

ACADEMIC WRITING

MMC 6936 - Fall 2022

Instructor: Dr. Devyn (Mullis) Piszczatoski

Email: mullis.md@ufl.edu (Preferred to Canvas mail)

Office hours: Wednesdays 12-1, and by appointment (always recommended).

NOTE: This is a living document, meaning it and the included schedule are subject to changes and edits throughout the semester. Changes will be dependent on student and instructor needs and could include (but not limited to) adjusted deadlines and/or addition/removal of assignments. I reserve the right to adjust as needed.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

MMC 6936 Academic Writing is a graduate-level course focused on enhancing a fundamental communication tool for students: writing.

Too often in academia, we get bogged down in grandiose ideas and language, resulting in difficult to understand products. This class aims to provide students with the knowledge, resources, and tools needed to write clearly, concisely, and effectively for academic products. These products include not only research articles meant for presentation and/or publication but also personal statements, CVs, cover letters, responses to reviewers, IRB protocols, and more.

To touch on all of these academic products, the class will be divided into three sections: 1) Research Writing, 2) Publication Writing, and 3) Career Writing. In all sections, we will address “How do I communicate my ideas in the clearest way in order to achieve my goal(s)?”

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is intended to break a rather massive subject, academic writing, into essential components. Thus, by the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Develop a plan for identifying and overcoming personal barriers to writing productively
- Generate topic ideas for papers

- Explore your own style of writing
- Cite others' ideas and research properly and avoiding plagiarism
- Formulate research questions and hypotheses that drive research projects
- Understand and apply the basic format for academic papers
- Identify the differences between sound quantitative and qualitative writing
- Understand how the peer review process works
- Provide peers with honest and useful feedback as well as appropriately respond to feedback
- Present findings in a clear and concise manner both on paper and orally
- Draft essential written documents for academic careers, including personal statements, cover letters, and CV
- Explore various careers in academic writing

LEARNING APPROACHES

To achieve the course objectives, we'll use a variety of approaches.

1. We will read, analyze and critique various sections of published academic papers. If you want to know how to succeed as an academic writer, it helps to evaluate what others have done so you can see what worked and what does not make sense.
2. We will practice writing by drafting sections of research papers, presenting findings, and creating personal academic products. We will also practice receiving and responding to peer reviews.
3. Experts in respective fields will speak to the class to offer insight on writing successfully. After all, "good" writing can be subjective, depending on your audience and other factors.

READINGS & OTHER RESOURCES

There is no required textbook for this course. I will post required article readings. You will also select readings for yourself.

Other useful resources:

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) from Purdue University offers useful citation and writing information.

Academic Writer Tutorial: Basics of Seventh Edition APA Style. This tutorial is designed for people who're new to APA style, but even if you aren't, it's likely to be helpful. The APA Style Guide offers a number of useful tutorials and webinars here. The APA Style Blog also is useful.

Your peers and faculty mentors.

CLASS POLICIES

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE: Each of you plays an important role in shaping this course. I encourage you to be actively involved in class discussions and activities. Class participation is an important (and graded) element of the class, and you can't participate if you aren't in class, so attendance is required. In class discussions, please aim to strike a happy medium – Speak up when you have something to say, but don't blather on. Remember that when you have a question, it's all but guaranteed that someone else has the same question, so do everyone a favor and ask!

Please also be appreciative of the contributions of others, including any guest speakers, and help create a class environment that is respectful and inclusive. This does not mean you should never disagree, but you should **always** do so courteously and thoughtfully.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION: The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society.

People of all backgrounds have important contributions to make to this class, and I expect all of you to respect that. If, at any point, you believe others in the class – including me – have expressed ideas in inappropriate ways, please let me know. My goal is to make certain everyone feels comfortable participating in and listening to class discussions and that these discussions support a diversity of perspectives and experiences and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, abilities, etc.).

If you prefer a name and/or pronouns that differ from those in the official records, please tell me so I can refer to you appropriately. If experiences outside this class are interfering with your performance in the class, please let me know; I'd like to help connect you with appropriate resources for dealing with any such issues. And if you prefer to speak with someone outside the course, Joanna Hernandez, CJC's director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can reach her via email at jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu.

COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS: The University of Florida community respects science, and the CJC's research and theory courses are aimed at helping you learn how to be good scientists yourselves. Hence, it makes sense to follow science-based recommendations for preventing the continued spread of COVID-19. UF administrators strongly recommend that everyone get the vaccine, and I would certainly echo that recommendation – for your own benefit and that of the people around you. I have been vaccinated, but in keeping with the CDC's recommendations, I will “mask up” during class until I can ascertain that everyone in the class also has been vaccinated. I would urge each of you to do the same. (FYI, although I will not ask you about your vaccination status, you may tell me if you wish to do so. And no, despite what you might have heard, neither asking about nor sharing information about vaccination status violates HIPAA or any other federal law.)

CELL PHONES AND OTHER DISTRACTIONS DURING CLASS: Recently published research shows that college students who have their laptops and/or cellphones open during classes score lower on exams. There are no exams in this class, but I do expect you to learn the material we cover, and that means paying attention to what's going on in class. For that reason, keep your laptop closed unless I or other class speakers specifically ask you to use your laptop or phone for some class activity. I strongly recommend that you take handwritten notes for the class, if possible; research documents that hand-writing your notes increases your likelihood of remembering and understanding the material. Multi-tasking is not effective.

ATTENDANCE: See the discussion above. Keep in mind, too, that the class is small – I *will* notice if you're not here. I reserve the right to lower grades due to excessive absences *or tardiness*. Your attendance and *participation* are important to making this class a success. I expect that you will attend every class unless an emergency or illness prevents you from doing so. If you find that you do have to miss a class due to an emergency, let me know immediately. You may be allowed to miss class if you're attending a media-related conference or professional experience, but *only* if you let me know in advance and can document that you have a time conflict, especially given that most conferences are still being held virtually. Obviously, if you have tested positive for COVID-19 or are quarantining due to exposure to COVID-19, you will not be penalized for missing class.

MISSING DEADLINES OR ASSIGNMENTS: In the communications field, meeting assignment deadlines is vital. The same holds true in this class. If you believe you have an exceptional reason for missing a deadline, please discuss it with me *immediately* and *in advance*. Fairness, both to me and to your classmates, requires that you meet all deadlines. Most often, I will count a missed deadline as a missed assignment, meaning that there will be a significant grade penalty, up to and including a zero grade on the assignment. *All*

assignments are due at the time listed in Canvas. Failure to turn in your assignments on time will result in a late penalty at a minimum.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS: I am more than happy to work with you to find accommodations for legitimate, documented special needs. You must register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide appropriate documentation to you, and you should provide this documentation to me at the beginning of the semester. Please do so, even if you do not believe you will need the accommodations. It is your responsibility to initiate this conversation early in the semester.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In accordance with UF policy, I'm including in this syllabus the definitions of the types of academic dishonesty that seem most likely to be potential problems for students in this class. If a situation ever arises in which you think something you're contemplating *might* constitute one of these types of academic dishonesty, *ask before you do it!* Apologies after the fact will not resolve the problem for anyone.

DEFINITIONS

MISREPRESENTATION: This means any act that is intended to deceive a teacher for academic advantage, including lying about the circumstances under which you collected data, turning in a paper you've previously submitted for another class, and failing to provide honest information when confronted with an allegation of academic dishonesty.

FABRICATION: For this class, the primary concern would be making up data or falsifying your findings (e.g. claiming a hypothesis was supported when it was not, etc.)

PLAGIARISM: Any use of someone else's ideas or words in a way that presents those ideas or words as your own constitutes plagiarism, even if the ideas or words have not been published. This includes using word-for-word or only slightly altered segments of wording from someone else, regardless of who that individual is, without providing a citation that gives the original author credit – which includes putting the original words in quotation marks. Obviously, submitting anyone else's work as your own constitutes plagiarism, but I also encourage you to look at the plagiarism guide provided by UF's Smathers Library: <https://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/copyright/plagiarism>

Plagiarism is one of the most serious crimes in academia and in communication. We will discuss in class how to avoid plagiarism, but it is your responsibility to make certain you correctly cite other people's research and writing in your papers. Be especially careful about keeping track of the sources of information you glean from Internet-based materials. Unintended plagiarism is still plagiarism, and *all plagiarism will be treated as intentional* because I cannot know what you meant to do. It is acceptable, of course, to include

verbatim materials from other people's works, but when you do, you must either include such material in quotation marks or set it off from the rest of the paper by indenting and single spacing.

The plagiarism avoidance guide our graduate faculty has approved will be provided on the e-learning site. If you read through that guide and still aren't certain what's acceptable, *ask me!* Do not assume that any other student or professor can tell you what will be acceptable in my class. Asking questions ahead of time is encouraged and comes with no penalties – but there are *serious* penalties for failing to credit someone else's work properly because you didn't ask questions.

ASSIGNMENTS

WRITING PHILOSOPHY

At the beginning of this class, you will write a one-page writing philosophy that details and reflects your own personal writing style. Expectations for this assignment will be discussed in class. You will also have the opportunity to revisit this statement at the end of the semester and make changes based on what you have learned and any growth you have achieved in writing.

WEEKLY ARTICLE DISSECTION

Each week a student will select a peer-reviewed article for all students to read prior to class. We will discuss when this is due to me for timely dissemination and how students prefer this article be shared. At the start of each class, we will dissect this article's organization and writing, looking for strengths and weaknesses. We will focus on a particular section of each article, depending on the class topics that day. Each student will be responsible for selecting at least one article for the semester (more may be necessary, depending on the number of students in class). That student will lead the in-class discussion and hand in a one-page analysis of their selected article.

WRITING WORKSHOPS

There will be six writing workshops with written outputs throughout the semester:

1. Introduction and Literature Review
 - Full sentence outline OR paragraph form
2. Methods and Results
 - Full sentence outline OR paragraph form
3. Peer Review practice
 - Edits on partner's paper plus response to reviewer
4. Oral Presentation

-10-15 minute practice of poster or conference presentation

5. Qualifying Exam writing practice

-In class writing practice

6. Personal Statement and CV

-One-page personal statement plus option to have CV edited for feedback

FULL PAPER OUTLINE

You will turn in a full research paper outline at the end of our Research Writing section of class. This can be on a topic of your choice. You will be able to use the above writing workshop assignments to create this full sentence outline. The structure of the outline will be detailed in class.

RESEARCH POSTER

You will create a research poster using PowerPoint or other computer software. This will have all sections of a typical academic poster presentation. You will also have the opportunity to practice presenting this poster in our oral presentation workshop.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Participation is fundamental to this class. I expect to hear from you multiple times in each class. We will be examining and analyzing our own and others' academic writing, and participation will be key to understanding and implementing these concepts.

WRITING JOURNAL

One key to great writing is to write as often as possible—even if it is just a few thoughts that you jot down daily. To help you get in this habit, you will have a writing journal that I will check each class. Appropriate topics to write about and expectations will be discussed in class.

GRADING

Writing Philosophy	50
Writing Philosophy Revisit	50
Weekly Article Dissection	50
Writing Workshop Assignments Intro & Lit Review Methods & Results Peer Review Oral Presentation Personal Statement & CV	50 each x6= 300
Full Paper Outline	100

Research Poster	100
Class participation	50
Writing Journal	50
TOTAL:	750

SCHEDULE

Week 1 – 8/24	Intro to class, syllabus, goals, assignments	
Week 2 – 8/31	Finding YOUR (writing) voice	DUE: Writing Philosophy
Week 3 – 9/7	RESEARCH WRITING -Selecting a topic, formulating RQs -IRB protocols	
Week 4 – 9/14	RESEARCH WRITING -Introduction and Literature review -Citing sources, Conducting research Guest speaker: April Hines	
Week 5 – 9/21	RESEARCH WRITING -Intros and Lit Reviews workshop -Methods & Results	DUE: Intro & Lit Review outline
Week 6 – 9/28	RESEARCH WRITING -Methods Workshop -Quantitative and Qualitative Writing Guest speaker	DUE: Methods & Results outline
Week 7 10/5	RESEARCH WRITING -The Discussion Section -Concluding your paper	DUE: Full paper outline
Week 8 – 10/12	PUBLICATION WRITING -Different forms of research writing (ethnographies, book and article reviews, critical studies, histories) -Journal selection, editing, abstract writing	
Week 9 – 10/19	PUBLICATION WRITING -Peer review process, giving and receiving feedback, response to reviewers Guest speaker	DUE: Peer review edits and response
Week 10 – 10/26	PUBLICATION WRITING -Academic presentations- posters, conference presentations, selecting conferences	DUE: Poster
Week 11 – 11/2	CAREER WRITING -Presentation Workshop -The Dissertation and Thesis process -Qualifying Exam writing practice	

	Guest Speaker	
Week 12 – 11/9	CAREER WRITING -Writing essential to academic jobs- Personal statements, Cover letters, & CVs	DUE: Personal Statement
Week 13 – 11/16	CAREER WRITING -Careers in academic writing	
THANKSGIVING BREAK		
Week 14 – 11/30	-Writing Philosophy revisit -Writing workshop- bring in papers from other classes/projects to be reviewed/edited	Due: Writing Philosophy Revisit
Week 15 – 12/7	Writing workshop	