

The University of Manitoba
Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences



COURSE TITLE: Plant Science Seminar

Department: Plant Science

Course Number: PLNT 7250

Academic Session: Fall 2011 and Winter 2012

Credit Hours: 3

Prerequisites and how they apply to this course

No prerequisites. Students should be registered as MSc students in the Plant Science Department.

Classroom Location: Rm 218 Plant Science

Meeting Days and Class Hours

Classes for this seminar course will normally run every Tuesday from 1:00 – 2:15 pm over both fall and spring terms except when indicated by the course schedule or the instructor. Thursday sessions have been scheduled for all students this year in September and early October due to high enrollment. Other Thursday sessions will be scheduled for individual students to review presentations on an appointment basis.

Department Office location: Rm 222 Agriculture Phone Number: 474-8221

Course Web Page: Angel course website at <https://angel.cc.umanitoba.ca>

Instructor Information

Name & Title: Dr. Yvonne Lawley, Assistant Professor, Department of Plant Science

(Students are welcome to address me by name as either Yvonne or Dr. Lawley)

Office Location: 105 Plant Science

Office Phone Number: 474-6504

Email Address: yvonne_lawley@umanitoba.ca (preferred form of communication outside class)

Office Hours: By appointment.

Please contact me by email to set up an appointment at a mutually agreeable time. I also meet with students on an “open door” basis. If my office door is open and you have a question, knock and inquire if I have a moment to speak with you. I teach another course immediately following this course on Tuesdays. Please approach me before class if you have questions during class time.

Course Philosophy

Students' Learning Responsibilities

1. Participate – Active participation is required to get the most out of the time you invest in attending this course. Quietly sitting in the back will not help you learn and develop the communication skills that are the focus of this course.
2. Prepare and practice – Most weeks, this course should not dominate your schedule, but it does require timely attention before class each week to get the most out of in-class activities. Some weeks require more preparation than others. Some activities (ex. research seminar and poster assignment) require significant advance preparation. Time management and planning strategies for presentations will be discussed in class and the method that works best for you should be put into practice on a regular basis.
3. Respect – Presenters need an audience. Regular attendance and active participation create a positive atmosphere for our learning community. As part of the course you will receive and be asked to provide constructive criticism. Learning how to do both effectively with respect are important professional skills to develop as active professionals in academic communities.

Why this course is useful?

Communication skills are one of the most valuable skills you can develop during your graduate program. Every type of employer is looking for graduates with strong communication skills. Scientific communication skills are essential for both disseminating the results of your research and for successfully competing for employment after graduation. Communication skills can only be learned by a combination of practice and observation. This course gives you the opportunity to do both and develop your scientific communication skills for a variety of academic settings and formats.

Who should take this course? How does this course fits into the curriculum?

This is a required course for all MSc students in the Plant Science graduate program.

Course Description/Objectives

Graduate Calendar Description

Principles of oral and poster presentations, visual aid design and organization are discussed and then applied by students in presentations of their current research, and agricultural issues. Course evaluated on a pass/fail basis.

Instructional Methods

Lectures: Several introductory lectures will cover aspects of preparing and presenting seminars and posters.

Presentations: Students will prepare and present presentations using a variety of formats. Some presentations will be videotaped for student feedback during first term.

Assignments: Short “out of class” activities and journaling assignments will be assigned to support the development of communication and time management skills.

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to teach students the principles of communicating scientific information in a number of different formats and to provide students with the opportunity to develop and practice these communication skills.

Learning outcomes

1. Prepare and confidently deliver academic presentations.
2. Understand standard formats and conventions of academic oral and poster presentations in the field of plant science.
3. Identify your target audience and adapt your presentation style and content for the audience.
4. Practice active audience participation by asking questions of presenters.
5. Develop time management skills.
6. Practice giving and receiving constructive criticism.

Description of Examinations

There are no written exams for this course. All assessment will be based on in class presentations and assignments.

Presentations and Assignments

See course schedule for presentation and assignment due dates. Assignment descriptions given at end of syllabus.

1. Presentations
 - i. Extemporaneous Presentation
 - ii. Instructional Presentation
 - iii. Extension Presentation

2. Assignments
 - i. Presentation Outlines
 - ii. Practicing SMART goal setting
 - iii. Seminar networking
 - iv. Asking good questions
 - v. Chairing a seminar session
3. Research Poster
4. Research Seminar

Grade Evaluation

Presentations	20%
Assignments	10%
Research poster	20%
Research seminar	50%
Final Grade	Pass/Fail

Important Dates

September 8-21 – Course revision period

March 16 – Last date for voluntary withdrawal from Fall/Winter term courses

Texts, Readings, Materials

There is no textbook for this course. Required readings for this course will be posted on the course website or provided in class. A list of library books and websites that may be useful to you during this course as supplementary readings will be posted on the course website.

Course Policies

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at the start of each class period. Late assignments will lose 20% per working day (Mon-Fri) and will not be graded if they are more than one week late. Assignments will not be accepted via email. Late assignments should be turned in at the instructor's office (Rm 105 Plant Science). Slide assignments under the office door if it is not open. If a student is unable to complete an assignment due to a medical or other emergency, contact the professor as soon as possible by email. Be prepared to provide a doctor's note or other documentation.

Missed Assignments

Students will receive a grade of incomplete until all assignments are submitted and presentations/seminars have been completed.

Presentation Schedule

Presentation dates for individual students are listed in the course schedule. Students may arrange to change their presentation dates by finding another student willing to exchange dates and then seek final approval from the course instructor for this change. These changes should be arranged a minimum of one week in advance for presentations given during the fall term. Changes to the research seminar schedule for the winter term must be finalized by December 6th, unless exceptional emergency circumstances occur.

Cell phones and computer use

Please turn off your cell phone during class. Students are encouraged to bring computers with them to class for note taking or for use when delivering presentations. Please respect the instructor and your fellow class member by refraining from last minute assignment work and distracting use of web searching or communication (email, instant messaging, facebook, etc.) during class time.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism or any other form of cheating in examinations, term tests or academic work is subject to serious academic penalty. Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, exam impersonation and duplicate submission See Section 8 on Academic Integrity in the University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar 11/12, available at:

<http://crscalprod1.cc.umanitoba.ca/Catalog/ViewCatalog.aspx?pageid=viewcatalog&catalogid=60&chapterid=227&topicgroupid=4056&loaduserredits=False>.

Use of Third Party Detection and Submission Tools

Electronic detection tools may be used to screen assignments in cases of suspected plagiarism.

Class#	Fall Term	Date
1	Introductions and syllabus review	Sept 13
2	Lecture #1 - Effective communication, networking, constructive criticism Instructional Presentation topics due	Sept 20
3	Lecture #2 - Planning presentations and posters, setting SMART goals Extemporaneous Presentations (Cunchun, Simranjit, Sarah,)	Sept 22 (Thursday)
4	Lecture #3 Preparing effective presentation slides Extemporaneous Presentations (Aaron, Chelsea, Sakaria, Kristine)	Sept 27
5	Lecture #4 Tables, question period, chairing sessions Extemporaneous Presentations (Chang, Rachel, Kristen P, Adam)	Sept 29 (Thursday)
	Instructional Presentations (Adam, Kristine, Simranjit)	Oct 4
	Instructional Presentations (Aaron, Chang, Sarah, <i>Rachel</i>) Extension Presentation plan due	Oct 6 (Thursday)
	Instructional Presentations (Kristen P, <i>Chelsea</i> , Cunchun, Sakaria)	Oct 11
6	No class	Oct 18
7	Extension Presentation (Simranjit, Kristine, Aaron)	Oct 25
8	Extension Presentation (Rachel, Cunchun, Kristen P, Chang)	Nov 1
9	Extension Presentation (Chelsea, Sakaria, Adam, Sarah)	Nov 8
10	Research Poster Presentation (Chang, Chelsea, Adam)	Nov 15
11	Research Poster Presentation (Rachel, Sarah, Sakaria, Cunchun)	Nov 22
12	Research Poster Presentation (Aaron, Kristine, Simranjit, Kristen P)	Nov 29
13	No class, Fall term assignment journals due, Titles for research seminars due	Dec 6
	Winter Term	
14	Research Seminar – Rachel	Jan 10
15	Research Seminar – Chang	Jan 17
16	Research Seminar – Sarah	Jan 24
17	Research Seminar – Adam	Jan 31
18	Research Seminar – Kristine	Feb 7
19	Research Seminar – Chelsea	Feb 14
20	Reading Week	Feb 21
21	Research Seminar – Kristen P	Feb 28
22	Research Seminar – Cunchun	Mar 6
23	Research Seminar – Aaron	Mar 13
24	Research Seminar – Simranjit	Mar 20
25	Research Seminar - Sakaria	Mar 27
26	No class	April 3

Presentations

1 - Extemporaneous Presentation:

- “Tell me about your research ...” - the purpose of this presentation is to prepare to answer this frequently asked question during conference networking or job interviews.
- Students will present a 2-3 minute overview of their research topic or area.
- Students should speak conversationally without notes or visual aids for this presentation.
- Students will be asked to answer follow up questions from their colleagues about their research topics.

2 - Instructional Presentations

- Choose a plant science topic that you know well and prepare a 10 minute presentation for an undergraduate student or graduate student audience. Examples of topics could include: identifying cereal crop stages, how to use and maintain a pipettor, fertilizer recommendations for canola, when to use ANOVA vs. regression.
- No power point slides can be used for this presentation. Overhead projector (tables/figures), whiteboard, or demonstration props are the only visual aids to be used for this presentation.
- Topics and proposed visual aids should be submitted to the instructor by Sept 20.

3 - Extension Presentation

- Choose your target audience: general public, farmers, industry, commodity group.
- Choose a subject that would be of interest to that audience.
- Prepare a 10 min presentation with a targeted extension message.
- This presentation must incorporate the use of at least one table and one figure.
- Use any combination of audio visual aids, props, or power point slides.
- A description of the audience, title, and audio visual needs should be submitted to the instructor by Oct 6

Assignments

Assignments 1-4 are to be composed/assembled in a paper or electronic journal. If using a paper journal, it can be of any size and shape, or a recycled notebook from a previous class with good, clean pages. Please ensure your hand writing is legible. Electronic journals could be composed in Microsoft Word or OneNote. Journals are to be submitted to the instructor on Dec 6 and will be returned after the break.

1 - Presentation outlines

Planning is essential for an effective presentation. In your journal, prepare an outline for each of the three presentation given during the first term (Extemporaneous, Instructional, Extension). The outline should include:

- Point form descriptions of the presentation sections
- Identify the audience for the presentation and describe assumptions you are making about the audience
- Identify your take home message(s)

2- Practicing SMART goal setting

Time management skills are needed to prepare for presentations when you have multiple demands on your time (research, classes, teaching, family, community involvement). Create a work schedule for completing the Instructional and Extension presentations. Setting SMART Goals is one method you could use to complete your presentation preparations within your work schedule. Write down 3-5 SMART goals for at least one work session for these two presentations. Indicate how much time you *plan* to spend on each SMART goal and the time you *actually* spend on each goal.

3- Seminar networking

Networking is not an essential skill to deliver a research seminar or poster. However – it is a skill that is often used immediately before or after attending or presenting research seminars and posters. Networking is a form of academic communication and takes practice to do with comfort and confidence. Networking typically involves two parts: 1) learning about others and 2) introducing yourself through conversation or correspondence. Sometimes you are lucky and get an introduction via colleagues and other times it involves taking the initiative to introduce yourself, regardless it takes self-confidence and practice to do well.

During the pre-seminar coffee session for Advanced Plant Science Seminar (or other seminars and workshops you attend) during the fall term, introduce yourself to a minimum of three people on separate occasions. They should be students or staff from the department that you don't know or don't know well. They could also be visitors from outside of the department. Find out who they are, what they do, the research they are involved with, or where they are from. Be prepared to tell them about yourself – practice your extemporaneous presentation.

Write three one paragraph journal entries to describe:

- Who you met during your networking session and what you learned about them?
- How effectively were you able to tell them about yourself and your research?
- How well you were able to carry the conversation?
- What might you try differently next time?

4- Asking good questions

Asking good questions can add a lot to the dialogue between speakers and the audience following a seminar. For most of us, it takes concentration and practice to confidently ask questions during seminars and poster presentations. During or following three Advanced Plant Science Seminars that you attend during the fall term, come up with a list of two or more questions that you would pose to the presenter. If possible, I encourage you to ask these questions during the question period following the seminar. In three separate journal entries list:

- The title of the seminar and date
- Presenter's name and affiliation
- A 2-5 sentence summary of the presentation, or its take home message
- Your questions for the presenter

5- Chairing Second Term Seminars

The last speaker in the second term will act as chairperson for the first seminar session and all subsequent sessions will be chaired by the previous week's speaker. The chair is responsible for:

- Introducing the speaker,
- Accepting questions from the audience (to help the class develop questioning skills and ensure class participation the chair should accept the first 2-3 questions from class members)
- Thanking the speaker on behalf of the audience
- Ensuring that the seminar room is set up appropriately and that the necessary equipment is present and working properly

Research Poster

- Preparation a research poster that could be delivered at a research conference.
- Prepare a 3-5 minute poster presentation that would be delivered to conference participants when coming to view your poster at a conference poster session.
- The posters are to be developed electronically using presentation software, such as PowerPoint, and will be presented as virtual posters using a digital projector (as opposed to actually printing them).

Research Seminar

- Prepare a 35 minute research seminar. It should include 1) the objectives of your research proposal, 2) integrate your research (or intended research) with existing related research in the literature 3) summary of your research date (it can be preliminary).
- Students will use a standard presentation program such as PowerPoint and a digital projector for visual aids.
- All members of the Plant Science Department are invited to attend these seminars.
- The seminar presentation length should be a 35(\pm 2) minute presentation based on the student's research topic. Timing is important! Seminars that are not close to time will be repeated.
- Tables and figures must be included in the presentation.
- Presentation titles must be submitted to the instructor by Dec 6 to allow a listing of all second term seminars to be posted.
- A presentation outline should be submitted to the instructor at least two weeks prior to the student's scheduled seminar. Your outline will be due by _____.
- A final title must be submitted no later than one week before the presentation to ensure the correct information is in the seminar announcement poster. Your final title will be due by _____.
- To be handed-in at time of presentation: A printed copy of all slide images (6/page) (text, Figures and Tables). Your seminar will be presented on _____.