

**BIOL0288: Writing in Biology Seminar**

Time: M 10:25 – 11:15a

Location: SCI 213

Instructor	Office	Contact Information	Office Hours
Robin E White, Ph.D.	Wilson 222B	rwhite@westfield.ma.edu (413) 572-8434	M 12:30 – 2:00p T 1:00 – 2:30p *And By Appointment

**Course Website:**

During this course, you will frequently access information and resources posted on the Plato Course Website.

**Text and Materials:**

1. Writing Papers in the Biological Sciences by V.E. McMillan: This helpful guide to writing will be an excellent resource for scientific writing throughout your college career and will be used as a guide for course writing assignments. Any recent edition is acceptable to use.
2. In addition to the above text, I will provide additional resources, either printed in class or available on the course website, throughout the semester.

**Commented [CS1]:** Guide that introduces writing in the field. This guide will help introduce students to “expectations for writing in the discipline” (EWIM Practice Outcome)

**Course Description and Information:**

Welcome to Biology 0288, Writing in Biology! One of the most important aspects of being a scientist is the ability to clearly share your findings and knowledge with your peers and the general community. While you often write lab reports in your classes, this seminar will give you the opportunity to focus more on the *process* of writing, especially the ability to incorporate information from scientific literature into your own writing. Furthermore, we will employ peer review so that you will get the “real world” experience of collaborative scientific writing that ultimately leads to excellent communication. In addition to writing for a scientific audience, we will also discuss and practice communicating with a general audience. By the end of this course, you should have a firm grasp on how to approach Writing in Biology that will serve you in your college career and beyond.

**Commented [CS2]:** Focus on the writing process.

**Commented [CS3]:** Peer review is presented as a priority and connected to the disciplinary practice.

**Commented [CS4]:** Introduces the concept of audience and establishes the intention of focusing on both academic and public audiences.

**Learning Outcomes:**

After completing this course, you should be able to:

1. Understand the process of publishing scientific articles.
2. Identify, incorporate, and cite information from scientific literature into your own writing.
3. Write a cohesive and polished literature review using multiple revisions.

**Commented [CS5]:** Discipline-specific learning outcomes

This course contributes to an intermediate level of mastery in the following Biology Department Learning Outcomes:

***Skills:***

- Work effectively as a team

***Communication:***

- Communicate and listen to those who have differing viewpoints and perspectives in a collegial and respectful manner
- Communicate ideas effectively both orally and in writing

**Grading Criteria:** This course will focus on qualitative not quantitative assessment. This means that I will not be grading individual assignments to simply evaluate your work, but rather I aim to provide meaningful feedback to promote individual growth and understanding. You will also be required to reflect on your own learning, as well as evaluate your peers work throughout the semester. My intention in removing quantitative values on assignments is to help you focus less on extrinsic factors (i.e., grades) and more on intrinsic motivation through feedback and revision. Hopefully this will allow you the space to challenge yourself and be more creative in your thinking without the risk of penalties. With that said I still must assign grades at the end of the semester. On the following page is the grading criterium for this course. If this process causes more anxiety than it alleviates, set up a meeting with me at any point in the semester to discuss your progress in the course. Your best strategy for success in this course is to attend class, do the readings, complete the assignments, and communicate with me if you are struggling – I want to see you succeed!

**Commented [CS6]:** Students will receive regular feedback

**\*\*Assignments must be received within 1 week of the due date; contact me if you need an extension\*\***

<b>A</b>	<b><u>Must complete all of the below learning targets</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missed no more than one class</li> <li>• All pre-writing checkpoints have been completed – 5/5 (paper topic, finding 5 papers, annotated bibliography, outline and outline revision)</li> <li>• Final paper shows extensive evidence of improvement – 4/4 Drafts show extensive revisions; feedback has been utilized</li> <li>• All reflections are complete, thoughtful, and fully discuss the writing process</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<b><u>Must complete all of the below learning targets</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missed no more than one class</li> <li>• Most pre-writing checkpoints have been completed – 4/5 (paper topic, finding 5 papers, annotated bibliography, outline and outline revision)</li> <li>• Final paper shows strong evidence of improvement – 3/4 Drafts show extensive revisions; feedback has been utilized</li> <li>• 90% reflections are complete, thoughtful, and fully discuss the writing process</li> </ul>
<b>C</b>	<b><u>Must complete all of the below learning targets</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missed no more than one class</li> <li>• Some pre-writing checkpoints have been completed – 3/5 (paper topic, finding 5 papers, annotated bibliography, outline and outline revision)</li> <li>• Final paper shows some evidence of improvement – 2/4 Drafts show extensive revisions; feedback has been utilized</li> <li>• 80% reflections are complete, thoughtful, and fully discuss the writing process</li> </ul>
<b>D</b>	<b><u>Must complete all of the below learning targets</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missed no more than two classes</li> <li>• Few pre-writing checkpoints have been completed – 2/5 (paper topic, finding 5 papers, annotated bibliography, outline and outline revision)</li> <li>• Final paper shows minimal evidence of improvement – 1/4 Drafts show extensive revisions; feedback has been utilized</li> <li>• 70% reflections are complete, thoughtful, and fully discuss the writing process</li> </ul>
<b>F</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missed more than two classes</li> <li>• Only 1 pre-writing checkpoints has been completed – 1/5 (paper topic, finding 5 papers, annotated bibliography, outline and outline revision)</li> <li>• Final paper does not show evidence of improvement – 1/4 Drafts show extensive revisions; feedback has been utilized</li> <li>• &lt;70% reflections are complete, thoughtful, and fully discuss the writing process</li> </ul>

At the end of the semester, you will do a self-evaluation of your learning throughout the course and assign yourself a grade based on the above criteria. I will look over your learning evaluation and if I think there are discrepancies between your evaluation and the grading criteria then I will request a meeting to discuss your evaluation.

Homework Assignments are due at **10:00am on the day of class.**

Please read the assigned McMillan text **BEFORE** coming to **class**.

Week Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment(s) Due
1 1/22	Introduction to Biological Writing	Introduction	None
2 1/29	Diverse Biological Perspectives Generative AI in Biological Writing	TEK Article	Start of Semester Survey Course Goals
3 2/5	Finding Biological Literature	Ch. 1 pp. 5-20	Pick a topic
4 2/12	Taking Notes Summarizing Biological Literature	Ch. 1 pp. 20-28 Ch. 6 p. 166	Find 5 papers
5 2/20 (T)	Review Article Introduction Writing a Thesis Statement Paragraph Structure	Ch. 5	Annotated Bibliography
6 2/26	Peer & Self Review of Thesis/Outline Incorporating References	Ch. 6	Outline and Thesis Statement
7 3/4	<u>Process of Writing 1</u> : Organizing thoughts, starting writing	Ch. 7 pp. 173-176	Final Revised Outline and Thesis Statement
<b>No Class – Spring Break</b>			
8 3/18	Reading and Writing Center Visit Practice Review	TBD	
9 3/25	Peer Review – Coherence & Consistency <u>Process of Writing 2</u> : Revising content and organization, references	Ch. 7 pp. 176-181	Process of Writing 1: 1 <sup>st</sup> Draft
10 4/1	Peer Review – Draft 2 <u>Process of Writing 3</u> : Paragraph Clarity and flow	Ch. 7 pp. 181-184	Process of Writing 2: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft
11 4/8	Peer Review – Draft 3 <u>Process of Writing 3</u> : Proofreading, sentence structure, word use, punctuation	Ch. 7 pp. 184-201	Process of Writing 3: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Draft
<b>No Class – Patriot's Day</b>			
12 4/22	Peer Review – Draft 4 <u>Final Edits</u>	Ch. 8	<u>Process of Writing 4</u> : 4 <sup>th</sup> Draft
13 4/29	Final Reflections	None	Final Draft

**Commented [CS7]:** This class overview demonstrates the following:  
“This course spreads writing assignments throughout the semester, providing students with opportunities to practice writing regularly.” (EWIM practice outcome)  
“Students will produce both formal and low-stakes products”.

**Commented [r8]:** In addition to the “first day of class” activities, we will complete a jigsaw activity about the different types of biological writing.

**Commented [CS9R8]:** Students are introduced to “the most common genres of the major/field” (EWIM Practice Outcome)

**Commented [r10]:** During this class period, we will start by having the students complete a reflection about the TEK article. For example, we may ask “How does TEK differ from the scientific method? Do you feel that TEK should be valued at the same level as information obtained via Western science? Why or why not?”

In addition, we will introduce the concept of linguistic bias and do a exercise about generative AI.

**Commented [CS11R10]:** This activity invites students to: “engage in critical analysis of disciplinary discourse by considering the perspectives and types of knowledge and communication that are included and excluded.” (EWIM Practice Outcome)

**Commented [r12]:** After the RWC visit, students will participate in a mock peer review session where they will review a paper provided by the instructors.

**Commented [CS13]:** Students are expected to complete multiple drafts and incorporate feedback:  
“Students will be expected to incorporate regular in-process feedback on their writing from faculty and peers and to revise their work by implementing substantial and holistic changes, proofreading, and editing.” (EWIM Practice Outcome)

#### Class Policies:

1. **Be respectful:** Please be thoughtful in your actions and show respect to your classmates and instructor.

2. **Attendance:** As stated above, attending class is part of your grade and it is very important that you attend class each week. Please let me know if you aren't able to attend.
3. **Late/Missing Work:** It is important for you to meet assignment deadlines to keep you on track for the class. However, I understand that life introduces many unexpected challenges. If you do not complete an assignment on time, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss an extension.
4. **Academic Honesty:** You are expected to abide by the Classroom Student Conduct Policy and uphold the highest principles of academic honesty as defined in the Academic Honesty Policy sections of the *University Bulletin*:

"Academic Honesty, a necessary foundation of a learning community is expected of all members of the University community... Violations of the Academic Honesty Policy are unacceptable and are subject to academic penalties, including reduced grade, failure of the course, and suspension or dismissal from the University."

You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the Student Conduct and Academic Honesty policies of the University, and avoiding conduct that violates these policies. Plagiarism and cheating on any lecture or laboratory work will not be tolerated. This includes not only plagiarism of outside material, but also of any other student's assignments. **Plagiarism is defined as 5 or more consecutive words from any source, un-cited information that is not common knowledge, and submission of work that is not your own writing. No quotes are permitted in any assignment – biological writing seldom uses quotes.** Please refer to the Westfield Student Handbook for more information.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (such as ChatGPT) can be a useful tool for brainstorming and writing. However, the purpose of this class is for you to learn the writing process, and some companies will not allow you to use it. While we will discuss Generative AI and a few ways that it could be used, **use of Generative AI such as ChatGPT is not permitted without explicit instructor permission.** Any unauthorized use of AI tools for work in this class may be considered a violation of Westfield State University's Academic Honesty Policy, since the work is not your own.

If a violation has occurred, I will contact you to discuss the penalty. If there are multiple violations within this course, I will report it to the university. When in doubt ask me. *If you are considering plagiarism because you cannot meet a deadline, please contact me to discuss an extension instead.*

5. **Citing references:** You will use the reference format described in Writing Papers in the Biological Sciences for all assignments requiring references. Again, **no quotes** are permitted on any assignment unless otherwise specified.
6. **Diversity and Inclusion:** In this classroom we will all work to create an inclusive learning environment in which diverse perspectives and people are respected, recognized, and fostered. Individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability, and other visible and nonvisible differences are welcome. Diverse languages and dialects are welcome in this classroom. As we communicate with one another, keep in mind that the reader/listener should work as hard as the writer/speaker in the communication process. This means that we will listen patiently, work to understand one another, seek out clarification when necessary, and avoid finishing each other's sentences or correcting grammatical errors unless invited to do so. If you feel comfortable doing so, please advise me of your name and pronouns so that I may address you correctly. This course was created and run on Pocumtuc and

Nipmuc lands. We as members of the scientific community have and continue to benefit from the occupation of this land.

#### **Available Campus Resources:**

1. **Counseling Center (In-Person and Remote Counseling), Lammers Hall Annex:** Life at college can get complicated. Students sometimes feel overwhelmed, and can experience a variety of challenges, such as anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and/or diminished self-esteem, to give just a few examples. Many issues can be effectively addressed with a little help. The Counseling Center helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. The Counseling Center is staffed by experienced, professional counselors and masters level clinical interns who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are FREE and completely confidential. The Counseling Center offers some check-in counseling, which is same-day appointment scheduling to ensure faster access to a counselor. ***Students can choose in person services or remote counseling and appointments can be made by coming into the Counseling Center, calling 413-572-5790, or emailing: [counseling@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:counseling@westfield.ma.edu).*** Find out more about all the Counseling Center resources at [www.westfield.ma.edu/counseling](http://www.westfield.ma.edu/counseling). Check out Counseling Center posts on instagram: @reachoutwsu.

Need to talk to a counselor after hours?...try the Telus Health Student Support app, available in any app store. Formerly "My SSP", Telus Health Student Support provides mental health information and the ability to chat or telephone a master's level counselor 24/7. Please talk to me if you are distressed and you are not sure what to do about it.

2. **Common Goods Food Pantry, Second Congregational Church:** Common Goods is a food pantry serving Westfield State University students, faculty, and staff who may be experiencing hunger and are struggling to purchase food. It is a safe, discreet, nonjudgmental, and welcoming space in which to distribute a variety of non-perishable foods and personal care items at no cost. Visitors to the pantry do not need to provide any financial documentation to use this service. Common Goods is housed in the Second Congregational Church on Western Avenue, adjacent to the entrance to the Commuter Parking Lot. For more information, please visit [www.westfield.ma.edu/commongoods](http://www.westfield.ma.edu/commongoods) or email [commongoods@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:commongoods@westfield.ma.edu). This semester, the Common Goods Food Pantry will be open Jan 16 – May 1 on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from Noon until 4pm.
3. **Reading and Writing Center (RWC), Ely Mezzanine:** The RWC, which offers virtual and in-person writing support, is dedicated to supporting you as you work on any type of writing project, at any stage of the writing process. If you are not sure how to get started, we'll help you understand the expectations of the assignment. If you have a draft, we'll help you improve that draft and provide you with strategies for writing and revising future papers. The writing center is a multilingual space that values ALL languages and dialects and employs bilingual tutors. To make a FREE appointment, visit: [www.westfield.ma.edu/reading](http://www.westfield.ma.edu/reading). You may choose to meet with a writing tutor online or in person in Ely Library, Mezzanine Level in the CARE Center. To learn more about the RWC, watch these videos: "[How the Reading and Writing Center works for students](#)" and "[How to make an appointment.](#)"
4. **TRIO Student Support Services Program, Scanlon Hall 215:** TRIO is a comprehensive academic support program for students who are eligible in one or more of the following three categories: first-generation college students, students with low income, and/or students with a documented disability. TRIO provides one-on-one academic coaching and tutoring as well as a range of support with time management strategies, financial aid literacy, career and graduate school exploration, and more. TRIO helps foster in students a sense of connection to their education, understanding of university procedures, and ways to maximize their opportunities and growth at Westfield State. For more information and the online application, visit [www.westfield.ma.edu/trio](http://www.westfield.ma.edu/trio). Email questions to [trio@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:trio@westfield.ma.edu).

5. **The Banacos Academic Center**

*Support for Students with Disabilities Requesting Reasonable Accommodations :* Westfield State University provides reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities upon request. All students are welcome to register and request accommodations through the Banacos Academic Center. If you need reasonable accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with an advisor in the Banacos Academic Center. Write to Disability Services at [ds@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:ds@westfield.ma.edu) or, if you were accepted into the Learning Disabilities Program, [ldp@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:ldp@westfield.ma.edu) to set up an appointment. Additionally, I strongly recommend that you make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss how we can work best together. Please note that a student may request accommodations through the Banacos Academic Center at any time in the semester.

*Exceptions to Class Rules, Restrictions or Requirements:* Any student may request an exception to the class rules, restrictions or requirements. Please set a time to meet with me during my office hours or send an email to me so that we can discuss your reasons.

**6. Course Achievement, Retention, & Engagement Center (CARE), Ely Mezzanine:** The CARE Center is here to support all students who may find themselves struggling academically for any reason. Our space is dedicated to providing content area tutoring as a part of the *Tutoring & Learning Center (TLC)*. At any point in the term you may need to rely on someone who has been in your shoes. Why not work with a student who has taken a course you may be struggling in for free. Students who seek a tutor have a 70% pass rate. CARE also offers *CARE Package Workshops*. Oftentimes you may struggle academically due to unhealthy academic habits. We want to help students build upon their strengths while working to overcome any barriers to their success as they adapt to college academics. We are easy to locate and accessible on the Ely Library, Mezzanine Level. If you need a tutor please contact [tlc@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:tlc@westfield.ma.edu) or 413-572-8376 and if you are looking for a workshop or one-on-one skill building connect with [care@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:care@westfield.ma.edu) or 413-572-5273.

**7. WSU360:** I utilize WSU360 (an online academic alert system) for this course. If I observe that you are experiencing difficulties in the course (attendance concerns, low test scores or participation, in danger of failing, etc.), you may get an email to your Westfield email account from [wsu360@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:wsu360@westfield.ma.edu). This email is managed by Nicole West, Director of the Course Achievement, Retention, & Engagement Center. The message will tell you about my concerns and ask you to meet with me, an advisor, or Nicole West. Your advisor and/or I will work with you to create success strategies to address any difficulties you are having. In addition, if I observe that you are doing well in my course, you may also receive "kudos" from [wsu360@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:wsu360@westfield.ma.edu) acknowledging your efforts.

WSU360 may involve taking advantage of various campus support services, such as Tutoring or the Reading & Writing Center. If I recommend that you use campus support services, your advisor or I will redirect you to that support office so they will be better prepared to assist you. WSU360 provides essential notices by email and/or text. Please check your Westfield email account frequently and respond quickly if you receive an email from [wsu360@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:wsu360@westfield.ma.edu).

Please see the WSU360 website for additional details: <http://www.westfield.ma.edu/wsu-360-user-guides>

**8. Career Center - Parenzo Hall 1st Floor:** The Career Center strives to assist students and alumni in finding success in employment. The center provides a myriad of programs and services, extensive web resources and platforms such as uConnect, Handshake, CareerSpots, StandOut and others that students can utilize 24/7. Visit the Career Center to talk about career/ major exploration, job/internship search, interviewing, resume, cover letter, graduate school search, and additional career related topics.

For more information on student resources, or to schedule an appointment, visit the website: [careers.westfield.ma.edu](http://careers.westfield.ma.edu). Appointments: In-Person, Virtual, and Phone. Hours: M-F, 8:30am - 5pm - **It's never too early to talk about your career!**