

Briley's Thoughts ...

On Excellent Writing Instruction

I created a seminar for Clusters 70 entitled *Astrobiology in Science Journalism*. In the course, students, most of whom are not science majors, learn about science through writing. One assignment asks students to translate a recently published scientific article for a general audience. The second assignment allows students to choose their own adventure, either writing another translation article, or a research paper about some aspect of science that interests them, or a profile piece about someone involved in science. The writing makes them active participants and gives them a stake in science. My goal is for students to leave the course with a new appreciation for what goes into science news, a new appreciation of science itself and less fear of it. They leave the course feeling empowered to consume this media with a more critical eye.

On Instructional Innovation and Student Engagement

To help students break out of the wrong preconceptions they have about the formality of scientific writing, I have students do a quickwrite describing a spaceship battle in the most vivid, over-the-top way. I then put them in groups and ask them to choose their favorite sentence from each person's piece. They write the sentences on the board to create a wild sci-fi mash-up.

Because students in my course find writing about science scary, something they aren't comfortable with, I've adopted ungrading approaches where students are not graded on perfection so they have more freedom to take risks in their writing without fearing the A. This allows them to set their own learning goals for the course.

On Supporting Graduate Students Teaching Writing

In our Clusters 495 course, we created an interdisciplinary community of Cluster TAs, where we all learned from each other and helped the TAs through a really challenging year.