

Preparing to Lead a Summer Journal Club – Summer 2013

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Hi and thanks for stopping by our Web meeting on “Preparing to Lead a Summer Journal Club”.

My name is Rocio Benabentos, and I am from the Office of Intramural Training & Education. I am the program manager for summer journal clubs this year. In the first part of the presentation, we will go over important dates that you should take into account when submitting your application materials to become a journal club leader and also for the journal club itself.

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So what is required of you before you lead a summer journal club?

There have been a few changes to the journal clubs this year, so if you have led one of these in the past please pay particular attention to the requirements. The changes streamline the journal clubs and will help us reach as many summer students as possible.

The first thing you need to do is watch the Web meeting that you are viewing right now. If you have friends that are planning to lead a journal club, we ask that you tell them to log in and watch this too.

Second, you need to register and attend the workshop on “Tips for Mentoring a Summer Student” on April 29th, from 3:30pm-4:30 pm, in Bldg 50 Rm 1227. This workshop will be led by Lori Conlan from the Office of Intramural Training & Education and it provides some excellent tips for mentoring summer students. If you are unable to attend, you can also watch the videocast of a similar workshop on mentoring summer student and leading a journal club, which was led by Lori Conlan and Carla Easter.

Finally, you need to submit a completed journal club registration form. You can find a template on the Summer Journal Club Leader Web site. The deadline for submitting the description is May 10th. By this deadline, we need the name of your journal club, a short description of your journal club, names of both co-leaders, as well as dates, times and location of the journal club.

We require each journal club to have two co-leaders. This allows for a more diverse teaching style and a broader depth of knowledge. If there is something you don't know, you have a co-leader that might be more knowledgeable in that specific area. Also, unexpected things can happen and we want the summer students that are committing to these dates and times to be assured that the journal club will meet. The best way to do this is to have two leaders per journal club. You are responsible for identifying a co-leader and we will give you some tips on how to do that later in the talk.

You are also responsible for finding a room to reserve as well as for all of the audio visual and other materials you need to hold the journal club. We will go over some tips on how to find and reserve a room later in the workshop.

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The other thing that we require from you is that you understand what you need beforehand.

You need to provide your own materials and supplies. For example, you need to select the articles to be presented or read for the journal club. If you are taking paper suggestions from students, you need to review them and approve them or not. Also, you need to provide your own audio visual materials, including a projector, laptop, or whatever else you might need for the journal clubs.

You should also establish and maintain communication with enrolled students. We will give you the list of enrolled students the week before journal clubs are scheduled to start. You need to e-mail them and send them reminders each week prior to the meeting.

Also, you need to maintain an attendance list and keep a record of it so that you can get it back to us. We want to get an accurate representation of how many students are actually attending our journal clubs. We do send out a survey at the end of the summer asking students for feedback, but we want to have an idea of actual attendance and how many students are benefiting from the summer journal clubs. Keeping track of attendance will be the responsibility of the journal club leaders.

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Let's talk about some specific details of the journal clubs this year.

The journal clubs are going to be starting late in June, the week of June 24th. We chose this to allow students to settle in their labs and get all of the required training done before they start a journal club. Also, some students do not start their summer

internships until June, so this gives them an opportunity to participate in the journal clubs as well.

We are asking that the journal clubs end by August 2nd.

This would give you six weeks, to meet for a minimum of four times and a maximum of six times. You have the flexibility to choose between four and six journal club sessions, but you have to stay within that range.

We will have no more than 10 students per journal club. We are looking for a group size of 8-10 students. This will allow you to focus on individual students, cater to their specific needs, and have important one-on-one interactions with everyone in your group.

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Finally, some important dates.

First, May 10th is when the application and registration materials are due for the journal club. E-mail those directly to me. All the materials have to be complete by May 10th. This includes all pertinent information about journal title and description, names of both co-leaders, day and time of journal club, and location. You can find a template in the Summer Journal Club Leader Web site. May 10th is a hard deadline because we need to compile all of the journal club titles to give this information to students and give them enough time to choose a journal club and register.

On June 17th, all of the journal club leaders will be given their student lists. You should contact all of the students on the list and make sure they have all the necessary information for the first meeting. I do want to say that, if we have a lack of interest in your journal club, we are going to go ahead and cancel it and redirect the few students that signed up to other available journal clubs. Depending on the number of journal clubs that we have and the number of summer students that register, we might consider opening up the journal clubs to Postbac fellows as well.

The journal clubs will start the week of June 24th and end the week of August 2nd. In this six week period, you can hold from four to six journal club sessions.

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This ends the first part of the presentation. The second part of the presentation includes more detailed information about the journal clubs.

If you have any concerns during the application process or during the actual journal club session, please contact me. Again, my name is Rocio Benabentos. I am located in

Bldg 2 in Room 2W11A, and you can e-mail me at the address indicated in this slide, benabentosr@mail.nih.gov .

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about the summer journal clubs.

Thank you.

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In this part of the presentation we will give you an idea of what you need to know and what you need to do to lead a summer journal club. This is somewhat of an orientation.

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Our objectives for this meeting are to:

First, go over the goals for the summer journal clubs. This includes the goals for you as a leader as well as the goals we hope to achieve for the summer students that will be attending these journal clubs.

Also, we will give you some helpful information that will get you started and help you have a successful journal club during the summer.

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First, the goals. So, what's in it for you?

As graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, you should always be thinking about your future careers and how to strengthen your resume and gain important skills. Leading a journal club will give you experience in several areas, including experience teaching, experience administering or organizing an event, as well as mentoring experience.

Leading a journal club also gives you the opportunity to give back and pass along information that you have gained along the way, and, at the same time, inspire the generation of scientists coming after you.

Finally, it's fun! You get to spend time with students that are new and enthusiastic about the science and are just starting this new process. You will see them learning about cool things we can do and probably had forgotten that are cool, which can be invigorating. It makes us remember why we are excited about science in the first place, so, this is an added bonus for leading a journal club.

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We also have goals for the summer students.

The primary goal of these journal clubs is for students to gain critical reading experience. This is the ability to dissect a paper, go through the introduction and understand what they need to get out of it to understand the rest of the paper, understand the data, and the take-home points.

Students also get to learn about cool laboratory techniques that they may not be using during the summer but they might be able to get to use them later, either during their undergraduate research projects or during graduate school. Learning about new laboratory techniques increases their understanding of science and the scientific method.

Students also get practice discussing scientific topics, get familiar with scientific vocabulary and learn about how projects are structured and how those projects turn into papers.

Finally, they will gain a deeper understanding of the specific topic you will be covering, learn about why it is significant and gain a new appreciation for it.

Now, let's talk a little bit about expectations.

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To lead a successful journal club you should understand your audience.

NIH welcomes a diverse pool of students each summer. There is large variety in their levels of research experience. For some of them, this is their first summer doing research or stepping into a lab. We have other students that have prior research experience. Some of the students may only have done a short research project, while others might have extensive experience and might have started in high school and now gone through several years of research experience. These students will have a different level of understanding of the scientific process and of scientific papers. One of the challenges of being a journal club leader is that you need to target a broad audience with diverse levels of expertise, and you need to cater your teaching style to reach this broad audience.

The level of education of our summer student population is very diverse. We have high school students, from 16 years old and up who have not taken any university level science courses. We also have community college and undergraduate university students at different levels. Finally, we have a few medical and dental students who will have taken upper level science courses during their undergraduate education. Please

take this into account when you are making decisions about the topic of your journal club and the papers you will choose. You might have to think about different ways to explain the concepts you will cover so that they are both understandable and challenging for students with different levels of education and research experience.

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Let me give you some information about picking your journal club topic.

You want to pick a topic that is broad enough that it will be widely applicable and interesting to a broad audience. This is not a journal club on your specific research topic. So, for example, if you study the molecular interaction between protein X and protein Y, this topic is not going to be broad enough to be interesting to a broad audience.

However, even though the topic should be general, it should have a focus as well. Topics such as “cancer” or “AIDS” will not be appropriate because they would be too broad. It doesn’t really tell the students anything about what they are coming into. However, having a journal club on, for example, “The current trends in targeted therapies for breast cancer” would be a topic that is broad enough to generate interest, but narrow enough that the students will have an idea of what to expect. There is a large scientific literature on this topic, but it is still specific enough that someone interested in breast cancer treatments or in clinical trials would be attracted to this journal club.

Also, the topic should be mainstream enough that it will attract students. Students will usually want to learn something more about what they have heard about, so if you pick a topic that is too obscure, you will have difficulty recruiting students to your journal club. The idea is to deepen their understanding using a topic to help them reach some of the objectives we have already talked about like increasing their knowledge of reading scientific papers or laboratory techniques.

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When picking a title, you need to focus on what the goal of that title is. The goal of a title is to gain the reader's attention and help them determine if the club is right for them. Remember, these students are here for a short time and they would like to pick something that is fun for them.

You should pick a title that accurately describes the topic you will be covering and that focuses on the most marketable aspects of that topic. Again, this title should be broad enough to garner enough interest but it should not be too vague or broad to be

misleading. For example if you have a title that says “AIDS treatments” it would imply that you are studying all AIDS treatments when you most probably are not.

The title does not have to be a word for word reiteration of the topic. You can be somewhat creative with it, to gain the reader's attention, but do not get carried away. The title should still convey what the topic will be. If you have a very cutsey title, students might not understand what to expect from the journal club.

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This year all of the journal clubs require two leaders. Here are some ideas on how to find a co-leader if you don't already have someone in mind.

Start with someone dependable. We will be asking students to review both the journal club and the journal club leaders, and we will try to make these reviews available to you. They could be great additions to future job applications as a proof of your teaching or mentoring success. So, try to find someone dependable that will enhance the experience that summer students taking your journal club will have.

You can look in your research group for a fellow postdoc or graduate student to co-lead the journal club with you, or in a research group that you collaborate with. You can also look broader, for example your "capital L" Lab, or people in your floor. Another way to find a co-leader is if you are part of an interest group. Since you already share similar scientific interests it might be a likely place to find an interested co-leader.

Finally, as a last resort, you can also send out a request via the Fellow-L listserv for graduate students and postdocs to try to find someone interested in your specific topic.

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Here are some tips on finding and reserving a room.

It is your responsibility to find and reserve a room this year, and by the application deadline you will need to provide the day and time that you will be meeting on a weekly basis. Make sure you start this process early, because it can sometimes take time to make these arrangements.

If you don't know where to start, you first need to know what you are looking for. You will need a room that is big enough to accommodate 10-12 people. It also needs to meet any of the audio-visual needs you have. So it will have to have space for a projector and for your laptop, as well as a screen or place to project to.

To find how to find and reserve a room, start with who you know. You can first ask your Principal Investigator or mentor. There is a good chance that they would have done this

before to hold lab meetings. They might be also able to point you to the right direction as to whom to contact. Also, talk your administrative staff in the lab, they will most likely know of rooms available and of how to reserve them.

As a last resort, you can contact Events Management. They have a pretty good understanding of what is available on campus. Most meeting rooms that they deal with are associated with a fee, but they will be able to point you in the right direction and put you in contact with pertinent people that will be able to help you find and reserve a room.

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Again, please contact me with any questions or concerns about the summer journal clubs.

Thank you for stopping by and watching this and I look forward to having a great time with the journal clubs this summer.