

**UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA**  
**COLLEGE OF MEDICINE SYLLABUS**  
**NEUROSCIENCE**

**GMS7795 Neuroscience Professional Survival Skills (3 credit hours)**

Semester: Fall and Spring

Delivery Format: Online

Instructor Name: Susan Semple-Rowland

Room Number: N/A

Email Address: rowland@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Arranged by student request

Graduate Assistant: N/A

Preferred Course Communications: Email through Canvas

Prerequisites: Consent of instructor. Designed for graduate students in MSc or PhD programs and Biomedical Neuroscience MSc students.

### **Course Overview**

The ability to effectively communicate scientific ideas through written, poster, or oral presentations is critically important in professional settings. Persons who excel in these skills often have a tremendous advantage over their peers in terms of job opportunities and career advancement. Neuroscience Professional Survival Skills (GMS7795) is designed to provide students with foundational knowledge that will enable them to effectively improve their communication skills. Assignments in this course will help students to improve their scientific writing in the context of scientific papers and grant proposals, to learn how to create effective digital figures and professional posters, and finally to learn various strategies to improve the effectiveness and clarity of their oral presentations.

### **Relation to Program Outcomes**

This course is a required course in the online Biomedical Neuroscience Graduate Master of Science program. Post-baccalaureate students, MSc and PhD graduate students, and working professionals who are interested in improving their writing and presentation skills are also encouraged to enroll in this course.

### **Course Objectives and Goals**

The primary learning objectives for this course are listed below. Each learning module has been structured to help you successfully complete these objectives. Upon completing this course you will be able to:

- Describe how individuals read scientific documents and what their expectations are
- Describe the importance of word selection and how word use affects writing clarity
- Recognize and write logically cohesive passages
- Create "publication-ready" digital scientific figures
- Describe the similarities between research papers and research proposals
- Create and deliver effective poster and oral presentations

## Instructional Methods

This is an online asynchronous course that has been created using CANVAS, an online course management system. The course is divided into 12 modules. Most modules are designed to be completed over the course of one week – modules 9-11 will each be completed over the course of two weeks.

To enable students to get the most out of this course, I have integrated several online communication tools into this course that should make it easier to actively engage in the creative processes of writing and digital media creation. In this course, all lectures and some assignments will involve the use of VoiceThread, an asynchronous learning platform. Writing and media creation assignments will be submitted, peer-reviewed, and discussed within the Canvas course platform.

The textbook *Scientific Writing and Communication - Papers, Proposals, and Presentations, 4th Edition*, by Angelika H. Hofmann, Oxford University Press is **required for this course**. This book is available as a paperback or eTextbook and is worth purchasing because (1) each module contains a reading assignment taken from this textbook and (2) the book will serve as an excellent reference text for you once the course is completed. When appropriate, I have supplemented the assigned textbook chapters with specific papers.

Student assessments include short writing assignments (7 total) designed to reinforce the module materials, tests to insure concepts are understood (3 total), critiques of manuscript figures and posters (2 total) and creation of a short oral presentation using VoiceThread.

## *How to Succeed in this Online Course*

First, you need to be aware that online learning poses its own unique challenges. Because the online classroom is available to you 24 hours a day it is easy to delay work on course material, forget deadlines, and not put enough time into course work to perform well on exams and assignments. These challenges can be exacerbated when students are not 'self-starters' or do not possess good time management skills.

Unlike traditional instructional settings in which each student goes to the same class, the online setting enables every student to “create” the class of his or her choosing. In theory, this type of instruction should be more adaptable to a variety of learning styles; however, the reality is that some students have not yet determined what their optimal learning style is.

Poor performance in online courses often can be directly linked to procrastination and poor time management (trying to do a week's worth of work just before the deadline). Rushing to complete and submit assignments at literally the last minute is NOT a good strategy because you (1) forfeit your opportunity to ask questions about materials you may not understand and (2) it is very easy to miss your opportunity to submit your assignments. In general, I always try to answer questions you have about course content within 12-24 hrs of your posting of your question. Oftentimes, I answer much more quickly. Your questions are important to me and constitute a very important part of the teacher/student interaction. Waiting until the day or hour an assignment is due does not allow me to provide you with the educational support that I would like to provide since I may not be able to answer your questions before an assignment is due.

You are expected to adhere to the posted assignment deadlines; however, you are encouraged to complete module assignments before they are due if this is convenient for you. It is possible to request an assignment deadline extension, but requests must be submitted to me and approved prior to the deadline if possible.

## Description of Course Content

### COURSE TOPICS

This is a 13-week course is offered during the Fall and Spring terms. The course is divided into 11 modules that will be completed every week. The exception is module 11 which will be completed over the course of 3 weeks. The following table shows the module topics that we will cover in this course and the number of weeks that will be spent on each module.

Week(s)	Topics
1	Course Introduction
1	Mod 1 – Understanding Expectations of Readers
2	Mod 2 – Word Selection and Writing Clarity
3	Mod 3 – From Sentences to Paragraphs
4	Mod 4 – Scientific Manuscripts: The Introduction
5	Mod 5 – Scientific Manuscripts: Materials and Methods
6	Mod 6 – Scientific Manuscripts: Results and Discussion
7	Mod 7 – Scientific Manuscripts: Abstracts
8	Mod 8 – Preparation of Publishable Digital Figures and Figure Legends
9	Mod 9 – Research Proposals
10	Mod 10 – Poster Presentations
11-13	Mod 11 – Oral Presentations

## Course Materials and Technology

### Reading Materials

The following textbook is **required** for this course

- *Scientific Writing and Communication - Papers, Proposals, and Presentations (4th Edition)* by Angelika H. Hofmann. Oxford University Press. This book is available as a paperback and eTextbook.

All modules include assigned reading assignments from this text. I have selected this text because it should also serve as valuable reference text to you.

### Required Technology

- **Laptop or desktop computer equipped with microphone and video camera.** The microphone and video camera can be used to post comments/questions to VoiceThread lectures and will be used to create the VoiceThread project for Module 11. There are VoiceThread apps that are available for free for iOS and Android devices that can be used to view the VT and comment on them. These apps should not be used when creating VoiceThreads. For these, I strongly recommend that you use a laptop or desktop computer.
- **High speed, broad band internet connection such as DSL or cable.** A broadband Internet connection is strongly recommended. Slower connections may affect your ability to interact with materials in the course. It is also recommended that you try to submit course exams and assignments well ahead of the deadline since we have found that network speeds can significantly slow as the deadlines in online courses approach due to increased use.

SPECIAL NOTE: Some users with satellite Internet service may find their online courses do not load quickly or consistently due to satellite network design issues.

- **Installation of LockDown Browser on computer that you will use for this course.** All tests will be taken using LockDown Browser. The computer you use to take exams should be “hard wired” to the internet. WiFi is not stable enough to support a reliable connection for taking tests. Instructions on how to install LockDown Browser are included in the course introduction module.
- Canvas courses are best viewed using Chrome or Firefox. For specific questions about browser compatibilities and general questions about e-learning at UF please go to <https://wiki.helpdesk.ufl.edu/FAQs/E-Learning>.

For any technical issues you encounter with your course please contact the UF computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357. For Help Desk hours visit: <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/> .

## Academic Assignments and Grading

- Readings are assigned from the required textbook (see course materials above) and in some instances, published primary literature.
- VoiceThread lectures are accessible through the course website. Students are encouraged to post any questions they have about the lecture material directly within the lectures using the text, audio, or video + audio commenting features of VoiceThread. These questions will only be visible to the instructor. All questions will be answered by the instructor. The answers to questions that would benefit all students taking the course will be posted in the lecture so all students can view them.
- Module tests have been designed to reinforce the lecture and reading assignments. All tests will be taken using LockDown browser and specific directions for taking and viewing the results of these tests accompany each test. Pay particular attention to when the results of your test will be visible to you.
- Written assignments and assigned peer reviews will be submitted through the Canvas course platform.
- Online, scheduled synchronous meetings between students and the instructor will be available by request throughout the semester using Zoom Conferences.

## MODULE TESTS

**Modules 1-3 include module tests that will be taken using LockDown browser.** The Module tests consist of T/F, multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, multiple answers, and short essay questions.

These tests are timed and the questions will be randomized. Importantly, the time limit for completing the exam starts when you start the exam. *If you begin a 40 min exam 20 minutes before it is due (e.g. 11:59 pm), you will have only 20 min to complete the exam because Lockdown browser will automatically submit your exam when it is due.*

You will receive your score for the test when you submit it but your score will not contain the results for any short written answer questions in the test. You will not receive your final score for the module tests that include short written answer questions until I grade them. I will post the corrected test results within 24 hours of the due date/time. You will then be given 24 hours to view each test and you will be able to see correct/incorrect answers and the comments I post on your tests.

**I strongly recommend that you take the ALL online tests well before the time they are due which is 11:59 pm. The speed of the internet can significantly decrease between 10 pm and midnight and can be particularly problematic during times when there is a dramatic increase in online instruction. Thus, to avoid time delays during testing, you should try to complete exams during non-peak hours and of course avoid using Wifi connections.**

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

You will complete seven assignments that involve writing and/or written critiques of written material, and two peer reviews. These assignments are accompanied by grading rubrics that will provide you with guidelines about how your assignments will be evaluated.

## **ORAL PRESENTATION**

Students will create a short oral presentation (5 min) using VoiceThread in Module 11. These presentations will be shared with the class and each student will be assigned one presentation to peer review. Projects and peer reviews will be graded using rubrics provided with the assignments.

## **GRADING**

The percent of the total points possible for this course (497 points) that you earn from the three module tests (95 points possible), the eight writing assignments (316 points possible), the two peer reviews (36 points possible), and the oral presentation (50 points possible) will determine your final grade for this course.

Module tests will be graded automatically except for any short answer questions which will be graded by me. Grading rubrics will be used to evaluate writing assignments, peer reviews, and the oral presentation. You will be given the rubrics ahead of time so that you will understand what is required to successfully complete these assignments and projects and how they will be evaluated.

Students are expected to complete all assignments by the deadlines found in the online course syllabus. Students should carefully examine the auto-generated Canvas course syllabus that lists the specific assignments associated with each module and the dates/times that these assignments are due. **It is important to make a note of due dates for the various quizzes, tests, and assignments since they vary across modules.**

There will be no deadline extensions for the completion of a module unless an extension is requested by the student and granted by me (see Exam/Assignment Policy below). Failure to submit a module assignment, quiz, test, or the final project by the course deadline will be recorded as a zero if no extension was granted.

### Course Assignment Point Distribution

Assignment type	Points Available
Module Tests (5)	115
Writing Assignments (9)	261
Peer Reviews (1)	15
Oral Presentation (1)	45
	Total Points = 436

### GRADING SCALE

Percentage total points earned	Letter Grade	Grade Points
93-100	A	4.0
90-92	A-	3.67
87-89	B+	3.33
83-86	B	3.0
80-82	B-	2.67
77-79	C+	2.33
73-76	C	2.0
70-72	C-	1.67
67-69	D+	1.33
63-66	D	1.0
60-62	D-	0.67
Below 60	E	0.0

Please be aware that a C- is not an acceptable grade for graduate students. If you obtain a C- in a course, it may be possible for you to retake the course but your C- will remain part of your

calculated cumulative GPA. If you are enrolled in either the Biomedical Neuroscience Certificate or MSc programs you must have a cumulative final GPA of 3.00 or higher.

Additional information on UF grading policy may be found at:

<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades>

## Exam Policy

### ***Late assignments and tests***

I recognize that personal circumstances arise that may interfere with your ability to meet a deadline. If you anticipate missing a deadline, please let me know as soon as possible and I will work with you to resolve the issue. Your emails will be responded to within 24 hours (typically sooner). Please see the [UF Attendance Policies](#) concerning absences, religious holidays, and illness. In general, late assignments, quizzes, and tests will not be accepted unless you have obtained a deadline extension from the instructor.

If you encounter technical difficulties with assignments (e.g. LockDown browser malfunction), be sure to include a UF helpdesk ticket number (<http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>) in your request for a deadline extension if you plan to request one. The extension request MUST be submitted within 24 hours of the technical difficulty.

## Class Attendance Policy

This course is entirely online and is asynchronous. Thus there is no formal class attendance policy. Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Excused absences that lead to missed assignment deadlines must be consistent with university policies in the Graduate Catalog

<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#attendance>.

Additional information can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

## Expectations Regarding Course Behavior

## **WHEN DO I CONTACT THE UF HELPDESK?**

In the event that you have **technical difficulties with E-learning**, please contact the UF helpdesk at [learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:learning-support@ufl.edu), or (352) 392-4357 - select option 2. If your technical difficulties will cause you to miss a due date, you **MUST** report the problem to E-learning. Include the ticket number that you are given in an e-mail to the instructor to explain the late assignment/quiz/test.

Types of questions that should be directed to the Help Desk:

1. I can't log into E-learning
2. I have clicked on the "submit" button for my quiz and nothing is happening
3. I can't upload an assignment (be sure that you have reviewed the tutorial on how to do this **BEFORE** you contact the Help Desk)
4. E-learning has given me an error message and I can't submit my assignment.

**NOTE:** *Late work that involves technical difficulties with E-learning **MUST** be accompanied by a ticket number from the Help Desk.*

**ALSO** - *Be sure to be familiar with the hours of operation for the UF help desk since they are oftentimes not available after 10:30pm on workdays and after 8:00 pm on weekends. There hours are posted at <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/about/business-hours/>*

## **WHEN DO I POST QUESTIONS TO THE COURSE QUESTIONS DISCUSSION BOARD?**

Questions that deal with the course itself should be submitted to the Course Questions board. Posted questions should **NOT** be about grades or a private matter. Do not post personal grade questions on the Course Questions discussion board.

Before posting a question, check those already posted to be sure that you are not duplicating a question. These should be things that other students in the class might have trouble with. For example:

1. I am unable to post comments to VoiceThread.
2. The link to Blendspace or a specific VoiceThread is not working.
3. One of the quiz questions did not display properly.

Posting on the Course questions board is the fastest way to get an answer to your question. Be sure to give it a meaningful heading!

**Questions of a private nature should be e-mailed to the course instructor** (see below on how to e-mail within E-learning). In all cases, please allow 24 hours for a response. Every effort will be made to answer questions posted over the weekend with 24 hours. If not addressed, they will be addressed on the following Monday.

## **WHEN DO I EMAIL MY INSTRUCTOR?**

Questions about the course should be e-mailed to the instructor through the e-mail tool in E-learning.

Examples of e-mail questions for the instructor to get clear, concise responses:

1. I think there is an error in my grade for the assignment in module 3 (be sure to explain exactly why you think there is an error and provide documentation)
2. I am behind in the course and I would like to know how I may catch up (in such a case, your instructor may ask you to set up a Skype meeting or a time to call on the telephone)

If you have questions about the course itself, please reread the syllabus before asking a question. If the answer is not in the syllabus, check the Course Questions discussion board (this discussion board can be located by clicking on the discussions menu tab on the left of the course home page). If the answer to your question is not there, please post the question on the Course Questions discussion board.

DO NOT e-mail the instructor with general course questions. If your question is of a personal nature, e-mail your instructor from within e-learning system using the instructions below. Late work that involves technical difficulties with E-learning MUST be accompanied by a ticket number from the Help Desk.

## **HOW TO EMAIL YOUR INSTRUCTOR**

When emailing your instructor, please do so through Canvas.

To send an e-mail from the course:

1. Click on the mail icon that is located the left side of your screen.
2. Click the "Compose Message" button.
3. "To: window" will display.
4. Locate your instructor's name.
5. Always include a description in your subject line
6. Type your message and add any necessary attachments. Be sure that your subject line is meaningful.
7. Click "send."

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students are expected to act in accordance with the University of Florida policy on academic integrity. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge:

**“We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.”**

You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

**“On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”**

It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For additional information regarding Academic Integrity, please see Student Conduct and Honor Code or the Graduate Student Website for additional details:

<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

<http://gradschool.ufl.edu/students/introduction.html>

**Please remember cheating, lying, misrepresentation, or plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and inexcusable behavior.**

### ***PLAGIARISM***

Students must understand what plagiarism is and must not engage in this behavior when completing assignments and tests in this course. The University of Florida Student Honor Code states that plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
- Submitting a document or assignment that in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

Student whose assignments/tests exhibit evidence of plagiarism will receive zeros for those assignments and tests for the first offense and will receive a warning. Students who continue to engage in this behavior after the warning will be reported to the UF Dean of Students Office.

### ***PROHIBITED COLLABORATION OR CONSULTATION***

Student found to be involved in sharing answers and/or collaborating on exams or assignments will receive zeros for those exams and assignments. Students who continue to engage in this behavior after the warning will be reported to the UF Dean of Students Office.

### **Online Faculty Course Evaluation Process**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at

<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/> . Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

## Support Services

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/> . It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. The College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to assist students in their coursework.

### Counseling and Student Health

Students sometimes experience stress from academic expectations and/or personal and interpersonal issues that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing issues that have the potential to or are already negatively affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and/or seek help through University resources available to you.

- The Counseling and Wellness Center 352-392-1575 offers a variety of support services such as psychological assessment and intervention and assistance for math and test anxiety. Visit their web site for more information: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>. On line and in person assistance is available.
- You Matter We Care website: <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>. If you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, you can reach out for help through the You Matter We Care website, which is staffed by Dean of Students and Counseling Center personnel.
- If you live in Gainesville or the immediate surrounding areas, the Student Health Care Center at UF Health is a satellite clinic of the main Student Health Care Center that is located on Fletcher Drive on campus is available to you. Student Health at UF Health offers a variety of clinical services. The clinic is located on the second floor of the Dental Tower in the Health Science Center. For more information, contact the clinic at 392-0627 or check out the web site at: <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>

- If you live in Gainesville or the immediate surrounding areas, the UF Health Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32698, [ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center](http://ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center).
- University Police Department: Visit [police.ufl.edu/](http://police.ufl.edu/) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from:

Alachua County Crisis Center:

(352) 264-6789

<http://www.alachuacounty.us/DEPTS/CSS/CRISISCENTER/Pages/CrisisCenter.aspx>

Do not wait until you reach a crisis to come in and talk with us. We have helped many students through stressful situations impacting their academic performance. You are not alone so do not be afraid to ask for assistance.

## Academic Resources

**E-learning technical support:** Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

**Career Connections Center:** Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services [career.ufl.edu/](http://career.ufl.edu/).

**Library Support:** [cms.uflib.ufl.edu/](http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/) ask various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

**Teaching Center:** Broward Hall 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. [teachingcenter.ufl.edu/](http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/)

**Writing Studio:** 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. [writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/](http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/)

**Student Complaints On-Campus:** [sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/](http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/)

**On-Line Students Complaints:** [distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process](http://distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process)