

Topics in Physical Chemistry Writing Practicum, CHEM 1431 Fall 2025

Course Instructor: Dr. Kimberly Carter-Fenk (she/her)

Email: kimberly.carter-fenk@pitt.edu

Office: CSC 107 J

Meeting Times: Weekly 30-minute appointments (determined with instructor)

Course Learning Objectives

Through active engagement and continued efforts to revise your writing, you will be able to

- Deeply explore a physical chemistry topic in the scientific literature and organize your reading into an annotated bibliography
- Summarize and synthesize complex information into a cohesive narrative to describe the state of a field within physical chemistry
- Apply ACS style formatting and referencing in your paper and comply with copyright law for appropriate use of published figures/data.
- Identify and formulate new questions of inquiry within your investigated domain of physical chemistry

Course Websites: Canvas will be used for all course activities, including reflection prompts and writing submission. I will keep all writing resource documents within a folder on Canvas.

Contract Grading

This document serves as a first and evolving draft of a contract that establishes mutual expectations for the work that we will perform throughout the semester. In this course, you as the learner will commit to 4-5 hours of reading, writing, and reflecting per week. As the instructor, I will commit to at least one 30-minute meeting with you per week and additional time to provide formative feedback on your writing and reflections. While there will be goals with target due dates throughout the semester, the structure of this course aims to value all rates of learning and progression in writing. Hence, your grade will be based on your continued efforts, reflections on your learning throughout the semester, and continued progress toward your writing goals.

You are guaranteed an A in this course if you meet the following guidelines:

- Attend weekly meetings and complete a weekly writing reflection prior to our meeting
- Meet our agreed upon writing target due dates (± 3 weekdays)
- Complete a 20-page paper with components that we mutually agree upon
- Perform at least two rounds of revisions on all components of the paper (or until all learning objectives are met with mastery)
- Spend 4-5 hours per week working on reading, writing, editing, reflecting, and discussing your writing with me

As the instructor, I will not assign grades to your drafts or reflections. I will provide extensive feedback, and I will indicate the alignment of your writing with my course learning objectives. At the end of the semester, you will be asked to reflect upon your writing goals and how your final paper did or did not meet those objectives. If you do not meet my outlined guidelines listed above, then your evaluation of your paper in the context of your writing goals and my learning objectives will be used as the basis for your grade. We will discuss your grade together and agree upon a grade that fairly reflects your investment into the course and your writing progress.

Target Due Dates

Although each of your writing projects will be different, here are some general target dates for your writing. Some sections are subject to change based on your writing project. All due dates will occur on the day of your scheduled meeting time with me:

- *Week of September 15th*: Draft of an annotated bibliography
- *Week of September 22nd*: Draft of a completed outline
- *Week of October 6th*: Draft of Specific Aims and Methods
- *Week of October 20th*: Draft of the Introduction/Background section
- *Week of October 27th*: Revisions on Specific Aims and Methods
- *Week of November 3rd*: Draft of Future Outlook and Conclusions sections
- *Week of November 10th*: Revisions on the Introduction/Background section
- *Week of November 17th*: Revisions on Future Outlook and Conclusions
- *Week of December 1st*: Final revisions
- *Friday, December 5th*: Final paper due by 5 pm

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 \(DRS\)](#), 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.

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). 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.

AI is becoming an ever-increasing presence in our society. For this course, direct cut and paste of information and prose generated by AI systems is strictly prohibited. AI can be incredibly helpful in understanding a topic or distilling a complex piece of information; but the original sources of the information must be cited, and you must summarize the information in your own words. AI can also be useful in editing phrasing in your writing, but you must be sure to write the original draft of the paper entirely on your own.

Your Well-Being Matters

College can be an exciting and challenging time for students. Taking time to maintain your well-being and to seek appropriate support can help you achieve your goals and lead a fulfilling life. It can be helpful to remember that we all benefit from assistance and guidance at times, and there are many resources available to support your well-being while you are at Pitt. You are encouraged to visit [Thrive@Pitt](#) to learn more about well-being and the many campus resources available to help you thrive.

If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support. In addition to reaching out to friends and loved ones, consider connecting with a faculty member you trust for assistance connecting to helpful resources. Dr. Carter-Fenk cares about you and wants to support you as best as I can.

The [University Counseling Center](#) is also here for you. You can call 412-648-7930 at any time to connect with a clinician. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, please call the University Counseling Center at any time at 412-648-7930. You can also contact Resolve Crisis Network at 888-796-8226. If the situation is life threatening, call Pitt Police at 412-624-2121 or dial 911.