**SYLLABUS for THESIS WRITING PRACTICUM , Spring 2020 (Term 2204)**

NROSCI 1962 – 10557

Coordinator: Lisa McIlvried, Ph.D., Department of Neuroscience

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Office hours: by appointment

The goal of this course is to guide students in the process of writing a thesis paper based on original neuroscience-related research conducted under a research mentor’s supervision. To be considered as a candidate for NROSCI 1962, you **MUST ALREADY HAVE COLLECTED A MAJOR PORTION OF THE DATA TO BE REPORTED IN YOUR THESIS.**Typically, this means approximately 3 credits of NROSCI 1901 and 3 credits of NRSOCI 1961 (or the non-credit equivalent).

The thesis writing process can be challenging, especially if you are new to writing large amounts of material in the format of a scientific paper. To help this process go more smoothly, your thesis will go through several rounds of revision, based on feedback from your mentor and, near the end of the term, from your Thesis Reader. Because this course fulfills one of your required writing courses, one of the main goals for these revisions is to develop your scientific writing abilities.

A helpful resource is *Writing Papers in the Biological Sciences*by Victoria McMillan.

**Thesis format**

The completed thesis must:

* Be written in the format of a standard scientific paper in the biosciences, including the following sections: title page, abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and references
* Include 12 or more pages of text (***NOT*** including title page, figures, figure legends, tables, or references)
* Be written at a level that is appropriate for publishable manuscripts in the biosciences
* Be double-spaced in 12-point font with margins no larger than one inch

**Thesis committee requirements:**

The student will select a thesis committee composed of the research mentor and at least one other faculty member to act as the Thesis Reader. One of these two committee members must be a primary or secondary faculty member in the Department of Neuroscience.

**Research Mentor Responsibilities** – outlined on page 3

**Role of the Thesis Reader**

The Thesis Reader will read the Thesis Reader’s Draft of your thesis and must approve it for you to successfully complete NROSCI 1962. This draft is to be a polished version of your thesis that has gone through several revisions by you, in regular consultation with your faculty mentor. If your Thesis Reader does not receive a sufficiently edited and revised copy of your thesis, the Thesis Reader will reject it and send it back to you for further revision. After reading this draft of your thesis, the Reader may request revisions that need to be made prior to submitting your final thesis for approval by the Undergraduate Advising Office. Thesis Readers will return their initial comments on your thesis to you by 4/9/20. They will need to approve the final version of your thesis, including revisions you made based on their comments, and they will do this by signing the title page of the final version of your thesis.

**Thesis submission deadlines and instructions**

For all materials you submit:

* Email document(s) to Dr. McIlvried (lam303@pitt.edu)
* In the body of each email, indicate the name and email address of your research mentor
* The title of your file AND the subject line of your email should be in the format of:

Lastname\_Firstname\_HonorsThesis\_draftX duedate (e.g. Golgi\_Camillo\_HonorsThesis\_draft1 2-23-1873)

First submission: due by 4:00 PM on **Friday, 2/14/2020**

* Submit what you have written or outlined to date; your research mentor will verify whether he or she feels you are making sufficient progress on your thesis at this point in the term
* Email this material to Dr. McIlvried

Second submission: due by 4:00 PM on **Friday, 2/28/2020**

* Submit what you have written or outlined to date; your research mentor will verify whether he or she feels you are making sufficient progress on your thesis at this point in the term
* Email this material to Dr. McIlvried

Final Draft (for Thesis Reader): due by 4:00 PM on **Friday, 3/27/2020**

* Submit a fully-edited complete draft of your thesis, including all required sections, that adheres to the thesis format instructions on the first page of the syllabus
* This draft should be complete and well-edited with all feedback from your mentor to be submitted to your Thesis Reader for comments
* Email this draft to Dr. McIlvried
* Additionally, your research mentor must verify in an email to Dr. McIlvried that this final draft is ready for submission to your Thesis Reader
* After receiving this verification from your mentor, Dr. McIlvried will forward this draft to your Thesis Reader, who will return comments to you by 4/9/2020

Completed thesis: due by 4:00 PM on **Wednesday,** **4/22/2020**

* Submit the completed version of your thesis, revised according to comments from your Thesis Reader
* Include with the completed thesis the title page signed by you, your research mentor, and your Thesis Reader (a title page template will be available on CourseWeb)
* Email your completed thesis to Dr. McIlvried (lam303@pitt.edu) **AND** to nrosciug@pitt.edu

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Failure to meet these deadlines will lower your final grade by one step for each missed deadline (e.g. if you would have gotten an ‘A’ but you missed one deadline, you will receive an ‘A-“ for the course). \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**PLEASE NOTE: It is critical that your completed thesis, including signatures from your research mentor and your Thesis Reader, be received by the final deadline (4/22/2020). If you do not meet this deadline, you will either receive a ‘G’ grade or will fail the course. If you are taking this course to fulfill one of the writing courses required for graduation, receiving a ‘G’ grade (or failing) may mean you will not graduate on time.**

**Research mentor responsibilities:**

Please note that this course fulfills one of two writing courses students need in order to graduate. As such, there is an expectation that research mentors will give students feedback on multiple thesis drafts throughout the term, as outlined below, to help them learn the skills needed to write well in the style of scientific writing used in the biosciences.

1. Timeline/planning with your student:

Early in the semester, discuss with your student the content and structure of their thesis, given the thesis format requirements indicated on the first page of the syllabus. At this time, agree on a timeline with your student for completing the thesis. Take into account the deadline for submitting a fully-edited complete draft of their thesis to the Thesis Reader, which is 4:00 PM on Friday, 3/27/20.

1. Thesis submission deadlines:

There are two ***intermediate submission deadlines*** during the term. These are Friday, 2/14/20, and Friday, 2/28/20. On these dates, the student will submit the components of the thesis he or she has been working on so far. There are no requirements for the specific material that is submitted on these dates, and it is expected that part or all of it will be a work in progress. For each deadline, you will be asked to verify in an email to Lisa McIlvried that your student is making adequate progress on his or her thesis and is on track to submit a full draft to the Thesis Reader by 4:00 PM on Friday, 3/27/20.

***Thesis Reader’s Draft:*** You will be asked to approve the Thesis Reader’s Draft of your student’s thesis before it is submitted to their Thesis Reader by Friday, 3/27/20. Your approval is to ensure the draft received by the Thesis Reader is adequately revised, at a level similar to a journal article draft that is ready for outside review. The expectation is that the quality of the scientific writing is similar to what would be appropriate for publishable manuscripts in the biosciences. It is understood that the content may not be of a publishable nature at this point, but the quality of writing shown by the student should be at this level. Additionally, your approval of this draft indicates that it meets the thesis format requirements indicated on the first page of the syllabus. Please send your approval in an email to Lisa McIlvried (lam303@pitt.edu).

***Completed thesis:*** Indicate your approval of your student’s completed thesis by signing the title page of the final version. The completed thesis, including the signed title page, is due by 4:00 PM on Wednesday, 4/22/20.

1. Grading of the final thesis:

Grading is to be done in consultation with the Thesis Reader. Once the Thesis Reader returns comments to the student, you should suggest to the Reader the grade you wish to assign. The Thesis Reader will then indicate whether this is acceptable based on the draft they have seen. In most cases, consensus can be reached with a brief discussion. In the event that consensus cannot be reached, the grade will be assigned by the course coordinator, in consultation with one or more members of the Department of Neuroscience.

**Academic policies**

**Academic Integrity:**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

**Disability Services:**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services](http://www.drs.pitt.edu/) (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

**Accessibility:**

Blackboard is ADA Compliant and has fully implemented the final accessibility standards for electronic and information technology covered by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Please note that, due to the flexibility provided in this product, it is possible for some material to inadvertently fall outside of these guidelines.

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