RHET 201-01 WRITING IN THE SCIENCES
Spring 2014 Course Description

Instructor: Jan Cooper
Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4, Wednesdays 3:30-5 or by appointment (I usually list additional appointment times for each week on Blackboard by Mondays)
Office: King 139 A
Email address: jan.cooper@oberlin.edu—I usually check email several times a day on weekdays and once or twice during the weekends
Telephone: 440.537.4828

Writing Associate: Abby James
Email: ajames@oberlin.edu

Class meeting times and place:
Mondays, Wednesdays, and some Fridays 10-10:50am, King 243 (some Friday classes may be cancelled to make more time for individual appointments with Jan and Abby)

Individual appointments with Jan or Abby (approximately every two weeks)

Small group meetings to be arranged as needed

Texts:
   We'll read selected chapters from this book posted in the Readings section of our Blackboard site, but if you want your own copy it's available via Amazon.com in hardcopy or kindle format.
Other readings will be available via the course Blackboard website or handed out in class.
Please be sure to download all assigned readings and bring them to the class when we discuss them.

Other materials needed:
A laptop or tablet computer brought to every class. You can easily check one out at Mudd if you do not own one. We will be using these often to discuss readings or do in class activities. A CELL PHONE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE FOR THIS REQUIREMENT.
A Google Docs folder to store all materials for midterm and final portfolio assignments
Access to a computer with Microsoft Word software and Internet access (all public computers on campus have that)

What is this course about?
This course is designed to teach you how to apply skills of rhetorical analysis and composing to various kinds of writing about scientific subjects. We will examine and create writing for both professional scientific and general audiences. It is a course about the paradigms and conventions—not The Laws—of good writing. Most of all, it is about the practices of excellent writing.

We have anticipated that two sorts of students will be attracted to this course: science majors who want to improve their technical writing skills and non-science majors who are interested in writing about scientific subjects for readers not trained in science. You probably fall somewhere in between those categories. My assumption is that even students who fall into only one of those sets can benefit from learning the skills of the other—scientists are frequently called upon to interpret scientific data or concepts in public debates and general science writers must understand technical writing to interpret science issues accurately.
Keep in mind that this course is primarily a writing class. You will have significant amounts of reading to do for it, but fewer published texts to read than required for most Oberlin Humanities courses. Instead a large portion of your reading will be either drafts written by your classmates or research that you conduct for your writing assignments. The role of instructor is somewhat different from that in other courses as well. Jan views herself as the planner and facilitator for the class; class members are primarily responsible for their learning, individually and collectively.

Course Objectives
The main objectives for this course are:
• developing a reasonably comfortable composing process that works for you
• increasing your knowledge of the special characteristics of science writing for both professional and general readers
• honing your ability to edit writing for exactness and conciseness

Assignments
See the overview list of assignments below for dates. Specific instructions for assignments will be posted in the Assignments section of the course Blackboard website. Consult the Weekly Schedule on the course Blackboard website to check exactly what you are expected to prepare for each class and what will be done in the class. Note that there is usually a major draft or homework task due on Blackboard by noon every week.

Course Requirements
To pass this course you will need to:
• Prepare for each class or individual or group meeting by consulting the Weekly schedule.
• Arrive promptly and participate in all classes, appointments with the instructor and teaching assistant, and small group meetings for the full time allotted. Do not schedule ANY other appointments at these times! Missing more than 2 required classes or meetings during the semester without documentation from a doctor or your class dean immediately puts you in danger of failing the course. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to contact Jan as soon as possible to find out what you missed and hand in any make-up work. Don’t forget to bring a laptop or tablet computer to every class for classroom tasks.
• Submit all assignments by deadlines posted on the Weekly Schedule in the course Blackboard site.
• Save all notes, false starts, writings, hand-outs, class comments, etc. that you’ve collected during the semester for a Google Docs portfolio due at midterm (Friday, March 21, 2014) and the exam time given to the course. This is especially important if part of your writing process includes doing things on paper; you should make an electronic scan of such materials to include in your Google Docs folder (Jan or Abby can show you quick, easy ways to do that with a cell phone or iPad). There will be no in-class exams in this course; instead you will submit midterm and final portfolios with reflective essays for grading.

Grading
Pass/ No Pass; all grading is done by Jan. Jan chooses to use this grading system because students tell her that it frees them to be more ambitious in their writing since they don’t have to worry about the calculations of letter grades. She also finds the letter grading system limits the exactness of her ability to tell students precisely what she thinks of their writing. In the world beyond the academy people do not use letter grades to assess writing; instead you will need to know how to interpret and deliver a variety of kinds of comments.

Because this course emphasizes revision, Jan also does not letter grade single pieces of writing. Instead she or Abby will give you written or oral responses to specific pieces of your writing to help you determine how best to improve them. At midterm, however, Jan will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the writing in your portfolio with you in an individual appointment. If at any time you have questions concerning the progress you’re making, please make an appointment to discuss your work with her.
Honor Code

Oberlin College’s student-created, student-run Honor Code is vital to the integrity of the work that all of us do in the institution. Acknowledging the influence of others and understanding the academic customs of showing one’s sources are highly valued skills of liberal arts learning. Jan and Abby expect you to read the Oberlin College Honor Code carefully, and we will discuss how it applies to each assignment.

One requirement of the code is that you must write the Honor Code on every assignment and sign your name to the statement. If you don’t include the code and your signature, Jan and Abby will not be able to respond to the assignment until you have included it. Typing your full name after the Honor Code will serve as an e-signature when you submit an assignment electronically via your Blackboard or Google docs folders.

A Word About Writing Proficiency If you have not yet completed your writing requirement, this course may be a way of working toward that, depending on the degree(s) you’re pursuing and your previous work. If passing a writing requirement is a major concern for you, please be sure to discuss that with Jan in your first individual appointment.

Overview of Assignments

See individual descriptions of each assignment for more details. Individual descriptions will be posted in the Assignments section of the course Blackboard site approximately 1-2 weeks before they are due. **NOTE: You will be submitting revisions for many of these assignments in the weeks following your first submissions. Often you will be submitting 3 revisions before you’re finished. Be sure to check the Weekly Schedule on Blackboard to see when further drafts are due.**

Day 1 Writing—(due in class on Mon., Feb. 3) Informal freewriting about your reasons for taking the course, your writing background and your interests in science.

Paper 1: Response to Syllabus & Blackboard Site—(due by noon on Tuesday, Feb. 4 on Blackboard or via email to Jan & Abby) Informal freewriting response to the materials you’ve received (and can find in the course Blackboard site) describing the course, including any questions or reactions you have about the course and how it works.

Paper 2: Choice of Review or Research Article—(due by noon on Thursday, Feb. 6 on Blackboard) A short description of the scientific field you’ve chosen to work in for Papers 3-5 and attached photo scan or URL of a review or research article that you’d like to analyze for Paper 3. Include in your description how you found the article that you will be using and why it fits your field.

Paper 3: Rhetorical Analysis of a Review or Research Article—(first draft due by noon on Tuesday, Feb. 11 on Blackboard) A thoughtful examination of how the review article you’ve chosen reflects modes and customs of the scientific field you’re interested in. This essay should carefully describe who has written it and who is expected to read it, and how the formatting, stylistics and graphics appear to be geared to that audience.

Revision of Paper 3 (due by noon on Tuesday, Feb. 18 in Blackboard)

Paper 4: Collaborative Research Proposal—(first draft due by noon on Tuesday, Feb. 25 on Blackboard) A proposal for research that you will conduct in Paper 5. The topic should be a question about the production of professional writing in the scientific field of your choosing. Guidelines for the format for your proposal will be posted in the Assignments section of the course Blackboard site.
Paper 5: Collaborative Research Report—(first draft due by noon on Tuesday, March 4 on Blackboard)
This will be your report of the result you conduct to answer the question you posed for Paper 4. It should be presented in an appropriate form for your scientific field.

Revision of Paper 5 (due by noon on Tuesday, March 11 on Blackboard)

Any further revisions of Papers 3 or 5 (due by noon on March 18)

Midterm Portfolio and Essay—(due by midnight on Friday, March 21 in your Google docs folder)—A gathering and arranging in chronological order of all the work you've done thus far in RHET 201. After rereading all your work you will also write an assessment of what you learned in the course to date to include in the portfolio.

Paper 6: Choice of articles for Paper 7—(due by noon on Thursday, April 3 on Blackboard)—A description of how you located and chose a general science article and its professional sources to write a rhetorical analysis of in Paper 7.

Paper 7: Comparison of A General Science Article and Its Professional Sources—(first draft due by noon on Tuesday, April 8 on Blackboard) A rhetorical analysis of how a writer has adapted professional science information or discourse to create an engaging piece of discourse for non-scientific readers.

Paper 8: General Science Writing—(first draft due by noon on Tuesday, April 15 on Blackboard) A creative, engaging adaptation of scientific information for a specific non-scientific audience. This assignment can take a variety of forms—journalism, children's nonfiction, audio broadcast, etc.

Revision of Paper 8 (due by noon on Tuesday, April 22 on Blackboard)

Revisions of Paper 7 or 8 (due by noon on Tuesday, April 29 on Blackboard)

Final Portfolio and Essay—(due by the exam time for our course in your Google docs folder) A re-gathering and arranging in chronological order of all the work you've done the whole term in RHET 201. After rereading all your work you will also include write an assessment of what you learned in the course to include in the portfolio.