# ENGL 299 A Intermediate Interdisciplinary Writing - Natural Sciences Syllabus

## Instructor’s Information:

**Instructor:**Norman Wacker

**Class Meets**: Week 1 Fully Online; Onward – in-person SAV 164 at 11:30

**Zoom Office Hours**: MW 1:30 – 2:30 and by appointment

**E-mail:**nwacker@uw.edu

**Additional Optional meetings**: Major essay conferences with the instructor and classmates (by appointment)

## Course Description:

ENGL 299 A: Intermediate Interdisciplinary Writing for the Natural Sciences is linked with BIOL 200: Introductory Biology.

Although the two courses complement each other, they have distinct goals, activities, and assessments. Our focus in ENGL 299 A is on (1) the dissemination of knowledge in science through science writing, (2) the role engagement of this writing contributes to our command of new discoveries and debates about the elements and processes that inform the natural world, even as we grow in our capacity to actively engage and write effectively about findings reported in the science literature.

## Learning Goals:

1. Use our experience closely reading the publications of participants in the discipline, to identify the writers' purposes, methods and key rhetorical principles that underlie the various genre of writing in the field and the credibility of the research findings reported in these resources.
2. Employ our growing command of those methods in analyzing content and planning writing tasks in a way consistent with the objectives of the discipline, while working collaboratively with class members and the instructor at each stage in preparation of our 4 major projects.
3. Learn to Identify and critically appraise the reasoning and supporting evidence on which claims in the line of analysis and argumentation the sources you consult are based.
4. Learn to actively appraise and revise arguments as a participant in the larger debates on display in the sources you consult and the alternative arguments by other sources referenced in a given text.
5. Use critical peer and instructor comments on reading and writing throughout this course to extend and refine your thinking and writing and as a helpful “mirror” on your progress at each stage in our preparation and execution of our four major essays.

## Course Expectations:

Attend each class session and participate fully in course activities. This includes preparing for class, asking questions, contributing to group work and class discussion, while completing assignments (including our many brief reflections and short pre-writing assignments, always there to position you a step at a time to produce the best product possible.

Show respect for all individuals and demonstrate responsibility in groups. Many activities in science inquiry and science writing are collaborative in nature and success depends on the contributions and insights generated by close collaboration.

Take advantage of opportunities to incorporate feedback and to grow as a scientist and writer--debate and feedback are fundamental to the development and testing of scientific questions and proposed answers.

Share your questions, concerns and insights clearly and regularly with both peers and instructors.

Conduct yourself with academic honesty (completing your own work and acknowledging any contributions of others). Do not deprive yourself of opportunities to challenge yourself and learn.

Check our Canvas course site and your email regularly for announcements and assignments. They are a source of constant feedback on our work-in-progress and questions or problems raised by class members.

You will submit assignments in MS Word format whenever possible electronically directly to Canvas. Additional instructions will be provided by the instructor, and online assistance is available from the associated help centers (Clue sessions and Undergraduate Library Writing Center). In-class activities may also be legibly hand-written and later scanned and posted to the Canvas drop-box.

Participation: In-class activities cannot be completed at another time. If you are unable to participate in class due to illness, family emergency, or UW-recognized event, email the instructor before class or as soon as possible. An excused absence from participation may require appropriate documentation.

Note: Pre-writing and Major Writing Assignment instructions and drop boxes will be found throughout the course on our Canvas English 299 A Course Site under the Assignments tab.

## Recommended and Required Resources:

Biology 200 textbook. lecture, lab manual and lecture content.

Turabian's *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers* (4th Edition) available at UW Bookstore.

**Guides, Policies, and Resources***:* Check the course website, under Pages, for additional guides, policies, and resources, including Collaborating Online, Searching for Scientific Literature, and Supporting Your Learning & Writing.

## Course Schedule:

The schedule is subject to instructor announced changes. Check the course website and your email regularly for announcements and assignments. Our assignment calendar has been updated for Week 1. Further updates will follow and be accompanied by announcements.

## BQMOD and Scaffolding Major Assignments: Reading Logs, Peer Review, and Drafting

In understanding, appraising and applying this information, we will employ a fundamental convention consistently employed in the science literature, this BQMOD convention is a kind of kind of flexible template used to carefully sequence over the course of the essay the key components including existing knowledge (Background), gaps yet to be settled in that knowledge (Questions), and the scientific approaches designed to rigorously examine the question (Method), results (Observations) and appraisal of the stakes of those Observations for the research Question (Discussion).

This painstaking exposition of existing knowledge, unanswered questions, and subsequent pursuit of new findings are tried and true stages in research-based analytical writing that you will notice as readers of your Biology text, lecture presentations, BIOL 200 labs and in each stage of our writing for this course.

For the purposes of our course this is also an introduction to a fundamental rubric that will inform the grading of each of the four major projects for this course. The grade assigned to your final draft will be holistic. It will reflect how equally well constructed are each of the elements of exposition and analysis framed by use of BQMOD template.

Keep in mind that the extensive use of closely related structures of accounting for the ***B***ackground material of your essay, isolation of the ***Q***uestion, ***M***ethods and ***O***bservations will be consistently mirrored in our close reading of the existing science literature, our active class discussion, instructor conferences and peer review revisions for the final product. These conventions are regularly demonstrated in the scientific literature we will read, fueling the larger processes of identifying important developments in scientific knowledge. They also mirror how writing contributes to our understanding of scientific questions and models effective writing in the sciences.

We address these objectives, as we read, carefully re-read and discuss bioscience writing and commit our responses to writing. We use a process of annotation, paraphrase and outlining of research questions, experimental methods, findings to examine the significance of the science writing we read.

As we compose and revise our own draft responses, we place special emphasis on the purposes different types of science writing serve in framing scientific questions, reporting new science knowledge and debate and the way any one scientific study enters into conversation with other studies in an area of research in ways that continue to be actively appraised, refined and applied, with the utmost care by other practitioners in a field of study.

This will be a highly collaborative and interactive class. We will exchange and discuss pre-writing homework with our classmates, prepare rough and revised drafts for each major assignment, and receive peer and instructor comment at each stage of the preparation sequence. Our linked course writing assignments will consistently integrate our knowledge of lecture content as well as recent published research. While the courses are two distinct 5-credit courses, they should be highly complementary throughout, allowing us to make strides towards understanding the lecture course topics, the larger discipline and the kinds of writing practiced in the field of Biology.

The linked course will emulate the practices that allow committed science students to become ever more reflective, informed and effective readers and analytical writers—practices you will come to recognize as you move on in your university study and professional training as standard practices among advanced students and successful professionals as they enter into the enterprise of making and applying new knowledge. Practices we will rely on throughout the class are listed below.

**Pre-Writing and Reading Logs**: Informal reading notes and comments translate reading and thinking activity into malleable written records that can be revisited, edited, even cut and pasted into descriptive outlines and rough draft sections. Students of literature and professional writers rely heavily on this preparation when discussing texts and ideas with others and preparing critical writing—such exchange is much more than a series of “off-the-cuff” remarks or impressions. It is a first-take and early crafting and trial ballooning of positions, an exchange that contributes to the range and depth that all members of the group will bring to the text and their initial writing about the text—few first takes and first impressions about complex texts survive, unrevised, all benefit when subjected to thoughtful appraisal by others.

**Key Elements of Critical Writing:** Carefully prepared initial writing, rough and revised drafts scaffold to a document that contains most of the critical sections that will make-up the final essay. *Introductions* briefly frame a critical essay, an *informing question* anchors the essay and places it in a cultural context. A *thesis* about the critical contribution of the focused analysis to follow is emerging. The *body* amounts to focused thesis-centered exposition of the reader’s analysis of text and context. The *closing discussion* expands upon the kinds of stakes his or her analysis has for a thorough understanding of the text and its contribution to either a historic or a contemporary context, including ways in which they may be a significant departure from previous or widely held ways of looking at the text.

**Peer review:** Writers share work--sometimes by choice with trusted peers and tutors, sometimes by course requirement, or contract with exacting / critical peers, teachers, editors and workplace supervisors. Writers also learn by reviewing writing completed by peers on similar topics or in similar genre, gaining guidance important awareness of conventions and strategies and ways they contribute to effective writing. It is part of a long apprenticeship that most writers—even the most celebrated-- serve to realize their potential and maintain excellence over the course of long careers. This also assures we do not confuse--or God forbid--submit for a grade or publication our raw, impressionistic, first drafts in place of the best work we can do when informed by others who are conversant with the same texts and questions with which we are wrestling and others have long wrestled before us.

**Final Edits and Revisions:** When the text is truly a full-blown work of analysis, it is ready for thoughtful editing for submission or publication. Both peers and the instructor of this course will enjoy familiarity with each stage of your work and be conversant with the work being produced by others in the class. If we engage and thoughtfully integrate the resulting perspective, we possess an editorial resource to help us craft a final “revision plan” of the kind that takes place before the published work we consume sees light of day. In this way we make sure we enjoy most of the resources available to writers who grow accustomed to and eventually master the demands and rigors of writing for advanced academic study, for publication. Writing happens in stages, in communities and with substantive review and input from others—conferences assure these stages are completed before our work is submitted in its final form.

## Reflection Through Out the Course:

Periodic Reflections on work-in- progress during the course will ask you to grasp, apply and otherwise pursue the implications of new learning about the discipline to your work in the BIOL 200 lecture course and to reflect on ways particular interests and future areas of study resonate with your own personal and professional goals. This “pause” for reflection button, assures that as our quarter progresses, you will relate the writing you have done in this course to your past writing in other relevant contexts and anticipate in more specific terms the range of writing expectations you are likely to confront in the future whether, from fellow science students and science instructors and or for a science-interested general public.

## Instructor’s Role

My role as your instructor is to assure members of the class receive close support and guidance in the practices of close reading and entering into critical discussions with peer and expert debate of the primary literature we review for our three major projects. I also believe the course will allow each of us to identify the range and diversity of Biological science and Biology based programs and professions and how they might figure in your long-term personal, education or professional goals. I will deem this course and the individual accomplishments of its students to be especially successful to the extent that each of us grows in our mastery of the primary literature, core Biology concepts and confidence in our ability to contribute to the conversations and debates that define the field and its many contributions basic science research, health and medical sciences and advanced science literacy and public policy.

## Major Assignments

**Essay 1: Essay for a non-specialist audience** on the public health concerns raised by antibiotic resistance and the mix of promising and concerning progress current research of the problem.

**Essay 2: An informed update of important applications of recent research** in Genetic Engineering – facilitated by CRISPR/ Cas 9 technology.

**Essay 3 Essay**: Heart regeneration research conducted at UW and analysis of 3 additional articles on the topic selected by you.

All our essays will be 3-4 pages long and employ APA formatting and work cited guidelines.

**Project 4: Poster** on a scientific paper or body of research of important and timely concern to a general audience. Think of your poster side-by-side on a tripod with other posters in the enormous undergraduate research fair in Mary Gates Hall. Think of the poster as a medium to vividly address an important gap in an addressing compelling area of public health.

## Grading:

You must both post to the Canvas site and retain your own copies of all course materials, including in-class activities, assignments, and comments. Full compliance over the course of the quarter means a robust participation grade, it is also strongly related to consistently effective Major Essays.

**Basic Assignment and Major Essay Requirements:** 1) Timely completion of all homework and in-class activities, including close reading exercises, discussion postings, outlines, drafts and revisions. 2) Timely completion of final projects. **Deductions for assignments 1 day past due, no-credit for assignments not posted by day two. If you believe you have a valid reason for a missed class or late homework, such as illness or emergency, please notify me in advance of class or the assignment due date.**

Table 1 Grading Policy

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| --- | --- |
| **Course Component** | **% of Total Grade** |
| Major Essay 1 | 20% |
| Major Essay 2 | 20% |
| Major Essay 3 | 20% |
| Major Essay 4 -Poster | 20 % |
| Class Participation  (aggregated hw and synchronous class activities) | 20% |

**No final exam or class meeting during finals week. Extra credit points will be assigned for closing reflective essay and completion of standard UW course evaluations during our final class meeting.**

## Other Requirements

**Post all homework to Canvas by attaching an MS Word file or pasting your text directly into the assignment drop box. No-PDF’s or Pages please!** Bring each day’s homework to class on a device (if possible) or as hardcopy to exchange with classmates. Regular class attendance absolutely required. In-class-activities will be posted and receive homework credit. In-class work cannot be made-up in the case of un-excused absences.

**Dos**:Participate! Collaborate! Engage! I have never met a student or a colleague who has not had important perspectives, questions, aspirations or experiences to contribute to their own success or fellow classmates and colleagues. Disengagement, silence or opting out can be toxic, undermining our sense that we matter and others matter to us. Please join in and keep in mind that even low-key public speaking and presentation are challenging for almost all of us, but among the awards are overcoming the subtle forms of self-censorship we can impose on ourselves in the process. It’s rare for my students to pass the quarter without doing something that either myself or their peers find awesome, so don’t hide!

## Religious Accommodations

“Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy (https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Request](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).”

## Feeling welcomed in our class

If you feel excluded or offended by a comment, course content or attitude from me and/or your classmates, please do not hesitate to contact me promptly. I’ll do my best to listen and act based on your feedback.

## Plagiarism

If you do want to use someone else's words, you need to cite them, including an acknowledgement of your source.  You cannot just paste text from online sources (including blogs and/or book reviews), unless they are your own.

If you are feeling unclear at all, review this material:

<https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/>

Let's make sure that your work does not get tarnished by failure to acknowledge sources you consulted and that you have relied on to move your work forward.

The University of Washington is transitioning to SimCheck, a plagiarism detection tool. Most of our assignments will have this tool turned on.

## Technology Support

If you need technological assistance, contact Tech Support on your campus.

UW Seattle: help@uw.edu 206.221.5000