BUILDING YOUR SCIENCE COMMUNICATION TOOLBOX
BINF 8770 – Spring 2025
Thursdays 9:35am-10:50am, Davison Life Sci B121

Instructor: Holly Bik – hbik@uga.edu, 706-542-2844, Marine Sciences 102

Description: Students will develop a foundational skill set for science communication via hands-on assignments and active learning exercises. Students will learn how to develop and refine an elevator pitch, identify target audiences, and use storytelling skills to communicate compelling scientific narratives in both written and visual formats.

Learning outcomes: Upon successful course completion, students will be able to:

1. Define science communication and discuss the different forms it may take
2. Demonstrate how to assess and define a target audience
3. Design and develop a personalized "elevator pitch" for communicating scientific research
4. Compare and contrast the features and applications of different digital media tools and platforms
5. Compare and contrast the utility of digital tools and in-person science communication activities, and argue when one approach may be preferred over the other
6. Appraise and defend the key elements of narrative storytelling
7. Differentiate how to use various assessment mechanisms and metrics for evaluating the success of science communication goals

Topical Outline:

1. What is Science Communication?
2. Defining your audience
3. Elucidating your professional "brand" and online presence
4. Fundamentals of narrative storytelling
5. Introduction to digital media tools and platforms
6. Adapting your science communication to different formats: written, visual, and audio
7. "Offline" science communication strategies
8. Interacting with journalists and the media
9. Communicating science to policymakers
10. Assessment tools and metrics for evaluating success

Course Logistics:

- **Location:** Davison Life Sciences (B121); hybrid participation options available on request only, at the request of the student and subject to instructor approval. All students are expected to attend every class in person.
- **Logistics:** This is a 1-credit hour course. Class will meet on Thursdays at 9:35am for a total of 15 hours (i.e. we will only meet for 10 class sessions).
- **Grading:** The grade will be S/U, Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory, based on attendance, class participation and a few homework assignments.

- **Attendance:** is mandatory. If an absence is needed to attend a conference or because you are ill/contagious please email the instructor ahead of the class that will be missed. Assignments will still be due at an arranged date.
- **Textbook for the Class:** Students are not required to purchase a textbook for this class – all required readings will be posted as digitized PDFs on eLC. Readings will focus on chapters and exercises from the following books (students are welcome to borrow a copy from the library or purchase their own books if so desired):
    - Kearns, Faith. *Getting to the heart of science communication: a guide to effective engagement. Island Press*, 2021.
    - Besley, John C., and Anthony Dudo. *Strategic science communication: A guide to setting the right objectives for more effective public engagement*. JHU Press, 2022.
- **Website for the class:** This class will use eLC for course materials: https://uga.view.usg.edu/

Discussion Schedule:

Class	Date	Instructor	Topic
-	**Jan 9**	NO CLASS	--
-	**Jan 16**	NO CLASS	--
NA	**Jan 23**	SNOW DAY	UGA CLOSED UNTIL 10AM
-	**Jan 30**	NO CLASS	--
1	**Feb 6**	Bik	Course Intro: Finding our goals & values, SciComm Categories 101
-	**Feb 13**	NO CLASS	--
2	**Feb 20**	Bik	What is Science Communication? Careers, Case Studies, and Mistaken Assumptions [Pre-Class Reading: Kearns Ch. 1 and 2]
3	**Feb 27**	Bik	The importance of building relationships, and how to navigate facts and feelings in SciComm [Pre-Class Reading: Kearns Ch. 3 and 4]
-	**Mar 6**	NO CLASS	SPRING BREAK
4	**Mar 13**	Bik	Building listening skills, and learning how to navigate conflict and collective trauma [Pre-Class Reading: Kearns Ch. 5, 6, and 7]
5	**Mar 20**	Bik	Strategic science communication – brainstorming your strategy, implementation, and evaluation [Pre-Class Reading: Besley & Dudo Ch. 1]
6	**Mar 27**	Bik	The Science Deficit Model and the pitfalls of pursuing science knowledge as a communications goal [Pre-Class Reading: Besley & Dudo Ch. 2]
7	**Apr 3**	Bik	Strategic Science Communication: Show warmth and integrity, and be willing to listen [Pre-Class Reading: Besley & Dudo Ch. 3,4,5]

8	**Apr 10**	Bik	Strategic Science Communication: Show you are not that different, show competence, and share risks and benefits [Pre-Class Reading: Besley & Dudo Ch. 6,7,8]
9	**Apr 17**	Bik	Strategic Science Communication: Share what other people think is normal, foster self-efficacy, and share emotions and frames (carefully!) [Pre-Class Reading: Besley & Dudo Ch. 9,10,11]
10	**Apr 24**	Bik	Class Wrap-up and Showcase: Presenting your Strategic SciComm Plan [Pre-Class Reading: Besley & Dudo Ch. 12]

Mental Health and Wellness Resources: If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit *https://sco.uga.edu*. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services. UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga*)* or crisis support (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies*)*. If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga*)* for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE AND ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY
Students will be expected to abide by the UGA honor code in all aspects of this course. All work must be original and the student's own work. Prior research must be cited in accordance with academic standards. Students must be prepared to demonstrate knowledge and be prepared to discuss all topics, as individuals in the class. Students are expected to perform their work independently, and will be graded individually. However, students are encouraged to collaborate when preparing for class and to engage in critical reading of each other's writing. Any infringements of the honor code that come to the instructor's attention will be remanded to Academic Affairs for disciplinary action.

UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should: 1) register with and provide documentation to the Disability Resource Center (https://drc.uga.edu/); 2) bring a letter to the instructor from DRC indicating you need academic accommodations. This should be done within the first week of class.

Disclaimer: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.