

Western University – School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

SGPS9104 Communicating Research to General Audiences

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

Time: Tuesday 1-4pm

Location: IGAB 1N05

1. Objectives of this professional development course:

SGPS 9104: Communicating Research to General Audiences will develop graduate students' skills and competencies in the rhetorical principles and practices of communicating to diverse audiences with a particular emphasis on communicating to general/non-specialist audiences. Students will learn strategies for effectively communicating complex, disciplinary specific ideas to non-specialist audiences in ways that are clear, concise and captivating, and focus on refining their writing and presenting skills.

Students will participate in a mixture of short written assignments based on the abstracts and lay abstracts typically required for graduate theses, and the Inspiring Minds Project Description, as well as oral presentations specifically focused on communicating students' academic work concisely and accessibly.

The course is open to all disciplines. It is ideal for students who are effective academic writers who want to learn to adapt their writing to a variety of audiences, who want to develop their ability to write abstracts of various kinds, who want to more generally refine both their writing and oral communication skills, and who want to hone their presentation skills.

By the end of the course, you will have given several presentations, and written an abstract, a lay abstract and an Inspiring Minds Project Description.

Professional Development Learning Outcomes:

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

- orally present research or work to a general, non-expert audience
- write for a general, non-expert audience
- articulate the impact of your research to the discipline
- articulate the impact of your research to the "real world"
- communicate complex ideas, your work and your skills effectively in all environments
- effectively summarize complex ideas
- adapt your writing to different audiences
- present effectively in different contexts
- use your writing and presentation skills to build professional relationships

2. Topics:

The basic topics in the course will include:

- Presentation skills
- Writing for general audiences
- Abstracts and lay abstracts

We will cover topics in grammar as necessary.

3. Timetable:

The basic timetable of the course will be:

Week 1 (May 6):

- Introduction
- Introduction exercise
- Abstracts
- Presenting

Week 2 (May 13):

- Abstracts
- Presenting
- Abstract workshop
- **Introduction Presentation (0%)**

Week 3 (May 20):

- Writing for general audiences
- Lay abstracts
- **Introduction Presentation (0%)**
- **Abstract (25%) Due**

Week 4 (May 27):

- Clarity and style
- Lay Abstract workshop
- **Project Presentation (15%)**

Week 5 (June 3):

- Presenting redux
- Inspiring Minds Project Description workshop
- **Project Presentation (15%)**
- **Lay Abstract (25%) Due**

Week 6 (June 10):

- **Elevator Pitch (15%)**
- **Inspiring Minds Project Description (20%) Due**

Note: short lectures on grammar may be added to this schedule to address specific issues raised by the assignments. You may be asked to do some readings from your grammar handbook to prepare for these lectures.

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

7. Instructor:

Dr. Aaron Schneider
aschnei4@uwo.ca or OWL mail

8. Contact Hours and Room:

Wednesday, 9:30-12:30, IGAB 1N05

9. Course Materials:

- Course materials available on OWL
- Purdue Writing Lab: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

10. Evaluation:

The final course mark will be determined as a Pass/Fail. There will be three presentations (2 graded) and two written assignments in the course.

Introduction Presentation (diagnostic assignment) 0%:

This is a short presentation. It is an ungraded assignment intended to introduce you to the expectations of the course.

Project Presentation 15%:

This is a 4-5 minute presentation of your research project aimed at a general academic audience.

Elevator Pitch 15%:

A 2-3 minute explanation of your project aimed at a general audience whose specific purpose is to sell the audience on your work and its value.

Abstract 25%:

A 350-word academic abstract with a list of key words. It should be an abstract for your research project.

Lay Abstract 25%:

A 350-word lay abstract aimed at a general audience.

Inspiring Minds Project Description 20%:

A 150-word description of your project that is suitable for submission to Inspiring Minds.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.