Course Overview:

English 390 satisfies the Professional Writing requirement for undergraduates. Given the thematic focus on scientific issues, this course is most appropriate for science majors interested in further study in the physical and biological sciences (but would be of interest to anyone with a serious interest in science as a discursive activity). As a professionally oriented course, assignments parallel the writing demands that students face both in college and in the workplace.

Students learn the conventions of scientific prose used in research articles and proposals; they also learn to accommodate scientific information to general audiences. In addition, students learn how to use stylistic and visual devices to make information more accessible and how to edit their own work as well as that of their peers.

Prerequisites: English 101 or equivalent and a minimum of 60 credits.

Required Texts:
Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup, Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace, 12th edition
Jesse Cohen, ed., The Best of the Best American Science Writing
Richard A. Muller, Physics for Future Presidents

Recommended Text:
Laurence Greene, Writing in the Life Sciences

Learning Outcomes:

This course fulfills the University’s Fundamental Studies Professional Writing Requirement. As stated in the University’s Plan for General Education (http://www.provost.umd.edu/GenEdReport/GenEdPublic-Dec2010.pdf, see Appendices p. 35), students should be able to perform the following tasks upon completing this course:

1. Analyze a variety of professional rhetorical situations and produce appropriate texts in response.
2. Understand the stages required to produce competent, professional writing through planning, drafting, revising and editing.
3. Identify and implement the appropriate research methods for each writing task. Students do research for each writing assignment.
4. Practice the ethical use of sources and the conventions of citation appropriate to each genre.
5. Write for the intended readers of a text, and design or adapt text to audience who may differ in their familiarity with the subject matter.
6. Demonstrate competence in Standard Written English, including grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, coherence, and document design (including the use of the visual) and be able to use this knowledge to revise texts.
7. Produce cogent arguments that identify arguable issues, reflect the degree of available evidence, and take account of counter arguments.

The learning outcomes associated with each major writing assignment are listed in parentheses after each assignment description (e.g., “6” would indicate that the assignment focuses on improving Standard Written English).

Course Philosophy

One of your instructor’s core philosophical convictions is that writing is constitutive of thought; in other words, we cannot “divorce” writing and thinking. Pedagogically, this conviction implies that the teaching of professional writing goes hand-in-hand with developing critical thinking skills. Specifically, “thought” enters the picture when a writer translates information that was developed in one context into a new context that is tailored to the document’s intended final reader. However, there is no thought involved in performing the “hunter gatherer” activity of finding information and “writing it up” (in a bunch of discrete grammatically correct sentences). The latter activity could be compared to a musician who knows how to play the correct notes, but does not know “how to make the music.”

Thematically, this issue of translation is this course’s organizing construct. Although translation has to be dealt with in all forms of technical writing, it is especially acute in science because of the highly professionalized nature of this activity. During the 19th century, science became a profession, which means (among other things) that very formal rhetorical structures govern how scientific practitioners address each other. Consequently, as an aspiring scientist, you will have to translate your empirical findings into language that conforms not only to the “generic” expectations of readers of Standard Written English, but also to the specific expectations that are unique to your particular scientific community. Furthermore, how you present your empirical findings will differ rhetorically depending on whether you are addressing professional colleagues or a lay audience. These issues will be addressed in depth in the course’s six modules: Reader Expectation Theory, The Peer Review Process, The Professional Application Packet, Warranting Conclusions in Research Articles, Strategies for Popularization, and Translating Technical Knowledge for Grant-Making and Policy-Making Audiences.

Since writing is learned through practice, there will be multiple writing assignments throughout the semester. As the Professional Writing Program website indicates, “In every PWP course, students write and revise four to six major assignments for a total of approximately 25 pages of formal graded writing per student.” The specifics for each of these writing assignments are provided in the Assignment link on ELMS under the heading “Major Writing Assignments.” As you will see, the majority of these writing assignments involve completing a first draft, which
will then be commented on by your classmates during peer review. There are (at least) three reasons for getting feedback prior to final submission of any written document:

1) Every piece of writing can be improved with revision;
2) Writing is an inherently social activity (between a writer and a reader); and
3) The best way, as a writer, to enhance the likelihood of being understood is to craft text in ways that conform to your readers’ expectations.

**Basis for Grading**

As indicated in “Assignments” on ELMS, there are three types of graded activities in this course—major writing assignments, low stakes writing assignments, and graded non-writing exercises. Low stakes writing assignments are worth 0.5 points individually, and graded non-writing exercises (e.g., brief voice thread posts, peer reviews, and one quiz) are worth 0.5-2 points individually; collectively, both groups of assignments are worth 17% of the final grade. As you will see, these exercises are assigned within each learning module before the capstone major writing assignment; they are meant to provide “training” in the conceptual and writing tasks that will help you execute the major writing assignment. When submitted on time, there is a high probability that you will earn a good grade on low stakes assignments as long as you demonstrate a “good faith effort” to complete the assignment (e.g., demonstrate that you have done the relevant reading/viewing and followed the assignment prompt). However, unless there is a compelling excuse (as outlined below), they will not be accepted after the due dates.

For the major writing assignments, grades will be determined based on the following rubric:

| Written papers will be awarded a grade of “A” if | They introduce information that is directly relevant for the audience, and package it in a way that explicitly addresses the needs of the audience. |
| Written papers will be awarded a grade of “B” if | They introduce information that is directly relevant for the audience, but they force readers to “connect the dots” to see why the information is relevant. |
| Written papers will be awarded a grade of “C” if | They introduce information that is only partially relevant for the needs of the audience. The readers not only have to “connect the dots” for information that is relevant, but also sift through what information that needs to be discarded. |

The above criteria will be used as a general guide to assign grades based on the quality of content in written assignments. However, **I reserve the right to lower the assigned grade by up to a letter if the submitted product is professionally substandard** (e.g., it has spelling, punctuation, or grammar error, has inadequate citations etc.). How these general criteria will be applied in assessing specific assignments is discussed in more detail in the Assignment section of the
course space on ELMS. General description of undergraduate letter grades can be found at http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1534.

Each assignment will be given a numerical score (including fractional values) with 100 points possible at the end of the semester. Your final numerical score will be translated into a final course letter grade based on the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-73%</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I do “round up” final grades to the nearest integer when scores are “0.5” or higher. In other words, a final grade of “93.5” would be awarded an “A” and an “89.5” would be awarded an “A-.”

Course Schedule based on Modular Construction

As an asynchronous online course, you will have to take an active role in mastery of the material. However, I have provided a modular structure. Each module has been scheduled to occupy a specific 1-3 week time frame as indicated on the schedule below. This means that everyone will be working on the same module at the same time. While you have to complete both low stakes and capstone assignments on the specific dates that they are assigned, you will work on the materials on your own schedule; there will be no designated “class time” when everyone would be online.

To further ensure uniformity of experience, each module has been set up in the same way. In particular, you will always be asked to perform the following specific tasks:

1. Review the learning objectives
2. Complete all assigned readings & viewings
3. Complete all lecture materials
4. Participate in the Discussion Board and/or Voice Thread (usually both)
5. Complete and submit all assignments by the due dates specified.

As a general approach, I would recommend that you first skim the contents of the module (paying particular attention to the learning objectives), and then listen to my lecture before proceeding to the assigned reading/viewing materials and the written responses. As you will see, my brief lectures are meant to provide an overview of how you should be processing the material in the module; in other words, the lectures provide the “glue” that holds all the other parts
together conceptually. Some of the lectures have been recorded specifically for this course whereas others have been recorded for Northeastern University where I also teach a writing course (periodically) in an online graduate program.

Here is the weekly schedule for completing the modules:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Module</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Number of Weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reader Expectation Theory</td>
<td>8/29-9/11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review Process</td>
<td>9/12-9/18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Application Packet</td>
<td>9/19-10/2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warranting Conclusions in Research Article</td>
<td>10/3-10/23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popularization Strategies</td>
<td>10/24-11/6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating Knowledge for Grant-Making &amp; Policy-Making Audiences</td>
<td>11/7-12/12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final Paper/Exam:** Because this is a writing course, the final group paper will serve as the final examination for the course. As such, it must be submitted (online through Canvas) no later than Wednesday December 14, 2016. Only one submission per group is required (i.e., it can be submitted on behalf of the group by any group member).

As per university policy, a student may seek to reschedule final examinations so that he or she has no more than three (3) examinations on any given day. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate the rescheduling or be responsible for taking the examination as originally scheduled. If this situation applies to any student in this class, then the group as a whole should contact the instructor to initiate rescheduling.

**General Course Procedures and Policies:**

**Technical Requirements**
As an asynchronous online course, you will need access to a computer with high speed internet access and microphone. If you need help with any of the technical issues, consult the UMD help desk, which can be found [here](#).

**Conferences**
Two conferences are required between the final project groups and the instructor. At the first conference, the Memo (submitted on 10/2) will be used as the basis for the discussion. I hope to schedule all of these first meetings during the week of 10/3-10/7; however, I realize that some meetings may be required in the following week (10/10-10/14) because of logistical considerations. At the second meeting, we will discuss your work-in-progress based on the literature reviews that you have completed, as well as the sentence-based outline (submitted on 11/28). These second meetings will be scheduled during the last two weeks of classes. You are welcome to schedule additional meetings with me (either as an individual or as a group) at other times during the semester to discuss your work and/or your progress. If stated office hour times
do not work, then send me an email to schedule an appointment at a mutually convenient time. In addition, you are encouraged to meet with fellow students outside class time in face-to-face or virtual environments to plan together.

**General Course Procedures and Policies:**
For a more detailed discussion of the policies below (as articulated by the university), see [http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html)

**Communication about this course:** Your instructor will use email to convey important information, and students are responsible for keeping their email address up to date, and must ensure that forwarding to another address functions properly. Failure to check email, errors in forwarding, and returned email are the responsibility of the student, and do not constitute an excuse for missing announcements or deadlines.

**Online submission of course work**
As an online course, all assignments will be uploaded to the course space in ELMS.

**Professionalism and Online Class Participation**
Just as the writing assignments are meant to model “real world” professional writing experiences, so likewise should class conduct model professional behavior. Specifically, this means that students are expected to do the assigned readings, contribute to online discussions (both the Discussion Board and Voice Thread) on a regular basis, and complete all assignments by their due dates. Given that there will be no face-to-face meetings, consistent participation offers students the most effective opportunity to gain command of course concepts and materials. Conversely, falling behind in the completion of the modules will adversely affect a student’s grade. Unless there is a university-sanctioned excuse for non-completion of work, students will either be penalized or not be able to make up assignments that are pass due. Students who fail to participate for two weeks or more will find it extremely difficult to make up the required work. More specific course policies on late submissions are provided below.

**Excused and Unexcused Late Submissions:** As per university policy, there are recognized situations in which accommodations will be granted. While most of these pertain to absences (which would not be as relevant an issue in an asynchronous online course), extensions and other accommodations will be granted in these situations if circumstances prevent submission of assignments on their specified due dates.

Events that qualify for an accommodation include the following:

- Religious observances
- Mandatory military obligation
- Illness of the student or illness of an immediate family member
- Participation in university activities at the request of university authorities
- Compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control (e.g., death in the family, required court appearance)
Work duties other than military obligation (e.g., unexpected changes in shift assignments) and traffic/transit problems do not typically qualify for an accommodation, which means that late submissions for these reasons will be subject to penalties as described below.

Students requesting an accommodation must notify the course instructor in a timely manner and provide appropriate documentation. The notification should be provided either prior to the event or as soon afterwards as possible. In the case of religious observances, athletic events, and other planned occurrences known at the beginning of the semester, the student must inform the instructor during the schedule adjustment period. All other events requiring an accommodation must be reported as soon as is practical. The documentation (e.g., for medically necessary procedures) must be provided in writing to the instructor.

**Late Papers:** Papers are due by the announced times as indicated on their syllabus and assignments pages in the ELMS course space. Low stakes assignments cannot be made up (unless there is a legitimate excuse as outlined above); however, major writing assignments will still be accepted late—subject to a letter grade penalty (10%) per day of lateness, including the first one.

**Course Evaluations**
Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) is a responsibility you hold as a student member of our academic community. Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University. Because CourseEvalUm does not ask specific questions useful to the Professional Writing Program, I will ask you to fill out a different, also confidential, evaluation in class. Both evaluations are important for separate audiences and somewhat separate purposes, and I appreciate your participation in this process.

**Academic integrity:** The UMD Honor Code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures. On every examination, paper or other academic exercise not exempted by the instructor, students must write by hand and sign the following pledge:

*I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (or assignment).*

Allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Student Honor Council: http://www.shc.umd.edu. If the Student Honor Council determines that this is an instance of academic dishonesty, then the student will receive no credit for the assignment in question.

**Disability Support:** Students with a documented disability should inform the instructors within the add-drop period if academic accommodations will be needed. NB: You are expected to meet with your instructor in person to provide them with a copy of the Accommodations Letter and to obtain your instructor’s signature on the Acknowledgement of Student Request form. You and your instructor will plan together how accommodations will be implemented throughout the
semester. To obtain the required Accommodation Letter, please contact Disability Support Service (DSS) at 301-314-7682 or dissup@umd.edu

**Copyright notice:** Class lectures and other materials are copyrighted. They may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor. Copyright infringements may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

**Emergency protocol/loss of internet access:** If the university is physically closed for an extended period of time, this should not prevent the continuation of course activities since this is an online course. However, if extended loss of internet access occurs, then there would be no penalties for missed due dates during the time of non-access.

**Academic accommodations for students who experience sexual misconduct:**
The University of Maryland is committed to providing support and resources, including academic accommodations, for students who experience sexual or relationship violence as defined by the University’s Sexual Misconduct Policy. To report an incident and/or obtain an academic accommodation, contact the Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct at 301-405-1142. If you wish to speak confidentially, contact Campus Advocates Respond and Educate (CARE) to Stop Violence at 301-741-3555. As ‘responsible university employees’ faculty are required to report any disclosure of sexual misconduct, i.e., they may not hold such disclosures in confidence. For more information: [http://www.umd.edu/ocrsm/](http://www.umd.edu/ocrsm/)

**Diversity:**
The University of Maryland values the diversity of its student body. Along with the University, I am committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equitable participation of all students regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Potential devaluation of students in the classroom that can occur by reference to demeaning stereotypes of any group and/or overlooking the contributions of a particular group to the topic under discussion is inappropriate.