502x Writing Skills for Engineering Ph.D. Students

Tentative Course Schedule Fall 2017
August 22 – October 7

The writing activities listed below are relevant to writing your dissertation and journal papers as well as tasks related to a career in academia or industry, e.g. proposals, review articles, career communications. Personalized attention is emphasized – you are encouraged to bring in your own work for feedback. Activities are focused to student’s individual strengths and challenges.

- We do exercises and short readings in class (schedule below is usually modified to fit student needs)
- We often start writing assignments in class and they are finalized as homework
- Deadlines are flexible and all writing assignments are short (about one page). Late assignments are always accepted
- You can substitute any of the writing assignments with your own writing tasks: abstracts, papers, quals, etc.

Week 1

8/22  Course introduction
Structuring a journal paper
assigned: writing sample – one-page description of ethical dilemma

8/24  Elements of an introduction – creating a research space
Abstracting information: techniques, academic tone
assigned: write an abstract (journal article provided in class)
due: background info sheet
Week 2

8/29  Summarizing Material, Concision
  due: writing sample (ethical dilemma)
  due: abstract a journal article provided in class, optional: abstract of
  article from your own work

8/31  Constructing the literature review
  The art of hedging to limit certainty of claims
  assigned: TED talk summary

Week 3

9/5   Writing data commentaries, paraphrasing
  assigned: data commentaries (in-class material and your own)
  due: TED talk summary

9/7   Conventions of visual perception – data displays and design
  Gapping titles, headings, and cv’s
  assigned: graphic presentation

Week 4

9/12  Comparative Summaries and citing
  assigned: comparative materials – summary of two articles
  due: in-class presentations: analyze and present graphics from your
  field
  due: data commentaries

9/14  Improving flow, writing up discussion and results
  sections

Week 5

9/19  Preparing for the quals and the dissertation proposal
  Writing critical reviews and using evaluative language
  assigned: critical review (of self-selected work)

9/21  Designing research funding proposals – industry/academic,
  developing a plan, budgets, describing qualifications
  due: comparative materials – summary of two articles
Week 6

9/26  Technical and Process Descriptions
      *due: critical review*
      assigned: technical description

9/28  Technical Communicating to Diverse Audiences (video)

Week 7

10/3  Managing the journal submission process: answering reviewers,
      incorporating feedback
      *due: technical description*

10/5  Workplace and academic communications: cv, cover letter, teaching
      philosophy, personal statement, job talk
      *(note: you can give me your cv anytime during the semester to get help)*

*Note: Class schedule is tentative and will be modified to meet the class’s
specific needs. In addition, class time may be used for individual conferencing,
workshops, and guest speakers.

**Do your best to meet deadlines, but you may always turn in an assignment late.
I will always accept it and provide you with feedback.

***Each student shows two versions of their research in a short informal
presentation. One version is the original introduction or abstract, and the second
is a rewritten version that is tailored to the level of expertise of your fellow
students in the class.*