

Critical Reviews of Geologic Writing

Geology 371

Wednesday, 12:30 to 2:00

Paul Bierman

1 credit

This is a class about writing and how to make it better. The premise is a simple one. We will spend the semester reading and editing papers written by current and former UVM students and faculty. The important difference between readings in this class and in other classes is that the papers you will be reading here, have yet to be published. In fact, many of them have not even been submitted to a journal. Your input and constructive criticisms will make these papers a stronger part of the geologic literature.

Your responsibility in this class is to approach each manuscript as though you were a reviewer for a professional journal. Each week you will receive a manuscript to edit. You will prepare a thorough and helpful review of the manuscript. The review should be typed and at least a single-space page in length although MOST reviews will be longer. To produce such a review, do the following.

1. Read the manuscript quickly to familiarize your self with its content and goals.
2. Read the manuscript slowly for a second time with a pen in hand. Make marginal notes where needed to correct grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.
3. For major comments and complaints, add a number to the manuscript and type your comments on a separate sheet.
4. Prepare your typed, formal review to include the following:
 - An introductory paragraph that describes what the paper is about and its main conclusions.
 - A second paragraph that presents your evaluation of the paper specifically in terms of: quality of data, logic of interpretations, writing clarity, clarity of illustrations.
 - A recommendation and justification of whether the paper should be accepted, accepted with major revisions, or rejected. This paragraph should clearly state what major changes are needed to make the paper acceptable for publication.
 - A list of specific comments tied by number to the ms.

Expectations and Evaluation Criteria

I expect that everyone of us will come to class each week with a completed, neatly typed review and annotated manuscript. I expect that no later than the end of the day on each Wednesday, you will email me a copy of your review so that I can read it and so that I can post these to our class web site -- these postings will let you see how each person approaches their reviews.