

Writing 20
Freshwater Resources and Society: Communicating Science and Policy
Fall 2009 Course Syllabus

Writing 20.03, 20.05 and 20.98: Academic Writing
Time and Location: Mon/Wed 1:15-2:30 Art 116 (Sec. 98)
Mon/Wed 4:25-5:40 Carr 242 (Sec. 03)
Mon/Wed 6:00-7:15 White 106 (Sec. 05)



Blackboard site to access course materials: <https://courses.duke.edu>

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<http://www.duke.edu/~sc153/CV.pdf>

Texts: All texts will be provided on Blackboard or handed out in class.

Course Overview:

Human beings are intimately connected to their freshwater resources, but watershed development and aquatic ecosystem health may not be topics that are at the forefront of our minds. It is important to effectively communicate the scientific research behind such issues to a non-specialist audience in order to influence policy and public awareness. In this course we will learn to communicate the science and policy implications of water resource problems through writing that informs, offers new insights, and proposes alternative questions. As with all Writing 20 courses at Duke University, our goals will be to **(1) engage with the work of others**, which we will do through analyzing and responding to news and commentary articles, scientific literature, and policy documents; **(2) articulate a position**, which will be facilitated by our class discussions and exercises; and **(3) situate writing in specific contexts**, which we will achieve in part by learning how to write for different readerships and for different purposes. We will work towards these goals through **researching, workshopping, revising, and editing**. Please refer to <http://uwp.duke.edu/courses/writing20/students/goals.html> for elaboration of the Writing 20 Goals and Practices. I hope that after completing this course you will be better able to critically analyze texts, develop new insights into an issue, and communicate those insights through writing that is purposeful, clear, and concise.

Narrative of Course:

In the **first part** of the course we will begin our work by studying the water resource problems facing the state of California, which has experienced recent droughts, water allocation disputes, ecosystem quality concerns, and budgetary problems. This multi-faceted and complex problem has been portrayed in a wide variety of recent academic and non-academic texts and media. Thus, some of our initial activities will involve writing short responsive pieces to podcasts of interviews, popular newspaper articles, primary scientific research articles, and some documents published by the Public Policy Institute of California. These readings, responses, and discussions will culminate in our **first of three major writing projects**: a critical commentary of water policy in California. This paper will be written

for a broad but generally well-informed, “policy-minded” audience. I will provide further details for this paper and other assignments later.

One key concept that will emerge from the first part of the course is the importance of watershed land use on aquatic ecosystems, especially in the context of maintaining water quality and maximizing water yield in drought-prone regions. For example, deforestation may increase run-off and streamflow, which has consequences that are both positive (e.g., more water availability for downstream use) and negative (e.g., reduced water quality). This concept of aquatic-terrestrial linkages will serve as the basis for the **second part** of the course, during which we will focus further on understanding scientific literature and subsequently explaining important concepts and insights of this literature through writing for a general science audience, such as the readership of the publication *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. Our readings will consist mainly of scientific review and research articles. Our major writing project for this part of the course will be a review article weighing the benefits and drawbacks of a land use practice (e.g., agriculture) on water resources, taking into consideration the multiple needs of society and the environment. This project will help you learn how to write for the dual purpose of explaining complex scientific concepts in clear language and offering new insights or larger implications related to those concepts.

The research and writing of the first two parts of the course should equip you for the **last part** of the course, during which you are free to explore a specific research question on a water-related issue of your choosing. My specialty is aquatic ecology, but I encourage you to probe whatever interests you, whether it is an engineering, economic, sociological, or political topic. You will write a **pre-proposal** that presents the context of your research question and argues for why it merits serious consideration and funding. Some funding agencies call for shorter pre-proposals before they invite submission of full proposals. In writing a pre-proposal the goal is to use what is often a limited amount of space (e.g., five pages) to “sell” your idea to a multi-disciplinary review panel so that they will invite you to submit a full proposal for funding consideration. Pre-proposals can focus more on key ideas, overall approach, and important implications, and may focus less on the detailed methodology. Once again, details of this assignment will be given at a later date.

Course Activities:

Major Writing Projects (MWP) – The three papers outlined above (MWP#1 – policy forum, MWP#2 – review article, and MWP#3 – pre-proposal) will form the backbone of this course, and thus will account for the majority of your grade (see *Grades* below). Each of these papers will be taken through multiple drafts and will be workshopped by your peers.

Short Papers (SP) – Examples of SPs include short essays (1 page or less), revision statements of major assignments, and peer reviews. These will be graded simply as √ (2 pts – you put in good thought and effort to do the work), √- (1 pt – work appears half-hearted or instructions were not followed), or 0 (missing or incomplete).

Course Procedures:

Attendance, Participation, and Conduct – This is a small, seminar-style class, and thus it is expected that everyone will attend class on time and participate in activities and discussions to the best of one’s abilities. If you do miss a class it is your responsibility to learn what happened in class on the day you were absent and to obtain any of the materials distributed that day. If you know in advance that you will miss a class, please speak to me about it so we can plan accordingly. If

your absence is excused, you can see me to find out what you missed, but if your absence is unexcused, you can ask a classmate or check Blackboard. Missing class or consistently being late to class will impact your course grade. During class interactions – which include discussions and peer review – please be respectful of differing opinions and viewpoints.

Submitting Work – All graded assignments must be submitted electronically via Blackboard by the due date and time, unless I specify otherwise. For most MWP and SPs, one or more hard copies must also be brought to class on the due date for workshoping or peer review. I will let you know when hard copies are necessary. Late work will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and may lower your grade (usually half a letter grade per day – e.g., A to A-). For assignment format, please use Times New Roman 12 pt font, 1 inch margins, and double spacing, unless otherwise noted. For papers longer than one page, please number the pages.

Editing and Proofreading – This is not a course in the mechanics of writing. Students in Writing 20 are expected to be able to write reasonably correct prose. This means you are responsible for making sure that your work is presented with care and thought. I am willing to help you with any questions you may have about points of style, usage, or grammar, but I should not be the first reader of your work. So, ask friends, classmates, or roommates to look over your work. I will not accept any writing that strikes me as hurriedly or carelessly prepared, so make sure to review, edit, and proofread all the work you do for this course before you turn it in.

Grades – Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Major writing project #1	20%
Major writing project #2	25%
Major writing project #3	25%
Short papers	20% (with lowest grade or missed assignment dropped)
Quality of participation	10%

I will distribute detailed grading rubrics for the major writing projects. I will also post to Blackboard a detailed course schedule with a list of short papers, which I reserve the right to modify (i.e., add to) as the semester progresses. Your “quality of participation” includes your thoughtful responses to the texts (via oral or blog discussion), your critical readings of your peers’ texts, and your participation in class activities (including attendance/ tardiness). Also, please note the following grading policy: although a MWP is worth only 20- 25% of your grade, failing to turn in one or more of the major writing projects will result in a failing grade for the course (i.e., you cannot receive a zero on one of these MWPs and pass the course).

The Writing Studio – The Writing Studio has three locations on East Campus: room 219 of the Academic Advising Center, the second floor of Lilly Library, and room 106 of the Art Building. There is also a location on the West Campus: room 112 in Perkins Library. (Go to <http://uwp.duke.edu/wstudio/index.php> for more information.) You can go to the Writing Studio for free help with drafting, revising, or editing any writing assignment you are doing for any course at Duke. The professional writing consultants will work with you on a one-time basis, or they can help you with your writing regularly throughout the term. I encourage you to visit the Studio – every writer, no matter how experienced or inexperienced, needs readers, and the consultants at the Studio are good ones. Be sure to take with you a copy of the assignment you are working on and any drafts with my or your colleagues’ comments.

Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism – Please familiarize yourself with the Duke Community Standard (<http://www.integrity.duke.edu/standard.html>) if you have not done so already. To misrepresent the work of someone else as your own is to plagiarize. When you quote, paraphrase, build upon, respond to, or in any other way draw upon the texts or ideas of others in your writing—as you will surely do in this course—you must note your use of their work. We will use different citation styles for each assignment, as I will explain in detail later. Please visit <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/index.html> or speak to me for additional guidelines, and I will be happy to help. I do not anticipate problems with plagiarism in this course, but the penalty for plagiarism would be a failing course grade.

Other – Please do not hesitate to speak to me if you have a learning disability, physical condition, or any other situation that may hamper your abilities in this course.

List of Important Due Dates and Events

Date	Task
Mon-Wed 9/7-9/9	Small Group Workshops in lieu of normal class meeting
Wed 9/16	2 nd draft of MWP #1 due to Bb by 5 pm
Mon 9/23	Library session
Fri 9/25	Final draft of MWP #1 due to Bb by midnight
Wed 10/7	RefWorks/ EndNote session
Mon-Wed 10/12-10/14	Small Group Workshops – no formal class meeting
Tues 10/20	2 nd draft of MWP #2 due to Bb by 5 pm
Fri 10/30	Final draft of MWP #2 due to Bb by midnight
Wed 11/4	MWP #3 outline due in class; informal presentations (tentative)
Mon-Wed 11/9-11/11	Small Group Workshops – no formal class meeting (tentative)
Tues 11/17	2 nd draft of MWP #3 due to Bb by 5 pm (tentative)
Tues 11/30	Final draft of MWP #3 due to Bb by <u>5 pm</u>
Wed 12/2	Review panels for pre-proposals