

BIOL 8320: Professional Transitions Seminar  
1 Credit (S/U grading)

**Course description**

You will develop the necessary skills and realistic plans for finishing your dissertation and acquiring your next position. We will discuss writing strategies, setting goals, and career materials, e.g., website, curriculum vitae, cover letter, and research description, professional statements. A concurrent writing group that provides support, technical skills, and discipline for dissertation writing and manuscript submission will be established. This class is open to all life science PhD students in their 4th or 5th year.

**Course learning objectives**

By the end of this course, you will...

- Be more confident and effective in your progress toward completing your dissertation.
- Have developed professional materials needed for moving to the next career stage
- Feel more comfortable in your role as a senior (i.e. finishing!) graduate student and in your career plans

**Your role as student**

The course is intended to offer support and structure for finishing students, so we'll take on topics that you feel are needed. You will be expected to attend in person and participate in discussions, sometimes on topics we all might prefer to avoid! Assignments should be done in a timely and thorough fashion so that peers can offer helpful feedback.

**Class Structure**

1) *Check in*. We will start every class with a check in where you will tell us what you accomplished this week on your dissertation/next steps.

2) *Q&A*. We will then move to Q&A, a time to discuss things that you are looking for feedback on – perhaps something you are not sure how to approach or where you tried and it didn't really work. The goal here is to get ideas and advice from each other. This is also a time to address general topics that you are curious about such as: What is the relationship between a dissertation chapter and a manuscript? How to allocate energy between manuscript revisions and writing chapters?

3) *Topic of the day*. See below, note assignments before each topic in **GREEN** in the righthand column.

**Assessment**

The course will be graded on an S/U basis. An "S" grade requires consistent attendance, participation, and assignment completion.

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Sample schedule

(GREEN: Assignment for the *NEXT* class)

Week	date	Topic	Details
1	8/29	<i>Initial check in</i>	Where are you in terms of writing your dissertation and developing post-graduate school plans (i.e. “next steps”)? What are your goals for the semester? SMART goals <i>Reverse planning timelines for next week</i>
2	9/5	<i>CV</i> <i>Mid-semester goals</i>	CVs and resumes– discuss best practices <i>Upload a CV or Resume to Canvas for group review</i>
3	9/12	<i>Research Statement</i>	CV Sharing – discuss best practices; Make REALISTIC Mid-semester goals <i>Get 2-3 sample Research Statements &amp; Read them</i>
4	9/19 (edb3 away)	<i>Research Statement</i>	Peer edits of Research Statement <i>Research Statement draft</i> <i>Ask 3 people for strategies to identify postdoc positions</i>
5	9/26	<i>Finding Postdoc opportunities</i>	Discuss strategies for finding postdoc positions & more feedback on research Statement <i>Get 2-3 sample “cover letters” (i.e. postdoc inquiry) Practice the elevator talk for your research</i>
6	10/3	<i>Cover letters</i> <i>Elevator talks</i>	Discuss purpose & components of Cover letter Share elevator talks <i>Write a Cover letter</i>
7	10/10	<i>Cover letters</i>	Peer edits of Cover letters <i>Select 4 people to reach out to about a postdoc</i> <i>Write postdoc inquiry for one of them</i>
8	10/17	<i>Mid-semester goal review</i> <i>Making postdoc inquiries</i>	Discuss mid-semester goals & postdoc inquiries <i>Find 3-4 websites that you like (people at your stage)</i>
9	10/24	<i>Websites</i>	Discuss purpose & components of a website <i>Make a website (or update yours)</i> <i>Think/survey about other forms of web presence</i>
10	10/31	<i>Websites</i> <i>Other web presence</i>	Give feedback on websites; discuss other web presence <i>Discuss the post-doc/job interview process with 2-3 people</i>
11	11/7	<i>Interviews</i>	Discuss Interviews – what did you learn? <i>Obtain teaching statements from 2-3 people</i>
12	11/14	<i>Teaching Statement</i>	Discuss Teaching Statements <i>Obtain diversity statements from 2-3 people</i>
13	11/21	<i>Diversity Statement</i>	Discuss Diversity Statement <i>Spiff up your website, finalize the text!</i>
14	11/28	<i>THANKSGIVING</i>	Kick back for a few days!! <i>Work toward your end of term goal!</i>
15	12/5	<i>End of term Goal review &amp;</i> <i>Website review</i>	Discuss end-of-term goals & and where you are in terms of finishing and next steps. Share websites!