

Course Syllabus for CNMS 395: Communication for Emerging Scientists I

Instructor

Sarah Hansen, M.S.

STEM communications manager

hansen.sarah@umbc.edu

[Introduction video](#)

Course Description

This course is required for STEM BUILD Trainees. It is part of a two-course series. You will take Communications for Emerging Scientists II in the spring. By the end of this course, you will realize that excellent communication skills will be a crucial asset in your biomedical sciences career. You will also have practiced and refined those skills in a variety of formats. As a result, you will be prepared to use your skills to apply for internships and jobs, communicate science in an accessible way, and grow your professional network—all with confidence.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will:

- ...be able to generate a simple, polished portfolio that is publicly available on the internet.
- ...be able to write a compelling cover letter.
- ...be able to craft a well-organized resume that emphasizes your strengths and transferable skills.
- ...be able to write about scientific research in a way that is accessible to non-scientists.
- ...be able to write a strong personal statement for graduate school and other applications.
- ...be able to practice constructive self-revision and peer-editing on written work.

Class logistics

This course will occur completely online. You should expect to spend a total of 2 – 3 hours per week on this class, both on weeks when we meet synchronously and weeks when we do not (see the detailed class schedule). Synchronous class meetings will occur on Wednesdays from 5:30 – 6:20 p.m. via WebEx. If you are consistently spending more than 2 – 3 hours per week on this class, please let me know.

Office Hours

Office hours will occur via WebEx. I will invite you all to online office hours from 11 a.m. – noon on Fridays on weeks when we meet synchronously. On asynchronous weeks, office hours will occur during our normal class time (Wednesday, 5:30 – 6:20 p.m.). Feel free to drop in to chat about assignments or anything else. I would love to get to know you all better, so casual conversation is welcome! Feel free to contact me directly if you need to set up a meeting at a different time.

Blackboard

As an online class, the course Blackboard site will be an indispensable resource for you. Please check it frequently. All relevant communication and content for the course will be available on Blackboard. Before you ask me a question, *check Blackboard*. You will also submit some of your assignments via Blackboard. If you have any technical concerns, please let me know as soon as possible so we can work together to help you resolve them. It is important that each of you has an equitable opportunity to be successful in this course.

Course engagement expectations

This course emphasizes active engagement during synchronous class sessions and asynchronously on Blackboard. The grading system reflects this emphasis. Your consistent active participation will be critical for your success. One of the goals of this course is to further develop your cohesion as a cohort. To respect privacy and people’s different situations, I am choosing not to require that cameras be on during synchronous sessions. If you are comfortable doing so, I encourage you to use your camera. If not, I still expect you to engage in synchronous activities by speaking, contributing to the chat, or in other ways. On the other hand, having your camera on does not in itself guarantee that you will be considered an active participant during that session. Please let me know about any concerns or anticipated challenges you may have related to engaging with the course as soon as possible.

Grading

I will post grades in the Blackboard Grade Center, so you can check your course grade at any time. There are no exams in this course. Final grades will be assigned on a pass/fail basis. In order to pass, your final grade must be greater than 70 percent, and you must submit every core assignment (i.e. you cannot completely skip any core assignments, even if your grade would still be above 70 percent). The core assignments include the personal statement, cover letter, news article, resume/CV, and web portfolio.

Late work: A late core assignment or peer feedback assignment (draft or final version) will be penalized with a 5 percent per day reduction (e.g. one day late means the maximum you can earn on that assignment is a 95 percent, two days late can earn a maximum of 90, and so on). Late discussion contributions and Blackboard quizzes will lose two points per day (which is much more than 5 percent). ALL assignments are due by 5:30 p.m. on Wednesdays (class start time), whether class activities are occurring synchronously or asynchronously.

Of course, I understand that things beyond your control may come up that prevent you from completing assignments on time. I cannot overstate the importance of *communication* in these situations, so that we can figure out a solution together.

Assignment	Weight (% of final grade)
Participation / Engagement	25
Synchronous attendance and participation	5
Blackboard Quizzes	10
Discussion Board/VoiceThread Participation	10
Peer Feedback	20
Core Assignments	50
Personal Statement	10
Cover Letter	10
News Article	10
Resume/CV	10
Web Portfolio	10
Core Assignment Revision	5

Detailed schedule – *subject to change*

*****Assignments listed under “homework” are due by 5:30 p.m. the following Wednesday, whether we are meeting synchronously or asynchronously, unless otherwise noted. Activities listed for asynchronous weeks must also be completed by 5:30 p.m. the following Wednesday, unless otherwise noted.*****

Date	Topic	Activities	Homework
9/2	Getting to know the course and each other	SYNCHRONOUS and recorded Welcome! Blackboard and Course Info: tour and questions Activity: 5 Things in Common	-Read all documents in the “Course Basics” folder carefully. -Take the Course Basics Quiz. -Share something fun about yourself in the Welcome Back VoiceThread, and comment on at least one other person’s contribution. -Read “Peer Feedback Tips and Rubric” document in the “Rubrics” folder.
9/9	Personal Statements	ASYNCHRONOUS Video: The importance of peer feedback Activity: Providing constructive feedback <i>(see instructions on Bb - includes a MID-WEEK DUE DATE!)</i>	-Read the article about crafting a strong personal statement. -Revise your personal statement from the summer.
9/16	Personal Statements / Web Portfolio	ASYNCHRONOUS Video: Introducing the Web Portfolio Activity: Exploration of professional scientist websites <i>(see activity instructions)</i>	-Offer constructive feedback to two of your peers on their personal statements. -Schedule a one-on-one workshop for your personal statement with Ms. Hansen for no later than 10/2.
9/23	Cover letters	ASYNCHRONOUS Video: Cover letters Activity: Cover letters <i>(see activity instructions)</i> Quiz: Cover Letters	-Revise and polish your personal statement. DUE 10/7, but you are strongly encouraged to make solid progress this week. -Begin work on your Portfolio Project: Set up the site navigation and home page
9/30	Cover Letters	SYNCHRONOUS and recorded CHECK-IN: Community-Building Activity	-Write a draft cover letter for the job opportunity on the list that you are most interested in. -Finalize and submit Personal Statement.
10/7	Cover Letters	ASYNCHRONOUS Activity: Offer feedback to two of your classmates on their cover letters. <i>(see</i>	-Revise and polish your cover letter. Schedule a workshop with Ms. Hansen if desired. DUE 10/21. Video: The importance of communicating science

		<i>instructions on Bb – includes a MID-WEEK DUE DATE!</i>	Quiz: Science Writing
10/14	Science Writing	ASYNCHRONOUS Activity: Exploring Science Writing (<i>see instructions on Bb</i>)	-Select a research article that interests you and read it. You will write about this research for a general audience next week. -Finalize and submit cover letter.
10/21	Science Writing	ASYNCHRONOUS Video: An introduction to writing about science for non-scientists. Activity: What are they saying?	-Write a short news article and three tweets about your selected research article, targeting a non-scientist audience.
10/28	Science Writing	SYNCHRONOUS and recorded CHECK-IN: Community-Building Activity Questions about science writing?	-Offer constructive feedback on two of your classmates' articles and tweets.
11/4	Resumes and CVs	ASYNCHRONOUS Activity: Resume and CV Exploration (<i>see activity instructions</i>) Quiz: Resumes and CVs	-Revise and polish your news article and tweets. Schedule a workshop with Ms. Hansen if desired. DUE 11/18.
11/11	Resumes and CVs	ASYNCHRONOUS Video: Resumes and CVs - Ms. McElroy -Schedule a resume review with Ms. McElroy or Ms. Susan Hindle (no later than 11/24)	-Generate a draft resume and CV. -Finalize and submit your news article.
11/18	Resumes and CVs	ASYNCHRONOUS Peer review: Review three of your classmates' resumes and offer constructive feedback. (<i>see instructions on Bb – includes a MID-WEEK DUE DATE!</i>)	-Revise your resume and CV. DUE 12/2. -Select one of the earlier core assignments (personal statement, cover letter, or news article) to revise further after receiving feedback from Ms. Hansen. Remember, success is never final!
11/25	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING WEEK	Take some well-deserved rest! Also, consider educating yourself further about Thanksgiving.	Here is one place to start: 8 Ways to decolonize and honor Native peoples on Thanksgiving
12/2	Portfolio Project	SYNCHRONOUS Activity: Reflection Thank you! See you in the spring!	-Finalize your Web Portfolio. DUE EXAM DAY. -Submit revised core assignment. DUE EXAM DAY. -Complete course evaluation