Syllabus: ASTR 578 Spring 2026
Writing Across the Space Sciences
T/Th 09:15-10:00 Rm 208

Instructor: Prof. Gurtina Besla N312
Office Hours: by appointment

Lecture Notes and Assignment Instructions: https://github.com/gurtina/ASTR578_Spring2026.git
Grades, assignment deadlines, and announcements: Class D2L https://d2l.arizona.edu/d2l/home/1714982
All assignments should be submitted through D2L

Course Goals: The primary purpose of this class is to strengthen the technical scientific writing and science communication skills of the student as well as broaden their understanding of research ethics in the fields of Astronomy and Planetary Science. Student knowledge of scientific writing with applications towards writing clear and competitive scientific proposals for funding will be advanced. Ultimately this class will help prepare the student prepare for their careers by teaching them about research ethics and advancing communication skills, written and verbal, as required in the professional practice of the Space Sciences.

Evaluation: (all deadlines are 5 PM)

10% Assignment 2: Mock Abstract **DUE Jan 26, Revisions Jan 28**
10 % Assignment 3: Mock Section 1 **DUE Feb 5**
20% Assignment 4: 10 minute presentation **Feb 19 -Mar 5, abstracts Feb 11**
10% Assignment 5: Proposal Abstract **DUE Mar 5**
10% Assignment 6: Proposal Outline + Revised Abstract **DUE Mar 26**
30% Assignment 10: 3 page scientific justification for an HST/JWST proposal **DUE Apr. 22**
10% Shorter or In-Class Writing & Public Speaking Assignments

Assignments 7-9 are not graded but will be due on the following schedule:

Assignment 7 : Apr 2
Assignment 8 : Apr 9
Assignment 9 : Apr 16

Course Topic Schedule:

January: Proposal Structure overview, Scientific Proposal Writing
February-March: Scientific Talk Structure, Student Presentations, Scientific Writing cont'd
(note : No Class Feb 26th)
April: Research Ethics
April 28, April 30, May 5: Mock Telescope Allocation Panels.

<u>Classroom Behavior</u>

Academic Integrity: All students in this course are expected to abide by the University of Arizona's Code of Academic Integrity http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies/

Note about Proposals: All scientific proposals shared with students in this class are to be kept confidentially and not shared outside the class.

Plagiarism:

I allow, even encourage, collaboration on most assignments. However, **you must always write the final version of an assignment yourself and your work must be unique.** You cannot, for example, utilize exact wording from your advisor's proposal in your own proposal. If I receive verbatim answers from more than one person (e.g. if you supplied the exact same ChatGPT prompt and got the same answer), I will divide the credit received among all those with identical answers. [Note, exceptions will be made if the assignment explicitly asks you to use ChatGPT].

Cheating is not tolerated in any form. If a student is caught cheating on any assignment or presentation the penalty will be failure in the course. In all cases a letter will be sent to the Dean of Students describing the incident. If you are aware that someone else is cheating, it is your obligation to inform the instructor.

It is fine to make use of reference books, journal papers, or websites. But if you do so, make sure to put any text taken **verbatim in quotes and appropriately cite paraphrased text**. In all cases you must list the source of your information. **Plagiarism is strictly prohibited**. If you are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism see: http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity

Note on Generative AI*:* This course will explore the ethical usage of generative artificial intelligence (AI), such as Chat GPT, and assess its practical merit for scientific writing in a professional setting. In this sense, AI will be allowed for class assignments in specific cases, as outlined in the instructions for each assignment. Note that these tools may reflect misconceptions and biases of the data they were trained on and the human-written prompts used to steer them. You are responsible for checking facts, finding reliable sources for, and making a careful, critical examination of *any* work that you submit. **Any use of AI tools or content must be acknowledged and cited (**see https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/). If you do not acknowledge/cite your use of an AI tool, what you submit will be considered a form of cheating or plagiarism. If you have any questions about this policy, please contact Prof. Besla.

Assistance:

Accessibility and Accommodations*:* At the University of Arizona, we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268, https://drc.arizona.edu) to establish reasonable accommodations.

Classroom Attendance:

- If you feel sick, or if you need to isolate or quarantine, stay home. Except for seeking medical care, avoid contact with others and do not travel. If you come to class, please wear a mask.
- Notify your instructor(s) if you will be missing a course meeting or an assignment deadline – please provide at least one day notice.
- Non-attendance for any reason does **not** guarantee an automatic extension of due date or rescheduling of examinations/assessments.
    - Please communicate and coordinate any request directly with your instructor.
- If you must miss the equivalent of more than one week of class, please contact the Dean of Students Office DOS-deanofstudents@email.arizona.edu to share documentation about the challenges you are facing.