



Scientific Writing
PSYC 6356
The University of Texas at El Paso
Fall 2024

INSTRUCTOR

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Office hours: before class (let me know you are coming) or by appointment

COURSE TIME AND LOCATION

Thursdays 3:00-5:50, Psychology Building room 310

REQUIRED MATERIALS

American Psychological Association (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Ed.)*. Washington, DC: APA.

Kail, R. (2019). *Scientific writing for psychology: Lessons in clarity and style (2nd Ed.)*. Washington, DC: Sage.

Silvia, P. (2018). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing (2nd Ed.)*. Washington, DC: APA.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to build graduate students' skills in the preparation of scholarly articles for psychology journals. We will cover issues of style, time management, selecting a journal, the peer review process, and the elements of a high-quality manuscript. You are expected to produce a complete manuscript for submission to a journal by the end of the semester. As such, you are required to have original data that has been analyzed prior to the beginning of the course.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Write on a consistent basis and demonstrate time management skills.
- Select the most appropriate journal for your work.
- Navigate the peer review process.
- Provide peers with helpful feedback on their writing.
- Develop a manuscript from start to finish, with appropriate style, content, conciseness, and flow.
- Submit a manuscript for publication to a journal.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

I have no tolerance for academic dishonesty of any kind, and if you engage in plagiarism while working on a scientific manuscript you are in for a rough life as a scientist. I will report suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) and the outcome may be a grade of "F" for the course. Please review UTEP's policy

statement on academic dishonesty: <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or Grammarly AI, is not allowed for your work for this class. The primary goal of this class is to enhance students' writing skills, which is achieved through practicing writing and learning to identify weaknesses in your own and others' writing. Use of AI tools hinders this learning process. The ethical use of AI in scientific writing will be discussed in class so you can make informed decisions about whether and how to use these tools, but any use of AI-generated content submitted in this class will be treated as plagiarism.

DISABILITY ACCOMODATIONS

If you have a disability and require accommodation, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148 or via e-mail (cass@utep.edu) during the first week of the semester. They will help you with the required documentation necessary to obtain accommodation. If you receive accommodations through CASS, please communicate with me directly about them so I can ensure your needs are met.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

We will be using part of the class meeting times to provide feedback on writing. You will need to have a computer/tablet that you can bring to class that can access Microsoft Word, OneDrive, and the internet. You can download Word for free via UTEP's [Microsoft Office 365](#) Portal.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class participation and peer review. *20% of total grade.* As with any graduate level course, students are expected to attend class regularly having read the assigned readings. Each student is expected to attend every class session and participate in the discussion on the readings, discussion of the writing process, and relevant exercises. If you must miss class, please email me to let me know.

Writing log. *20% of total grade.* You will complete a writing log throughout the semester and bring it to class for discussion and troubleshooting. You will be assessed on the completeness of your log and your progress on working on writing roadblocks.

Manuscript. *60% of total grade.* You will work on a manuscript throughout the course, which will be the basis of much of your final grade. When you submit your final manuscript at the end of class, please include a description of the journal you plan to submit it to along with a description of the requirements that journal has for submissions (e.g., topics, word count, formatting, etc.). You should also submit an appropriate cover letter (see APA guide).

Your grade will be based on the overall quality of your manuscript (e.g., quality of writing, how close it is to being ready to submit to a journal) and your responsiveness to feedback from the instructor and classmates. To receive a passing grade, you must actively work on your manuscript throughout the semester and provide sections for peer review as listed in the course schedule. The procedure for submitting writing samples will be discussed in class—please submit no later than the beginning of class. If late submissions become a problem, an earlier deadline will be implemented. Note that your faculty mentor will need to be available to provide you with feedback on your manuscript at least once during the semester. We will discuss this on the first day of class.

GRADING

Grades will be based on the quality of the course requirements above using the following scale:

90% and above	=A
80 to 89%	=B
70 to 79%	=C
60 to 69%	=D
59% and below	=F

COURSE SCHEDULE

Adjustments to the course schedule are unlikely but may occur. Adjustments will be announced in class and via email.

Week	Date	Topics and Assignments
Week 1	8/29	<p>Course Introduction Review syllabus Discuss practical issues Developing a writing log How to give feedback</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Begin writing log, use it daily Develop one-paragraph description of writing project Discuss course requirements with your mentor/faculty co-author Read Silvia ch. 1-3</p> <p>If you haven't already, begin drafting your manuscript. Start with the introduction and methods.</p>
Week 2	9/5	<p>Time management and developing good writing habits Review writing logs, discuss barriers to writing Discuss writing project</p> <p>The writing process Discuss common barriers Discuss how to select a journal Discuss reference management</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Writing log (daily for rest of semester) Discuss possible outlets for your paper with your coauthors Compile list of 3 possible outlets, rank in order of preference Identify requirements for top choice journal Read APA manual ch. 1-3 Read Silvia ch. 5-6 Work on method section</p>

Week 3	9/12	<p>Review writing logs</p> <p>Ethics and authorship Discuss journal selection input from coauthors Discuss issues of ethics and authorship</p> <p>Methods sections Discuss requirements for writing a good methods section</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Revisit APA manual ch. 2-3, read APA manual ch. 7 Read Kail ch. 6 (do exercises) Complete draft of method section Make sure your analyses are complete!</p>
Week 4	9/19	<p>Review writing logs Provide feedback on methods sections</p> <p>Results sections Discuss elements of a good results section</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Complete draft of results section, including tables & figures Review resources on outlines (see OneDrive)</p>
Week 5	9/26	<p>Review writing logs Provide feedback on results sections</p> <p>Outlines and storytelling Discuss structure of a good introduction How to create an outline and why they are important</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Work on revisions of methods & results sections Outline introduction section Review resource on introduction (OneDrive) Read Kail ch. 5 (do exercises)</p>
Week 6	10/3	<p>Review writing logs Provide feedback on introduction outlines</p> <p>Introduction sections Discussion of effective introduction sections</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Complete draft of introduction section Read Kail ch. 1-2 (do exercises)</p>

Week 7	10/10	<p>Review writing logs Provide feedback on introduction sections</p> <p>Common style issues Writing clearly Adding emphasis Other style issues</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Read Kail ch. 3-4 (do exercises) Revise introduction section</p>
Week 8	10/17	<p>Review writing logs Provide feedback on revised introduction sections</p> <p>Revising Writing concisely Structure revisited</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Read Kail ch. 7 Complete draft of discussion section outline</p>
Week 9	10/24	<p>Review writing logs Provide feedback on discussion section outlines</p> <p>Discussion sections Discuss elements of a strong discussion section</p> <p>Dealing with limitations Discuss how to present the limitations of your research</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Complete draft of discussion section</p>
Week 10	10/31	Writing retreat
Week 11	11/7	<p>Review writing logs Provide feedback on discussion sections</p> <p>Putting it all together: Revising the whole document Discussion of style issues Discussion of how to revise</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Put the complete manuscript together, making edits as needed from peer and instructor reviews Review APA section on titles and abstracts</p>

Week 12	11/14	<p>Review writing logs Provide feedback on whole article</p> <p>Abstracts and titles How to craft an abstract Peer review of abstract</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Work on revisions to whole document, including title and abstract</p>
Week 13	11/21	<p>Review writing logs Provide feedback on whole article</p> <p>The peer review process Submitting a manuscript What happens behind the scenes at journals Dealing with reviews</p> <p><i>For next class:</i> Work on revisions to whole document for final submission Draft submission letter Read Silvia ch. 4</p>
Week 14	11/28	THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS
Week 15	12/5	<p>Reflections on what you learned Keeping up good writing habits</p> <p><i>Final manuscript due at beginning of class</i></p>