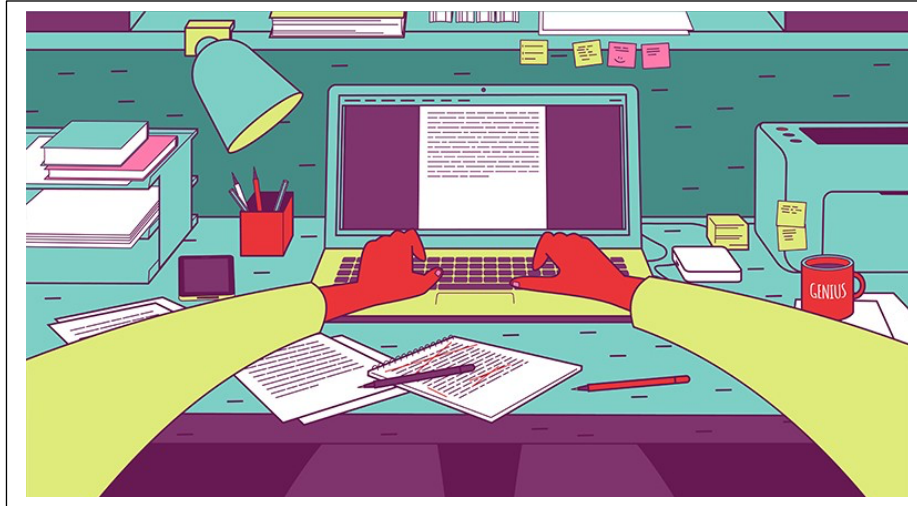


## HEB 1378:

# Professional Writing for Human Evolutionary Biologists

Fall 2022 Syllabus



### Time and location

Wednesdays 6-8 pm, Location TBD

**Instructor:** Dr. Bridget Alex

Email: [balex@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:balex@fas.harvard.edu)

Office: MCZ-543

Office hours: 1:30 – 2:30 pm or by appointment

### Description

Great research isn't enough. Scientists need to effectively communicate their work to diverse audiences. This course will explore written communication in human evolutionary biology and related disciplines. Students will become better writers and produce publishable writing samples. We will survey major genres in academia and beyond, including research papers, grant proposals, job/school/fellowship applications, and pop-science writing for non-specialists. By analyzing exemplary models from these genres, we will distill elements that make scientific writing successful and sometimes beautiful. In this way, we'll approach science writing as a technical and creative endeavor. We'll also discuss strategies to make writing easier, which consider the writer's emotional, social, and environmental conditions. For the major course assignment, students will choose a specific writing project (e.g. grant proposal, op-ed) and work on it throughout the term in order to produce a document that's ready to publish or submit. Course intended for upper-level undergraduates or graduate students.

**Keywords:** evolution, biology, anthropology, science communication, science writing

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and implement elements of effective writing
- List and practice habits of successful writers
- Characterize genres of writing in your field
- Communicate science to diverse audiences
- Improve your writing and communication abilities
- Evaluate others' writing and provide constructive feedback
- Produce a publishable document

## Course Materials

We will use Canvas for course documents and assignment submissions. Materials you need for the course will be free and posted on Canvas.

<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/111598>

The following books are recommended, but **NOT required**:

*Air & Light & Time & Space: How successful Academics Write* by Helen Sword

<https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674737709>

*The Chicago Guide to Communicating Science* Second Edition by Scott L. Montgomery

<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/C/bo18111315.html>

## Assignments & Grading

### Summary

One-to-one meeting.....	2
Weekly prep assignments..... <i>(5 points each, 11/12 possible assignments included, 1 dropped)</i>	55
“Publishable” Writing	
Plan or Pitch.....	10
Draft.....	20
Peer Feedback.....	20
Final and Reflection.....	50
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>157</b>

## Assignment details

**1) One-to-one meeting:** During the first two weeks of class you will schedule a meeting with your Instructor to introduce yourself and discuss course goals. [2 points]

**2) Weekly prep assignments:** Each week an assignment, designed to prepare you for seminar, will be posted to Canvas. Usually, these prep assignments should take **2-3 hours to complete**. They are due Tuesdays 11:59 pm, *before* our Wednesday meeting for that week. For example, the Week #2 homework is due Tuesday 6 September. [5 points each, lowest score dropped, 55 points total]

**3) Publication quality writing:** You will work to produce a document that's ready to publish or submit. The document can belong to any genre relevant to science communication and should be something that advances your progress as a student or professional. For example, you may choose to write a grant proposal, research paper, application materials for jobs or graduate school, an explainer story for the public, or more.

## Expectations & Policies

**Attendance:** We will generate knowledge and build community during our class meetings. Attending is expected and will enhance your enjoyment and mastery of course material.

**All students have one free "class pass" – you can miss one class without notifying the professor.** Beyond that, you must notify the professor and provide a reason that merits an excused absence, such as sickness, emergencies affecting yourself or those close to you, or meetings important for your scholarship. Extenuating circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Deadlines and late assignments:** I sympathize with how challenging it is to meet deadlines. You have other priorities. Unanticipated trials will affect us variably at different times. Weekly pre-class assignments are due Tuesdays 11:59 pm, unless there is an emergency. Writing assignments are due at their respective deadlines, posted on Canvas and the course calendar. In most cases extensions will be granted provided they are requested at least 3 days prior. Late submissions without prior permission will be penalized 1 point every two days. If you have technical difficulties submitting an assignment, directly email it to your instructor along with screenshots showing the file, the final time it was edited, and the technical issue preventing you from submitting the assignment.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** In HEB 1378, discussion and exchange of ideas are encouraged. However, written work should reflect your own thoughts, inspired by class readings and discussions. Submitted documents must be written independently.

You will give and receive peer feedback. Still, *your words should be your own*. When providing feedback to others, point out elements that you think could be improved. Rather than directly editing another's writing, explain *what* is difficult to follow as a reader and

*why*. When receiving feedback from others, you are still the sole author of your writing. You aren't required to incorporate their suggestions.

Plagiarism is prohibited and does not help you improve. With all submissions, you must clearly cite any sources that informed and influenced your words. Self-plagiarism is also prohibited. If you're not sure, just ask your instructor. For more guidance on plagiarism, I recommend "Hixon Writing Center's Guide to Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism" (<https://writing.caltech.edu/resources/plagiarism>).

You must abide the Harvard College Honor Code: *Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity - that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing, or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.* <https://honor.fas.harvard.edu/honor-code>

**Accessibility and accommodations:** I am committed to providing an accessible academic setting. The Accessible Education Office (AEO) offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities. Please visit <https://aeo.fas.harvard.edu/>

**Wellness policy and Covid concerns:** I believe in prioritizing mental and physical health of yourself and your loved ones. I encourage you to reach out to me if are feeling overwhelmed or would like help adjusting workload expectations or deadlines. Given the continued concerns and precautions related to Covid, please keep me informed if you encounter any discomfort with being back in-person.

**Classroom Citizenship and Conduct:**

This course depends on the community we build. I trust all students to:

- Come to class prepared to engage with course material, your instructor, and peers
- Be open to sharing their ideas and to make space for others' ideas
- Participate in activities with an openness for learning and growth mindset
- Put away electronic devices that interfere with class engagement
- Promote inclusion with your words and actions

## Course Schedule: Overview

Subject to change. Consult Canvas for up-to-date schedule and assignments.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
UNIT 1: Writing Well						
Aug 28 <b>Week 1</b> Intro Meetings DUE →	29	30	31 Fall classes begin Intro	Sep 1	2	3
4 <b>Week 2</b> Intro Meetings DUE →	5 Labor Day	6 Week 2 prep DUE	7 Models Structure Story Telling	8	9	10
11 <b>Week 3</b>	12	13 Week 3 prep DUE	14 Sentence-Level Stuff	15	16 Plan/Pitch DUE	17
18 <b>Week 4</b>	19	20 Week 4 prep DUE	21 Inner & Outer Forces	22	23	24
25 <b>Week 5</b>	26	27 Week 5 prep DUE	28 Habits, Toolkit	29	30	Oct 1
UNIT 2: Scholarly Science Writing						
2 <b>Week 6</b>	3	4 Week 6 prep DUE	5 Research papers	6	7 Drafts DUE	8
9 <b>Week 7</b>	10 Indigenous People's Day	11 Week 7 prep DUE	12 Proposals	13	14	15
16 <b>Week 8</b>	17	18 Week 8 prep DUE	19 Applications	20	21	22
23 <b>Week 9</b>	24	25 Week 9 prep DUE	26 Feedback, Recs	27	28 Peer feedback DUE	29
UNIT 3: Writing Beyond Academia						
30 <b>Week 10</b>	31	Nov 1 Week 10 prep DUE	2 Pop-Science	3	4	5
6 <b>Week 11</b>	7	8 Week 11 prep DUE	9 Policy	10	11	12

13 <b>Week 12</b>	14	15 Week 12 prep DUE	16 Industry	17	18	19
20 <b>Week 13</b>	21	22	23 Thanksgiving Break	24	25	26
27 <b>Week 14</b>	28	29 Week 13 prep DUE	30 Summary Showcase	Dec 1 Last Day Fall Classes	2 Reading Period	3
4	5	6	7	8 Finals	9 Final & Reflection DUE	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17