BISC 542A: Writing Workshop for First Year MolBio PhD Students
Fall Semester 2017

Basic Information
Place and Time: RRI 101 on Thursdays from 4-4:50 pm
Course Leader: Norm Arnheim
Norm's Contact Information: arnheim@usc.edu, 213-740-7675, RRI-319C
Teachers:
Teachers' Contact Information:
Office Hours: by appointment
Final Proposal Deadline:

Course Goals and Learning Objectives
The primary goals of this course are to train first year PhD students in the Molecular Biology PhD Program in how to write grant and fellowship proposals, and to more generally help students develop writing and critical thinking skills. Instruction will be provided through a combination of in-class advising by faculty, peer review, and one-on-one consultations between students and their mentors during the first rotation. Students should develop their abilities to formulate questions and hypotheses, structure proposals, pick scientific objectives, summarize background on a research problem, develop a research plan, and determine outcomes, conclusions, and alternative strategies for their research.

Expected Products
Students should finish the course with the two essays needed to apply for a NSF Graduate Research Fellowship. Specifically, these include a Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement, and a Graduate Research Plan Statement (as described in https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2016/nsf16588/nsf16588.htm). Based on these essays, as well as the entirety of students' curriculum vitae, the rotation faculty will advise their students whether they should submit a fellowship application to NSF or another relevant agency.

Course Plan
During most weeks, students will have to complete a writing assignment outside of class. These assignments will be provided in class or over email. Most classes will be used for small group peer review, in which students will critique each other's writing samples. Review should be conducted in a manner that is collegial, respectful, and constructively critical. Students should aim to help their peers develop proposals that are strong at all levels—e.g., structure, logic, content, grammar, aesthetics.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment (due at class)	Instructor
1	August 24, 2017*	Summary of expectations, including description of available fellowships and current qualifying exam procedures	Draft 1 of Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement	Susan
2	August 31, 2017	Writing workshop	Draft 2 of Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement	Irene
3	September 7, 2017		Draft 1 of Graduate Research Plan Statement (Outline)	Irene
4	September 14, 2017		Draft 2 of Graduate Research Plan Statement	Norm
5	September 21, 2017		Draft 3 of Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement	Irene
6	September 28, 2017		Draft 3 of Graduate Research Plan Statement	Carolyn
7	October 5, 2017		Assessment of both essays	Matt D.
8	October 12, 2017		Assessment of both essays	Norm
9	October 19, 2017	Seminar Workshop	Bad Slide Talk	Norm

*For the first class only we will meet from 2:00-3:00 PM.

Required Materials
All materials for this class will be provided by the instructors either as a web link, a hard copy or by email.

Classroom Policy
Any electronic communication devices (phones, blackberries, and similar) must be turned off, and no instant messenger/chat type programs are allowed in class.

Assessment
This course is only offered as Credit/No Credit. To receive credit for the class, students must complete all assignments by their associated deadlines and contribute to the class

during peer review. They must also submit a finished NSF (or equivalent) grant application regardless whether they actually submit the application to a granting agency. Given that a major component of the class is focused on interactions between students and their first rotation advisors, students will also be assessed based on how proactive they are in working with their rotation mentors.

Policy against Cheating

All USC students are responsible for reading and following the Student Conduct Code, which appears in the Scampus and at http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/goverance. This policy does not apply to discussion or exchange of ideas.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus,* the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/.