

SEMINAR IN CHEMISTRY
CHEM 700
SYLLABUS

Dr. Kelley J. Donaghy

Spring 2000

Class Meetings: Tuesday

Office Hours: MW 2:30-4:30 PM
T 9:30-11:30AM
Appointments always welcome

Course Objective: Preparation and presentation of a scientific seminar based on a current topic outside of your field of research. An exercise to help improve your skills in chemical literature searches as well as a friendly arena to practice asking pertinent questions.

Description: Scientific communication generally falls into two categories: (1) written and (2) oral. The purpose of the graduate seminar is to give you practice in some aspects of both types of communication. You will be expected to perform a complete literature search on a topic then summarize the topic and write an abstract. The oral seminar of about 45 minutes in duration with visual aids such as overhead transparencies, slides or powerpoint presentations are acceptable. In fact a little extra credit will be given for powerpoint presentations, we have a laptop for your use during the class and I will arrange for the projector to be available, as long as you tell me you will need it within a week.

Grading: Your grade will be based on four things, your abstract, your short-seminar, your full-length seminar and your attendance.

Abstract: The abstract should be a one-paragraph synopsis (100-200 words) of the presentation highlighting the major points and describing the reasons they are noteworthy.

Seminars: The grades for the seminars will be based on (a) the importance and currency of your topic, (b) the use of visual aids, (c) organization, (d) clarity of presentation (e) ability to deal with questions and (f) overall professionalism.

You will give one 15 minute seminar, a "quick" overview of your full-length presentation and a full-length seminar (45 minutes). Use the comments and questions generated in your 15-minute seminar to make your full-length talk exceptional.

Attendance: Absences are not acceptable. You are required to attend all scheduled seminars both from our class and the outside speakers. More than two unexcused absences will result in a whole letter grade reduction. You will also be expected to ask questions of your colleagues and our visitors. Positive contributions to the seminar each week are expected

Ground Rules:

- (1) Three preliminary topics are due no later than February 1st.
- (2) The seminar topic may not related to your present or past research or employment.
- (3) Abstract is due one week prior to your scheduled seminar.
- (4) Seminar should be 50 minutes in length with 5 - 10 minutes for questions.
- (5) Presentation will be done in Powerpoint, a computer projector and laptop will be provided. See me if you need a Zip-disk. Also, I will need your Zip to get a copy of your presentation so please be prepared to let me borrow your disk the week after your presentation.
- (6) You will introduce the seminar speaker and prepare the refreshments the week before your seminar.

Tips for visual aids:

- (a) Simpler backgrounds are much easier to read.
- (b) Choose a font that is easy to read and play with size until you find a pleasing one....a font too large is sometimes overwhelming - too small people in the back can't read it.
- (c) Do not put full sentences on your overheads!!!! Full sentences will make you want to read the slide to us, use bulleted lists. There is nothing more insulting then to have someone read a slide to you! If you can't remember what you want to say practice!!!!
- (d) Memorize your slide transitions, getting from one slide to the next is by far the hardest thing to do seamlessly, practice!!!!!!
- (e) Never talk over a blank screen
- (f) When using the laser pointer, do not circle the object, do "shoot from the waist".
- (g) No handwritten overheads!
- (h) Be sure to effectively use your pointer to help your audience follow your points.

Nerves: We all get nervous some visible signs are-----

Breathlessness: As you practice, learn to take time out from speaking to process your thoughts and in the meantime breathe! Deep breathing before you being speaking, for example, as you are being introduced, might help. Also, having a glass of water handy to take a sip of when you feel yourself begin to hyperventilate will help. Sometimes asking if your slides are in focus is another way of settling down. If you are a musician, think of where the breathmarks should be in your seminar flow.

Giggling: Almost a sure bet that you are also having trouble breathing. All of the above should help, also plan your slide transitions better. A giggle in nervousness usually escapes at the end of a slide when you realize you don't know what's coming next. Exhale and pause, soundlessly.

Uhms and Ahs: We've all done it....I do it routinely except that I say SO....Don't let the seminar carry you along faster than you can mentally process the material. Quiet pauses are much more elegant than an uhm or an ah or even a so!

Shaky Hands: Being scientists we need to point things out on our slides. Sometimes you will be given a "stick pointer" other times it will be a laser pointer. Make sure not to touch the

"stick" to the screen, doing so not only makes an unpleasant sound but it also moves the screen causing your slide to move in and out of focus. With a laser pointer make sure to shoot from the hip until you've got your hands under control. I find the first fifteen minutes to be the worst....then my hand miraculously stops shaking. Shaky hands is also a sign that you are not breathing properly.

Pacing and eye contact: What's the first thing a child does when he is scolded by a parent? Rocks his feet and drops his gaze. Moving around a little is good...a lot is not. Look at your audience....sometimes their faces give you indications as to whether they are following you or not. Maybe you need to expand upon something and maybe they even have questions.

Preliminary Course Schedule:

25-Jan	No Class
1-Feb	Discussions of Topics/Invited Speaker
8-Feb	Invited Speaker
15-Feb	3 - 15 Minute Seminars
22-Feb	4 - 15 Minute Seminars
29-Feb	Student Seminar
7-Mar	Student Seminar
14-Mar	Spring Break
21-Mar	Student Seminar
28-Mar	No Class
4-Apr	Student Seminar