

# Western University – School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

## SGPS9103

### Writing for Success in Graduate School and Beyond I

## Course Outline

### 2025

**Instructor:** Dr. Aaron Schneider

**Office:** UC 2431

**Office Hours:** Monday and Tuesday 12-1pm in-person or by Zoom (if you can't make these times, I am happy to meet with you at another time)

**Email:** [aschnei4@uwo.ca](mailto:aschnei4@uwo.ca)

**Time:** Monday 9am-12pm

**Location:** IGAB 1N05

#### **1. Objectives of this professional development course:**

Writing for Success in Graduate School and Beyond I course will develop graduate students' skills and competencies in writing. It will introduce students to the fundamentals of English grammar and provide them with the tools to write clear, correct, and accessible academic prose. Emphasis will be placed on the basic principles of effective academic writing and on establishing a foundation that will allow students to develop into confident academic writers.

Students will complete a series of short assignments modeled on the abstracts and lay abstracts required for graduate theses, and give one short presentation.

The course is open to all disciplines. It is ideal for students who need to acquire a basic understanding of English grammar, who need to improve their foundational writing skills, and who would like to polish their writing skills.

By the end of the course, you will have learned the basics of English grammar, improved your editing/proofreading skills, improved your writing skills, practiced your presentation skills, learned how to present your research to a general audience, and completed an abstract and a lay abstract.

Professional Development Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- write for a general, non-expert audience
- orally present research or work to a general, non-expert audience
- adapt their writing to structural constraints (limited word count, etc.)
- understand the fundamentals of English grammar and apply them to their own writing
- understand the basic principles of effective academic writing
- identify and correct errors in grammar, style and structure
- incorporate feedback into revisions and effectively edit their own work

#### **2. Topics:**

The basic topics in the course will be:

- Grammar
- Abstracts
- Writing for general audiences
- Lay abstracts
- Effective academic writing
- Presenting

### 3. Timetable:

#### Week 1 (May 5):

- Introduction
- Abstracts
- Grammar (basic terms and principles)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/mechanics/parts\\_of\\_speech\\_overview.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/mechanics/parts_of_speech_overview.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/independent\\_and\\_dependent\\_clauses/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/independent_and_dependent_clauses/index.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/academic\\_writing/sentence\\_variety/sentence\\_types.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/sentence_variety/sentence_types.html)
- Concept Explanation workshop
- **Concept Explanation (0%) Due two days after class**

#### Week 2 (May 12):

- Grammar (paragraphs and commas)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/commas/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/commas/index.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/commas/extended\\_rules\\_for\\_commas.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/commas/extended_rules_for_commas.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/commas/commas\\_after\\_introductions.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/commas/commas_after_introductions.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/commas/commas\\_vs\\_semicolons.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/commas/commas_vs_semicolons.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/commas/commas\\_with\\_nonessential\\_elements.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/commas/commas_with_nonessential_elements.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/academic\\_writing/paragraphs\\_and\\_paragraphing/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/paragraphs_and_paragraphing/index.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/academic\\_writing/paragraphs\\_and\\_paragraphing/paragraphing.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/paragraphs_and_paragraphing/paragraphing.html)
- Abstract workshop

#### Week 3 (May 26):

- Grammar (semicolon, colons and dashes)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/english\\_as\\_a\\_second\\_language/esl\\_students/punctuation/semicolons\\_colons\\_and\\_parentheses.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/english_as_a_second_language/esl_students/punctuation/semicolons_colons_and_parentheses.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/english\\_as\\_a\\_second\\_language/esl\\_students/punctuation/hyphens\\_and\\_dashes.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/english_as_a_second_language/esl_students/punctuation/hyphens_and_dashes.html)
- Lay abstracts
- **Abstract Draft (0%) Due**

#### Week 4 (June 2):

- Grammar (sentence boundary errors)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/independent\\_and\\_dependent\\_clauses/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/independent_and_dependent_clauses/index.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/independent\\_and\\_dependent\\_clauses/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/independent_and_dependent_clauses/index.html)
  - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/mechanics/sentence\\_fragments.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/mechanics/sentence_fragments.html)
- **Project Presentation (0%)**
- Lay Abstract workshop:

**Week 5 (June 9):**

- Grammar (fixing common problems)
- Clear and varied writing
- Project Presentation (0%)
- **Abstract Final Draft (40%) Due**
- **Lay Abstract Draft (0%) Due**

**Class 6 (June 16):**

- Grammar (bringing it all together)
- Concise writing
- Lay abstract workshop
- **Lay Abstract Final Draft (60%) Due one week after last class**

**4. Prerequisite:**

This course is open to any graduate student at any stage of the program, subject to compliance with SGPS' regulation 9.0:

Graduate students are encouraged to participate in professional development and career-related courses, workshops, talks and events. Graduate students do NOT need the approval of their supervisors or their programs to participate in these faculty, program and university-wide events. Professional development and career-related events can be found through the Teaching Support Centre, the Student Development Centre, the Student Success Centre: Careers, Leadership and Experience, the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and individual Faculties. Participation in professional development and career offerings is expected to occur outside of TA duties, time-critical research duties, and shall not interfere with required current Graduate program courses, meetings and responsibilities.

**5. Corequisite:**

None

**6. Antirequisite:**

None

**Instructor:** Dr. Aaron Schneider

**7. Contact Hours and Room:** IGAB 1N05, Tuesday, 9:30-12:30

**8. Course Materials:**

- Course materials available on Brightspace
- Or, Purdue Online Writing Lab: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)

## **9. Evaluation:**

The final course mark will be determined as a Pass/Fail. There will be 4 assignments in the course, two of which will be graded:

### **Concept Explanation (diagnostic assignment) 0%:**

A one-page max assignment designed to give your instructor a sense of your writing abilities, and to give you a sense of the expectations of the course.

### **Abstract 40%:**

A 350-word abstract with a list of key words of the kind included with graduate theses. You will workshop and hand in a draft of this before handing in the final draft.

### **Project Presentation 0%:**

You will briefly (in no more than 5 minutes) present your research project to the class to get feedback on it that you can use to write the lay abstract.

### **Lay Abstract 60%:**

A 350-word lay abstract of the kind included with graduate theses. You will workshop and hand in a draft of this before handing in the final draft.

## **10. Scholastic Offences:**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:  
[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf).

## **11. Plagiarism:**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

**The use of AI in this course is strongly discouraged.** The aim of this course is to improve your writing and grammar. This aim is best achieved through unassisted writing.

## **12. Accessibility:**

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for

Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.