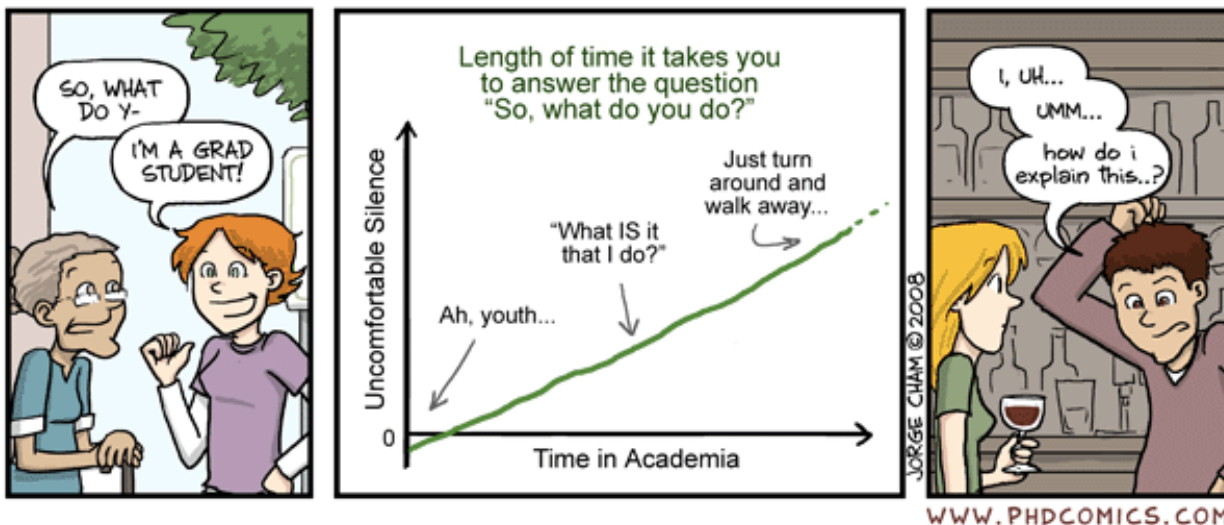


Science Communication
UPGEN 778E / Oct. 21 – Nov. 2, 2020
MWF 2-3:30 p.m.



Instructor: Robin Smith, Ph.D.

Office hours: held online 3:15-4:00 p.m. after each class at [this link](#); please [sign up](#) for a 15-min slot

Email: ras10@duke.edu (please allow 24 hours for a response)

Course Description

"The Public" -- taxpayers, policy makers and pundits -- often doesn't speak your language. But they DO have a powerful influence over your work. In this six-part workshop, we'll share some techniques to help you communicate your work more effectively with a variety of audiences beyond your colleagues. We will have you practice telling your scientific story in several ways, from tweets and radio interviews to blog posts and crowdfunding campaigns. We'll also introduce you to working with a university news office and the news media. Effective communication can help you get noticed by potential mentors and search committees, earn higher marks on your job and postdoc applications and advance your academic career. Our workshops will include some hands-on, active learning, so please come prepared to brainstorm and join the discussion.

Date	To Do/Discuss in Class	Due
W 10/21	Why we struggle/Recognizing the expert blind spot	
F 10/23	What's in a word?	Assignment 1 due by 9 a.m.
M 10/26	Metaphors and analogies/Making data more relatable	
W 10/28	Turning a topic into a story	Assignment 2 due by 9 a.m.
F 10/30	Helping your press office help you	
M 11/2	Putting it all together: How to pitch, present and field questions like a pro	Assignment 3 due by 9 a.m.

Assignment 1 (due by 9 a.m. Friday, Oct. 23)

You are wowed by a paper and you want to tell your friends about it. Read the following paper (three to choose from, to be announced in class -- stay tuned) and condense it into any ONE of these: a lay-friendly headline (5-10 words), a haiku, a song lyric, a five-line limerick, or some other tweetable nutshell that sums up the main point of the paper in 280 characters or less.

Please tweet it any time before 9 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 23, with a shortened URL link to the paper and the hashtag #upgg20 so we can find and track your work. (True, that's several characters you've already lost, but you can do it -- even limericks are usually less than 200 characters).

Note: one popular link shortener is <https://bitly.com/>. Just enter the full URL in the box at the bottom of the screen, click "Shorten," and copy and paste the shortened link into your tweet.

If you don't have a Twitter account please sign up for one at <http://twitter.com>. To get credit for the assignment, please make sure your Twitter handle (or Twitter bio or profile photo) makes it possible to identify who you are in the class.

Assignment 2 (due by 9 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 28)

The *Journal of Badass Genomics* has invited you to submit a photo or image for consideration for the cover of their next issue. You don't have to be the photographer, but the image should relate to your lab's work or to the work of someone in your department, and you must have permission to share it. Write a 100-word lay language caption (be sure to credit the creator in your caption). See examples below, or in Duke's "1100 Words" column at <https://bit.ly/30lb1Qz>.

Please email your caption and attached image to ras10@duke.edu any time before 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 28. Then upload your image as a virtual background before class. The top image + caption combinations will be considered for the "1100 Words" feature on the Duke Research site at <https://research.duke.edu/>.

Note: JPEG or TIF image files are preferred, as large as possible up to 10 MB. When you email your work, please name your attached image according to this formula: lastnamefirstinitial.jpg. This will make it less likely that I end up with 20 files that are all named "My image."

Tip: You can do a lot in 100 words. Look at the examples at <https://bit.ly/30lb1Qz>. If you read closely you'll find story elements, metaphors/analogies, and other moves that we'll talk about over the course of the workshop. Each of these captions answers at least 3-4 of the following questions in a mere 100 words, on the dot. See if you can do the same:

- 1) What are we looking at?
- 2) What's the question? i.e., what do/did they want to know?
- 3) What did they do/what are they doing to find out?
- 4) What did they find? (or: what do they hope to find eventually?)
- 5) Why should we care? What's the big picture?

Assignment 3 (due by 9 a.m. Monday, Nov. 2)

Your lab is about to publish a paper and you want to make sure it gets noticed. Tell your press officer about a forthcoming paper that you think might be important or interesting enough to share with journalists or policymakers.

(Note: newly published research is OK for the purposes of this assignment; just make sure it isn't already being covered by major news outlets.)

Task 1: Find an article. It could be one that’s been accepted in a high-impact journal, or is likely to make people in your field sit up and take notice. Or maybe it has practical applications: maybe the research could save money, or energy, or help people live healthier lives. Perhaps it relates to something important happening in the world right now, or is relevant to people’s interests. Or maybe it’s just cool, or surprising, or makes you go “wow.”

Task 2: Write the pitch. Send your press officer a short note (150-300 words or 8-12 sentences) telling them what the research is about, why it’s new/important/interesting, why you’re telling them about it now, and what visuals you could offer. Send your pitch as a simple email to ras10@duke.edu. Don’t send as a word attachment. The end result might look something like this:

Dear so-and-so,

My colleagues and I are about to publish our work using tiny custom-fitted cameras modeled after human eye-tracking devices to study peacock courtship from the female’s point of view. Would the Duke news office be interested?

The peacock is one of the animal kingdom’s ultimate Casanovas. But which parts of the peacock’s love dance turn a female’s head has been a puzzle for years. Our study reveals it’s not what you might think.

We performed eye-tracking experiments on female peacocks while male peacocks danced and strutted. Surprisingly, we found that females spend less than a third of their time looking at the male. When they do, they pay most attention to his legs and the bottom of tail, and barely glance at the upper half of his tail or his head.

Now is a good time for this story because of our forthcoming paper in the Journal of Experimental Biology, embargoed for Nov. 15, 2020 (attached). Eye trackers have been used extensively in psychology and marketing research on humans, but this paper marks the first time the technology has been used to study mate preferences in animals.

For visuals we can provide video footage of the female’s shifting gaze as she watches her mate.

Thanks for giving this a read. If you’d like to hear more please let me know.

Attendance and Grading

Assignment 1:	25%
Assignment 2:	25%
Assignment 3:	25%
<u>Participation and Attendance:</u>	<u>25%</u>
	100%

Assuming that you make a good faith effort to complete the assignments, attend class, and contribute to the conversation, you can expect to do well in this workshop. If you’re absent please email Robin to find out what happened in class on that day and to pick up any handouts you may have missed.

Zoom Etiquette

With online classes becoming the new norm, Zoom fails will happen. Your computer may self-mute. Your Wi-Fi may drop out. We may have an unplanned guest appearance from someone’s snacking housemate or crying kid or barking dog. We will troubleshoot any technical glitches together. You can do your part by showing up on time and turning off any apps or notifications that might vie for attention during class. If there are any circumstances you think I should be aware of please don’t

hesitate to drop me a note. It's going to be okay. We're all just trying to make it through however we can.

Learn more:

For answers to the question: why do it? What's in it for me? See the intro chapter to "Explaining Research" by Dennis Meredith: http://dennismeredith.com/introduction_282.html

Advice for scientists who want to write for the public from NC State professor Rob Dunn: <http://www.yourwildlife.org/2013/06/advice-for-scientists-who-want-to-write-for-the-public/>