

Genres Covered in WRTG f213: Writing and the Sciences

In this course students will read and write a variety of science-related genres. For reference, this list provides the name of each genre, a brief description, the audience each genre is communicating to, and an example from our course reading.

Science Nonfiction

Definition: Writing in the Nonfiction Genre is made up of [prose](#) writing based on facts, real events, and real people. Books in this genre are based on true facts and information. They are narrative accounts or other communicative works that impart knowledge or information to the reader. Books in the nonfiction genre must contain only facts and memories—recalled and recounted as accurately as possible. The nonfiction genre includes sub-genres like memoir, autobiography, science journalism, and narrative nonfiction. Written for a popular audience, though often, unfortunately, a niche one.

Examples: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot. Students in WRTG 213 will write a review of this science-based nonfiction book this semester.

Science Journalism

Definition: Science journalism is a field that reports back to the general public about scientific matters. Science journalists are a special sub-group within the greater journalistic field. Science journalists must wear two hats at all time. The first hat is that of a scientist - a professional who can read and comprehend the often detailed and complex reporting that comes out of the scientific and research fields. The second hat is that of a reporter who is then tasked with communicating that complex knowledge in an easy-to-understand way that the lay public can easily understand and make use of. Audience: general public.

Examples: The weekly essays assigned to read for writing reading responses. Just to name a few: “The Billion Year Wave,” “The New Harpoon,” “The Case for Leaving City Rats Alone,” etc. Depending on your approach, you will also have the chance to craft your own piece of science journalism writing Paper 3, the academic-to-popular translation.

Scientific Writing

Definition: Scientific writing is a technical form of academic writing that is designed to communicate scientific information to its audience, primarily other scientists. Depending on the specific scientific genre—a journal article, a scientific poster, or a research proposal, for example—some aspects of the writing may change, such as its [purpose](#), [audience](#), or [organization](#). Scientific writing is concise and precise and is set within the context of other published works. In WRTG f213, we will not write this type of paper. To learn more about scientific writing, enroll in a technical writing course.

Examples:

- “Observation of Gravitational Waves from a Binary Black Hole Merger,” (assigned for reading in Week 2).
- All of the articles listed to choose from for use in Paper 3.
- “How to Read a Scientific Paper,” refers to how to read these types of papers.

Popular Science Writing

Definition: Professional scientists and engineers are often required to explain their work to non-specialists, including members of the media and the general public. Popular science writing, found in newspapers and magazines such as *National Geographic*, *Wired*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *Smithsonian*, is one common way of communicating with the public. Written to a popular audience from an academic audience to inform and to entertain.

Examples: As you, my students, get farther into your individual field of study you may be tasked with writing to non-specialists from your scientist, engineer, mathematician perspective. At this time, as a professional in your field, you will be engaging in popular science writing. Popular Science Writing is similar to Science Journalism, but science journalism is written by a journalist outside of the field on which they report, and one is written from someone from within their own field of study from a position of authority on that subject. Think of the “Talk Nerdy to Me” TED talk assigned in Week 7. Depending on your approach, you will also have the chance to craft your own piece of popular science writing for Paper 3, the academic-to-popular translation.