Assignment Overview:

The objective of this assignment is for you to read a scientific journal article in a peer-reviewed publication and compare how the topic and/or results are addressed in this article to how they are addressed in a popular magazine, newspaper, or website. For this assignment, you'll look in peer-reviewed research journals for your article. You will submit a written summary of your comparison and present your findings to the class. The written summary is worth 50 points and the class presentation is worth 50 points.

Choosing a Peer-Reviewed Article:

You will use the database Academic Search Complete (link from the library website) in order to find your peer-reviewed journal article. We’ll have a class with a librarian to guide you in choosing a good article for this project. The journal article can be on any topic related to biology, but must be a full-text article from a peer-reviewed journal. You may use a literature review article or one that is based on original research.

You must email me (fterranova1@nvcc.edu) a pdf version of the article or a working link to the article no later than 12:00 noon on Wednesday, January 30th. Late assignments will be penalized 10% each day they are late (day 1 of being late is 12:01 pm on Wednesday, January 30th). No student may use an article that another student is already using. In the case where more than one student chooses the same article, the student who submitted their article first will get to use it.

Reading the Peer-Reviewed Article

Reading a peer-reviewed scientific journal article is challenging. However, with patience and focus you should be able to understand the background information in the paper, its purpose, and the main conclusions drawn from the study. Here are websites that may help you:

Characteristics of Other Periodicals (from the NOVA Library website)
How to (Seriously) Read a Scientific Paper (from Science magazine)

Once you’ve read the peer-reviewed journal article, you need to be sure you understand the background information, the purpose of the authors’ research or literature review, and their main conclusions.

Written Portion of the Assignment (worth 50 points):

This part of the assignment is due by 12:00 noon two days before your oral presentation. For example, if your oral presentation is scheduled for Wednesday, February 6th, then you must email your written assignment by 12:00 noon on Monday, February 4th. Late assignments will be penalized 10% each day they are late (day 1 of being late is 12:01 on the written assignment due date).

The written portion of the assignment must be emailed as an MS Word document or pdf file. And, it must include the following information:

1) Title of research article, the authors, the publication it appears in, and the date of publication.
2) An introduction to the topic. This should be one or two paragraphs that summarize the basic background information necessary to know before explaining the peer-reviewed journal article.
3) One or two paragraphs that explain the purpose of the authors’ study or literature review.
4) One or two paragraphs that explain the results and conclusions of the research or literature review.
5) The comparison. This last section should include the name and source of one article in a popular magazine, newspaper, or website that is about a topic similar to your peer-reviewed journal article. You need to describe how the topic is addressed differently in the peer-reviewed article compared to this other article meant for the general public. This section should be about two paragraphs in length.

That’s it—a paper that is about five to eight paragraphs long, which equates to about two or three pages (no longer). A rubric will be posted on Blackboard to provide specific information on how you will be graded on the written portion of the assignment.

**Oral Presentation Portion of the Assignment (worth 50 points):**

You will make an oral presentation to the class on a date assigned by the instructor. Specifically, here’s what you need to present:

1) State the title of the peer-reviewed article and the journal it is published in. Then give a brief overview of what the topic of article is about. Specifically, explain what the researchers’ purpose of the study or literature review was, and their conclusions.

2) State the title of the popular magazine, newspaper, or website that you compared the peer-reviewed article to. Then give a general overview of what this popular article is about. Explain any interesting differences you noticed between the two publications.

3) Pose one topic or question for discussion to the class. This needs to be something specific—not something like: “So, what did you think of these articles?” You need to lead this discussion!

You may use visual aids, such as PowerPoint, graphics, websites, etc., but you don’t need to. You may use notes or notecards during your presentation; however, you are not to read from your notes! You are giving a talk, not a reading. You’ll be graded on how clearly you convey the information to the class and on how well you lead the discussion.

The oral presentation should last about 10 minutes. There are no “do-overs” for this part of the assignment, so practice giving the presentation a lot before you do it for the class. A rubric will be posted on Blackboard to provide specific information on how you will be graded on the oral presentation portion of the assignment.