Physics 496: Communicating in Physics—Writing Papers and Giving Talks
Fall 2023

Semester at a Glance
Meets 2:00–4:50 p.m. Fridays, 158 Loomis Laboratory of Physics
Class Attendance is Mandatory unless Excused; Zoom link

Writing Workshop is held weekly, unless otherwise noted
In-Class Activities require your presence and active participation
Homework Assignments are uploaded to the course portal on my.physics by the posted deadline*

Schedule is subject to change; changes will be posted to course website
Questions about the schedule should be directed to Celia Elliott

August 25—first day of class
Course introduction (TLH)—Class questions and discussion—read the syllabus and course schedule, poke around the website, and come prepared with questions
Technical communications for physicists (cme)
Communicating in science—“The Up Goer Five” (group activity)
Effective titles (TLH)
No homework due today

September 1
Literature search group activity (JLR)
How to read a physics paper (TLH)
Standards and values for physicists (group activity)
Ethics overview (cme)
HW #1—“Evaluating Titles”

September 8
Introduction to Writing Workshop—rationale and goals (JLR)
WW #1—“Finding the Right Word” (JLR)
How to evaluate a scientific talk or colloquium (TLH)
How to write an abstract (cme)
Writing an abstract—collaborative activity + group presentations
HW #2—“Understanding a Paper”

September 15
WW #2—“Using the Right Word” (JLR)
How to get started if you hate to write, Part I (Outlines) (cme)
Guest speaker—Professor Lance Cooper, “How to Pick a Graduate School” 3:00 p.m.
HW #3—“Title and Abstract”

* Deadline dates and times are listed on each written homework assignment.
September 22
Guest speaker—“Stumbling Blocks to Intercultural Communication,” Kimberly Yau, ISSS
WW #3: “Four-Letter Words in Science Writing” (JLR)
How to get started if you hate to write, Part II (Paragraphs) (cme)
Technical Writing 101 (Review the handout prior to class!)
HW #4—“Explaining Physics” Draft
Colloquium Report #1 Due

September 29
Reference rules and styles in scientific writing (cme)
What to reference, why, and how—group activity (JLR)
The scientific publication process and peer review (TLH)
HW #5—“Explaining Physics Concepts” Final Version

October 6
WW #4: “Ambiguous Pronouns” (JLR)
How to write instructions (JLR)
Writing Instructions—group activity (JLR)
Giving good science talks (TLH)
HW #6—Peer Reviews

October 13
WW #5: “Them Thar Indirect Openings” (JLR)
Revising and editing your work (cme)
First meeting of journal-club teams—group activity
HW #7—Best Practices for Technical Presentations

October 20
WW #6: “The Three-Preposition Rule (3PR)” (JLR)
Effective figures (TLH)
Rules for capitalization and acronyms (Review the handout prior to class)
Guest speaker
Have team scribe submit your paper selection for your journal-club talk
HW #8—Short Science Talk Draft Slides
Last Day to Submit Re-writes for Colloquium Report #1

October 27
WW #7—“Making Verbs Work” (JLR)
Voice and tense—Making verbs work (cme)
Effective figure captions (cme)
Class activity: Rules for expressing numbers (Review the handout prior to class)
HW #9 Evaluating Figures and Captions
Colloquium Report #2 Due
Arrange for your JC team to meet with Professor Hughes before November 10!
November 3
How to present a journal-club talk (cme)
A framework for ethical decisions (cme)
Hard problems—ethical case studies team activity
**HW #10—Short Science Talk** (presented during class; parallel sessions in Room 158 and 151)

November 10
WW #8—“Parallel Construction”
Writing a statement of purpose for grad school admissions (cme)
Surviving Graduate School (TLH)
**HW #11—Making Your Own Figures and Captions**

November 17
WW #9: “Shooting for ‘Shorth’” (JLR)
Scientific posters (JLR)
Intellectual property and copyright (cme)
Class activity: Eliminating fluff in scientific writing (Review the handout prior to class)
**Guest speaker**
**HW #12 Resume and Statement of Purpose or Cover Letter**

November 24
NO CLASS—FALL BREAK

MONDAY, November 27—Email your nearly final journal club slides to phys496@physics.illinois.edu by NOON

December 1—last day of class
WW Bonus (optional—complete on your own)—“Editing Practice”
The Last Word on “Due To” (Ms Particular)
**HW #13 Journal Club Talk** (presented during class)