Academic Writing - Course Syllabus Winter 2016

Description
The Academic Writing class is an intensive analysis of the principles of excellent academic writing for Scientists preparing a range of texts including research papers, conference proposals, conference posters, book chapters, technical reports, dissertations.

Class discussion focuses on the central role of rhetorical positioning in the development of a clear, interesting, and rigorous science research paper. We talk about the significance of narrowing the problem space, the construction of logical arguments, the reporting and interpretation of data, as well as other important concepts including reader-oriented writing, genre, precision, tone, and strategies useful for redrafting and editing. Some of the sub-genres we analyze and practice include introductions, data commentaries, results/discussion, conclusions, and abstracts.

An important course goal is the refinement of students’ skills as critical readers so that they are able to offer explicit and useful feedback to colleagues and co-writers.

Students receive detailed feedback on their writing through class activities as well as individual conferencing throughout the course. During all editing and redrafting activities, attention is given to the structure and logic of the author's argument, the use of detail and visuals, the placement of transitions, word choice, and flow.

Enrollment
Graduate students and postdocs
Maximum enrollment - 30

Course Format
Two class meetings each week: 90/120 minutes each
One-on-one meetings with the instructor throughout the course

Class organization
The class combines lecture and discussion with other activities including writing for fluency, peer editing, and group analysis and editing of student writing.

Class activities
Each class session includes writing, text analysis, and redrafting/editing work.
Composing. We discuss and practice the important distinction between the composing of text and the editing process. Students write during each class meeting to see first-hand how writers develop content and fluency through practice with timed, unedited journal-type writing.
Peer editing. Student pairs read and give extensive feedback to each other’s text, a vital aspect of writing development.
Group editing. We discuss and edit student texts that we project on a screen in front of the class.
Location
Skirball 2nd Floor CR

Date/Time
Mondays & Thursdays, Jan. 11th - Jan. 28th
10:00-11:30 am

Course Topics
1. Rhetorical positioning (audience, story, purpose, organization, style, flow, presentation)
2. Narrowing the problem space
3. The construction of logical arguments
4. Reader-oriented writing (register, tone, precision, clarity, grammar)
5. Composing v editing
6. Discourse community and genre
7. Sections of a science paper
   Introductions
   Methods
   Data Commentaries
   Results
   Discussion/Conclusions
   Abstracts
   Acknowledgments
8. Other professional writing (critiques, requests for funding, bio-data statements, blogs)
9. Other important topics
   Formal style and vocabulary
   Formal style and grammar
   Commas, parentheses, dash skewers
   Argument, voice, rhythm

Materials
A class packet that includes detailed sections on all topics covered in the class.
Supplementary texts and references -
About Janet Kayfetz, PhD

I am an Applied Linguist, and I have taught academic writing and presentation skills to both native and nonnative speakers of English for 30 years. I work with graduate students, researchers, postdocs, faculty, and business professionals in a wide range of interesting areas including computer science, engineering, environmental science and policy, bioengineering, medicine, business, and law. Some of the groups I have worked with include the University of California, Santa Barbara -- Departments of Computer Science, Mechanical Engineering, Materials Science, and the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management; Columbia University Computer Science and Engineering; Columbia University and NYU Medical Schools; Albert Einstein College of Medicine; NYU Neuroscience Institute; NYU College of Dentistry; Clinical Outcomes and Analytics Group, Walgreens. I also served as director of the ESL Program at UCSB.

In all of my work, my goal is to create a culture of excellence in the communication of ideas, new knowledge, opinions, and even casual interactions. I focus on the principles of rhetorical positioning and the development of a logical and interesting story, clarity of expression, precision in word choice, and the relationship between tone, personal style, and authenticity.