Syllabus BCH 407 - Research Presentations - 1 credit
Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Gail R. Willsky

Read Carefully. Every year some student drops at least 1/2 letter grade due to late write-ups or not following instructions.

This course is best taken in the Spring of your Senior year, but can be taken earlier if you plan to graduate early. You should follow the information in this handout to avoid grading penalties.

Course Description:

This course involves going to Science Research Seminars (Health Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Engineering), writing up a summary of the seminar and evaluating a paper by the seminar speaker. Some departments have seminar schedules for each semester. There will be at least one seminar a day that you can attend. Common times for seminars are 3:00 or 4:00 PM and during lunch. Seminar speakers should not be graduate students. Most University at Buffalo seminars for the following week are in the Reporter calendar which is available on the web. Students may also attend seminars at any University-affiliated venue. Buffalo General Hospital, Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI) and the Hauptman Woodward Institute (HWI) are all located in the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and have good seminars. This venue is near the Hospital/High Street subway stop and also on a UB shuttle bus route from South Campus. Some of the weekly Biochemistry seminars are held at HWI or RPCI.

Students are encouraged to find a research paper by the speaker to read before attending the seminar. A research paper has introduction, materials and methods, results and discussion sections. Multiple experiments are discussed. Reading this paper before the seminar helps to familiarize you with the speaker's research interests. If you do get a paper and hand it in with your write-up the seminar will count for two write-ups.

The most difficult part of understanding a research seminar is understanding and evaluating the methods. At first students tend to summarize the introduction and discussion. As you attend more seminars you will usually be able to include more experimental detail. In your write-up it should be clear what information is part of the speaker's general introduction to the topic and what information comes from experiments done by the seminar speaker and presented in the seminar. In general the first 5-10 minutes of a seminar is the introduction, which explains the experimental system and why the experiments to be reported were done. The middle portion of the seminar contains the actual experimental data, which can be presented in summary form or with great detail for a single experiment depending upon the topic. The final 5 minutes or so of the seminar usually summarizes the results and explains their importance. If you have trouble following the experimental detail as the seminar is being given, remember that you have another chance as the most important experiments should be summarized at the end of the seminar.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of this course the student should be able to understand research seminars that they attend.

Other: The course follows the University Rules for academic integrity (http://undergradcatalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.shtml). Requests for accommodation for physical or learning disabilities will be made after a student has registered with the office of Accessibility Resources (http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/)
Course Requirements:

Students are required to hand in 15 seminar summaries, call them points at the end of the semester. Each seminar summary should be two to three pages double spaced pages and have at the top your name, the name of the speaker, the title of the seminar, the date and the room number. If you do get a paper and hand it in with your write-up, that will be another point. The paper cannot be a review paper. You should not summarize the second paper. At the end of your seminar summary you must place the paper in one of the following four categories: 1-paper is the written version of the seminar, 2-paper has nothing to do with the seminar, 3-paper uses the same techniques mentioned in the seminar to study a different topic, 4-paper uses different techniques to study the topic of the seminar. In general a seminar contains more information than one paper. You must also give a sentence or two in this final paragraph describing why you have placed the paper in a particular category. Please include the category number. A copy of the paper is handed in with and attached to your seminar write-up. Students are urged to read a paper ahead of the seminar.

Your final folder must have 15 points. You can submit any combination of paper + seminar (2 pts), and seminar only (1 pt) as long as you have 15 points. All students taking BCH407 in Spring of 2015 need to submit TWO seminar summaries by Monday, March 9, 2015. Each paper and write up should be clipped or stapled together. For each week that these write-ups are late you will lose a letter grade for these two write-ups in the final grading. I will grade the two write ups and return them to you to make sure you have the idea. These two write-ups can be redone in the final folder. Most lost points occur when students go for the two points and have difficulty putting the paper into a category. It is to your advantage to include a paper with the two seminars handed in March 3, to learn how to assign the paper to the correct category.

Course Grading:

Students receive one point for each seminar summary and one point for correctly assigning the paper they select to the proper category. 15 points should be handed in in your final folder.

All the write-ups are due on the last day of classes, Friday May 8, 2015. Each write up should be stapled or paper clipped to the paper. You should hand in your write ups in a folder, file or envelope. The two write ups handed in in March need to be in your final folder, even if there were no corrections. Not following these instructions for format will cost you 1/2 of a letter grade. For each week the folder with all the write ups is late you will lose a letter grade in the final grading. Common reasons for students not receiving an A are failure to properly put the paper written by the seminar speaker into one of the four categories mentioned above and not having 15 points worth of seminar material handed in for final grading. The grading scheme is A = 13 - 15 points, B = 10 - 12 points, C = 7 - 9 points, D = 4 - 6 points and F < 4 points. Points will be deducted if your summary does not clearly explain what is introduction and what is work done by the speaker, if you do not at least mention the methods and have some experimental detail, if the English is so poor that the meaning is lost, or if you fail to assign the paper to the correct group. Seminar summaries need to be written in standard English. If there are more than 10 English usage errors you will not get the 1 point for the write up. Sample write-ups are in a folder in the Biochemistry Office, Farber 140. Remember that if you hand in 15 points you could still lose some points in the final grading. Students can hand in “extra” points up to 18 to cover possible point deductions. It is better to hand in a C folder on time than A work which merits a D because it is late.

If you have any questions contact me: Dr. Willsky, 829-2969 or gwillsky@buffalo.edu. Sample write-ups from past years are in the Biochemistry office, Farber 140. I will be on Medical Leave for approximately one month starting January 19th and Dr. Ettinger (ettingem@buffalo.edu) will be taking questions during this time.