

**CHEMISTRY 1905 [Section 004, FRI]
Science in the News (Freshman Seminar) – 2 credits**

**Fall Semester 2013
111 Smith Hall**

- INSTRUCTOR:** Professor **George Barany**, 435 Smith Hall, 612-625-1028
barany@umn.edu [e-mail; please provide clear subject line that makes it obvious to me that your message is related to this course, Chem 1905-FRI, so that I can give it proper priority]. I do not schedule office hours for this class, but I am widely available (including weekends) and each student can expect to have multiple one-on-one meetings with me over the course of the semester.
- CLASS HOURS:** **Friday, 2:30 P.M. – 4:10 P.M.** (September 6 – December 6)
- COURSE GOAL:** To engage in free-wheeling discussions and analysis about modern scientific developments and historical contexts, with our point of departure being the “Science Times” section of the *New York Times*, which is published every Tuesday. We may also get into all sorts of additional news, as well as some puzzle-related digressions, based on multi-media provided by the *New York Times*, and various other newspapers and magazines. For example, if a prominent scientist passes away, we would review his or her obituary. Finally, we want to establish for ourselves a level of scientific literacy appropriate to the 21st century, and consider how science is currently portrayed in the media. *The emphasis will be on learning new and interesting material, and on having fun!*
- REQUIREMENTS:** All students need to have web access (www.nytimes.com) to the *New York Times* (discussed further at first class meeting). You *must attend* all class meetings, be *well prepared*, and *participate actively* in a variety of ways that will evolve as we get to know each other. For example, each week, students should prepare short outlines with questions or “talking points” corresponding to specific articles. These reports must be in your own words; they should be typed up and handed in after class and are retrieved a week later with Professor Barany’s annotations, corrections, and suggestions (in the meantime, keep a copy for yourself). *If possible, plan to bring a laptop computer (or equivalent device) with wireless access to class.* Both individual and team efforts are encouraged. Please budget approximately 4 hours per week outside of class for work associated with this seminar, and keep a log of your activities (a template will be provided).
- GRADING:** *There will be no quizzes or examinations in this course.* Students who take seriously the course goal and requirements as set forth above can expect to receive an ‘A’ – with the caveat that this is *not* intended to be an ‘easy A’. Students whose effort is satisfactory but not especially distinguished can expect to receive a ‘B’. Students who do not participate or contribute will be advised to drop the class. There is no prescribed grade distribution, and nothing would delight your instructor more than to give all (or almost all) high grades for this course.