

Course Number/Title: COMM 6410: Research Writing (cross-listed as COMM 4410).

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Department of Communication and Media

Spring 2024

Time/Dates: MO/TR 2:00PM-3:50 PM In-Person

Location: CARNEG 102

Instructor Name: Corinne Jones

Title: Assistant Professor of Scientific and Technical Communication

Email:

Phone:

Office Hours: MO 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM. In-Person or Zoom. If you need to meet outside of that time, please email me so that we can make alternative arrangements.

Office Location: Sage 4404

Course Description

In this class, students will write on topics from their major discipline and investigate the kinds of research texts that professionals in their field produce. The course will emphasize research writing as an ongoing conversation with other researchers. Students will (1) use discipline-specific library databases, (2) identify genre conventions from their major disciplines, (3) develop literature reviews to identify “gaps” for research questions, and (4) write research proposals. In addition, they will develop effective note-taking and research skills and learn strategies for effective prose style.

Objectives

In this class, students will:

- Analyze genre conventions for research writing in their field of study and articulate how those conventions respond to specific audiences and purposes.
- Apply genre conventions appropriate to their field of research to strategically communicate to an academic audience in several common formats related to research writing.
- Recognize research as an ongoing conversation and describe academic conversations in their major fields of study.
- Organize academic sources into a literature review for an academic audience.
- Develop research questions and construct a research proposal for an academic audience to explore questions pertinent to their academic field of study.

Required Texts

- All reading material will be available online, through RPI’s library, or PDFs on Blackboard.

Other Requirements

- Please come to class with a computer, Internet access, and familiarity with computer programs and technology.

- We will complete activities that require access to the Internet in class. If you do not have a laptop, you can [rent one from RPI](#).
- A word processing program (e.g., Microsoft Word)
- A PDF reader (e.g., Adobe Reader)
- All papers must use APA formatting.
- In-class assignments and reading comprehension questions may be turned in directly through Blackboard. Unless otherwise stated, all major assignments must be turned in using Microsoft Word (e.g., “.doc” or “.docx” file formats.)

Grade Breakdown:

Participation (25 required classes x 4 point each), 10%	100 points
Reading Comprehension/Application Questions (6 Due x 25 points), complete/incomplete, 15%	150 points
In-Class Assignments, (5 Due x 24 points), complete/incomplete, 12%	120 points
Peer Review, (3 Due x 35 points each), complete/incomplete 10.5%	105 points
Genre Analysis Paper, 15%	150 points
Literature Review, 15%	150 points
Research Proposal, 15%	150 points
Final Reflection, 7.5%	75 points
Final Grade	1,000 points

*There is no form of grade “resurrection” built into this grading. Rather, you have multiple small assignments so that one poor grade will not result in failure. There are no formal means to appeal grades. Extra credit will be available throughout the semester.

Grading Scale:

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D+	67-69
A-	90-93	C+	77-79	D	64-66
B+	87-89	C	74-76	D-	60-63
B	84-86	C-	70-73	F	59 and below

If the grades are between cutoff percentages at the end of the semester, I will round the final grade up or down. If the grade is a 93.45%, I round that down to 93% for an A-. If the grade is 93.55%, I round that up to 94% for an A.

Assignment Descriptions

Participation (25 total x 4 points each=100 points/10%. Graded on complete/incomplete).

Since we will discuss important information in-class that will scaffold you into your major assignments, attendance and participation are crucial for this course. This semester has 28 total class periods. You may miss up to **three** total class periods without penalty. After three absences, you will lose points. **If you show up for class more than 5 minutes late, or if you leave more than 5 minutes early, you will only receive half credit.**

Reading Comprehension/Application Questions (6 Due x 25 points=150 points/15%.

Graded on complete/incomplete). These are out-of-class activities in which you will respond to questions about course readings or apply concepts that we learned about in class, such as finding

sources. They are due *before* class because we will engage with your answers in class. Rather than having you write responses to every reading, these are targeted questions and activities to ensure that you understand key concepts and they are meant to scaffold you into larger assignments. These are not graded on grammar or correctness. Responses should be at least 200 words. If you respond to the entire question fully, you will receive full points.

In-Class Assignments (5 Due x 24 points=120 points/12%. Graded on complete/incomplete). These are in-class activities like quick-writes and other informal activities that are meant to scaffold you into your major assignments. The portals to turn in these in-class activities will open during class time and close by the end of class time. **You must be in class to receive points for in-class activities.** With the exception is when we practice citation, these are not graded on grammar or correctness. Responses should be at least 200 words. If you complete the assignment fully, you will receive full points.

Peer Reviews (3 total x 35 points each=105 points/14%. Graded on complete/incomplete). For peer reviews, you will bring in nearly complete drafts of your upcoming assignments. These are meant for you to practice getting feedback from actual readers (your peers) and myself. These are also meant for you to practice putting yourself in the position of the reader. Answer the peer review questions for your peers and write 3-5 things you will change for the final draft. **You must be in class to receive points for peer review.**

Genre Analysis Paper (150 points, 15%).

In this major assignment, you will locate **3** academic scholarly, peer-reviewed research articles that use **empirical methods** from a journal in your field and conduct a genre analysis of the articles. Broadly, the paper will answer the question: What key features characterize academic research writing in your field? How do these features fulfil the purpose of the document and respond to recurring situation of research writing in academic journals? The paper will analyze global organization of articles, content included in articles, and sentence-structure elements. It will be in APA format and be at least 1,000 words (before citations) (for grads).

Literature Review (150 points, 15%).

In this major assignment, you will **write a literature review** about a topic in your field that leads to a research question which you could feasibly answer in this field. It will include at least **10 scholarly**, peer-reviewed sources, and it will be about **1,500 words** long (before citations). Rather than simply summarizing previous studies, the literature review will put scholars into conversation with each other and use clear topic sentences to outline themes and debates. (for grads).

Research Proposal (150 points, 15%).

In this major assignment, you will write a research proposal. You may build from your literature review and research question in your previous assignment. The rest of the proposal will address methodology (optional), methods, and the significance of the research. Since this is *not* a methods class, I will *not* be looking to see if your methods are accurate or appropriate for your field. Instead, I am looking to see that you have a well-developed research plan that you can write about for an educated audience. It will include at least **10 scholarly**, peer-reviewed

sources, and it will be about **1,500-2,000 words** long (before citations). **Graduate students** should **cite at least one new source** that justifies your methods/methodology.

Final Reflection (75 points, 7.5%).

The final reflection will be completed in-class as your final exam. As with in-class assignments, the portal to turn in the in-class activities will open during class time and close by the end of class time. **You must be in class to receive points for in-class activities.** It will not be graded on grammar or correctness. If you complete the assignment fully, you will receive full points.

Syllabus Statements

Tentative Schedule (changes will be announced via the learning management system)

Week/Days	In-Class Activities	Readings and Assignments due before class.
Week 1: Monday, January 8 1	<p>Introductions</p> <p>In-Class Activity: Quick Write: Please look at the course outcomes. Given those outcomes and the fact that this course includes people from many different majors, what do you hope to learn from this class?</p> <p>Discuss different types of articles and why we will focus on empirical articles.</p>	
Genre: What structure and form does research writing take in your field?		
Week 1: Thursday, January 11 2	<p>Discuss types of research and using the library.</p> <p>Please explain the difference between primary and secondary sources. What are some examples of primary sources in your field?</p> <p>What is positivist research? What is constructivist research? Can we bridge the two?</p> <p>Watch: Positivism and Constructivism and</p>	<p>Read: Gabe Wang, "What Type of Research Project do you have?" in <i>Student Research and Report Writing</i>.</p> <p>Watch: What is Information Literacy? Be able to define the 10 terms. Finding information Evaluating Information</p> <p>Reading Comprehension Questions: What are primary sources? What are secondary sources? What is positivism? What is constructivism?</p>

	<p>Ontology, Epistemology, and Paradigms.</p> <p>Please explain, to the best of your ability, the value of journal articles in research.</p> <p>Look through RPI's Library guides.</p> <p>Look through Google Scholar.</p> <p>Find journals in your field.</p>	
<p>Week 2: Monday, January 15 No Class, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day</p>		
<p>Week 2: Thursday, January 18 3</p>	<p>Define Genre for first assignment. Discuss: What is genre? How is it different from “movie/book genres”?</p> <p>Practice a genre analysis with emails, instructions, encyclopaedia entry, nutrition labels, sports articles, video game reviews.</p> <p>Use genre analysis worksheet to practice.</p> <p>Discuss first major assignment in more depth.</p>	<p>Read: “Genre” (pg. 16-21) (in BB) AND General Resource about Genre from CredoReference database (you only need to read until the heading “Research”)</p>
<p>Week 3: Monday, January 22 4</p>	<p>Citation and plagiarism Look through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPI's Citation and Style Guides • Citation Styles by discipline. <p>Discuss Quotes, paraphrasing, and summaries.</p> <p>Discuss ethics of citation.</p>	<p>Watch: Choosing a topic and Avoiding Plagiarism</p> <p>Read: Quotes_Paraphrases_Summaries (in BB). Read: Citation Politics (also in BB).</p>

	<p>Look at Citation Managers and Citation Managers Comparison Chart.</p> <p>Go back to the journal in your field and look at what citation style they use.</p> <p>In-Class Activity</p> <p>Create end of paper reference citations in APA format for an article from a journal in your field. (I suggest finding a topic in which you are interested in!). Paraphrase a key argument from that article with a signal phrase and in-text citation.</p>	
<p>Week 3: Thursday, January 25 5</p>	<p>Thesis statements and Evidence</p> <p>Discuss evidence and thesis statements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is evidence? What makes good evidence? • What is a thesis statement? • What makes a good thesis statement? <p>Evidence handouts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go back to the journal article you identified in your field. • Find what kind of evidence they use. • How do they connect it to their thesis statement? 	<p>Watch: Gathering Evidence (be able to define evidence!) Writing a thesis statement</p> <p>Reading comprehension/application questions: What makes a good thesis statement? What is evidence? What kinds of evidence do you think your field uses?</p>
<p>Week 4: Monday, January 29 6</p>	<p>Organization</p> <p>Discuss organization.</p>	<p>Watch: Organizing your argument (pay attention to subclaims and methods for organizing</p>

	<p>Discuss the IMRD format and humanities structures.</p> <p>In-Class: Read “Academic Cross-Cultural Differences – Academic Writing” in BB (in course readings). Focus on “Differences in Written Discourse” section. (Not essentialist).</p> <p>Try visualizing: How to Craft an Organizational Structure for your research article.</p> <p>Practice reverse outlining in class. (PDF also in BB).</p>	<p>subclaims and counterarguments). Read: Transitional Devices.</p> <p>For social and hard sciences organization, Watch: IMRD: the Parts of a Research Paper For an example of humanities organization Read: Organizing Your Analysis (OWL Purdue) (also in BB).</p>
<p>Week 4: Thursday, February 17</p>	<p>Peer Review Preparation and grammar Discuss how to do peer review.</p> <p>Discuss paragraphs and topic sentences, and signposting.</p> <p>Go back to the journal article you identified in your field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use genre analysis worksheet on your articles. 	<p>Read: How to respond to peers’ writing (in BB) Read: Paragraphs (in BB).</p>
<p>Week 5: Monday, February 58</p>	<p>Peer Review</p>	<p>Peer Review</p>
<p>Week 5: Thursday, February 89</p>	<p>Grammar</p>	<p>Read: Proofreading_Editing (In BB). Focus on sentence fragments, run-on sentences, commas, subject-verb agreement, parallel structure, punctuation, capitalization.</p>
<p>Literature Review: What has been said in your field and what questions still exist?</p>		
<p>Week 6: Monday, February, 1210</p>	<p>Looking ahead to the Literature Review. Discuss different types of articles again.</p>	<p>Genre Analysis paper due by class time.</p>

	<p>You can draw from theoretical articles and review articles for a literature review.</p>	
<p>Week 6: Thursday, February 15 11</p>	<p>Discuss the Burkean Parlor. Why is it important to understand what “they say”?</p> <p>Talk about how to use the Libraries' discovery tool Quick Search, and talk about how to use Interlibrary Loan.</p> <p>Who is your subject librarian? Locate the subject librarian for your discipline.</p> <p>Start to develop a specific topic and search for sources about your topic.</p> <p>(<i>Review</i> articles are helpful to understand what “they say.”.)</p> <p>In-Class Activity: What topic do you want to pursue? Why is this topic interesting to you and how can you start to narrow it down? Turn in search queries that you will begin to use to develop this topic and one citation for an article that you might use (in APA format).</p>	<p>Read: “They Say, I Say.” (“Introduction” and “Chapter 1: They Say”) (pg. 1 – 29) Read: Burkean Parlor (in BB).</p>
<p>Week 7: Monday, February 19 No Class, Presidents’ Day</p>		
<p>Week 7: Tuesday, February 20 Follow a Monday schedule 12</p>	<p>Talk about the Burkean Parlor metaphor, and “I say.”</p> <p>What is “yes, no, okay, but”?</p>	<p>Revisit: Choosing a topic and Finding information Quotes_Paraphrases_Summaries (in BB).</p>

	<p>Continue to develop a specific topic and search for sources about your topic.</p>	<p>Read: “They Say, I Say.” (“Chapter 4: Yes/No/Okay, But”) (pg. 53 – 66)</p> <p>Reading comprehension/Application questions: What are the three ways that the author says you can respond to what “they say”? Did you see examples of this with any of the articles that you already looked at in this class? Can you think of other ways we can respond?</p>
<p>Week 7: Thursday, February 22 13</p>	<p>How can we avoid just listing authors in our literature review? How can we get them to “Talk” to each other?</p> <p>Fill out the Literature Review Matrix. Swap and explain to a peer how your authors are “talking” to each other.</p> <p>In-Class Activity: Complete the Literature Review Matrix in class.</p>	<p>Come to class with <i>three</i> sources that you located from the library about your topic.</p> <p>Please have read them well enough to understand their major points (you will not be able to complete the in-class graded activity otherwise).</p>
<p>Week 8: Monday, February 26 14</p>	<p>Briefly talk about how the literature review will bridge into the research proposal.</p> <p>What is are problem statements and research questions?</p> <p>How do they relate to what “they say”?</p>	<p>Read: How to Write a Good Research Question. (also in BB). Read: Elizabeth Wentz, “Chapter 10: Problem statement”</p>

	<p>What do you want to know about your topic? What are you genuinely curious about?</p> <p>Use research question handout.</p> <p>In-Class Activity: Turn in an initial research question. How does this research question display qualities of a “good research” question and how does it stem from your literature review? (These may still change!).</p>	
<p>Week 8: Thursday, February 29 15</p>	Peer Review	<p>Peer Review</p> <p>Extra credit: Scholarship as conversation Tutorial Percipio Certificate due.</p> <p>Percipio Link: https://rpi.percipio.com/linked-contents/a3ac39fe-9080-450f-865b-331d76471bf2/landing</p>
<p>Week 9: Monday, March 4 No Class, spring break</p>		
<p>Week 9: Thursday, March 7 No Class, spring break</p>		
Research Proposal: How can you answer questions that still exist in your field?		
<p>Week 10: Monday, March 11 16</p>	Talk about Research Proposal.	Literature Review Due by class time.
<p>Week 10: Thursday, March 14 17</p>	<p>What is a research proposal? Why do we write them?</p> <p>Read: Example sample proposals in BB and here.</p>	Read: Elizabeth Wentz, “Chapter 12: Research Proposal”
<p>Week 11: Monday, March 18 18</p>	<p>What are methods? Why are they important?</p> <p>What is data and evidence?</p> <p>Talk about Data Collection: How do methods affect what</p>	<p>Undergraduate Students Read:</p> <p>Elizabeth Wentz, “Chapter 11: Research Methods”</p>

	<p>kinds of evidence you collect, and therefore what kinds of questions you can answer?</p> <p>Talk about Data Selection and Reduction: how do you select which evidence you use?</p> <p>Talk about Data Analysis: What is analysis and how is it different than evidence?</p> <p>Talk about validity and reliability. What are they?</p> <p>In-Class: Look through CredoReference and Research methodology: Research Starters Topic For possible research methods in your field.</p> <p>You may also look at some of the sources you used in your literature review for methods they used.</p>	<p>Graduate Students Read: Elizabeth Wentz, “Chapter 11: Research Methods” And: Peter Smagorinski: “The Method Section as Conceptual Epicenter in Constructing Social Science Research Reports” (focus on pg. 389- 399+ “the epicentric role of the methods section” on 405).</p> <p>Qualitative and social scientists would benefit from reading the coding section, but not required.</p> <p>Revisit: Evaluating Information (be able to distinguish between primary and secondary evidence) and Gathering Evidence (be able to define evidence!)</p>
<p>Week 11: Thursday, March 21 19</p>	<p>Debrief on the methods used in different fields.</p> <p>Apply the methods grid to these methods.</p> <p>What methods answer your question?</p>	<p>Reading Comprehension/Application Questions: Please write a brief list of 2-3 methods you found that your field uses. What data does this method use and how does it analyze that data? What kinds of questions can these methods answer?</p> <p>Use the sources we looked at in class, ask peers and professors, and look at example articles from your field (look for articles with a “methods” section, or search for “your field+methods.”)</p>

<p>Week 12: Monday, March 25 20</p>	<p>Use genre analysis worksheet to analyze the methods section of the article you found in your field. Completed in-class.</p> <p>Discuss limitations of methods.</p> <p>Swap with a peer</p> <p>Start writing your methods section.</p>	<p>Reading comprehension/Application questions: Find an article that demonstrates one method used in your field. <i>This means the article should have a “methods” section.</i> What does this methods section do? What does it include? Why is this information important for readers? What kinds of questions can this method answer? What kinds of information can this method NOT answer?</p>
<p>Week 12: Thursday, March 28 21</p>	<p>What is the “story” of your methods section?</p> <p>For materials: What will your materials be and how will they be selected (why?) What is your study design (and why?)</p> <p>Continue writing your proposed methods section.</p> <p><i>Make sure to think about if your methods can answer your questions.</i></p>	<p>Read: “How to Write a Methods Section” (in BB).</p>
<p>Week 13: Monday, April 1 22</p>	<p>What is methodology?</p> <p>Philosophical assumptions inform <i>methodology</i>.</p> <p>Use the library to find a <i>theoretical</i> article from your discipline that can inform your analysis.</p> <p>Talk about “neutrality” in research.</p>	<p>Read: Creswell “Philosophical Assumptions and Interpretive Frameworks”</p> <p>Reading Comprehension Questions: Why does philosophy matter in research? What are “interpretive frameworks”? What is methodology and how is it informed by philosophy and interpretive frameworks? How do you think this relates</p>

		to Ontology, Epistemology, and Paradigms ?
Week 13: Thursday, April 4 23	<p>Talk about Research Oversight Committees, Environmental Health and Safety, Export Controls, Research Administration and Finance.</p> <p>Talk about the Belmont Report and research ethics.</p>	<p>Look through: RPI's research compliance page and IRB, IACUC, IBC. Which of these applies to your research area?</p> <p>Skim: The Belmont Report, and the Declaration of Helsinki. Be able to answer: what are the three basic ethical principles in research?</p>
Week 14: Monday, April 8 24	Peer Review	Peer Review
Week 14: Thursday, April 11 25	<p>Why is it important to align your research?</p> <p>What are some problems that arise if you do not align your questions with your methods?</p> <p>Look back at the methods you started writing last time. Do your research questions, objectives, and methods align?</p> <p>Writing Day</p>	<p>Read: "Aligning the Problem, Research Objectives, Research Questions, and Research Design"</p> <p>Writing Day</p>
Week 15: Monday, April 15 26	Research Proposal Due by class time	Research Proposal Due by Class time
Week 15: Thursday, April 18 27	Research Colloquium	Research Colloquium
Week 16: Monday, April 22 Last Day of Classes, April 24 28	<p>Final Reflection Due In Class</p> <p>In-class final reflection due</p>	In-class final reflection due
Week 16 Thursday, April 25 No Class		
Monday, April 29		

No Class		
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