
WILD 494 - 02 – Senior Wildlife Seminar
Spring 2024, section 02, CRN 32443
Tuesdays: 3:00 – 4:50-ish PM in Forestry 206

Instructor: Dr. Victoria Dreitz

Office: FOR 312

Contact: 406-243-5476, email THROUGH MOODLE (more below).

Office Hours/Appointments: Mondays & Wednesdays 3:00 – 5:00 pm or by appointment.

Teaching Assistant: Mike Green

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Effective communication skills, both in writing and verbally, are critical for professionals in wildlife biology. Knowing your audience is key to effective written and verbal communication. This course aims to enhance students' communication skills through instruction and practice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Learn skills to communicate effectively and strategically in various professional settings
- Gain experience in developing written communication
- Gain experience giving professional-oriented oral presentations
- Practice self-critique and constructive critique of peers to improve communication skills
- Learn about wildlife biology and conservation topics from your peers

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Communicate effectively and strategically. Students should be able to:

- identify necessary steps in preparing professional written and verbal communication;
- identify techniques for engaging audiences and delivering key messages;
- tailor written and verbal communication to diverse audiences; and
- understand linkages between communication and leadership.

Gain experience with peers. Students should be able to:

- prepare and deliver professional communication in front of others;
- appreciate concepts of channeling inner purpose and nerves into positive energy when preparing and delivering professional communication; and
- overcome basic anxieties associated with self-developed professional communication.

Positive Critique. Students will practice critiquing other's work. It's a valuable skill that offers both personal and professional growth, enhances communication, and contributes to the overall improvement of one's creative and professional development.

- prepare and deliver constructive input to peers
- increase critical thinking and attention to detail, enabling you to produce higher-quality communication
- enhance your ability to understand diverse viewpoints and collaborator efforts

effectively, appreciation for diversity of creative expression
Expand knowledge of wildlife biology and conservation. Students should have a broader knowledge of current wildlife science and management issues.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each student is required to provide multiple written and verbal communication that will benefit soon-to-be graduates. Written communication is in the form of cover letters and curriculum vitae (CV). We will work on tips and tricks when applying for positions with different wildlife organizations through peer-to-peer *constructive* critiques and class discussion.

Verbal communication is in the form of:

- 1) elevator speeches (60-90 sec)
- 2) a 3-minute professional/technical presentation (1 slide using PowerPoint or Google Slides)
- 3) an 8-minute non-technical/"layperson" presentation (slides or other visual aids allowed).

Each student will also be required to submit a short (~1 page) *constructive* critique of a) fellow peer presentations and, 2) their OWN presentations viewed on video.

Grading is CR/NCR (credit/noncredit). Attendance is mandatory unless there is an exceptional circumstance and the instructor approves the absence in ADVANCE. **Two or more unexcused** absences will automatically result in NCR grade.

TENTATIVE* SCHEDULE (materials due through Moodle are in **bold** and *italics*)

23-Jan	Review the syllabus, course requirements, and in-class activity
30-Jan	Knowing your audience and purpose: communicating strategically and finding common ground. Intro cover letters and key points.
6-Feb	Peer-to-peer critique of cover letters. Cover letters MUST BE submitted through Moodle, <i>no later than 11 AM today.</i>
13-Feb	Students Deliver Elevator Speeches – Employment: Pick one of the positions provided for the cover letter and provide a 60-90 sec elevator speech about you! Think of this as if you just stepped into an elevator with the person who will be interviewing you!
20-Feb	<i>No in-person class</i> – Provide topics and preferred presentation dates for the technical (3-min) and non-technical (8-min) talks <i>through Moodle by 5 PM today.</i>
27-Feb	Student 3-minute technical talk (1 slide ONLY). Your audience is professional peers. Think of this talk being done in a Wildlife course or at a professional conference (e.g., The Wildlife Society or American Fisheries Society Annual conference). <i>Your talk MUST be uploaded in Moodle by 11 AM the day of your presentation.</i>
5-Mar	Student 3-minute technical talk (1 slide ONLY). Your audience is professional peers. Think of this talk being done in a Wildlife course or at a professional conference (e.g., The Wildlife Society or American Fisheries Society Annual

conference). **Your talk MUST be uploaded in Moodle by 11 AM the day of your presentation.**

12-Mar	Students Deliver Elevator Speeches – Technical: Using the same topic as your 3-minute talk, provide a 60-90 sec elevator speech to policy makers (e.g., Director of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Director of US Fish and Wildlife, USDA Secretary of Agriculture).
19-Mar	<i>No Class: Enjoy Spring Break!!</i>
26-Mar	Student 8-min non-technical talk. Your audience is the general public (think of speaking to ~ 8th graders. Remember, not everyone is as passionate about wildlife as you are!). Your talk MUST be uploaded in Moodle by 11 AM the day of your presentation.
2-Apr	Student 8-min non-technical talk. Your audience is the general public (think of speaking to ~ 8th graders. Remember, not everyone is as passionate about wildlife as you are!). Your talk MUST be uploaded in Moodle by 11 AM the day of your presentation.
9-Apr	Student 8-min non-technical talk. Your audience is the general public (think of speaking to ~ 8th graders. Remember, not everyone is as passionate about wildlife as you are!). Your talk MUST be uploaded in Moodle by 11 AM the day of your presentation.
16-Apr	Student 8-min non-technical talk. Your audience is the general public (think of speaking to ~ 8th graders. Remember, not everyone is as passionate about wildlife as you are!). Your talk MUST be uploaded in Moodle by 11 AM the day of your presentation.
23-Apr	Student 8-min non-technical talk. Your audience is the general public (think of speaking to ~ 8th graders. Remember, not everyone is as passionate about wildlife as you are!). Your talk MUST be uploaded in Moodle by 11 AM the day of your presentation.
30-Apr	In-class activity, evaluations, and any remaining wrap up

*Schedule provided is tentative and may change. The instructor will provide ample notice to students of schedule changes.

Course Website & Emailing ME!!

- MOODLE UOnline (<https://umonline.umt.edu/>).
- **PLEASE SEND EMAILS TO ME THROUGH MOODLE!!!** I have set up my inbox to ‘flag’ emails sent through Moodle, and I respond to these ‘flagged’ emails first. If you email me directly, it could take a few days, maybe up to a week, because I respond to emails in order as received (and I do restrict my time responding to emails!). See information on Moodle about how to email through Moodle (or google it).

Office for Disability Equity (ODE):

- The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Office for Disability Equity (ODE); <https://www.umt.edu/disability/>. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your

academic performance, and you have not already registered with ODE, please get in touch with ODE in Aber Hall (1st floor) or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and ODE to provide an appropriate modification.

Student Conduct Code

- All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <https://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/default.php>

COVID-19/Illness Related Considerations:

- Masks are optional in the classroom.
- Attendance is mandatory. If you are sick and feel its best to be isolated, **you may reach out to me via email to request a Zoom link to attend class remotely. I will make accommodations for students who reach out to me, and I acknowledge I received the request, by 11 AM the day a class meets.**
- The course may be recorded via Zoom, in which case I will let you know in advance.

Dropping/Adding:

Drop/Add dates are posted at [Office of Registrar: Calendar](#).

Important Dates Regarding Opportunities to Drop a Course during Spring 2024 Semester:

Date	Description	Date Range
To 15 th instructional day	Students can drop classes on Cyberbear with refund	Jan 18th to Feb 7 (by 5 PM)
16 th to 45 th instructional day	Drop requires instructor and advisor approvals (via Cyberbear), and there is a \$20 fee; student will receive a 'W' on transcript and no refund.	Feb 8 to Mar 28 (by 5 PM)
46 th to last instructional day	Students are only allowed to drop a class under very limited and unusual circumstances. Concern over course grade is not an acceptable reason. Requests to drop must be approved by the instructor, advisor, and Dean and a \$20 fee applies. A WP or WF will appear on the student's transcript.	Mar 29 – May 3 (by 5 PM)