

welcome

to Writing Fundamentals

MMC2121

Asynchronous online class on Canvas
Optional live Zoom sessions

FALL 2023

Instructor:

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She/her
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Office hours:

9 to 11 a.m. Mondays and by appointment
It's fine to text me simple or urgent questions.
Send emails through Canvas.

Will this course cause you to break out in a sweat as you debate the placement of a comma? I hope not! I think it's a fun course, but I'm obviously biased and love grammar. I realize that not everyone shares my joy. You may think that learning about grammar is as exciting as unloading a dishwasher. I promise to make the class more enjoyable than that. To be a good writer, you have to communicate clearly. Once you master these grammar rules, then you can apply them to your writing and feel confident in your punctuation and word choices. Soon, you'll be a grammar guru who silently corrects your friends.

Moe's fail! My favorite restaurant needs an editor. There are two errors here. Can you spot them?



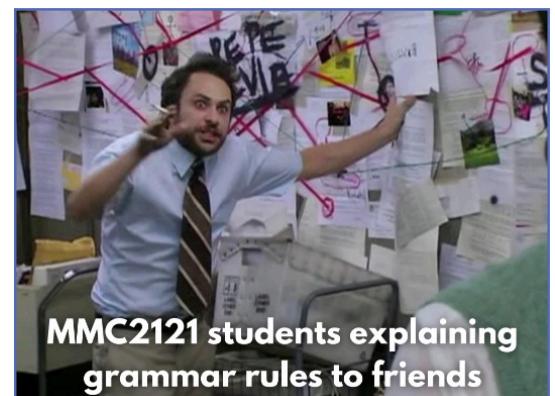
Course purpose

The purpose of one-third of the course is to ensure you have sufficient skill in grammar and punctuation to write with clarity. This is applied grammar and punctuation. You won't have to define an intransitive verb, but you will need to understand how a comma can change the meaning of a sentence. The course covers only grammar and punctuation. It does not cover Associated Press (AP) style that many of you will use in future classes. In two-thirds of the course, you will put principles of good writing into practice with short writing assignments that have real-world applications. While not media-specific assignments, these assignments will be professionally oriented to help improve your writing skills.

Learning outcomes

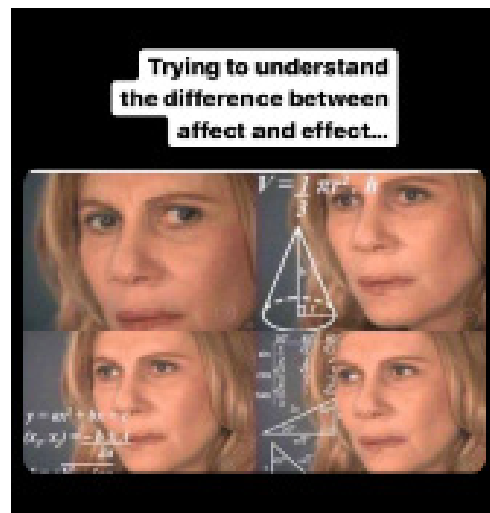
By the conclusion of the course, you should be able to:

- Identify basic parts of speech required to know agreement and pronoun use: adjective, adverb, antecedent, conjunction, noun, preposition and pronoun.
- Differentiate between an action verb and a linking verb.
- Detect run-on sentences and sentence fragments and know how to fix them.
- Spot sentences without parallel construction and know how to fix them.
- Detect sentences with pronouns that lack clear antecedents and know how to fix them.
- Ensure modifiers such as only, not and dates are correctly placed in a sentence.
- Avoid passive voice.
- Avoid "dead" construction.
- Use introductory clauses correctly.
- Handle apostrophes involving businesses names.
- Form plurals of common and proper nouns.
- Spot ambiguous comparisons and fix them.
- Form a possessive involving common and proper nouns.
- Use dashes, ellipses, parentheses and semicolons properly.
- Convey meaning with quotation marks.
- Place punctuation inside or outside closing quotation marks.
- Use an apostrophe properly for possession, omitted letters and plurals.
- Determine when to use a colon and when to capitalize the following word.
- Determine whether one or two apostrophes are used for a compound subject.
- Correctly place an apostrophe involving plural possessives.
- Distinguish between descriptive (no apostrophe) and possessive (apostrophe).



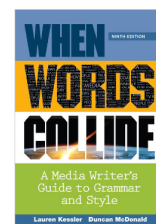
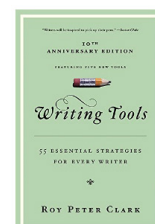
Learning outcomes, continued

- Use commas correctly with conjunctions, appositions, introductory phrases, “free” modifiers, quotation marks, equal adjectives and a series.
- Distinguish between essential and non-essential clauses.
- Differentiate among that, which and who.
- Identify when to use a hyphen with compound modifiers.
- Discern agreement errors.
- Determine when to use who and whom.
- Discern when to use lay or lie.
- Correctly use affect and effect.
- Ensure a verb agrees with its subject.
- Determine which pronoun to use in comparisons.
- Ensure a pronoun agrees with its antecedent.
- Determine pronoun use based on whether it is used a subject or an object.
- Determine which pronoun to use for compound subjects and objects.
- Avoid the use of incorrect phrases such as “try and catch the fish.”
- Correctly use word pairs such as fewer vs. less.
- Determine whether a collective noun such as family or class is singular or plural.
- Practice principles of good writing (not discipline-specific, but media-related), emphasizing the areas of mechanics, concision, clarity, professional tone, structure, organization, assimilating information and translating messages across platforms.



Textbooks

- **“Writing Tools” 55 Essential Strategies for Every Writer** by Roy Peter Clark (Required)
- **“When Words Collide”** (9th edition) by Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald (Required)
- **Merriam-Webster online** - <https://www.merriam-webster.com/> - This is the resource you’ll use to check spelling.



MISSPELLINGS RESULT IN A STIFF PENALTY, SO PLEASE CHECK YOUR SPELLING OFTEN.

- **The Associated Press Stylebook**, updated annually. It can be purchased as a book, a subscription website or an app. The punctuation guide at the end of the book is especially helpful. (*Recommended — NOT required*)

Computer equipment

Because this course is an online course, you must have a computer that has internet access. You also need a webcam and microphone.

Course structure

This is an asynchronous online class, so the lectures are on videos that you can watch at your convenience. However, there will be opportunities throughout the semester to **connect with me via Zoom for some live review sessions and Kahoot practice quizzes.** *(I have to warn you - I love Kahoot a little too much. The competition is fun!)* I will announce these sessions in class. You are expected to **read the announcements each Monday and to check into class several times a week to make sure that you don't miss anything.**

For the grammar portion: The course has **12 grammar modules** that are roughly equivalent to what would occur in a regular 50-minute class period. Each module also has a downloadable study guide summarizing the applicable grammar principles. Each module has between two and nine chapters. Each chapter has an instructional video, usually less than 10 minutes long. At the end of each module, you will take short practice quizzes. **There are three graded quizzes that cover four modules each.** After finishing all 12 modules, you will take the **final grammar exam.** Everyone gets two attempts on this exam, and only the highest score counts. You will complete this grammar portion in the first six weeks of class.

For the writing portion: The course has **10 writing modules.** Each module includes videos that cover a variety of writing skills. After each video, you will take a quiz over the lecture and textbook material. The quizzes also include some grammar content to make sure you remember what you've learned. You are expected to review the lecture and complete the readings before taking the quizzes. In addition, there are **FOUR writing assignments** that allow you to practice your skills. You will participate in peer critiques to get feedback on your writing.

Deadlines: Meet them

You will have **quizzes and assignments due almost every Saturday in this course.** The quiz deadlines are firm. If you miss a writing deadline, then you have 24 hours after the assignment to turn it in. There will be a 10-point late penalty. After 24 hours, your assignment won't be accepted. Work ahead to avoid last-minute issues that often arise. Reach out to me if you have an emergency that prevents you from meeting the deadlines so that I can help.

Correct spelling matters — look up confusing words

You are expected to look up words using **Merriam-Webster's online dictionary.** **The most frequently misspelled words are those that could be one word, two words or hyphenated.** Here are examples of misspelled words from previous classes: photo shoot, fast-forward, hardworking and skill set. You will lose 20 points for a misspelled word because accuracy matters. If readers see a misspelling, then they may wonder if the content could be inaccurate, too. You want to build trust and establish credibility with your audience, and a misspelling harms that.



Required assignments

- **Grammar Pre-test:** The grammar pre-test helps you get a grasp on how well you know grammar before the course really takes off. You will retake this test at the end of the semester so that you can see your growth. These are not graded.

- **Modules & Quizzes:** You will complete modules every week and then take quizzes. The **grammar module quizzes** are for practice only and are not graded. You can take these quizzes as many times as you would like.

The **writing module quizzes** are graded. You have seven minutes to answer five questions that cover material from the lectures and textbook.

- **Graded Grammar Quizzes:** There are 12 modules. To help you prepare for the final grammar exam, you will take graded grammar quizzes that cover four modules at a time. You will do this three times (4 modules x 3 quizzes = 12 total grammar modules). These graded grammar quizzes will be proctored by HonorLock.

The graded quizzes have 20 questions each, and you will have 30 minutes to complete them. ***I drop the lowest of the three graded grammar quiz scores.***

- **Grammar exam:** After all 12 grammar modules have been covered, you will take a final grammar exam. This grammar exam is comprehensive. You can use your three graded grammar quizzes to study as well as the practice quizzes. I will also lead a live review session and will record it in case you can't attend. This grammar exam will be proctored through ProctorU.

You can take the grammar exam twice, and I only count the highest score. You will have 60 minutes to answer 40 questions worth 5 points each. The grammar exam makes up more than half of your grade for the grammar portion of the course, so you need to dive into this class and start studying the first week.

- **Discussion posts:** You will earn participation points by posting to the discussion board a few times during the semester. Two of these posts allow you to share your writing assignments with your classmates. Everyone will participate in peer critiques so that you have the opportunity to improve your rough drafts.

- **Writing assignments:** There are three writing assignments and one writing quiz. These are worth 90 points each and 360 points combined. The grammar exam is worth 200 points, so you can see how you can score low on the grammar exam and still manage to pass the course if you do well on these assignments. You will write an About Me essay, an email to a professor and an elevator pitch.

*How to earn a good grade

- Complete the weekly readings and read class announcements
- Watch all the instructional videos for each module and participate in the live Zoom sessions
- Review the module material and take notes before each quiz
- Spend A LOT of time studying for the grammar quizzes and exam (make flash cards with the grammar rules to test yourself)
- Put effort into all the writing assignments and meet deadlines. Look up questionable words in Merriam-Webster.

Grading

Grammar Modules (40%)

Pre-test (ungraded)	0%
Practice grammar quizzes (ungraded)	0%
3 Grammar quizzes	37.5%
Grammar Exam.....	62.5%

Writing Modules (60%)

Quizzes	21%
Writing assignments.....	74%
Participation	5%

Grading Scale

A: 94-100%
A-: 90-93%
B+: 87-89%
B: 84-86%
B-: 80-83%
C+: 77-79%
C: 70-76%
D+: 67-69%
D: 60-66%
F: 59% and below

Scores are rounded to the nearest whole point: 89.49 rounds down to 89 (B+) while 89.5 rounds up to 90 (A-). I only look at the tenth spot for rounding.

The grading scale is firm. The minimum score to enter JOU 3101 is 70, not 69.

UF Grading Policy

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

See the **course schedule** on the last page for deadlines.

Sample grammar exam questions

All questions are multiple-choice with four answer options. Here's an example:

1. Choose the best answer.

- a. The quart of strawberries are on the table, ready for whoever wants a snack.
- b. The quart of strawberries are on the table, ready for whomever wants a snack.
- c. The quart of strawberries is on the table, ready for whoever wants a snack.
- d. The quart of strawberries is on the table, ready for whomever wants a snack.

Usually two items are manipulated in each question. Above, those two items were are/is and whoever/whomever. A and B answers offered "are" while C and D offered "is." The second item, whoever/whomever, was manipulated so that A offered "whoever" and B offered "whomever," and the pattern was repeated for C and D. The options were given in alphabetical order.

You can see that pattern in the next sample question:

2. Choose the best answer.

- a. Mary felt bad about asking her sister to work full time this summer.
- b. Mary felt bad about asking her sister to work full-time this summer.
- c. Mary felt badly about asking her sister to work full time this summer.
- d. Mary felt badly about asking her sister to work full-time this summer.

The correct answers are 1c and 2a.

Will I be able to learn in this online format?

As with any class, the more effort you put into it, the more you will get out of it. You are required to read the assigned chapters and watch the lecture videos, as well as meet all of the assignment deadlines. You are expected to complete the work each week even though we do not have a set meeting time. If we were meeting in person, we'd have one class period once a week for about three hours total. The beauty of this online class is that you can learn throughout the week. You will have the same "out of class" workload as a campus course.

Class attendance

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Seek help if needed

College is stressful. You have counseling help available to you, and I hope you will use it if needed. Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575.

Honor code

When you enrolled at the University of Florida, you agreed to the following honor code:

"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."

On all work submitted for credit, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

Review UF's academic honesty guidelines at:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Cheating & plagiarism

While students are encouraged to study together, you can't take quizzes together. **There have been instances of college cheating taking place over Group Me and text chats. Some people cheat by getting material from Quizlet, Course Hero and other online sites. None of this is allowed. Cheating is not tolerated, so please be honest. You may not turn in work that is not your own, including work generated by Chat GPT and other AI programs** **Students are further expected to observe intellectual property rights and to comply with copyright laws. You are NOT allowed to post class content on the internet. This includes uploading material to Quizlet and other sites. Also, you should not plagiarize the words, designs, concepts or ideas of others.**

Plagiarism, whether intentional or accidental, has become easier to commit since the advent of the internet. Plagiarism is defined as "...taking someone's words or ideas as if they were your own." Source: Dictionary.com.

That means you cannot take even a single sentence from another Web site without attribution. It means you cannot take someone else's design and replace the words and pictures with your own. It means that if you use even a few of someone else's words verbatim, you must put quotation marks around them and cite the source.

Diversity statement

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism 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 journalism courses to foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official records, please let me know.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, Joanna Hernandez, CJC director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can email her at jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu.
- If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.

Course evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. I value your feedback, and I hope you will take the time to complete the evaluation form. I will let you know when it's available, but it's typically open during the last two weeks of the course.

Privacy: Online recordings

Our live class sessions may be recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend. Students who participate with their camera engaged or use a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who unmute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

The most frequent question that I get from students: "Do you offer extra credit?"

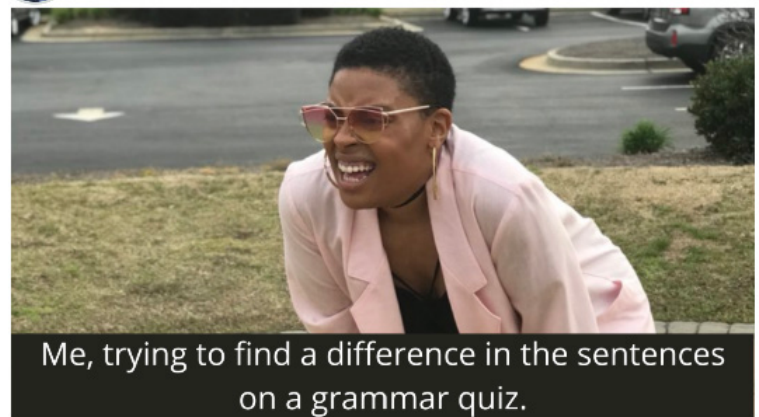
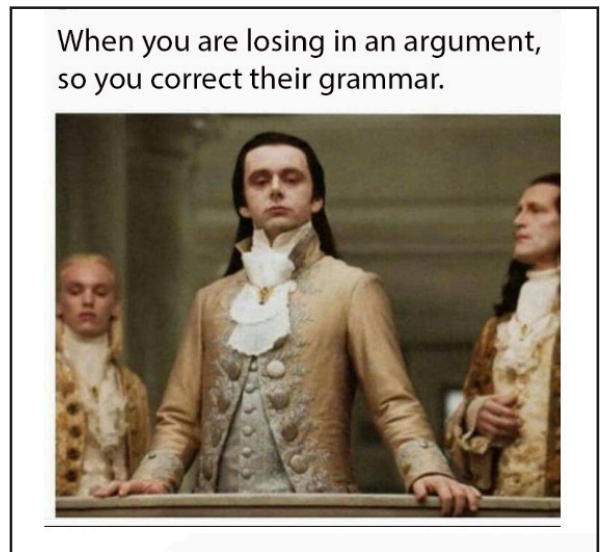
Yes! I will offer you some extra credit opportunities to help you boost your scores. My favorite extra credit activity involves students making memes about the class. Throughout this syllabus, you've seen some of the memes previous students have created. Below are a few more. These may seem funnier after the class gets underway.



Me, feeling confident about my writing assignments because I used Grammarly premium:



Grammarly's advice to place oxford commas everywhere:



Fall 2023 Course Schedule

Week	Modules	What's Due
Week 1 Aug. 23	Modules 1, 2	Orientation quiz Pre-test 2 practice quizzes Introduce yourself on Canvas 11:55 p.m. Aug. 26
Week 2 Aug. 28	Modules 3, 4	2 practice quizzes Graded Grammar Quiz #1 11:55 p.m. Sept. 2
Week 3 Sept. 4	Modules 5, 6	2 practice quizzes 11:55 p.m. Sept. 9
Week 4 Sept. 11	Modules 7, 8	2 practice quizzes Graded Grammar Quiz #2 11:55 p.m. Sept. 16
Week 5 Sept. 18	Modules 9, 10	2 practice quizzes About Me peer critique 11:55 p.m. Sept. 23
Week 6 Sept. 25	Modules 11, 12	2 practice quizzes Graded Grammar Quiz #3 Writing Assignment #1 11:55 p.m. Sept. 30
Week 7 Oct. 2	<i>Study, study, study for the grammar exam.</i>	Grammar reflection post 11:55 p.m. Oct. 5 <i>Oct. 6-7 Homecoming</i>
Week 8 Oct. 9	<i>You can do it, grammar warriors! Conquer that grammar exam.</i>	First grammar exam attempt due by 11 p.m. Oct. 9 Second attempt due by 11 p.m. Oct. 14
Week 9 Oct. 16	Modules 13	1 quiz Writing Assignment #2 11:55 p.m. Oct. 21
Week 10 Oct. 23	Modules 14	1 quiz Writing assignment #3 11:55 p.m. Oct. 28
Week 11 Oct. 30	Module 15, 16	2 quizzes 11:55 p.m. Nov. 4

Course Schedule, continued

Week	Modules	What's Due
Week 12 Nov. 6	Modules 17, 18	2 quizzes, peer critique 11:55 p.m. Nov. 11
Week 13 Nov. 13	Module 19	1 quiz Writing Assignment #4 11:55 p.m. Nov. 18
Week 14 Nov. 20	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i> <i>Enjoy!</i>	<i>Step away</i> <i>from your computer</i> <i>and relax</i>
Week 15 Nov. 27	Module 20, 21	2 quizzes 11:55 p.m. Dec. 2
Week 16 Dec. 4	Module 22 <i>Congrats on finishing!!!</i>	1 quiz No final 11:55 p.m. Dec. 6