

Description of Assignments:

You will be writing two types of writing assignments:

- (1) Difficulty papers are short (~2 pages), informal papers in which you:
 - critique a section of a journal article that I assign
 - discuss some difficulty you are having in understanding a section of the journal article
 - you will also read and comment on your W-classmates' difficulty papers
- (2) Scientific reports are formal papers written in a scientific journal style and format.
 - You will present the experiments and results dealing with the culture-dependent and culture-independent DNA analysis
 - Some of the scientific reports may be collaborative
 - There will be peer-editing assignments in which you will edit the scientific report of a classmate, and a classmate will edit your scientific report.
 - Instructions regarding collaboration and peer-editing will be in separate handouts.

Difficulty papers:

There are journal articles assigned for you to read and critique. It is necessary to be familiar with technical writing in order for you to learn how to write technically yourself. Links to the articles are in the Difficulty Paper assignments folders.

There will be at least two difficulty papers. You will be given specific instructions for each one. The due dates will be posted with the difficulty paper instructions.

Scientific Reports:

These will be technical reports on the laboratory experiments that you will perform during the culture-dependent and culture-independent DNA bioinformatic analysis. Initially these reports will be brief, i.e., Title, Materials and Methods, References; but as the term progresses you will incorporate more experiments into the paper, i.e., Title, Abstract, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion/Conclusion and References.

In addition to the detailed instructions for each of the scientific reports, you will use *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* by Robert A. Day as a reference and resource. This is available as an eBook through the University Library System. See separate instructions on how to access the University of Pittsburgh eContent Collection. Please see me if you have any trouble with this.

You will be given specific instructions for each of the scientific reports. The sections that will be included in each report are as follows, subject to modification and compression:

Scientific Report #1: Title, Materials and Methods, References.

Scientific Report #2: Title, Material and Methods, Results, References. This will be the peer-edited paper. The first due date is when the paper is to be delivered to the peer-editor and the second due date is when the peer-editor is to be finished editing.

Scientific Report #3: Title, Abstract, Introduction, Material and Methods, Results, References. This will be the peer-edited paper. The first due date is when the paper is to be delivered to the peer-editor and the second due date is when the peer-editor is to be finished editing.

Scientific Report #4: Title, Abstract, Introduction, Material and Methods, Results, Discussion/Conclusion, References. This will be the peer-edited paper. The first due date is when the paper is to be delivered to the peer-editor and the second due date is when the peer-editor is to be finished editing.

Scientific Report #5: Final revision of complete paper. This paper will be required **only if** Scientific Report #4 is unsatisfactory.

Due **time** is 11:55 pm. The papers are to be emailed to me as Microsoft Word attachments and posted as documents attached to the Dirt Writers wiki.

I will keep you apprised of the due dates.

Bureaucratic Details:

Late paper penalties: You will start off the term with five “grace days.” This means that there is no late paper penalty until you have accumulated a total of five late days. You can use up all of your grace days on one paper or spread them out over all the papers or not use them at all. The only exception is the final revision. The absolute latest that this paper can be submitted (even if you still have five grace days) will be the announced due date.

Format Requirements: The papers must be written using Microsoft Word. This is one of the most common word processing applications used by biologists. The reasons for requiring this are:

- Subscripts, superscripts and special characters such as α , β , μ and $^{\circ}$ are available and easily inserted.
- Tables, figures and footnotes can be easily incorporated in your text.
- Revisions are much easier when your previous version is saved on a computer.
- The Hughes Computer Lab in 120 Clapp is available to you for printing. The printer queues are short (generally) in this lab.

Use typeface Times New Roman, 11 point type, flush left lines and margins of one inch on each side.

Include a header which has your name, the page number and the total number of pages (“page X of Y” in the “Insert Auto Text” tab of the Header/Footer).

Save your work frequently and back up your work.

If you need help with basic writing skills such as paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and so on, please visit the Writing Center (4-6556). An appointment with a graduate student assistant can help with these types of writing difficulties.

Please spell check and proof read your paper before submission. *Your grade will be seriously adversely affected if you hand in a paper with spelling and grammar errors.*

Grading:

Writing classes always have more grading subjectivity than classes with exams. Since each of your papers will not be receiving a grade, here is a thumbnail sketch of what the grading criteria will be:

→If you hand in the assigned papers on time, with evidence that reasonable effort was made and instructions were followed, you will pass *i.e.*, receive at least a C.

→Receiving a better (than just passing) grade will depend on two things -- your initial writing ability and your improvement. If you start out as a superficial, non-technical writer and stay that way, you will still only pass; however, if you improve, so will the grade you receive. If you start out as a pretty good technical writer and stay that way, your grade will start out pretty good and stay that way. If you improve, your grade will improve.

→I will give you feedback on your scientific reports to indicate how your writing skills are progressing.

→Since the difficulty paper assignments are designed to sharpen your skill in reading and analyzing scientific journal articles, (which should result in more skillful technical writing on your part), I will not be critiquing your writing abilities, but will grade these papers with a + or - .

Plagiarism will result in a failing grade. Please read over the citations document carefully and review the university guidelines on student conduct and integrity.

I will keep electronic and hard copies of your papers so that I can monitor your effort and improvement.