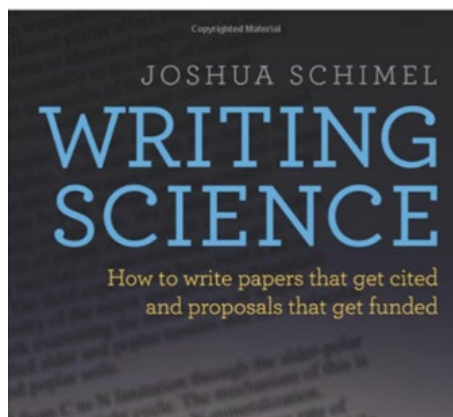# WIS 6934 Writing Science (3 credits)

Instructor: Lyn Branch, Lyn Branch,
 UF Department of Wildlife Ecology and
Conservation
E-mail: BranchL@ufl.edu
Office hours: After class

**Class time:** Tuesdays 9:35 AM -12:35 PM
online

**Course description:** This course aims to improve writing skills of advanced graduate students, based on Joshua Schimel's book *Writing Science* and his view that writing requires a toolbox and hard work.  This student-led course is structured around writing teams (~3 students). Students develop their writing toolbox as they write, and repeatedly revise, a short piece from their research, lead weekly discussions of chapters from Schimel's book, analyze the writing (not the scientific content!) of published papers, and critique their teammates' writing.

**Required text:** *Schimel, J.  2012. Writing Science: How to write papers that get cited and proposals that get funded.  Oxford University Press.*

Additional readings will be assigned throughout the semester, along with optional readings in other writing textbooks.

**Course objectives:** By the end of this course, students will:

➢ Understand the 3 aspects of effective storytelling: content, structure, and language
➢ Know how to develop the "story" in scientific writing so that it flows from

   Data -- Information – Knowledge -- Understanding.

➢ Be familiar with the core elements that make a story stick with the audience.
➢ Know the 4 story structures used in different genres of writing and be able to apply the appropriate story structure for a given audience.
➢ Understand (and have practice in) structuring paragraphs and sentences as mini-stories.
➢ Have strategies for energizing and condensing writing.
➢ Be familiar with the message box as a tool for framing a scientific story for the public.

**General class structure (to be modified as needed):**
At the beginning of the semester, the class will choose several published papers to analyze for writing throughout the semester. Also, each student will write a short article describing his/her/their research and develop message boxes to frame this story for experts in the field and for the public.

Each week prior to class, all students will read 1-2 chapters from Schimel's book, and based these readings, revise their article, critique teammate's articles, and analyze the writing in the published papers.

For the first half of the class period each week, 1-2 students will lead a discussion of the chapters from Schimel's book and analysis of the published papers. Then the class will split into writing teams for the remainder of the class to focus on critiques of student articles.  If there is insufficient time for these 3 activities, then alternate weeks will incorporate review of students' articles.

| Week | Tentative schedule of topics following Schimel |
|---|---|
| 1 | Organizational meeting |
| | **Three aspects of effective story telling: I. Content** |
| 2 | Chapter 1 - Writing in Science, Chapter 2 - Science Writing as Storytelling, and Chapter 20 - Message box: A tool for framing a story.  pp. 198-203 (Read Sections 20.3-20.5. You do not yet have the background for other parts of this chapter.) |
| | |
| 3 | Chapter 3 - Making a Story Sticky |
| | **Three aspects of effective story telling: I. Structure** |
| 4 | Chapter  4 - Story Structure |
| 5 | Chapter 5 - The Opening, Chapter 6 - The Funnel: Connecting O and C |
| 6 | Chapter 7 - The Challenge, Chapter 8 - Action |
| 7 |  Chapter 9 - The Resolution (plus review of Chapters. 3-8) |
| 8 | Chapter 10 - Internal Structure |
| | **Three aspects of effective story telling: I. Language** |
| 9 | Chapter 11 - Paragraphs, Chapter 12 - Sentences |
| 10 | Chapter 13 - Flow |
| 11 | Chapter 14 - Energizing Writing, Chapter 15 - Words |
| 12 | Chapter 16 - Condensing, Chapter - 17 - Putting It All Together: Real Editing, Chapter 18 - Dealing with Limitations |
| 13 | Chapter 19 - Writing Global Science, Chapter 20 - Writing for the Public, Chapter 21 - Resolution |
| 14 | Wrap up |

**Grading:**

Grades will be assigned based on three criteria:

45%   In class presentations and homework assignments

45%   Participation in weekly discussions and peer reviews

10%   Final paper

UF's required grading scale: A (94% or greater), A- (90%-93%), B+ (87%-89%), B (84%-86%), B- (80%-83%), C+ (77%-79%), C (74%-76%), C- (70%-73%), D+ (67%-69%), D (64%-66%), D- (60%-63%),  E (<60%)

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**UF requires the following on all syllabi:**

**Academic Honesty, Software Use, UF Counseling Services, Services for Students with Disabilities**

In 1995 the UF student body enacted a new honor code and voluntarily committed itself to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. When students enroll at the university, they commit themselves to the standard drafted and enacted by students.

In adopting this honor code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the university community. Students who enroll at the university commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the honor code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the honor code is bound by honor to take corrective action. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon community acceptance and enforcement of the honor code.

**The Honor Code: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.**

On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: "**On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.**"

The university requires all members of its community to be honest in all endeavors. A fundamental principle is that the whole process of learning and pursuit of knowledge is diminished by cheating, plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty. In addition, every dishonest act in the academic environment affects other students adversely, from the skewing of the grading curve to giving unfair advantage for honors or for professional or graduate school admission. Therefore, the university will take severe action against dishonest students. Similarly, measures will be taken against faculty, staff and administrators who practice dishonest or demeaning behavior.

Students should report any condition that facilitates dishonesty to the instructor, department chair, college dean or Student Honor Court.

*(Source: 2007-2008 Undergraduate Catalog)*

It is assumed all work will be completed independently unless the assignment is defined as a group project, in writing by the instructor.

This policy will be vigorously upheld at all times in this course.

**Software Use:**

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

**Campus Helping Resources**

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. Both the Counseling Center and Student Mental Health Services provide confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance. The Counseling Center is located at 301 Peabody Hall (next to Criser Hall). Student Mental Health Services is located on the second floor of the Student Health Care Center in the Infirmary.

*University Counseling Center*, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, **www.counsel.ufl.edu**
*Career Resource Center,* CR-100 JWRU, 392-1602, **www.crc.ufl.edu/**
*Student Mental Health Services,* Rm. 245 Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, **www.shcc.ufl.edu/smhs/**
        Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)
        Center for Sexual Assault / Abuse Recovery & Education (CARE)
        Eating Disorders Program
        Employee Assistance Program
        Suicide Prevention Program

**Students with Disabilities**

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services, and mediating faculty-student disability related issues.

0001 Reid Hall, 392-8565, **www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/**