

**University of Guelph**  
**College of Biological Science**  
**Department of Human Health and Nutritional Sciences**  
**COURSE OUTLINE**  
**HHNS\*6000: HHNS-SPARK**  
**Fall 2016**

## **Course Description**

The purpose of this class is to learn applied research communications techniques, through practical experience. Research shows most Canadians get their health news from the media, making HHNS students' understanding of the news writing process pertinent and career-oriented.

This course experience will be part of the successful SPARK (Students Promoting Awareness of Research Knowledge) program at the University of Guelph, in which students write, edit and coordinate a variety of news publications that highlight University of Guelph research activities primarily for the public, as well as for specific research stakeholders (e.g. research funding decisions makers, granting councils).

HHNS-SPARK students will learn about communication theory and application, and they will write two journalistic stories that must be considered publishable by the course coordinator Dr. Owen Roberts, an experienced journalist. To establish the story topics, students will explore research leads on research ongoing at University of Guelph. In consultation with the course coordinator, students will develop a topic, research the story and write the story to be ready for publication. These stories will be evaluated by Dr. Roberts, with the primary assessment being whether the individual stories are publishable in the popular media, outside of the scientific press.

To practice scientific analysis and synthesis skills in relation to news stories, students will find a news story in the mass media related to a scientific topic of their choice and review it from a scientific perspective. This will involve finding primary scientific articles that support the news story and critically analyzing those papers and relating the results to the content of the news story. This scientific critique will be graded by course co-coordinator Prof. Alison Duncan. Students will also practice reviewing the news story from a journalistic perspective in which they will apply theory learned from Dr. Roberts, who will also grade the journalistic critique.

This course is largely self-directed. From Dr. Roberts, students will learn the concepts related to research communication through their practice of writing two news stories, as well as the steps involved in assembling a news story on a scientific topic. Students will receive formal lecture in the beginning of the semester on news writing, and one-on-one instruction and mentoring through the semester.

**Teaching Team**

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**Class Schedule**

Class meetings will occur in the Office of Research Communications (UC 445) periodically throughout the semester at a time that works for the group. The meetings will occur on Thursdays from 11:15am to 12:45pm. The schedule of dates will be determined and will include 5-7 class meetings with the first one on Thurs Sept. 15, 2016. Efforts in the course will be primarily self-directed with periodic consultation with both course coordinators in these class meetings and through email.

**Learning Goals**

Upon completion of this course, students should:

1. Describe the concepts related to communicating research.
2. Learn the steps involved in assembling a news story on a scientific topic.
3. Understand the basic components of scientific writing in journalism.
4. Critically analyze science stories in the media.
5. Have improved journalistic writing skills.
6. Have improved scientific writing skills.

**Methods of Assessment**

Form of Assessment	Weight of Assessment	Date of Assessment	Course Content /Activity	Learning Outcome Addressed
News Story#1 (assigned)	30%	TBD	Class discussions and independent work	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
News Story#2 (not assigned)	30%	TBD	Class discussions and independent work	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Scientific and Journalistic News Critique	35%	By end of semester	Class discussions and independent work	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Effort/Progress throughout semester	5%	–	Class discussions and independent work	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

## **Course and University Policies**

### **When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement**

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#).

### **Accessibility**

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact Student Accessibility Services (formerly the Centre for Students with Disabilities) as soon as possible.

For more information, contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email [csd@uoguelph.ca](mailto:csd@uoguelph.ca).

### **Academic Misconduct**

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor. The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

### **E-mail Communication**

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

### **Drop Date**

The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is the 40<sup>th</sup> class day. To

confirm the actual date please see the schedule of dates in the Undergraduate Calendar. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the [Undergraduate Calendar](#).

**Copies of out-of-class assignments**

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

**Recording of Materials**

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

**Grading**

If you are absent for a class, you are expected to make up missed material on your own. Please seek input from fellow classmates on any material you have missed.

## Campus Resources

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**If you are concerned about any aspect of your academic program:**

Make an appointment with a [Program Counsellor](#) in your degree program.

**If you are struggling to succeed academically:**

There are numerous academic resources offered by the [Learning Commons](#) including, Supported Learning Groups for a variety of courses, workshops related to time management, taking multiple choice exams, and general study skills. You can also set up individualized appointments with a learning specialist.

**If you are struggling with personal or health issues:**

[Counselling services](#) offers individualized appointments to help students work through personal struggles that may be impacting their academic performance.

[Student Health Services](#) is located on campus and is available to provide medical attention.

For support related to stress and anxiety, besides Health Services and Counselling Services, [Kathy Somers](#) runs training workshops and one-on-one sessions related to stress management and high performance situations.

**If you have a documented disability or think you may have a disability:**

[Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) formerly Centre for Students with Disabilities can provide services and support for students with a documented learning or physical disability. They can also provide information about how to be tested for a learning disability.