

Spring course MMBB404/504 (2 credits) **Science writing laboratory**

Professor: P. Hartzell

*Open only to graduate students and undergraduates engaged in research
2 credits (2, 1.5 hour labs) Tues-Thurs 4-5:20*

Don't let your advisor have all the fun. Bring your data to class and we'll work with you to 1) get the data into the proper format for a specific journal, 2) write the figure legend, 3) write up the materials and methods section that matches the figure, 4) write the results and discussion, and 5) add references.

Specific tasks:

Instructions to authors: identify the journal you plan to submit your work to

Getting figures formatted to meet the journal specifications (proper dimensions with minimal white space, labels and arrows, good contrast).

Designing a great, easy to read poster

Finding the best visual style to present your data – line graph, bar graph, etc.

Combining multiple images into one figure for impact.

Data that don't belong in a manuscript but might be OK in your thesis/dissertation

Writing headings and legends that give the take-home message.

Writing in simple, declarative sentences.

Finding good examples of great figures and writing styles.

Grading: 500 points

300 pts

Your data.

You will be expected to bring at least 6 datasets to class. You will be given a grade for each the figures (or tables) and for all the copy that accompanies the figure or table. The quality of writing will be judged for completeness, accuracy, and proper use of language. 50 points each. If you don't have enough data, we will give you data to use.

100 pts

Final exam.

For the 1.5 hr final exam, you will be given some raw data and will be asked to generate a figure and write text that explains what is going on in the figure.

100 pts

Final miniposter or powerpoint presentation

Expectations.

It is expected that by the end of the class, you will be very good at preparing high quality figures with accompanying text (methods, results, discussion, legend) that can easily be understood by someone outside your immediate field of work. You will have developed tools to help you overcome writer's block.