



Environmental Science and Policy

## Syllabus: Proposal and Article Writing, 2025

EVPP-692-DL2; CRN 24181 (MSc students; 1 credit)

EVPP-991-DL2; CRN24182 (PhD students; 2 credits)

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Gad Perry

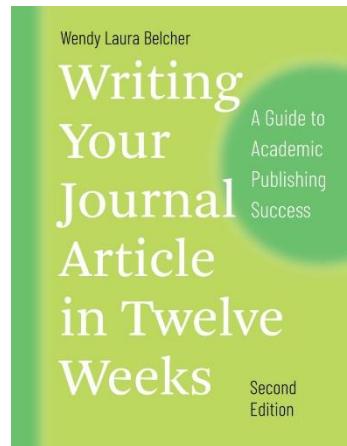
Email: GPerry23@gmu.edu

**MEETINGS:** Tuesdays, 1:30 to 3:20 PM

Enterprise Hall, Room 277

**OFFICE HOURS:** David King 3003, by appointment

**REQUIRED READINGS:** Belcher, WL, 2019: *Writing your journal article in 12 weeks*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of Chicago Press. Additional readings will be assigned as relevant.



**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this seminar we will explore how to write informative, interesting and publishable scientific articles and effective research proposals, with an emphasis on grant proposals. This will be achieved through presentations and group discussions on the basic elements of these documents, reading and analyzing examples from published literature, and students' short writing assignments and oral presentations. Assignments emphasize reading and analysis of existing articles, but students have the option to do more original writing if they would prefer to have the practice and feedback on their own work (recommended). While it is not a course on good scientific methodology or basic writing skills, these aspects will be addressed in the context that underlying rigorous science is a prerequisite for preparing good proposals and articles, and that clarity, conciseness and sound grammar are essential for effective communication of scientific ideas and research to any audience. We will also cover topics such as the role of effective statistical analysis and graphics, features of different types of articles and audiences, factors to consider when selecting a journal for submission, including the proper formatting of references, and fine-tuning grant proposals to the interests and criteria of granting entities.

**COURSE STRUCTURE:** Weekly class in-person meetings will include presentations by the instructor and guest speakers, structured and open-ended discussion of topics and of examples of articles provided by the instructor and by students, student presentations and group discussions on reading and writing assignments.

Time is also allocated for additional topics to be proposed by students. Each student will select an article and carry out an analysis of its quality and effectiveness based on concepts covered in the class, and make a 15-minute oral presentation on it to the class. EVPP 991 students will also submit a more detailed written version of this analysis.

**GRADING:** Grades will be based on the instructor's assessment of students' writing assignments and oral presentations, and on meaningful, informed and proactive class participation, with weighting as follows:

	EVPP 692 (1 Credit)	EVPP 991 (2 Credits)
Class participation:	40%	40%
Short writing assignments:	20%	20%
Oral presentation on analysis of selected article:	30%	20%
Short writing assignments:	10 %	20%

Letter grades will be assigned based on total credit as follows:

A: 90-100%                    C: 70-79%                    F: 0-59%  
B: 80-89%                    D: 60-69%

Two or more *unexcused* absences will result in failure of the course unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There is no final in this class.

**DIGITAL COMMUNICATION:** Students must use their GMU email account for *all* class-related communications.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** GMU students, faculty and staff are bound by the GMU Honor Code. Adherence to the GMU Honor Code is expected of all students, specifically: "*Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.*" In all assignments and communications, plagiarism will not be tolerated. This applies equally to oral and written communications in the context of any evaluated (graded) course assignments and includes unauthorized use of artificial intelligence. As stated in the Honor Code, infractions may result in invalidated credit for dishonorable work and lowered grade, including failure from the class, suspension or dismissal. Inquiries for clarification from the professor are welcome. For more information, see the complete Honor Code in the current university catalog.

**DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS:** Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | Phone: (703) 993-2474.

**DIVERSITY STATEMENT:** George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture

of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. *Please be civil in discussions.*

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE, SPRING SEMESTER 2025

Class #	TOPIC and READINGS	Notes and Assignments
1 (21 Jan)	<b>Course overview</b>  Context  <i>Introduction (p. 1-13)</i>	Personal self-introductions Course objectives  Some basic context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasons for publishing scientific articles</li> <li>• Types of published articles</li> <li>• Overview of basic structure of scientific articles</li> <li>• Types of journals</li> <li>• Steps in publishing an article</li> </ul> <b>ASSIGNMENTS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 volunteers for recap</li> <li>- Box: Feelings about writing (p 15)</li> </ul>
2 (28 Jan)	<b>Structure and style of scientific articles, Part 1</b>  <i>Week 1 (p. 14-59)</i>	- Student recap of previous class (at start of each class) - Discussion: Box: Feelings about writing (p 15)  How to use this book Title, Abstract and Introduction sections  <b>ASSIGNMENTS:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Box: Authorship (p 59)</li> <li>2) For a scientific article of your choosing, be prepared to evaluate the Title and Abstract.</li> <li>3) In writing, provide the original title of the article, a proposed improved title (perhaps just aimed at a different audience, which you must specify), and why it would be better (up to ½ page max).</li> </ol>
3 (4 Feb)	<b>Structure and style of scientific articles, Part 2</b>  <i>Week 2 (p. 60-89)</i>	- Student recap - Discussion: Box: Authorship (p 59) - Title and Abstract discussion, homework hand-in  Methods, Results, Discussion/Conclusion The importance of publishing negative results  <b>ASSIGNMENTS:</b> For an article of your choosing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Choose one Figure, one Table, and one statistical analysis in the Results</li> <li>- Be prepared to share with classmates, explain why you think that particular option was chosen, and evaluate/suggest alternatives.</li> </ul>

4 (11 Feb)	<b>Presenting results: tables, figures, graphics, stats</b>  <i>Week 8 (p. 238-255)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> </ul> <p>Student presentations and group discussion on Results</p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> Prepare and submit a journal-quality printout of a graphic based on your own attached data <i>or</i> data provided by the instructor (up to ½ page max).</p>
5 (18 Feb)	<b>Selecting a journal</b>  <i>Week 4 (p. 110-149)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> <li>- Graphics discussion</li> </ul> <p>What are the options? How do you choose?</p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> Prepare for discussion a list of five outlets that might be appropriate for your work and explain why you chose them.</p>
6 (25 Feb)	<b>Oral presentations (1)</b>  <i>No chapter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> <li>- Journals discussion</li> <li>- The conference 15-minute talk</li> <li>- The 3-minute talk</li> <li>- Longer talks (including defenses)</li> </ul> <p><b>ASSIGNMENTS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare for discussion a list of two conferences that might be appropriate for you and explain why you chose them.</li> <li>- Prepare a 3 minute version of a talk about your current, past, or planned research</li> </ul>
7 (4 Mar)	<b>Oral presentations (2)</b>  <i>No chapter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> <li>- Conference discussion</li> </ul> <p>Student presentations and critique</p> <p>What should we do for class 8?</p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> TBD</p>

10-16 March: Spring Break, no class

8 (18 Mar)	<b>Student determined</b>  <i>No chapter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> </ul> <p><b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> Find the Instructions to Authors of three journals you might want to publish in. Format the same reference (of your choice) to fit all three. Submit (in print) the I2As and formatted references.</p>
9 (25 Mar)	<b>References</b>  <i>Week 5 (p. 150-189)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> <li>- What did you learn from the assignment?</li> </ul> <p>What to cite? What not?</p> <p>How and why to use a citation manager</p> <p>ChatGPT and the like</p>

10 (1 Apr)	<b>Writing research and grant proposals</b>  <i>No chapter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> </ul> <p>Guest lecture: Dr. Leslie A. Frieden, Associate Director for Research Development, George Mason University</p> <p>Why write grant proposals? How are they different from research proposals?</p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> Read and review, in writing, provided article. PhD students need to provide written review, all students should take notes to facilitate discussion.</p>
11 (8 Apr)	<b>Peer review</b>  <i>No chapter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> </ul> <p>Discussion of the review experience and articles</p> <p><b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> students select an article of interest to themselves, to be subject of their review/critique to be presented to the class (and submitted in writing, for EVPP 991 students)</p>
12 (15 Apr)	<b>Addressing peer review comments</b>  <i>No chapter</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> </ul> <p>Presentations on peer review experience.</p>
13 (22 Apr)	<b>Responding to reviews</b>  <i>Week 10 (p. 358-389)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student recap</li> </ul> <p>Responding to comments</p> <p>Discussion of additional topics identified by students in previous weeks</p>
14 (29 Apr)	Recap, conclusions, general Q&A	Students recap of the course, group discussion of main conclusions/take-home messages

### Special dates:

- Spring Break: Mon, Mar 10 – Sun, Mar 16
- Last day of classes: Mon. May 5



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