

Biomedical Explorations through Narrative

VIBS 311 – Spring 2020

VIDI 106

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Office hours: Whenever my door is open or by appointment. **To set up an appointment with either your instructor or your TA, first consult the links on the eCampus course homepage.** If none of the times listed there work, then please email us to see what other times we might be available.

Syllabus & Course Policies

Welcome to VIBS 311! Obviously, this is a writing course and we will spend time focusing on the mechanics of writing. However, unlike VIBS 310, which many of you have probably taken, our focus this semester will be on the power of story to convey complicated, highly technical, and, at times, emotionally difficult information. Additionally, two major themes will run throughout our discussions. First, writing is an act of communication. In the throes of a writing project, it is all too easy to lose sight of this basic principle. Returning to the basic questions of what it is you are trying to communicate, to whom and for what purpose is often the key to reining in a writing project that has run wild or to spur a stubborn passage that simply refuses to budge. Second, writing is a process. This simple truth is lost somewhere in the educational system. Students most often interact with writing in the form of textbooks, magazines, newspapers, journal articles, websites, etc. However, all of these represent final drafts. Students rarely get to see the outlines, rough drafts, editorial notes and countless revisions that preceded the polished product that eventually made its way to the marketplace. This is unfortunate in that it often creates anxiety and unreasonable expectations for beginning writers who mistakenly believe the first words on the page must be perfect. In reality, brainstorming, planning, reviewing and revisions are just as much a part of writing as final publication.

Learning Objectives

Application of these foundational themes will help you communicate more effectively. In particular, the activities and assignments in VIBS 311 should help you:

- Strengthen and refine your writing skills
- Become more effective in communicating complex, scientific information to lay audiences
- Enhance your analytical and editorial skills

Expectations

Participation is an important part of the learning process in VIBS 311. Class time will be spent discussing readings, completing group tasks, giving feedback, etc. Time outside class will be spent reading, writing and providing peer reviews. As such, you are expected to attend class, to arrive on time, to complete reading assignments *before* coming to class, to participate in discussions, to provide your peers with thoughtful feedback, and to turn in assignments on time.

Grading

This course will be graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory. Individual writing assignments will be graded according to the following scale:

- A 90-100 Outstanding work, strong in both content and mechanics
- B 80-89 Good work, requiring minor revisions in either content or mechanics
- C 70-79 Adequate work, requiring moderate revision in content and/or mechanics
- D 60-69 Unsatisfactory work, requiring extensive revisions
- F <60 Unacceptable work

In order to receive a satisfactory grade for VIBS 311 you will need to have an overall average of at least 70 *and* a grade of at least 70 on the final assignment. Contributions to your final grade and tentative due dates are as follows:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Draft</u>	<u>Reviews</u>	<u>Final</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Worksheet(s)	---	---	---	10%
Personal narrative (750 words)	2/5	2/12	2/19	15%
Interview narrative (750 words)	2/26	3/4	3/18	20%
Informative narrative (1,000 words)	3/25	4/8	4/22	35%
Peer reviews				10%
Rough drafts				10%

Late Policy

Writing assignments must be turned in by 11:59 pm Central Time on the day they are due. *Due to technical constraints, the deadlines for peer reviews cannot be extended for any reason.* For all other assignments, failure to meet the deadline without a university approved excuse will result in a deduction of 10% of the assignment's total value for each day beyond the due date. In other words, turning in a 100 point assignment two days late will result in a 20 point deduction. Turning in a 10 point assignment three days late will result in a 3 point deduction. In the case

an assignment is not turned in due to a university approved excuse, the instructor and student will negotiate an appropriate way to make up the work.

Peer Review

As mentioned above, writing is a process. For each assignment, you will turn in a preliminary draft which will be reviewed both by your teaching assistant and by your peers. This is a vital part of the writing process and it depends not only on taking your role as a peer reviewer seriously, but also on completing peer reviews on time. Note that peer reviews will count 10% toward your final course grade.

Attendance Policy

Attendance in VIBS 311 is mandatory. Each unexcused absence will result in a 5 point reduction to the final course grade. *Note that it is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet each week.* If you notice a discrepancy in your attendance record, you must bring it to the attention of the instructor within one week of the attendance date. Students with a university excused absence should contact the instructor as soon as possible so arrangements can be made to make up any missed activities or in class work.

Academic Integrity Statement

As the Aggie Honor Code states, "An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do." It is expected that you will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on work in this course. All writing for this course must be your original work. For Texas A&M Honor Council Rules and Procedures, please see <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>.

Counseling & Psychological Services

If you find yourself in a crisis situation you may go to the Student Counseling Service (979) 845-4427) for crisis intervention anytime during business hours, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. After 4 pm or on weekends, you may call the HelpLine at (979) 845-2700 (V/TTY), or go to the nearest hospital emergency room. For more information, please visit <https://caps.tamu.edu/>.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.