

Chemeng Graduate Scientific Writing Course

Fall Term: ESL

Winter Term: Native and Proficient Speakers

Do you want to complete your thesis and papers with maximum efficiency?

Do you want to ensure maximum exposure for your ideas?

Do you want to enhance your chances of climbing the professional ladder?

In today's engineering world, excellent writing and oral communication skills are essential. They often tip the balance in hiring choices. Recognizing the importance of good communications, the Department of Chemical Engineering will offer two graduate scientific writing courses. The fall session is intended for those whose native language is not English, while the winter session is designed for native speakers and those who already have a sophisticated command of English. The courses have a similar organizational framework, but the pace in the native speakers' group is faster, and the ancillary reading material is different. This training will enable you to fine tune the skills you require as a professional engineer. It will save you time in the long run and boost your career.

Each course is designed as a literature survey; the assignments fulfill part of the work required for the thesis project. Students will also be given the opportunity to improve their oral presentation skills and produce a poster based on their research. A detailed description is appended.

Course Description

This hands-on course is designed to help students develop fluency, clarity, and accuracy in their written work and oral presentations. The goal is to enable students to perceive and correct errors on their own so the thesis supervisor is not burdened with extensive revision. Accordingly, every class includes a grammar and style lesson, illustrated with excerpts from the professional literature to put the material in context. The material is adapted to the conventions of scientific writing. Students are expected to learn the information and apply it to the weekly assignment.

The course consists of the following components:

1. A WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT:

ESL students read a journal article in their discipline and write a one-and-a-half to two-page précis. Native speakers read two journal papers and write a two-page comparison. The work is meticulously corrected and returned so that

the revisions can be incorporated into subsequent assignments. There will be six such assignments.

2. COMPARATIVE LITERATURE SURVEY/DISCUSSION:

ESL students are asked to prepare a comparative literature survey in their research area; native speakers will write a discussion analyzing research results.

3. TABLE EXERCISE:

All students are asked to prepare a table based on a paper in their area or on their own research results.

4. AN ORAL PRESENTATION:

All students are required to make a ten-minute PowerPoint presentation on their research. Basic comments about the form of the talk are provided by the instructor; then classmates are asked to critique the scientific content. One or two students will present each week.

5. POSTER:

Students will be asked to prepare a poster based on their research. The last class will be a poster session to which faculty will be invited.

This course has proved successful; those who take it seriously make substantial progress. Because writing is learned by practice, the ultimate goal is for each student to develop a substantial portfolio of written work over the term.

If there are any questions about the course, please feel free to contact the instructor, Debby Repka, at d.repka@utoronto.ca

Debby Repka
Course Instructor