

ABE 502 Graduate Seminar: Advanced Career Skills

DRAFT Course Syllabus – Spring 2026

Fridays at 12:00 – 12:50 for 15 weeks
Room 208 AESB
Credit: 1 hour

Coordinator: Kent Rausch
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Office hours: by appointment
Course web page: <https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/53463>

Description: Introduction to managing time and stress, completing degree program requirements, research methods, data collection techniques, professional ethics, research presentations, communication methods and project management.

Course Format: One 50 minute lecture and discussion period per week for 16 weeks, all in person.

Audience: All students enrolled in graduate programs within ABE, ETMAS, PSM-ETMAS and PSM-Bioprocess & Bioenergy.

Objectives:

1. Learn about resources and programs designed to prepare graduate students for a variety of careers in academia, industry and research agencies.
2. Learn methods of communicating research to a range of audiences (e.g., scientific conferences, public).
3. Become aware of methods to assure integrity in professional conduct, research, project management and data collection techniques.
4. Increase awareness of time management and mental wellness.

Expectations of Students:

1. Attend all seminars and listen actively to each speaker. Your behavior during guest presentations reflects on our department and its programs.
2. Come to the seminar prepared to ask a question of the presenter.
3. Complete the reflective evaluation form (REF) associated with each seminar and submit it by the due date on Canvas.
4. At all times, seek to gain new understanding from the seminar topic even if it may seem peripheral to your interests.
5. Provide constructive feedback to the coordinator or department head.

Expectations of Instructor:

1. Communicate during class as well as via email and Canvas announcements.
2. Organize seminars that are helpful to students' education and degree program.
3. Be attentive to students' concerns and refer them to appropriate resources.

Grading and Assignments

Attendance: it is expected that you will attend each seminar each week. Contact the instructor if you will not be able to attend. Attendance will be taken each week. Two absences will be allowed regardless of reason, but an REF will still be due.

Reflective Evaluation Form (REF): following each seminar, you are to submit a form that requires that you reflect on each topic presented. The REF will be tailored to each seminar topic. Slides from the seminar may be available and can be consulted as you complete the form. Other times, you may

have to take notes on your own to formulate your reflections (e.g., evaluating a poster presentation). REF grades will be based on thoughtful and complete responses to the REF prompts/questions and clarity and conciseness of communicating your thoughts. Each REF is expected to be about one page in length. An REF is required even if you are absent from seminar for that week.

Professional Ethics Case Study and Essay: Write an **original** essay for a specific ethics case study. A grading rubric will be posted with details when the case study is assigned.

Component	Points	%
Attendance (15 weeks @ 5)	75	23
REF (about 15 @ 10)	150	46
Professional Ethics Case Study and Essay	100	31
Total	325	100

Grading Scale – a plus/minus scale will be used

A+: >97.0%; A: 93.0-96.9%; A-: 90.0-92.9%
B+: 87.0-89.9%; B: 83.0-86.9%; B-: 80.0-82.9%
C+: 77.0-79.9%; C: 73.0-76.9%; C-: 70.0-72.9%
D+: 67-69.9%; D: 63-70; D-: 60-63% F: less than 60%

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance at all seminars is expected. If you are unable to attend, you may attend a different seminar on campus and submit an REF for that presentation but contact the coordinator in advance. You can be absent from two seminars, regardless of reason, without a point penalty.

Academic Integrity

In this course you are expected to produce your own work in all assignments. Creative writing assignments such as the Ethics Essay are expected to be original writing of your own. Written assignments will be submitted through a software tool that compares your writing against a large database as well as to the work of your current classmates and previously submitted assignments. Assignments with close matches to other work will be flagged and investigated.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in this Course

Use of AI and AI tools is prohibited for creative writing assignments, which includes REF and the ethics case study assignments.

Mental Health

Significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, substance/alcohol misuse or interferences in eating or sleep can have an impact on academic performance, social development, and emotional wellbeing. The University of Illinois offers a variety of confidential services including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, psychiatric services, and specialized screenings which are covered through the Student Health Fee. If you or someone you know experiences any of the above mental health concerns, it is strongly encouraged to contact or visit any of the University's resources provided below. Getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do for yourself and for those who care about you.

Counseling Center (217) 333-3704

McKinley Health Center (217) 333-2700

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273-8255

Rosecrance Crisis Line (217) 359-4141 (available 24/7, 365 days a year)
If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

Community of Care

As members of the Illinois community, we each have a responsibility to express care and concern for one another. If you come across a classmate whose behavior concerns you, whether in regard to their well-being or yours, we encourage you to refer this behavior to the Student Assistance Center (217-333-0050 or <http://odos.illinois.edu/community-of-care/referral/>). Based on your report, the staff in the Student Assistance Center reaches out to students to make sure they have the support they need to be healthy and safe. Further, as a Community of Care, we want to support you in your overall wellness. We know that students sometimes face challenges that can impact academic performance (examples include mental health concerns, food insecurity, homelessness, personal emergencies). Should you find that you are managing such a challenge and that it is interfering with your coursework, you are encouraged to contact the Student Assistance Center (SAC) in the Office of the Dean of Students for support and referrals to campus and/or community resources.

Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the course instructor as soon as possible and provide the instructor with a Letter of Academic Accommodations from Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES). To ensure that disability-related concerns are properly addressed from the beginning, students with disabilities who require assistance to participate in this class should apply for services with DRES and see the instructor as soon as possible. If you need accommodations for any sort of disability, please speak to me after class, or make an appointment to see me or see me during my office hours. DRES provides students with academic accommodations, access, and support services. To contact DRES, you may visit 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign, call 217-333-1970, e-mail disability@illinois.edu or visit the DRES website at <http://www.disability.illinois.edu/>. The direct link to apply for services at DRES is <https://www.disability.illinois.edu/applying-services>.

Disruptive Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office for Student Conflict Resolution (<https://conflictresolution.illinois.edu>; conflictresolution@illinois.edu; 333-3680) for disciplinary action.

Emergency Response Recommendations

Emergency response recommendations and campus building floor plans can be found at the following website: <https://police.illinois.edu/em/run-hide-fight/>. I encourage you to review this website within the first 10 days of class.

Religious Observances

Illinois law requires the University to reasonably accommodate its students' religious beliefs, observances, and practices in regard to admissions, class attendance, and the scheduling of examinations and work requirements. Students should complete the Request for Accommodation for Religious Observances form should any instructors require an absence letter in order to manage the absence. In order to best facilitate planning and communication between students and faculty, students should make requests for absence letters as early as possible in the semester in which the request applies.

Sexual Misconduct Reporting Obligation

The University of Illinois is committed to combating sexual misconduct. Faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct to the University's Title IX and Disability Office. In turn, an individual with the Title IX and Disability Office will provide information about rights and options, including accommodations, support services, the campus disciplinary process, and law enforcement options.

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors, confidential advisors, and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: wecare.illinois.edu/resources/students/#confidential.

Other information about resources and reporting is available here: wecare.illinois.edu.