

# Scientific Writing, Winter - 2014

Instructor: James D. Thomas, Instructor

Wed: 6:30-9:30 pm – CONFERENCE ROOM- Schure Bldg.

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In general, the way we will be addressing topics in this sequence:

## January: (Preparation)

1. What are grants and proposals? Who/what are sources of information
2. How the grant process works, assembling information
3. Information sources and other grant resources
4. Identifying a topic and potential funding sources, rfp's, preproposals

## February: (Assembly, putting the parts together)

1. Outlines, their use and construction, sharpening your writing and thinking skills, literature and learning to “talk the talk”, assembling your literature and abstract base.
2. The project description -why you now have to write and think with precision.
3. Dealing with the crappola; **budgets** and supporting documents.
4. Final Assembly, the submission process.

## March: (Reviewing and evaluating, how the process works and why you need to know)

1. Joint proposals, the value of making the right choices
2. Mock panel reviews
3. Revising and resubmitting TBA
4. All proposals due
5. Evaluations

## Expectations:

1. You are encouraged select an actual funding source of relevance to you and submit a proposal. The gold standard of proposals is the tomes submitted to the National Science Foundation (NSF). If you can prepare proposals in this format all the rest is gravy. This will be our model.
2. The course will be conducted in a realistic atmosphere of fear and pressure that grant writing engenders. Learning to deal with uncertainty and deadlines are part and parcel of this process. I will seldom answer questions directly. My goal is to focus your thinking and writing process. Grant preparation is really just following a set of procedures. Knowing the right procedures is the key.

## **“What makes a good proposal?”**

This course is designed to provide tools, resources, and approaches to improve a student’s ability to write in a scientifically precise and accurate manner and to interrelate complex conceptual issues in a coherent manner. The skills acquired while learning to write a grant proposal are very similar to the skills needed to write a project plan or scientific paper. Thus, by building grant-writing skills, general scientific writing skills are improved in equal measure. This course is an intensive introduction of how to prepare, write, edit, and review a standard grant proposal.

Participants in this course will be expected to write a grant proposal in their field of interest as a class project. The following topic areas will be presented and developed:

- How to identify viable research topics
- How to assemble relevant information and data into an outline
- Identifying funding sources
- Writing abstracts and summaries
- Different writing styles for various audiences
- Targeting proposals to specific funding agencies
- Editing and reviewing for scientific content
- Improving both oral and written presentations of research projects
- Understanding the peer review process, role-playing

Proposal writing is essential in the competitive scientific job market, but it can be intimidating for the novice. There is nothing worse than staring at a blank piece of paper or computer screen with the sinking feeling that so much is riding on the prose you must create. This course will provide the tools and procedures to write and submit a competitive grant proposal.

Participants in this course will be expected to be motivated and willing to improve their written and verbal communication skills. There will be an abundant writing load and outside class assignments. Class enrollment is limited to 14 to allow for adequate interaction between students and instructor.