

English 395—Writing for the Health Professions
Fall 2014, Section BL01
Time: 8:00 am—9:15 am, Tawes 0234/online
Tuesday/Thursday

Instructor: J. Rosser Matthews
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Course Overview:

English 395 is an advanced writing class designed to help students transition from college-level writing into “real world” professional writing and communication. You will be exposed to advanced research resources and strategies unique to the health professions, and learn how to produce high-quality professional documents such as cover letters and resumes, personal statements, project proposals, and review articles. In all of these writing endeavors, the focus will be on tailoring the specific document to meet the needs of its specific audience. Finally, this class will give you the opportunity to reacquaint yourself with foundational writing issues (drafting, revising, and editing), as well as the essentials of style and grammar.

Reflecting a long-standing concern of the University of Maryland, sustainability issues will be used as a lens to develop critical thinking skills relevant to writing about medicine and health.

Prerequisites: English 101 or equivalent **and** a minimum of 60 credits.

Required Texts:

Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup, Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace, 11th edition
(New York: Longman 2014)(ISBN: 978-0-321-89868-5) (Style)

A World of Health: Connecting People, Place, and Planet (Portland, OR: Northwest Earth
Institute, 2010)

Learning Outcomes:

This course fulfills the University’s Fundamental Studies Professional Writing Requirement. As stated in the University’s Plan for General Education (<http://www.provost.umd.edu/GenEdReport/GenEdPublic-Dec2010.pdf>, see Appendices p. 35), students should be able to perform the following tasks upon completing this course:

1. Analyze a variety of professional rhetorical situations and produce appropriate texts in response.
2. Understand the stages required to produce competent, professional writing through planning, drafting, revising and editing.
3. Identify and implement the appropriate research methods for each writing task. Students do research for each writing assignment.
4. Practice the ethical use of sources and the conventions of citation appropriate to each genre.
5. Write for the intended readers of a text, and design or adapt text to audience who may differ in their familiarity with the subject matter.

6. Demonstrate competence in Standard Written English, including grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, coherence, and document design (including the use of the visual) and be able to use this knowledge to revise texts.
7. Produce cogent arguments that identify arguable issues, reflect the degree of available evidence, and take account of counter arguments.

The learning outcomes associated with each major writing assignment are listed in parentheses after each assignment description (e.g., “6” would indicate that the assignment focuses on improving Standard Written English).

Course Philosophy: Health, Medicine, and Sustainability

If you are taking this particular section of Professional Writing, then you presumably intend to enter one of the health professions—medicine, an allied health field, or public health. In your future day-to-day work lives, you may often think about very specific issues—how do I treat this particular patient, how do I implement this particular public health policy etc. This individualistic focus is very much part of the culture of the health care field. There is ample evidence, however, that the current health care field is broken. In medicine, expensive high-tech care is not necessarily the “best” care; in public health, expensive campaigns sometimes do little to move the general population toward more health-promoting activities. What is missing is system thinking: how should all the components be arranged to benefit not only individual patients, but also not waste society’s finite resources—both now and in the future? Without this shift in focus, our current health care delivery system is unsustainable.

As a campus, the University of Maryland is in the vanguard of sustainability issues; earlier this year, the university received a “Gold Rating” from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. One aspect of this focus is the Chesapeake Project, which is a professional development activity that encourages faculty to integrate sustainability issues “across the curriculum.” In May, your instructor took part in the Chesapeake Project, and has revised this course accordingly.

While sustainability issues are often discussed in terms of preserving the environment, they are just as central to health promotion and the delivery of medical care. Furthermore, environmental concerns impinge directly on health issues—both negatively and positively. Changes in the environment can transform the “ecology of disease” in ways that lead to new health threats; conversely, sustaining the environment is necessary to ensure an adequate food supply. As some scholars have argued, cleaning up the environment and increases in agricultural productivity have actually been more “health promoting” (in terms of increased longevity) than specifically “medical” interventions after patients have become sick.

In the assignments for this course, I would like you to couple these sustainability themes with either medical practice or public health. If you focus on medicine, you could design a proposal to show how system thinking can improve the efficiency, delivery, and long-term sustainability of health care services in a clinical setting; you might consider drawing on your own internship and/or physician shadowing experiences. If you focus on public health, consider how

sustainability ideas interact synergistically with health promotion (e.g., food production), or how changes in the environment can impact the ecology of disease.

Regardless of your focus, you will have to develop a series of arguments that can anticipate (and rebut) the traditionally individualistic focus of much clinical thinking; by introducing a “systems approach,” you are implicitly trying to introduce a paradigm shift in this field of professional endeavor. As such, you will have to execute many of the tasks listed among the course’s learning outcomes—for instance, adapting text to audience and “produce cogent arguments that identify arguable issues, reflect the degree of available evidence, and take account of counter arguments.”

Course Expectations: Writing, Revising, and Thinking (an interactive loop)

Writing is learned through practice, which means (as a consequence) that there will be multiple writing assignments throughout the semester. As the Professional Writing Program website indicates, “In every PWP course, students write and revise four to six major assignments for a total of approximately 25 pages of formal graded writing per student.” The specifics for each of these writing assignments are provided as a separate document posted on ELMS/Canvas. As you will see, many of these writing assignments involve the completion of a first draft, which will then be commented on by one of your classmates. There are (at least) three reasons for getting feedback prior to final submission of any written document:

- 1) Every piece of writing can be improved with revision;
- 2) Writing is an inherently *social* activity (between a writer and a reader); and
- 3) The best way, as a writer, to enhance the likelihood of being understood is to craft text in ways that conform to your readers’ expectations.

In all of the writing assignments, the ability to tailor information to suit the needs of an audience will be primary in determining the grade, with individual grades determined based on the following general rubric:

Specific Criteria Used To Determine Letter Grades on Individual Assignments

Written papers will be awarded a grade of “A” if	They introduce information that is directly relevant for the audience, and package it in a way that <i>explicitly</i> addresses the needs of the audience.
Written papers will be awarded a grade of “B” if	They introduce information that is directly relevant for the audience, but they force readers to “connect the dots” to see why the information is relevant.
Written papers will be awarded a grade of “C” if	They introduce information that is only partially relevant for the needs of the audience. The readers not only have to “connect the dots” for information that is relevant, but also sift through what information that needs to be discarded.

The above criteria will be used as a general guide to assign grades based on the quality of content in written assignments. However, *I reserve the right to lower the assigned grade by up to a letter if the submitted product is professionally substandard* (e.g., it has spelling, punctuation, or grammar error, has inadequate citations etc.). How these general criteria will be applied in assessing specific assignments is discussed in more detail in the Assignment section of the course space on ELMS. General description of undergraduate letter grades can be found at <http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1534>.

Each assignment will be given a numerical score with 100 points possible at the end of the semester. Your final numerical score will be translated into a final grade based on the following table:

94-100%	A	4.0
90-93%	A-	3.7
87-89	B+	3.3
84-86	B	3.0
80-83	B-	2.7
77-79	C+	2.3
74-76	C	2.0
70-73%	C-	1.7

Assignments Schedule, Approximate Page Lengths, and Grade Percentages

Assignment	Percentage	No. of Pages	Due Date
1) First Reflection Essay	1%	1	9/4
2) Reader Expectation Theory Essay	4%	2	9/18
3) Resume/Cover Letter/Personal Statement	5%	4	9/25, 10/2
4) Second Reflection Essay	2%	1	10/28
5) Website on Health Issue	20%	4	10/30, 11/6
6) Memo Outlining Group Project	3%	2	11/11
5) Review Article	15%	5	11/18, 11/25
7) Oral Presentation	5%	-	Various
8) Final Project—Individual Component	20%	8	Time of Final
9) Final Project—Group Component	8%	-	Time of Final
10) Final Reflective Essay	2%	1	12/11
11) Class Participation/Attendance	15%	-	Various

Specific Assignment for Class Meeting of:

Module I: Writing for General Reader Expectations

9/2 —Course Overview

Read Charles E. Rosenberg, “Framing Disease: Illness, Society, and History”; Review Stasis Theory; Respond to Discussion Board prompt

- 9/4—Introductions: Exorcising “Miss Grundy”
Style, Lessons 1 & 2
 Submit 1st Reflection Essay
- 9/9— Ethos, Pathos, and Logos
 Danielle Ofri, “Common Ground” (Canvas)
Style, Lessons 3-4
- 9/11—Discussion of Ofri’s “Common Ground”
Style, Lessons 5-6
- 9/16— The Rhetoric of Data and Visual Culture
 Frank Frommer, How Power Point Makes You Stupid (New Press, 2012)(Canvas)
- 9/18— **Due: Reader Expectation Theory and Professional Writing**
Style, Lessons 7-8;
 Overview & Practice of the Peer Review Process
- 9/23—Writing a Resume, Cover Letter, and Personal Statement
 “Practical Writing” from Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (Canvas)
- 9/25— **Due: Resume, Cover Letter, and Personal Statement (first draft)**
 In-class peer review of RCLP
- 9/30— Online Peer Review of RCLP
- 10/2— Presentation by librarian Nedelina Tchangalova (nedelina@umd.edu)
 (Physical Sciences & Public Health Librarian), McKeldin Library, 6th floor, Room 6101
Due: Resume, Cover Letter, and Personal Statement (final version)

Module II: Developing Writing, Research, and Critical Thinking Skills: A Case Study Using Ecological Medicine and Public Health

- 10/7—Watch the following videos online: Atul Gawande, “How do we heal medicine?” (Ted Talk, filmed February 2012), The Daily Show, “An Outbreak of Liberal Idiocy” (aired on June 2, 2014), “About NIH.” Also, read the assigned excerpt from Thomas McKeown, The Role of Medicine: Dream, Mirage, or Nemesis
- 10/9—A World of Health: Connecting People, Place, and Planet, Session 1 “Redefining Health”
- 10/14—Watch the following videos online “The Wonder World of Chemistry” (DuPont Company Promotional Film, 1936); Annie Leonard, “The Story of Stuff”
- 10/16— A World of Health, Sessions 2 & 5
- 10/21—Examine specified websites on environmental toxins and related issues; read excerpt from Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature (Canvas)
- 10/23—A World of Health, Sessions 3, 4, & 6
- 10/28—Designing Health Education Materials & Writing for a Lay Audience; **Due: Second Reflection Essay** (online)

Module III: Planning a Public Health Campaign

- 10/30— Group Formation for Final Project; Peer Review of **Website on Health, Medicine, & Sustainability (first draft)**
- 11/4 —Background to a Public Health Campaign—review online materials
- 11/6— In-Class Research on Public Health Project; consultation with instructor as needed.
Due: Final Version of Website on Health, Medicine, & Sustainability
- 11/11—Writing a Review Article & its Relationship to a Research Article
Due: Memo on Proposed Topic of Final Group Project

11/13— Finding and Writing Grant Proposals
11/18—Peer Commentary of **Review Article (first draft)**(online)
11/20—Peer Commentary of Review Article (on ground)
11/25—Authorship and Recognition in Science
Biagioli, “Rights or Rewards? Changing Contexts and Definitions of Scientific Authorship” (Canvas)

Due: Final Version of Review Article

11/27—Thanksgiving
12/2 —Oral Presentations of Group Projects
12/4 —Oral Presentations of Group Projects
12/9 —Oral Presentations of Group Projects
12/11— Oral Presentations of Group Projects (as needed) & Course Evaluations
Due: Final Reflective Essay

Final Paper/Exam: Because this is a writing course, the final group paper will serve as the final examination for the course. As such, it must be submitted (online through Canvas) no later than the end of the examination time scheduled for this course on Testudo. Specifically, this means that the final group paper must be submitted no later than 12:30 pm on Friday, December 19, 2014.

General Course Procedures and Policies:

Folders and Record-keeping

At the end of the semester, you must submit a portfolio, which contains all of your graded assignments and their revisions. This will be used to assess how much your professional writing has improved over course of the term. When grades are borderline, marked improvement in writing over the course of the term will result in the higher grade being awarded. By contrast, failure to submit this folder at the end of the term will result in a significant lowering of the course participation grade.

Conferences

Two conferences during the semester are required. At the first conference, you will present plans for the final group project. At the second, near the end of the semester, we will discuss your working draft for the final project. You are welcome to make further arrangements to meet with me to discuss your work and your progress. In addition, you are encouraged to meet with fellow students outside class time in face-to-face or virtual environments to plan together.

Attendance Policies

To succeed in this course, regular attendance is required. Classroom discussions and in-class work account for a significant part of your grade, and class participation, once missed, cannot be restored.

Below are the policies on unexcused and excused absences, as well as tardiness. Please note that *missing more than two weeks' worth of class for any reason may result in a zero for the participation/professionalism portion of your grade* and may jeopardize your overall course

grade. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you've missed. Missing more than two weeks of class will make catching up difficult, if not impossible.

Unexcused Absences. You may take up to one week's worth of no-questions-asked absences per semester for both the expected (i.e., being the best man in your brother's wedding) and the unexpected (i.e., a flat tire).

If you take a no-questions-asked absence, however, ***you are still responsible for whatever material was covered in class.*** If a major scheduled grading event (assignment due, in-class workshop/peer review, presentation) is scheduled for that class period, and you don't show up and don't have a university-sanctioned excuse (see below) then you will lose the points for that activity.

Excused Absences. The University excuses absences for your own illness or the illness of an immediate family member, for your participation in university activities *when requested by University authorities*, for religious observance, and for compelling circumstances beyond your control.

Absence due to Illness: In general, students are expected to inform the instructor in advance of medically necessary absences, and present a self-signed note documenting the date of the missed class(es) and testifying to the need for the absence. This note must include an acknowledgement that (a) the information provided is true and correct, and (b) that the student understands that providing false information to University officials is a violation of Part 9(h) of the Code of Student Conduct. The university's policies on medical and other absences can be found at: <http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540>

Absence for one class due to your own illness: The university requires that you provide me a self-signed note attesting to the date of your illness, with an acknowledgment that the information provided is true. Providing false information to University officials is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action. The Health Center has an online form

(<http://www.health.umd.edu/sites/default/files/Class%20Excuse110.pdf>).

Absence from more than one class because of the same illness: You must provide written documentation of the illness from the health care provider who made the diagnosis. No diagnostic information shall be given. The provider must verify dates of treatment and indicate the time frame during which you were unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Non-consecutive medically necessitated absences from more than a single class: Such absences may be excused provided you submit written documentation for each absence as described above, verifying the dates of treatment and time frame during which you were unable to meet your academic responsibilities. However, as also noted above, if you miss too many classes—even if excused—it may become too difficult to make up the work as a practical matter.

Special Flu Season Policy:

No one should endanger themselves or others by attending class when they are sick. Anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms should not come to class. The only requirement is that the instructor **MUST** be notified by email **PRIOR** to the class missed. All such cases will be granted a no-penalty excuse from class. No doctor's note is required. Appropriate accommodations will be made for missed assignments.

Absence due to religious observance will not be penalized, however, *it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructors within the first three weeks of class regarding any religious observance absence(s) for the entire semester.*

Tardiness. In the professional world tardiness is not tolerated. However, this campus is large, and another instructor may keep you late. So if you do arrive late on occasion, do not disrupt class, and let me know by the end of the schedule adjustment period if you anticipate ongoing conflicts. Remember that it is your responsibility to catch up on your own time, not the class's. Thus, 2 late arrivals (or unexplained early departures) will convert to 1 absence.

Late Papers: Papers are due at the beginning of class or by the announced times on their assignment sheets. Papers turned in late without prior permission are subject to a penalty of one letter grade for each class period day late, including the first one.

Class Participation/Professionalism

Just as the writing assignments are meant to model “real world” professional writing experiences, so likewise should in-class conduct. Specifically, this means that regular attendance and active participation in class is expected. Students are expected to do the assigned readings on time and be prepared to contribute to the class discussions and in-class exercises on a regular basis. As noted above, 10% of the final grade will come from this attendance/participation requirement. There will be periodic short writing exercises, which will be worth approximately 0.5-1.0 points each. Typical exercises will be peer commentaries on your colleagues writing, exercises in the *Style* textbook, and brief (1-2 paragraph) response papers on assigned articles prior to class discussion. Over the course of the semester, I anticipate that the total from these exercises will be approximately 4-5 points; the remaining points will be based on attendance records informed by the policies outlined above.

Course Evaluations

Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility you hold as a student member of our academic community (www.courseevalum.umd.edu). Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University. Because CourseEvalUm does not ask specific questions useful to the Professional Writing Program, I will ask you to fill out a different, also confidential, evaluation in class. Both evaluations are important for separate audiences and somewhat separate purposes, and I appreciate your participation in this process.

Academic integrity: The student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge prohibit students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures.

On every examination, paper or other academic exercise not specifically exempted by the instructor, students must write by hand and sign the following pledge:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (or assignment).

Allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Student Honor Council: <http://www.shc.umd.edu>. If the Student Honor Council determines that this is an instance of academic dishonesty, then the student will receive no credit for the assignment in question.

- **Students with Disabilities:** The University of Maryland is committed to providing appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with a documented disability should inform the instructors within the add/drop period if academic accommodations are needed. To obtain an Accommodation Letter prepared by Disability Support Service (DSS), a division of the University Counseling Center, please call 301.314.7682, e-mail dissup@umd.edu, or visit the Shoemaker Building for more information.
- **Copyright notice:** Class lectures and other materials are copyrighted and may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor.
- **Emergency protocol:** If the university is closed for an extended period of time, then readings, discussions, and as many course activities as feasible will migrate online to Canvas.
- **Expectations for tolerance of diversity:** The instructor of this course is committed to creating an open and accepting environment in which diversity, unique perspectives, and others' worldviews are respected.