

AGRO/HORT/SOIL 590/694—Graduate Seminar
Fall 2021
Friday, 3:30-4:20 pm on Zoom

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Office Hours: T 1-2pm, F 11-12am or by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

The purpose of seminar is to teach and refine science communication skills through graduate student presentations, guest scholar lectures and peer evaluation.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, students:

- will have presented a science presentation to an audience
- will learn to give objective and constructive criticism
- evaluate presentations for completeness and clarity

COURSE MATERIALS:

There are no required materials for this course.

Canvas: (<http://learn.nmsu.edu>) will be the main communication tool for this course. Get in the habit of checking it frequently. You will submit your evaluation of speakers via canvas.

Grading Policy

Below are listed the assignments from which your grade will be derived.

Assignments in this course:

Assignments	Points each	Weight
Attendance at all class meetings	50	25%
Peer evaluations of all speakers	50	25%
Your presentation	100	50%
Total	TBD	100%

Grading Scale:

Percentage	Points	Grade
90-100%		A
80-89%		B
70-79%		C
60-69%		D
59% and Below		F

I will provide a more detail grading scale when I know how many students are enrolled in the course. If guest speakers are added, they will also be added to the grading. You will be required to give feedback on ALL speakers, guests and other students.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

Attendance

All students are expected to attend every seminar. This is mandatory. If you are unable to attend seminar, a recording will be available for you to view. If you're going to be out of town or for some other reason unavailable, please let me know. Research or lab work are not valid excuses for missing presentations.

Peer evaluations

Learning to give and receive constructive feedback is a large part of this course. You will be required to submit through Canvas feedback on every presentation, both other students and guest lecturers. Evaluation comments on student presentations will be shared anonymously with the student presenter so they may know what they're doing well and areas where they can improve. It is important to remember that learning to communicate your science is as important as doing the science. The most groundbreaking science advancements mean nothing if they can't be communicated (especially to those who have funding to provide!)

You will also be asked to evaluate guest lecturers, though this will not be shared with them. Learning to evaluate the communication skills of others helps refine your own skills.

Your presentation

Masters and early-stage PhD students will be assigned 20-minute time slots with 5 minutes each for questions. PhD students nearing completion of their degrees will be assigned 40-minute slots with 10 minutes for questions. If you are a Masters candidate or early-stage PhD student, you may be sharing the presentation time slot with another student, so 2 presenters on some days.

Your major advisor is expected to attend your presentation and introduce you, therefore, **please be sure to ask them if there are days they are not available prior to letting me know your available dates.** If they are not available, you may choose someone else on your committee to present you. If neither of those work, you may choose someone else on faculty, or ask me to present you. Your presenter is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!**

You are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to practice your presentation with your advisor and/or others who can provide you with helpful feedback before your assigned day. I am happy to be one of those people if you choose. (I was in theatre for 20 years, and I routinely edit journal articles, so am happy to help even if I don't know your specific research.)

Everyone must submit their abstract to me no less than 1 week prior to their presentation.

The key to a good scientific presentation is to place your research in a larger context. The majority of your audience will not know why your science is important, so providing background information and explaining the importance of your project is vital. Explain why your research is interesting and how it relates to other areas. Don't forget to summarize your research and talk about what next steps are, either in your research or for other researchers to consider. Provide a take-home message! Remember to use language and terminology that everyone understands and don't use abbreviations unless you explain what they mean. Using jargon alienates the audience and makes your presentation less successful.

NMSU Student Resources and Policies

Please visit <https://provost.nmsu.edu/faculty-and-staff-resources/syllabus/policies> for university policies and student services, including Discrimination and Disability Accommodation, academic misconduct, student services, final exam schedule, grading policies and more.