

Course evaluation PSY4314 Fall 2025

Course responsible: Ylva Berger

Additional teacher: Dan Quintana

About the course:

From the course description: “Dissemination and communication of research to the public constitutes one of the core functions of the university. Neuroscientists engage in conversations with society through writing, talks, and participation in media, thus benefiting various parts of our community. Communication skills also benefit scientists. Communicating your own work makes you more aware of what you are actually working on. Communicating general topics to people who are not familiar with psychology and neuroscience helps you broaden your scope, and inspires new research questions. Communicating your skills may also come in handy when applying for jobs inside and outside of academia. In this course, you will learn some of the genres of research communication and dissemination within various media, including popularized essays, op-eds, public talks and interviews. Students will read and discuss examples from various sources, from Oliver Sacks to op-eds on current topics, then write and read each other’s texts, as well as giving talks and interview each other. The course is set up as a workshop, with a lot of student participation.”

The course has consisted of 6 3-hour seminars spanning most of the semesters. Students have been presented the various topics, done writing exercises and discussions in class, and have submitted written assignments in between classes (creative writing, popular science essay, op-ed, and popular science essay 2). They have also had a podcast workshop (with Dan Quintana). Even though there is no mandatory attendance, and frankly speaking no mandatory assignments, most students have taken part in most sessions, and a majority of students submitted every assignment (10-13 submissions per assignment). Only one group submitted a podcast recording.

Evaluation:

A Nettskjema form was issued, which only 4 students replied to. Because of the small group size, most questions were open ended. Students were asked about learning outcome, usefulness of curriculum, quality of discussions, and the podcast workshop. They were also asked to judge various suggestions for new activities.

Somewhat surprisingly, some of the students thought the course would be about academic writing, so the scope needs to be made more explicit. Students were nevertheless very happy with the learning outcome, and considered it a useful toolbox and a way to be able to help people in society, write for a broader audience and discuss broader topics within neuroscience and psychology. Students were very pleased with

the curriculum, and the way discussions were set up in class for this. I am also much more happy with the new curriculum as compared with the former textbook.

Discussions could have been better planned and structured, although some of the discussions which developed more spontaneously, where among the best I myself have experienced with students. The podcast workshop was excellent, but it should have been scheduled earlier in the semester, so as to allow more time to go through with the actual recording.

When asked about possible future activities, all agreed that organizing a panel discussion at the library or similar, would be useful, and $\frac{3}{4}$ said yes to mini festival, pedagogy (how to teach high school og BA level) and “keep the course as is”.

This fall, the students had to put up with a sub-par teacher who was absent from part of the follow-up, due to sick-leave. A planned interview-assignment had to be skipped altogether, and feedback came way too late on many of the written assignments.

Plans for improvements:

To prevent getting stuck on too many assignments to give feedback on, I will use students more in peer-reviewing, and exchange one writing assignment with a panel discussion, and possibly include a session on pedagogy. The podcast workshop will be scheduled earlier in the fall.