LMC 48/13/8803: Science Communication and Public Engagement
TR 9:30-10:45 AM

Course Information

- **Semester**: Fall 2026
- **Section**: KR
- **Credit hours**: 3
- **Course mode**: In person
- **Classroom**: Skiles 010

Instructor Information

- **Instructor**: Kelly Ritter
- **Email**: kelly.ritter@gatech.edu
- **Office**: Skiles 337
- **Office hours**: 8:30-9:30 AM TR

Course Description

This advanced undergraduate and graduate-level course prepares students to communicate scientific and technical knowledge effectively to diverse public audiences. Students will examine how scientific information circulates across media, institutions, and communities, and will practice skills for engaging publics in the scientific research enterprise.

Through a combination of readings, case studies, workshops, and multimodal assignments, students will learn strategies for designing public-facing communication products, engaging with stakeholders, and participating in dialogues about emerging scientific issues. The course emphasizes practical skill development, such as rhetorical awareness, audience research, message framing, visual communication, narrative design, and community-engaged approaches. By the end of the semester, students will be able to communicate their own research (or scientific topics within their domain) in ways that build trust, support informed decision-making, and foster meaningful public engagement.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students completing the requirements for LMC 4813/8803 will be able to:

- Articulate communication goals for engaging non-expert audiences with scientific research.
- Demonstrate effective framing, message design, and multimodal communication based on research in science communication, rhetoric, and public engagement
- Evaluate science communication products for accuracy, and ethical responsibility
- Engage diverse publics using participatory approaches and dialogue.
- Create written, visual, and digital materials that effectively convey scientific information
- Articulate how effective science communication contributes to the professional success of scientists and societal well-being
- Articulate how communicating scientific research effectively has the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.
- Develop personal science communication goals aligned with personal and professional aspirations.

Required Course Materials
No textbook purchase is required for this course. All readings will be available online through our Canvas site. The following book will serve as the core of our readings, along with additional PDFs uploaded to Canvas.

https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-mono/10.4324/9781003493938/science-communication-scientists-john-besley-anthony-dudo-laura-lindenfeld-todd-newman-xia-zheng

Grading Policy

Grade	Description	Grade Point (%)
A	Excellent	90%-100%
B	Good	80-89%
C	Satisfactory	70-79%
D	Passing	60%-69%
F	Fail	0-59%

Grading Components

Assignments	Description	Weight
[Major Project 1]: Science Communication Audit	Students will select an existing organization, research topic, community initiative, or public controversy and conduct a detailed audit of its current science communication practices. Students will assess strengths, limitations, gaps, and risks.	25%
[Major Project 2]: Public-Facing Explainer	Students will create an accessible, engaging explainer that translates a scientific concept or research finding for a non-expert audience. Students must demonstrate audience analysis, effective framing, and clear communication supported by plain language and narrative techniques.	25%
[Major Project 3]: Public Engagement Initiative or Communication Campaign	Students will design, prototype, and implement a comprehensive public-engagement initiative or communication campaign aimed at building trust, informing the public, or facilitating dialogue around a scientific issue. Projects may include public workshops, participatory activities, outreach events, short campaigns, or educational toolkits.	35%
Class Attendance & Participation		15%

Attendance Policy
I expect you to attend this course regularly. You will be allowed to miss 3 classes before attendance impacts your grades. Afterward, each absence will deduct 10 points from this category (100 points in total). Any attendance concerns should be communicated to the instructor. Your course grade will be an automatic F if you miss 7 or more classes.

This is a hands-on, workshop-style course that requires strong participation from everyone, such as engaging with your peers and with me, engaging with your readings, and responding in our physical and digital spaces. Graduate students will also sign up to each lead discussion of readings and topics once during the semester.

Academic Honesty/Integrity Statement
Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's *Academic Honor Code*, please visit http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/ or http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/, as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic
Unit 1: Foundations of Science Communication	
1	What is science communication
2	Understanding audiences and publics
3	Message design, framing, and narrative
4	Misinformation, trust, and ethics
5	Visual and multimodal communication
Unit 2: Analyzing Public Communication and Engagement	
6	Public engagement models and practices
7	Communication ecosystems and media landscapes
8	Institutional communication and policy contexts
9	Assessing public communication: Tools and frameworks
10	Strategies for improving public communication
Unit 3: Designing and Implementing Public Engagement	
11	Design public engagement initiatives
12	Participatory science
13	Social media as science communication tools
14	Public participation, stakeholder engagement, and interpersonal interactions
15	Evaluation and impact assessment
16	Final presentations