

GLY 6932
Navigating Graduate School
Fall 2025

Instructor: Ellen E. Martin (email: eemartin@ufl.edu); 381 Williamson Hall
Office Hours: Wednesday 4:00-5:00

Credits: 1, Course Number- 20889, Section 7942

Pre-requisites: none

Meeting time: Monday afternoons, 8th period (3:00-3:50)

Classroom: Wmson 210

Objectives: The path through graduate school can be challenging; the goal of this course is to provide information on how to deal with those challenges and optimize your graduate experience. During the course we will discuss critical deadlines, expectations, academic norms, skills that contribute to success in research and teaching, how the department works, and what resources are available to help you succeed. Everyone in the course will also be asked to think about and articulate their strengths, weaknesses, and goals.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the steps and deadlines that will carry you through your graduate career successfully
- Strengthen self-advocacy skills
- Identify time management skills to help you work for efficiently and effectively
- Clarify advisor expectations
- Join a cohort of students outside of your research group
- Expand your ability to create a healthy work environment
- Identify potential sources of conflict during graduate school and resources to help navigate those conflicts
- Define your career goals and the skills required to achieve those goals

Readings: Readings will be assigned throughout the semester and will be posted on canvas.

Assignments: There will be an assignment **due at 5:00 the Friday** before each class each. These assignments are designed to emphasize the learning objectives. A tentative plan for each week's assignment is included on the syllabus, but the details may evolve during the semester. The final version of each assignment will be posted on canvas the week before it is due.

Grading:	Attending Class	40%
	Participating in discussion	30%
	Completed Assignments	30%

Grading scheme:

Percentage earned	93%-100%	90%-92%	87%-89%	83%-86%	80%-82%	77%-79%	73%-76%	70%-72%	
Letter Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	etc.
GPA Equiv	4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	

Below 60% = E (0 GPA)

Course Logistics:

e-learning site There is canvas site for the course that you should already have access to. Contact me if you have any trouble.

Class Conduct: Please be considerate of your fellow students and me during the class period. Please try to get to class on time, stay until the end and pay attention to the class rather than your phone or computer. These are basic, common courtesies that prevent distractions during class. We will be talking about the things people find challenging or confusing about graduate school. Please respect each other and recognize that everyone is coming to graduate school from a different place and dealing with different issues.

I can set up a zoom meeting on occasion if someone can't attend class in person, but the goal is to have everyone working together in the classroom. If you do have to participate online, please keep your video on, if possible. It can be difficult to stay engaged remotely and it helps if you do not feel like an anonymous black box. *Please email me or talk to me before or after class if there is some reason you need to participate remotely and if you cannot zoom with your video on.*

Health and Wellness: Life offers numerous challenges and being a student can be one of them. If you are struggling mentally or emotionally for any reason, you can contact the [Counseling and Wellness Center](https://counseling.ufl.edu/) (<https://counseling.ufl.edu/>). They have one-click access to people who can help you connect to the right resources for your situation. If these struggles are negatively impacting your performance in your courses, I encourage you to contact the [Dean of Students Care Area](https://care.dso.ufl.edu/) (<https://care.dso.ufl.edu/>) to connect with a support team that can help with temporary accommodations, authorization to make up missing course work, etc. Additionally, if you are comfortable doing so, please reach out to me and I will provide any accommodations in this course that I can.

- U Matter, We Care: umatter@ufl.edu; 352-392-1575.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1575.
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center; 352-392-1161.
- University Police Department: <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>; 352-392-1111 (911 for emergencies).

University Policies and Resources:

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

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Modules		Topics	Guests/Reading
1	Aug. 25 The Department	Welcome and structure of the Department of Geological Sciences	NA
2	Sept. 8 Graduate School Milestones	The Graduate Student Handbook; the steps along the way; deadlines; forming committees;	<i>'20 Things I wish I knew at the start of graduate school'; Dept. Grad Handbook;</i>
3	Sept. 15 How does graduate school work?	Work expectations; who do you work for; the GAU (union); who owns your research; the academic hierarchy; summer funding	<i>'The importance of stupidity in scientific research'</i>
4	Sept. 22 Teaching and Mentoring	What is expected of TAs; how to excel as a TA; how to mentor undergraduates; available resources Also- discussion about use of AI	<i>'3 everyday practices that make you a good listener'</i> <i>'Potential Issues of ChatGPT in Science'</i>
5	Sept. 29 Professional Meetings & Funding Opportunities	Finding the right meeting/session; writing an abstract; co-authorship; TARs; professional behavior, networking; support for your research and travel	<i>'How to get the most out of attending a meeting'</i>
6	Oct. 6 Effective Story Telling	How to share your science with scientists and the general public; how to capture the reader's attention	<i>'Story telling: the soul of science communication'</i>
7	Oct. 13 How to critically read a paper	Where to start; what to focus on; how long should it take;	<i>'How to seriously read a scientific paper' & others</i>

8	Oct. 20 Writing Manuscripts	How does peer review work; authorship; when to cite; referencing; synthesizing other people's work (vs. plagiarism); annotated bibliographies	<i>'Art of responding to reviews'</i> <i>'Ten simple steps to writing a scientific paper'</i> <i>'Publication Challenges'</i> -AGU
9	Oct. 27 Your Prospectus	What goes in it; when is it due; how long should it be; elements of a successful proposal	<i>Prospectus Guidelines-Geological Sciences</i>
10	Nov. 3 How to Make Effective Figures	Elements of a good figure; what does a figure convey; how to make it legible, accessible, appealing, and impactful	<i>'How to make good graphs and figures for Scientific papers'</i>
11	Nov. 10 Work/Life Balance Time management	Time management strategies; setting expectations and goals	GatorWell Rep <i>'9 to 5'</i> <i>'15 strategies for overcoming procrastination'</i>
12	Nov. 17 Mental Health; Dealing with and Reporting Issues	Dealing with mental health issues, general health issues; advisor, colleague, or subordinate conflicts; reporting a grievance	<i>'Mental Health of Graduate Students sorely overlooked'</i> and <i>'The emotional toll of Graduate school'</i>
		No class- Thanksgiving Break	
13	Dec. 1 Your strengths and Career Goals	Skills/qualities of a good scientist or a good graduate student; your strengths; skills/qualities you want to work on; what do you want to achieve in graduate school; what are your career aspirations and why	<i>'Putting your Best Foot Forward'</i> <i>'How to find the right career for me in 5 steps'</i> <i>'Career Trends'</i>

Assignments (Preliminary):

Due Sept. 5- *Graduate School Milestones-*

- Read the Graduate Student Handbook for Geological Sciences.
- Skim through the [UF Graduate Student Handbook](#).
- Make a list of key milestones. What are firm deadlines versus norms that have some flexibility? Note any inconsistencies between the 2 handbooks and any questions you want to follow up on.

Due Sept. 12- *How does grad school work?-*

- Write down your goals for 1) this semester, and 2) this year.
Provide as much or as little detail as you want. What do you want to accomplish? What do you need to achieve to be on track for graduate school? You can think about this in terms of research, teaching, life, professional development- or whatever combination of those that you choose.
- Start to work on your Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Due Sept. 19- *Teaching and Mentoring-*

- Take the Implicit bias test from Project Implicit at Harvard. Go to (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>) and select the 'Project Implicit Social Attitudes test'. You can sign in as a guest. There are a number of tests you can choose between to test your bias on a range of topics. Try at least two that strike you as interesting. Do not report your score. Instead, please **submit a few sentences about your thoughts on the test**. Which tests did you take? Have you taken a test like this before? Are you glad you took them? Did they seem fair, frustrating, intriguing? Would you recommend implicit bias tests to other people. Why or why not? Essentially, just let me know your impression of the test and how you think it should be used.
- ***What is the Impact of ChatGPT?-***
Ask ChatGPT to write a 350 word essay explaining the processes that can lead to sea level rise. I'm going to let you decide how to word the request.
Provide a short critique of the essay. The critique can be a bulleted list of what ChatGPT did well and what it got wrong. How might you discern that this was not written by a student? Add a short summary statement of what you see as the pros and cons of using ChatGPT to address scientific questions.

Due Sept. 26- *Professional meetings and Funding Opportunities*

- ***Professional meetings*** Find one session at a meeting that would be an appropriate place for you to submit an abstract for your research (I will provide links to GSA and AGU). This is a process you need to go through before you go to any meeting, so it is good to figure out how to do it. Many of the meetings have

an overwhelming number of sessions and finding the right one for you can be a challenge- or you may already know of a session that is a perfect fit from a friend, colleague, advisor. There are often general sections by discipline in case you have a hard time finding something more specific, but try to find a session that is relevant if you can.

- Complete a Travel Authorization Request (TAR)- this is a critical step for any work-related travel.
- **Funding Opportunities** - Communicate with your advisor and identify a potential funding source you could submit a grant to in order to help support your research efforts. This can be for small amounts of money for field or lab work (eg., GSA, Sigma Xi), support for travel to a meeting or workshop, are more substantial funding that might support your tuition and/or salary, such as an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship. Look up and write down the details of the requirements and deadlines for one funding source you are interested in. Search around a bit and see if you can identify 1-2 other funding sources that might be relevant to your particularly research topic. Write down the titles and deadlines for these funding sources as well.

Due Oct. 3- *Effective Storytelling*- The goal is to present your research from a humanities viewpoint.

- Compose a Haiku *and* a limerick about your research. I will provide more details on the framework for each.
- Come up with another way to tie your research to the humanities- either through linking it to literature or to art- you could write an essay, make a painting, write a poem or a song- just do something that makes you think about your scientific research in a different way.

Due Oct. 10 - *How to critically read a paper*-

- After reading the assigned papers, fill out the table I will provide about the order people in the readings use to work through the section of a paper. Then fill out a column about the order you use to read the sections of a paper.
- I will provide a paper and you will write an abstract for that paper and define the central hypothesis.

Due Oct 16 (Note this is a THURS. due to Homecoming on Friday)- *Writing*

Manuscripts- Put together an annotated bibliography for 5 articles that are relevant to your research.

Due Oct. 24- *Your Prospectus*- Prepare two elevator speeches about your research topic or research interests. One should be targeted for someone you run into at a scientific conference, one should be targeted at a friend or relative with a limited background in your research.

Due Oct. 31- *How to make effective figures-*

- 1) Make a figure to illustrate an important point or concept related to your work. This can be based on your own data or on data from an archive or a published paper. If you are going to use data from the literature, copy any figure from the original publication that includes those data and explain how your figure improved the presentation of the data or clarified the point you want to make.
- 2) Make an XY plot using your data or data from an archive or publication (this can be the figure from Part 1). Try changing the axes by changing the scale, plotting as logarithmic and normal, add and remove error bars. Just fiddle with the plots and see how these types of manipulations change how you view the results of the data.
- 3) Submit the figure from #1 and the figures from #2 through Canvas and include a comment on the differences in the plots for #2 explaining how you think the changes alter the way you view/interpret the data.

We'll put everyone's plots up on the screen during class and talk through them.

Due Nov. 7 -*Work/Life Balance-*

- 1) Read through: [9 to 5](#)
- 2) Open the [combined file](#) with the 'Weekly study schedule' and '15 Strategies for Overcoming Procrastination.'
- 3) Complete both parts of the weekly study schedule worksheet. This is about your normal commitments, not a daily log of what you actually do. It asks you to list your classes as well as regular research commitments (TA times, lab meeting, scheduled research hours, lab work... anything you have scheduled in on a regular basis). Feel free to include time you reserve for activities outside of school but that is not required.
- 4) Read through the '15 Strategies for Overcoming Procrastination' handout- highlight in red the strategies you don't like, put a '?' by ones you want to learn more about, and highlight least 3 that you would like to try in Green.
Turn in the completed word document in on canvas.

Due Nov. 14- *Mental health/reporting issues-*

- Go to the Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC) website (<https://counseling.ufl.edu/>) and explore a bit. Look into the services that are offered (<https://counseling.ufl.edu/services/>) and resources that are available (<https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/>). Also note, there is an "Ask a Question" section (<https://counseling.ufl.edu/outreach/askit/>) .
- Then complete the Kognito training for students.
This is a 30 minute course that is designed to help you recognize the signs of psychological distress and learn how to provide support to others.

For Nov. 21- (note this is the assignment for Dec. 1- immediately after Thanksgiving Break)- *Your strengths and career goals-*

- Make a list of:
 - at least 6 skills/qualities you think are important to be a successful scientist
 - 5 strengths you think you have that will contribute to your success in graduate school and/or as a scientist,
 - 5 areas where you want to improve.
- Discuss a complete draft of your IDP with your advisor and turn the final version in to Diana.
- Write a description of a job/career that sounds like your dream job/career at this point in your life. Explain what it is about that job/career that appeals to you and what you think the biggest challenges to succeeding in that job/career might be for you.