

Assignment

ENGL 315: Scientific Writing & Communication

Popular Science Journalism Article & Peer Review

Due: Wednesday, April 25, midnight

Save as: Lastname_PopSciArticle.fileextension (Newbold_PopSciArticle.doc)

Turn In: On BlackBoard, under Content

Value: 100 points (11% of overall grade)

Description and Rationale: While we often think of scientists and researchers as primarily working in private and secluded laboratories, it is important to remember that *what* the scientists are researching affects the larger society in some way. Furthermore, scientists are dependent upon funding that comes from agencies supported by communities and governments. Because of this, scientists have moral, economic, and political reasons for communicating with the public, attempting to ensure citizens that their work is important and valuable to society and that it is conducted according to common ethical standards.

One of the more common ways for scientists to communicate to the public is through press releases and news articles. Because public readers of these articles are not typically specialists in a scientist's field of study, a scientist communicating with broad audiences will be required to "popularize" his or her work in a way that makes sense. This often means defining complicated terms (or removing them entirely), leaving out technical procedures, summarizing data into statistics, and making metaphorical connections between ideas.

As you become more and more advanced in your field of study, it will be increasingly important to recognize how you can popularize your own work so that it can be accessible to the audiences it affects.

Assignment: For this assignment, you will locate a scientific article published in a peer-reviewed journal. You will then re-write the article to be accessible to a public audience. In order to do this, you will need to analyze the data and procedures, summarize them, and simplify the terminology and text to take an angle on the topic. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO COVER EVERYTHING** included in the original article, but you do need to make a coherent claim using the facts from the article. Following common newspaper print guidelines, you will be required to keep your text between 500 and 600 words, using the inverted-pyramid writing format (naming the most important information first). You will be graded on your ability to appropriately reach a public audience by creatively summarizing, metaphorizing, and otherwise explaining your angle in an engaging (but ethical) manner. To do this, you must keep the integrity of the findings in the original article as best as possible, and not exaggerate or make up claims that cannot be drawn from the original article.

As a part of the assignment, we will conduct a roundtable, peer-review edit in class on Monday, April 23. This will require you to **HAVE A ROUGH DRAFT** ready to share in class. Having a rough draft and participating in the peer review is worth 25% of the assignment grade.

RESOURCES FOR FINDING ARTICLES:

Science Direct: <http://www.sciencedirect.com>

Alpha Galileo: <http://www.alphagalileo.org/Default.aspx>

EXAMPLES OF POPULAR SCIENCE JOURNALSIM:

Scientific American: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/>

Tigra Scientifica (Clemson University):

<http://www.clemson.edu/academics/programs/creativeinquiry/documents/TigrascientificaSpring2011.pdf>

Science Daily: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/>