

# SCIE 300 Communicating Science September 2011

## Dates and times:

Section 112 and 101: Tuesday 12:30

Section 112: Wednesday and Friday 12:00 pm

Section 101: Wednesday and Friday 1:00 pm

Classes start Wednesday, September 7; Classes end Friday, December 2

There will be no class on Friday, November 11 (Remembrance Day)

## Credits and hours:

Credits: 3

Standing: 3rd- or 4th-year standing required

Co-requisite: One of BIOL 300, STAT 200, or STAT 241

Hours: Three hours of class time is scheduled each week. You should budget five additional hours per week for homework, assignments, and readings.

Calendar entry: [SCIE 300](#)

## Location:

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Friday
Section 112	12:30 HENN 200	12:00 IBLC 185	12:00 IBLC 185
Section 101		1:00 GEOG 214	1:00 GEOG 214

## Course description:

Welcome! You are part of a new course within the Faculty of Science at UBC. The overall goals of SCIE 300 are to illustrate the importance of communicating scientific information and provide you with some of the skills you need to become good science communicators. Wherever your career takes you, communication skills are highly valued, transferable, and arguably more important than even before.

SCIE 300 is an interactive course divided broadly into two main sections: communicating science within the scientific community and communicating science to broader non-expert audiences. Communicating about science in any form involves some type of writing. So, unsurprisingly, there will be a lot of writing in this course. But you will not be writing long essays. We will cover the structure of scientific papers and the peer-review process. You will have the chance to write reports on your own research, summarize other people's research, and apply methods you can use to present your data so that they are clear, support your arguments, and are not misleading. In addition, you will have at least three opportunities throughout the term to give presentations. A library session will focus on performing good literature searches and using online citation managers, such as RefWorks.

Thinking about reaching broader audiences, you will explore online science communication, contribute to a course blog, and write scripts for the audio and video pieces you will create. This part of the course will feature science journalism and storytelling. You read that correctly – there will be storytelling and you will get to read the news in a third-year university course. Could there be a better course? The catch – *you* will be telling the stories and writing the news. You will explore the similarities and differences between science and journalism and learn the basics of writing in journalistic style. Best practice examples of using audio and video to tell science stories will be discussed and your own creations will be shared on the course blog. With a little luck, SCIE 300 will make you famous. Well, maybe with a lot of luck, but if you set high goals for yourself, you will learn a lot in this class.

### **Learning objectives:**

*By the end of this course a successful learner will be able to:*

- A. Communicate scientific information to scientific audiences, specifically:
  - 1. Compose well-written documents at the senior undergraduate level in scientific style
  - 2. Participate in a presentation as both presenter and audience member
  - 3. Communicate numerical information visually to scientific audiences
  - 4. Communicate scientific information using multimedia and Web technologies
- B. Communicate scientific information to non-expert audiences, specifically:
  - 1. Compose well-written documents at the senior undergraduate level in journalistic style
  - 2. Participate in a presentation as both presenter and audience member
  - 3. Communicate numerical information visually to non-expert audiences
  - 4. Communicate scientific information using multimedia and Web technologies
- C. Critically appraise scientific information and reporting, specifically:
  - 1. Analyze formats for communicating science, e.g. scholarly articles, news reports, blogs
  - 2. Explain critical factors that impact how science is communicated
  - 3. Evaluate scientific information from various sources

### **Evaluating SCIE 300**

The development of SCIE 300 was made possible by the Faculty of Science and the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund. This is only the second term the course has been offered. That means we're still learning a lot about the best way to teach such a unique course and to do that we need your help. In order to evaluate the success of this course, we will need your input. After obtaining your permission, we will ask you to complete surveys about the course. We may also ask you to participate in interviews and focus groups. We want to know if the course is meeting your expectations, if you have suggestions for improvements, and if there are topics you think should be included in future versions of the course. We will be in touch a few times throughout the term asking for your help, but feedback at any time is most welcome.

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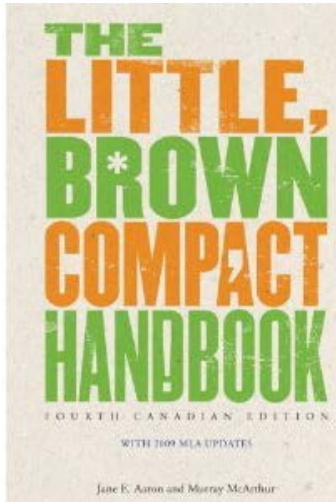
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## Required handbook and online resource:



This writing handbook is required for the course. Both the physical copy and the e-text are acceptable.

*The Little, Brown Compact Handbook, Fourth Canadian Edition*  
Jane E. Aaron and Murray McArthur

You also need access to the online resource MyCanadianCompLab. This comes with the purchase of the physical book or you can buy an access code.

Please refer to the “Course Materials” document on Vista for more information on both of these resources and for instructions on getting started with MyCanadianCompLab.

## Library visit:

We’ll remind you again later, but please mark *Friday, September 23* in your calendars. On this day, the class will be held in the newly refurbished and very fancy *lower level computer lab of Woodward Library*.

## Participation:

Your success in this course is highly dependent on your level of participation. Your colleagues’ success and stress level are also dependent on your participation. A blog cannot work without everyone’s input. Class discussions and group activities without group engagement will be unfulfilling. Peer assessment that is not handled professionally is unconstructive. So, please do your part for the course: attend class, participate, and do your fair share of group work.

We have not allocated a specific amount of your final grade for participation. But that does not mean that it does not count. Your attendance and participation will be observed and recorded.

## Professionalism:

Whether you are working with a publisher on a research paper or book, submitting an article to a newspaper or magazine, or contributing an abstract to a conference, deadlines are extremely important. Likewise for SCIE 300.

The two major assignments in SCIE 300 have many smaller components (steps) due before the final project deadlines. These assignments are designed in this manner so that you receive feedback during the process and to help keep you on track. The assignment steps have hard deadlines. They must be met or you will receive a mark of zero for that component of the project. You are still eligible for full points in the remainder of the project components. However, by failing to submit the earlier project steps you forfeit those points and valuable feedback from your peers, instructors, and TAs that will help you complete the subsequent steps.

Only final assignment submissions will be accepted late, but will carry a penalty of 10% reduction in mark per day, up to a maximum of five days.

Should you miss a class on which an assessment is made (for example, on one of your presentation days) or fail to meet one of the hard deadlines, you must have an acceptable excuse and supporting documentation (for example, a doctor's note) in order to obtain an extension without penalty. The only acceptable excuses are illness, serious family emergency, or a major religious holiday. Whenever possible, you should let the instructor and your group members know of your absence in advance.

Attendance is expected at all classes, team meetings, workshops and scheduled activities. Do not schedule interviews, meetings, or other events during class times. Finally, please arrive on time for every class.

Please see the separate document "Assessment Regulations, SCIE 300" for further details.

### **Academic integrity:**

Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in SCIE 300. Present only your own ideas or, when presenting other people's ideas, cite the appropriate source. Course work must be completed independently or, in the case of group work, equally distributed among group members. The UBC Learning Commons has a wealth of information on academic integrity. Please visit this website and familiarize yourself with the difference between quoting and paraphrasing as well as the correct way to cite sources. There is also an entertaining and interactive animation you can watch.

<http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/get-study-help/academic-integrity/>

To test your knowledge, please complete this short quiz.

<http://www.bio.ucalgary.ca/undergrad/plagiarismquiz.html>

Plagiarism and dishonesty is not only something we think about at universities. Here is a real-world example of the trouble plagiarism can get you in.

<http://www.gazette.com/articles/gazette-58112-stories-four.html>

### **Blog:**

SCIE 300 has a [course blog](#)! If you have not already registered on UBC Blogs and joined the SCIE 300 blog, please do so as soon as possible. Please refer to the separate document on the course WebCT Vista site for instructions on signing into the course blog, including the required password.

## **WebCT Vista:**

SCIE 300 has a WebCT Vista site. Vista is an online class management tool. It is your responsibility to check the Vista site for announcements. We will do our best to remind you in class, but checking Vista at least once per week is the best way to stay informed. The Vista site will serve as a repository for lecture notes, handouts, assignments, grading rubrics, and some other resources. Some of your assignments will be submitted on the Vista site using Turnitin. The discussion board and email can also be used within Vista.

If you have a general question about the course, we encourage you to use the discussion board because many other students probably have the same question. In addition, you may get a faster answer from your peers than by emailing your instructors. If you have a question that is more personal, you are of course welcome to email the instructors.

Go to [www.vista.ubc.ca](http://www.vista.ubc.ca), log in with your CWL, and look for SCIE 300 Communicating Science.

## **TurnItIn:**

SCIE 300 will use the anti-plagiarism service called [TurnItIn](#). You will upload some assignments directly to TurnItIn. The service then compares your submission with an archive of documents, including Web pages, to check for plagiarism. For more information about UBC's use of TurnItIn please visit:

<http://www.vpacademic.ubc.ca/integrity/turnitin/index.htm>

## **Peer assessment:**

One of the features of TurnItIn is called PeerMark. This gives classes the ability to use peer assessment – all online within the TurnItIn environment. Peer assessment must be performed in a constructive, respectful manner. Details on how this feature works and how it will be used in SCIE 300 will follow.

Peer assessment will also be used for evaluating your presentations in SCIE 300.

Finally, two of the assignments in SCIE 300 involve group work. To minimize any unfairness that can occur in group work scenarios, you will have the opportunity to peer assess the contribution of your fellow group members to the projects.

## **SCIE 300 assessment summary:**

Short, individual presentation: 3%  
Scientific investigation project: 28%  
Science outreach project: 28%  
Library research assignment: 3%  
Writing assignments: 9%  
 Blogging assignment: 9%  
 Fusion Project: 20%