**ENGI 600: GRADUATE COMMUNICATIONS SEMINAR**

**Brown School of Engineering**

**SYLLABUS, FALL 2017 (Revised, post Hurricane Harvey)**

**Dr. Jan Hewitt**

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Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00 – 3:30; Thursdays, 1:30 – 3:00; by appointment

**Mech Lab 253**. One group meets Wednesdays 10:30 – noon; the other group meets Thursdays 4:00 – 5:30. Attendance is required, but if you have a conflict on the day your group meets, you may come to the other session if you notify Dr. Hewitt in advance. (If you have a documented disability, please talk with me about your needs.)

**Course goals**: You will learn how to present your research clearly and persuasively, both written and orally, to a wide range of audiences: expert, interdisciplinary, international, and general. The course does not give credit hours, but a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory will show on your transcript. To receive a Satisfactory grade, by semester end you must complete one of the following: a paper for publication, an extended PhD proposal, or a thesis chapter; you will then meet with Dr. Hewitt to discuss it. You must avoid plagiarism in all work, written or oral; cite all sources.

**Week One: August 23 and 24**

Introductions (Name, department, 2 sentences about your research focus)

Necessary paperwork (Verify registration; Where Do You Need Help, Making an Appointment)

Discuss **Course syllabus**

Discuss **Seven Key Questions** (7 questions you must answer before writing a paper for publication, thesis proposal, Master’s thesis, Ph.D. dissertation, grant proposal, or conference talk)

**Homework #1**: *Due at start of class, Week Two.* ***Write the answers to the Seven Key Que*stions** (not too technical; max of 2 pages, 12 point, single spaced. Number your answers. Send one copy to me as a Word or pdf document ([jhewitt@rice.edu](mailto:jhewitt@rice.edu)). **Bring one paper copy to class**. **At the top of the page, indicate if you will be working on a thesis, PhD proposal, or journal paper.**

**Homework #2: Find out your departmental / advisor requirements for a proposal or thesis. Bring me a copy. Or find out the journal requirements for a journal to which you are likely to submit a paper. Bring me a copy.**

**HURRICANE HARVEY**

**Week Two: September 6 and 7**

**Contents of a thesis, thesis proposal, or paper for publication**: How are they the same? How do they differ?

Discuss the **Template for Taking Notes** on research articles (download from rcel.rice.edu)

Choose someone in the class who is outside your field and **discuss your answers to the Seven Key Questions**. Start with an application that the other person would understand. Identify terms and concepts the other person is not familiar with. Think of an example that would clarify what you do.

**Homework #3***: One paper copy due at start of class, Week Three***. Fill out the Template for Taking Notes** (or something similar) for a published paper related to your research (it may be a paper you have already read, but for which you do not have good notes.) Choose one from a top-rated journal in your field. Single-spaced, 12 point, 2 pages max; dbl-sided is OK. Sentences do not have to be complete except for quotations. Use quotation marks around any exact wording from the paper!

**Week Three: September 13 and 14**

**Recognize and avoid plagiarism**

Writing an acceptable **paraphrase**

**Analysis of an abstract** (3 drafts) for the Seven Key Questions and effective first sentence

**Homework #4***: Due at start of class, Week Four*. **Write a paraphrase** of two key paragraphs in the Template paper. Include only the key points, cite the source, and **bring me a copy of the paragraphs you are** **paraphrasing**. (Indicate which ones they are!) Remember that a paraphrase is always considerably shorter than the original source; it pulls out the **key ideas**, not every idea. You may include short quotations in the paraphrase, if necessary. For example, the author’s claim might be a good sentence to quote.

**Homework #5**: **Write a technical practice abstract** (350 words for PhD thesis or proposal, 150 words for Master’s thesis, 150 words or the stated requirements for a journal paper). Identify which it is for. Add a title; indicate the word count**. Send me an electronic copy by 5 p.m. of Monday, September 18**; bring 3 paper copies to class.

**Week Four: September 20 and 21**

Working in pairs**, evaluate your practice abstracts** for opening sentence, closing sentence, and clarity of content (the Seven Key Questions).

Writing a **literature review; analysis of a sample lit review** (note answers to the Seven Key Questions, precise verb choices, and linking of ideas.)

Discuss the **90-second talks** that begin on September 27 and 28. Your audience is this class—smart and well educated, but not familiar with your field or topic. Focus on what you are doing that is NEW. Identify the research question you are working to answer, its importance (not just to your field), results to date, and potential applications. Do not try to cover too much or promise too much; your work may be a step toward curing cancer, for example. It may be a proof of concept. Work for an attention-getting opening sentence; use a clear example that everyone would understand; write a memorable closing sentence that emphasizes your take-away idea. No slides. **Sign up for the 90-second talks**.

**Discuss and sign up for 10-minute talks that begin October 25 and 26.** More technical, but understandable to the entire class. (This is not a conference talk.) Max of 10 slides, including the cover slide.

**Homework #6**: **Write a minimum of 3-4 pages of your Literature Review with a minimum of 4 references***. Due Monday, October 23, at 4:00 p.m*. If I am not in my office, put it under my door.

**Week Five: September 27 and 28**

Working in pairs**, evaluate your practice abstracts** for opening sentence, closing sentence, and clarity of content (the Seven Key Questions).

**Evaluating visuals: A Checklist** for slides and in-text visuals

Discuss annotated **sample slides**.

**90-second talks** (2)

**Homework #7**: **Revise your abstract**; hand in both drafts, clearly labeled Draft One and Draft Two. Include a title and word count*. Be sure to rewrite the first sentence to include problem, method, results:*  “This thesis/paper proposes/demonstrates/develops…” Send me an electronic copy. Bring t*wo paper copies to class, Week 6.*

**Homework #8**: **Write a minimum of 3-4 pages of your Literature Review with a minimum of 4 references***. Due Monday, October 23, at 4:00 p.m*. If I am not in my office, put it under my door.

**Homework #9**: *Due no later than Monday, November 20, at 4 p.m.:* **A complete and well edited draft of one of the following: your paper for publication, PhD proposal, or thesis chapter. Bring a paper copy to Dr. Hewitt’s office. We will meet to discuss it. You must complete this assignment to get a Satisfactory grade for the class. If you need an extension, you must request it in advance!**

**Week Six: October 4 and 5**

**Exchange and discuss the clarity of the revised technical abstract.** Work with someone in your field or able to understand the technical terms.

**90-second talks** and discussion**. No slides. (4)**

**Homework #10: 1) In one or two sentences explain to someone working in your area what you are working on. Use technical terms. 2) In one or two sentences explain your work to someone technically trained, but not familiar with your field. Use fewer technical terms. 3) In one or two sentences explain your research to someone without technical background. *Send one electronic copy to Dr. Hewitt*.** *Bring 3 paper copies to class.*

**Week Seven: October 11 and 12**

**Exchange and comment on the clarity of the 3 sentences.**

**First sentences and topic sentences; paragraph development**

**90-second talks** and discussion. (4)

**Homework #11**: Bring to class a slide that you would use in the 10-minute talk to explain your work OR bring a copy of a key visual that you plan to use in written text.

**Week Eight: October 18 and 19**

**90-second talks** and discussion. (2)

Discuss the good points of the **visuals** you bring; discuss possible improvements.

**Homework #8**: **Write a minimum of 3-4 pages of your Literature Review with a minimum of 4 references***. Due Monday, October 23, at 4:00 p.m*. If I am not in my office, put it under my door.

**Homework #9**: *Due no later than Monday, November 20, at 4 p.m.:* **A complete and well edited draft of one of the following: your paper for publication, PhD proposal, or thesis chapter. Bring a paper copy to Dr. Hewitt’s office. We will meet to discuss it. You must complete this assignment to get a Satisfactory grade for the class. If you need an extension, you must request it in advance!**

**Week Nine: October 25 and 26**

Writing an effective job/postdoc/grant **application letter and e-mail cover letter**

**10-minute oral presentations** and discussion (2)

**Homework #12**: **Write a one-page letter of application and a cover e-mail.** Can be printed dbl-sided. *Bring one paper copy to class*.

**Homework #8 is due Monday, October 23, at 4:00 p.m.**

**Week Ten: November 1 and 2**

Limit use of **passive, weak, or colorless verbs**

Generate a list of precise, active verbs

**Commas, semi-colons, and colons**

**10-minute oral presentations and discussion** (3)

**No homework**.

**Week Eleven: November 8 and 9**

Writing a fine **introductory paragraph for a chapter or a section**

**Transitions**: between sentences, between paragraphs, between sections, between chapters

**10-minute oral presentations** and discussion (3)

**Homework #9 is due by 4 p.m. on Monday, November 20. If you need an extension, you must request it in advance.**

**Week Twelve: November 15 and 16**

Writing the Introduction/Background chapter and the Conclusion/Discussion

Techniques for **reducing wordiness**

**10-minute oral presentations and discussion (2)**

Make an appointment with me to discuss your final paper.

**Homework #9: A nearly complete and carefully edited draft of your final paper (paper for publication, thesis chapter, extended PhD proposal) is due in my office (Abercrombie A-109) by 4 p.m. on Monday, November 20. If you need an extension, you must ask in advance**! If I am not there, put it under my door.

**November 22 and 23: NO CLASS-- THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week Thirteen: November 29 and 30 (Last week of class)**

**10-minute oral presentations and discussion** (3)

**Thinking on your feet**: role playing

**Hour-long student conferences**

**KEY DATES**:

**Today or tomorrow**:

* Download the up-to-date university requirements: *Thesis Format,* *Thesis Submission*, and *Checklist for Master’s/PhD Thesis Submission*, and *Thesis Templates.* Note**: Thesis submission is now electronic, but you must take certain paper pages to the Office of Graduate Studies by noon of Friday, December 1 and complete your electronic submission by NOON of Friday, December 1.** Do NOT wait until the last minute. If you do not meet the noon deadline, you won’t graduate in December. NO EXCEPTIONS. **This is NOT a moveable deadline!**
* Change your default margins to fit thesis requirements: 1.5 inches left; one inch top, right, and bottom.
* Check departmental requirements for a thesis proposal or thesis (Master’s or PhD).
* Verify journal requirements for the paper you are writing.
* Set a tentative timetable for writing your paper for publication, PhD proposal, or thesis.

**By the middle of October:**

* Work with your advisor to finalize who is on your committee.
* Check with your department to get individual deadlines for when you must submit your thesis or proposal to your committee before your Defense. Schedule your defense date and place. If you wait until the last minute, you may have difficulty finding a room or a time when all your committee members are available**.**

**Friday, November 17: Try to defend before this date** so that you will have time to revise your thesis prior to the turn-in deadline of NOON on Friday, December 1. An earlier defense would be even better.

Janice L. Hewitt, PhD Rice University [jhewitt@rice.edu](mailto:jhewitt@rice.edu) Fall 2017