For these workshops, each of you will write three pieces:

1. A story for an audience with a scientific background
2. A story for a lay audience
3. A piece that is not about molecular and cellular biology

Each assignment is 650 word minimum. You can go as long as you want in your writing and I will be happy to read and critique, but I would suggest shooting for 800-1000 words.

You will also read each other’s pieces, and we will spend time during each workshop talking about those pieces – both what worked and what didn’t.

Because we are reading each other’s pieces, your writing is due about week before each workshop. I will be on campus for much of the day roughly a week before each workshop, and will be happy to talk to you about drafts and/or brainstorm topics. The pieces will be due to your colleagues and myself two days after my office hours.

Reading assignments will be uploaded to a dropbox file shortly. You can also upload your writing assignments there.

**Workshop 1, 9/16: Introductions**

Office hours 9/9, 11 am-4pm – in case anyone wants to get a head start on their writing assignments.

At the workshop, we’ll go around and introduce ourselves and our work. Be prepared to give a five-minute overview of your work. (Note that I will time you, since staying on time is a neglected art in oral communications.)

Then, we will talk about what you are hoping to learn in these workshops.

I will give an “Introduction to scientific communications,” and an overview of the three different writing assignments.

**Writing assignment:** No writing assignment for workshop 1.

**Reading assignment:** Because there is no writing assignment, the reading assignment for this workshop is longer than usual. It is also a mixed bag, spanning topics, as well as genres.
“At the dam” by Joan Didion

“Innovators Who Have Revolutionized Cancer Research Selected to Receive America’s Most Distinguished Prize in Medicine” on the 2019 Albany Medical Prize

“Female scientists report a horrifying culture of sexual assault” by Kayla Webley Adler, from “The best American science and nature writing 2018”

“Making peace” by Barbara Kingsolver, from “High Tide in Tucson”

“POLO brings PARP to pancreas” by Anette Breindl

“Profile of Rodolphe Barrangou” by Tinsley Davis

“Startups and their publications” by Derek Lowe

“Spring 2016 student End7 action kit, US edition”

“The twisty physics of Simone Biles’ historic triple-double” by Rhett Allain

Workshop 2, 10/17: Writing for an audience with a scientific background

Office hours 10/9, 11 am-4pm, pieces due 10/11

Fall is awards season, and we will have plenty to pick from – in particular, the Albany Prize, the Lasker Awards, and the Nobel Prizes.

Writing assignment: You can write about the work done by one of the honorees, the impact of that work, or a profile of the scientist.

Reading assignment: Because the Lasker Award is announced on Sept. 10, and the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine on Oct. 7, the reading assignment is not complete yet.

“With the Nobel Prizes around the corner, it’s crystal ball time” by Sharon Begley

Both advanced information and popular information for the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2006, which was awarded jointly to Andrew Z. Fire and Craig C. Mello "for their discovery of RNA interference - gene silencing by double-stranded RNA."

Workshop 3, 11/14: Writing for a lay audience

Office hours 11/6, 11 am-4pm, writing assignment due 11/8

Writing assignment: The only requirement is that this piece is somehow related to RNA. It does not have to be on your own research, nor does it have to be on molecular and cell biology. It could be on an RNA virus such as HIV or HBV – where it could be a public health story, or a cell biology story – or a more
basic science story about new functions of noncoding RNAs, or on drug discovery targeting RNAs or using RNAs as therapeutics.

**Reading assignment:** TBD

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**Workshop 4, 12/12**

Office hours 12/4, 11 am-4 pm, writing assignment due 12/6

**Writing assignment:** For this last workshop, I ask you to move away from what you know best in terms of your own research, and write about a field of science that is not cellular or molecular biology. Science is a giant enterprise, and you can pick what you want.

**Reading assignment:** We will look at one story – last year’s report of CRISPR edited babies – as covered by several different media outlets.

“Storygram: Two media outlets cover the ‘CRISPR babies’ news” by Jill Adams. This one needs to be read online, as it is interactive.


“In the hot seat: Chinese scientist defends gene editing human embryos” by Chermaine Lee

"Irresponsible, unethical': Research community piles on criticism, concerns” by Nuala Moran

“The US Scientists Who Knew About CRISPRed Babies” by Shawna Williams

“Did CRISPR help—or harm—the first-ever gene-edited babies?” by Jon Cohen