

21F225 (graduate students)

21F226 (undergraduate)

Advanced Workshop in Writing for Science & Engineering: ESL

A HASS Communication-Intensive Course*

Fall 2009
T, Th 2:00-3:30
Room 14E-325

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Office Hours: M 9-10; W 2-3 and by
appointment.

Listeners are generally not accepted in
21F225/6.

Course Description

If you are a junior, senior or graduate student in the sciences or engineering at MIT **and** if your English writing skills are advanced but not native, 21F.225/6 is the right place for you. This workshop provides the opportunity to analyze, practice and receive feedback on many of the types of professional and academic documents that you will write in your engineering or science studies and careers. You will find the workshop most productive if you are already engaged in a research project; you can then use your own data in the course assignments. Class members are occasionally the authors of the work under review and are also occasionally responsible for leading group discussions and for short oral explanations.

The subject, then, is not a grammar class although it addresses many of the common sentence-level problems of **advanced** non-native writers of professional English. Nor is it a thesis editing service though we spend considerable time developing students' editorial skills. Constructive participation in the group analyses, discussions and speaking exercises that take place in class is crucial to the learning process and to the success of the workshop. As a result, regular attendance and timely completion of assignments are requirements of 21.225/6. If you expect to have difficulty in arriving on time, preparing for and attending almost every class, and completing assignments on time, you do not belong in the 21F225/6.

*(Undergraduate HASS CI subjects require at least 20 pages of writing divided among 3-5 assignments. Of these 3-5 assignments, at least one must be revised and resubmitted. HASS CI subjects offer students substantial opportunity for oral expression, through presentations, student-led discussion, or class participation. In order to guarantee sufficient attention to student writing and substantial opportunity for oral expression, the maximum number of students per section in a HASS CI subject is 18, except in the case of a subject taught without sections (where the faculty member in charge is the only instructor). In that case, enrollments can rise to 25, if a writing fellow is attached to the subject.)

Students in this workshop are encouraged to consult with tutors in the Writing and Communication Center, Building 12-132, for help with any writing tasks. The center offers free one-on-one professional advice about all types of academic and professional writing and about all aspects of oral presentations. Go to <http://humanistic.mit.edu/wcc> and click on "Appointments." The Center's core hours are Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; evening and Sunday hours vary by semester. Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours: <http://web.mit.edu/writing/Center/faq.html>

Required Course Texts and Materials (Tech Coop & in the library)

- 1) Alley, M. *The Craft of Scientific Writing*
- 2) *New Spring 2009 Course Packet & Workbook* (Copy Center, 11-004) (CW)
- 3) Raimes, A. *Grammar Troublespots*
- 4) On-line English-English dictionary (e.g., *American Heritage* or *Oxford American*)
- 5) A formal, academic **article, or model paper**, reporting on research from a respected English language refereed **academic** journal in your field, or from *Nature*. The article must include an abstract, subheadings, figures, tables and references. The article may **not** be a letter or conference proceedings. Bring one copy to me; have another copy with you in every 21F225/6 class.
- 6) A binder with pockets to hold extra materials.

Recommended Texts & Materials (available at Tech Coop or in the library)

Alley, M. *The Art of Scientific Presentations*

Azar, B., *Chartbook: A Reference Grammar*

Day, R. *How to Write & Publish a Scientific Paper*

Hacker, D. *Pocket Style Manual*

Mayfield Handbook of Scientific and Technical Writing (On Line:
web.mit.edu/odsue/wac_engineering/mayfield/home.htm)

Michaelson, H. *How to Write & Publish Engineering Papers & Reports* (out of print; see me to borrow a copy.)

Swales, J. & C. Feak. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*

Wilkinson, A. *The Scientist's Handbook for Writing Papers and Dissertations*

William, J. Style: *Ten Lessons in Clarity & Grace*

Recommended Sites

Academic Communication in English

upc.es/slt/recursos/English_resources/academic/academic_text.htm#9

Academic English Café. <http://academicenglishcafe.com/default.aspx>

How Stuff Works. www.science.howstuffworkds.com/

Attendance & Participation

Ten percent of your grade is based on punctuality, attendance, familiarity with the required readings, and constructive contributions to class discussions. An attendance sheet will be circulated at the start of each class for students to sign. Please be familiar with the course schedule, read the indicated passages in the materials, prepare the tasks for in-class discussion that are provided in the Course Packet and come to each class prepared. Those who do not prepare, contribute to discussions, complete assignments on time and attend class regularly cannot receive an A for the course.

Grading Guidelines in 21F225/6

Your grade will be based on the following:

- (1) Punctuality, attendance, preparedness and participation (10%)
 - You are expected to come prepared, on time and to almost every class.
 - You are expected to take responsibility for any necessary tardiness or absences by notifying me in advance, and by consulting with a classmate to learn what was covered in the class that you missed.
 - You are expected to contribute constructively to class dynamics.
- 2) Collected exercises (5) (10%)
 - No late assignments will be accepted unless arranged in advance.
- 3) In-class, open-book quizzes (5) (10%)
 - No make-up quizzes will be given unless arranged in advance.
- 4) Memos (4) (10%)
- 5) Four shorter formal papers (40%)
 - No late papers will be accepted unless arranged in advance.
 - All shorter papers will require revisions.
- 6) Final long paper (20%)
 - No revision is possible.

94 & above=A	90-93=A-	86-89=B+	83-85=B	80-82=B-
76-79=C+	73-75=C	70-72=C-	60-69=D	Below 60 = F

Short Assignments (Memos and Exercises)

A variety of short assignments provide practice in strategy (designing the best approach for your readers and purposes), retrieving and summarizing key information, and building fluency and accuracy. Details about, and due dates for, the assignments are provided in the class schedule. A template for the memo assignments follows:

Memorandum

To: Reader
From: Writer
Subject: Informative title motivating reader to read memo
Date: Month, day, year

The first few sentences summarize the main message (E.g., Here are the data from the latest tests. They confirm our assumption that).

Subheading(s) (followed by information in paragraph form).

Using subheadings, divide up the body of the memo into units of information that provide details, data and other information that supports your main message. When possible/appropriate, present details in a table or list within the paragraphs.

Closing

If appropriate, conclude the memo with an “action” statement including contact information. (E.g., Please let me know if you have any questions: dunphy@mit.edu)

Major Assignments: Formal Papers

In addition to the short assignments described above, four shorter formal papers and a longer final research project of 12-15 pages are required. This final paper must be based on current research and studies; students may **not** submit documents written and evaluated in the past. Subjects and approaches will be discussed as the term progresses.

Procedures for all formal papers

Effective writing requires multiple drafts and feedback from colleagues. As a result, we will follow these steps for the four formal papers required in 21F225/6:

1. You are responsible for distributing copies of each of the four formal texts to your editing group members at least 24 hours **before** the peer workshop in class. You will read each group member’s draft and make notes (in pencil if you’re working with a hard copy) of the points you’d like to discuss with the group members. I will provide the names and contact information of your editing group members before each assignment is due.
2. These formal writing assignments will be discussed in class workshops.
3. You will revise your draft based on the constructive feedback of your editing group.

4. Your first good draft (which I call your “best draft”) is due to me for comments by the class following the workshop. I will provide a close reading and assign one point (carefully done draft) or 0 points (carelessly done draft).
5. After I return your draft, you have until the following class to revise and resubmit it for a grade out of 9 points. Please submit both your earlier and your revised drafts.

Grades for formal papers: If you receive a grade of “C” (7/10) or lower on any of the four shorter formal papers, you can submit a third draft. Rewrites are due the next class. Your new grade will be a combination of the original grade and the grade received for the rewrite.

There is no opportunity to rewrite the final project. However, each of you will have at least one scheduled appointment with me for feedback on your final project in progress.

Format: Unless you are told otherwise, all formal written assignments should be typed in 12 point TimesNewRoman font, on standard 8.5 X 11” paper using 1.5 spacing. Include page numbers on all assignments longer than one page. Please do not staple pages together.

On all papers, provide the following information in the **upper right-hand** corner of *page one*: your name, your e-mail address, as well as the intended audience/reader and purpose of the document. Include your name in the **upper right-hand** corner of all subsequent pages.

Your memo assignments should be typed in 12 point TimesNewRoman font, on standard 8.5 X 11” paper using single spacing. Your memo headings will provide the audience, purpose and author information.

Schedule and topics for formal papers

Formal Paper	Workshop Due Date	Best Draft Due Date	Final Draft Due Date	% of Grade
#1	Th 9/24	T 9/29	T 10/6	10
#2	T 10/20	Th 10/22	Th 10/29	10
#3	Th 11/5	T 11/10	T 11/17	10
#4	Th 11/19	T 11/24	T 12/1	10

Formal Paper 1: Writing for a Non-expert Audience

In a short paper (two pages) introduce your major research interest in an understandable context and show the importance of a concept that is central to your field of interest. Your paper must be suitable for the intended readership: an interested and well-educated,

but non-expert audience. The style and tone should be appropriate for the intended audience. In your header, indicate your intended audience and purpose.

Bring the original and 1 copy to class. Distribute a copy to each member of your editing group *at least one day* before class.

Formal Paper 2: Writing Correspondence

Write a one- to two-page technical memo or a post-doctorate or job application letter suitable for an academic or professional environment. Please single-space this assignment. Attach the ad/job description if you choose to write a cover letter. In your header, indicate your intended audience and purpose.

Bring the original and 1 copy to class. Distribute a copy to each member of your editing group *at least one day* before class.

Formal Paper 3: Introducing Material

Write an abstract (150-250 words) and an introduction (one-three pages) for a technical report, article or short thesis. In your header, indicate your intended audience and purpose.

Bring the original and 1 copy to class. Distribute a copy to each member of your editing group *at least one day* before class.

Formal Paper 4: Proposing Research

Write a two- to three-page proposal. In your header, indicate your intended audience and purpose. This assignment can be used to help you organize your final project in advance, or the topic of your proposal may be completely different from that of your final project. Some ideas for the kinds of proposals you can write follow:

- UROP, UG or short MS thesis proposal
- Section of a longer MS or Ph.D. proposal
- Proposal for a research project that you are already working on
- Proposal for a research paper you are working on in another course, or you may write in a future class.
- Proposal for a change in approach to solving a particular problem

Bring the original and 1 copy to class. Distribute a copy to each member of your editing group at least one day before class.

Final Project (20% of final grade)

Write a 12- to 15-page formal paper on a scientific or technical topic of your choice. The paper must incorporate headings, figures, tables and equations appropriately into the text; it must include internal and end references that are documented according to the conventions of your field. In your header, indicate your intended audience and purpose.

The project can be one of the following:

- Review or research paper you are writing for another course this semester
- Review or research paper for publication
- Part of an undergraduate thesis or one chapter of a Master's or PhD thesis
- Ph.D. thesis proposal
- UROP report or other substantial lab report

Other projects may be approved with sufficient advance notice. See me if you are having trouble anticipating a topic for the final project. Do not wait until the end of term.