

welcome

to Writing Fundamentals

MMC2121

Asynchronous online class on Canvas
Optional live Zoom review sessions

SPRING 2026

Instructor:

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Office hours:

11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays and by appointment
You can text me simple or urgent questions.
Please 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 this 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. You will put the principles of good writing into practice with writing assignments. Although the assignments are not media-specific, they are professionally oriented to help improve your writing skills.

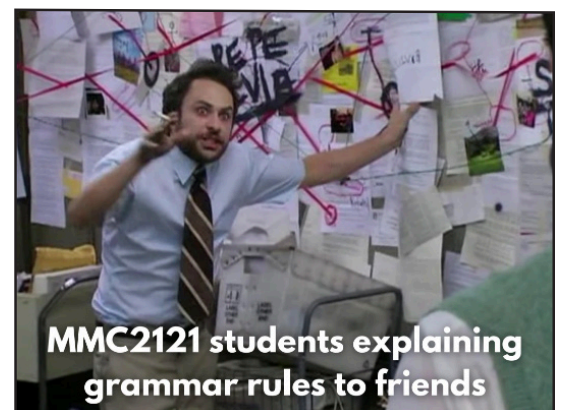
Learning outcomes

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

1. Use correct sentence structure, punctuation and word usage in your writing
2. Identify common grammatical errors and be able to correct them
3. Write clearly, concisely and accurately
4. Develop a personal writing voice, using tone, rhythm and sentence variety to enhance storytelling and reader engagement

Here are some of the skills that you will learn in this course:

- 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 and dead sentence 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

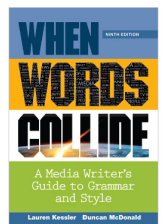


- Determine when to use a colon and when to capitalize the following word
- Determine whether one or two apostrophes are used for a compound subject
- Correctly place an apostrophe involving plural possessives
- Distinguish between descriptive (no apostrophe) and possessive (apostrophe)
- Use commas 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
- Determine when to use who/whom and lay/lie
- Correctly use affect and effect
- Ensure a verb agrees with its subject and a pronoun agrees with its antecedent
- Determine which pronoun to use in comparisons
- 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, emphasizing the areas of mechanics, concision, clarity, professional tone, structure, organization and voice
- Determine how AI can help or hinder your role as a writer and editor



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 modules total** that are roughly equivalent to what would occur in a regular 50-minute class period. Within the modules, you will have lecture videos to watch, textbook readings to complete and activities to do. For the first six modules, you will focus on learning grammar and punctuation rules. **There are three tests that cover two modules each.** After finishing the first six modules, you will take a **grammar exam**. Everyone gets two attempts on this exam, and only the highest score counts.

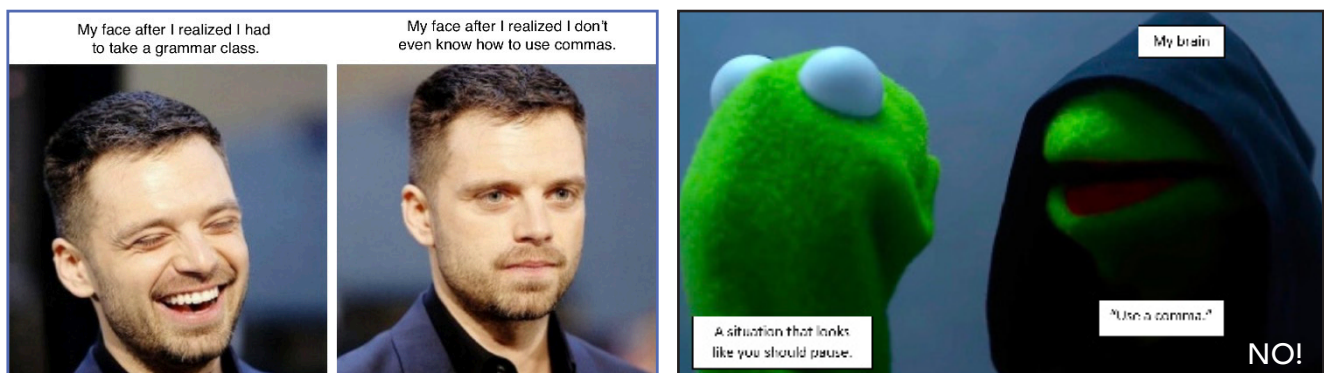
For the writing portion: The course has **five modules** focused on improving your writing skills. The modules include videos with writing advice and tips. After each video, you will take a quiz over the lecture and textbook material. You are expected to review the lecture and complete the readings before taking the quizzes. In addition, there are **two writing assignments** that allow you to practice your skills. You will participate in peer critiques to get feedback on your writing and to gain experience with editing other people's work.

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. You should reach out before the deadline passes.

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 Pretest/Posttest:** The grammar pretest helps you get a grasp on how well you know grammar before the course really takes off. You will retake a similar quiz at the end of the semester so that you can see your growth.
- **Modules & Quizzes:** You will complete modules every week and then take quizzes. The **Grammar Practice Quizzes** are for practice only and are not graded. You can take these quizzes multiple times. The Grammar Graded Quizzes are for points. You can retake these quizzes up to 10 times. Only the highest score counts. The **Writing Module Quizzes** are graded and cover material from the lectures and textbook.
- **Grammar Tests:** There are three tests to help you prepare for the Grammar Exam. These tests cover the grammar and punctuation rules from the module content. You need to take all three tests. These tests will be proctored by HonorLock. The tests have 25 questions each, and you will have 40 minutes to complete them. **I will drop the lowest of the three tests scores.**
- **Grammar Exam:** After all six grammar modules have been covered, you will take an exam. 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 almost one-third of your grade for the grammar portion of the course, so please spend time preparing.
- **Discussion posts:** You will earn points by posting to the discussion board during the semester. One of these posts allows you to share a practice writing assignment with your classmates. You will also create a grammar meme, try to spot spelling errors in an article and contemplate the use of AI.
- **Assignments:** The assignments include a comma quiz and a posttest. In addition, you will also write an anecdote. This is a timed writing assignment that will be proctored by Honorlock. You will have an hour to write an anecdote. The prompt will be provided. You will also work on writing an email and will be asked to use AI and make comparisons between your original work and what AI creates.

Instructor feedback

- Receiving feedback is important for learning, so my goal is to return my comments and scores for the discussion posts within a week. The grading for the anecdote and email assignment should be completed within two weeks. These writing assignments take longer to grade because the class is large.

*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 live Zoom sessions when offered
- 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 of the writing assignments and meet deadlines
- Look up questionable words in Merriam-Webster.

Grading

Grammar Modules (51%)

Grammar Quizzes.....	8%
Grammar Tests	14%
Grammar Exam.....	29%

Discussion Posts (9%)

Writing Quizzes (7%)

Assignments (33%)

Anecdote	14%
Posttest.....	3%
Comma Quiz	7%
Email.....	9%

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>

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

To do well in this course, log into Canvas several times a week. Look at the due date and read the announcements. 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 counseling 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."

The Conduct Code specifies behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor for this class.

The Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code states that:

"A Student must not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing or patch-writing.
- Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the faculty to whom it is submitted.
- Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
- Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author."

Review UF's academic honesty guidelines at: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Cheating, plagiarism & AI use

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 unless this is part of the stated instructions. 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, including AI programs. 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. You cannot take someone else's design and replace the words and pictures with your own. If you use even a few of someone else's words verbatim, then you must put quotation marks around them and cite the source.

Cheating on quizzes and the exam is obviously not permitted. You may not use notes or other materials. You must have a web camera and have your face and eyes visible on camera throughout the quiz/exam session. You should not look off camera or talk. You have to take the quiz/exam in a private room without others around. Your phone, smart watches and other electronic devices should be off and placed away from you. You can't use an external monitor. Study and do your best!

Etiquette and Netiquette

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions, and chats. UF has provided a netiquette guide:

<https://ufonline.ufl.edu/resources/computer-requirements/>

Materials/Supply Fees

Please consult the course schedule at ONE.UF for more information on specific supplies and fees for the course.

Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills

This is a beginning class, so you aren't expected to have extensive prior knowledge about writing or grammar. If you enjoy what you learn, then you can take more advanced classes in each of the areas we cover.

Minimum Technology Requirements

The University of Florida expects students entering an online program to acquire computer hardware and software appropriate to their degree program. A student's computer configuration should include webcam, microphone, broadband access, and Microsoft office suite. Individual colleges may have additional requirements or recommendations, which students should review before starting their program. More information on technical requirements is available at the UF Online website: <https://ufonline.ufl.edu/resources/computer-requirements/>

Privacy: Online Recordings

This is an asynchronous course, but if there are any live meetings, then 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.

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that

form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, August 5th, 2021, Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Invest in your success

Remember, you will do well in this course if you log into Canvas several times a week to read class announcements, watch videos and work on the assignments. Meet all deadlines and do your own work. Study for the quizzes and exams. Seek help when you are confused. I'm here to support you! Hard work will pay off.

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 appreciate you taking the time to give feedback and will send out an announcement with the evaluations are open. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at the GatorEvals results page.

Technical Resources

[UF Licensed Software](#) Students can access software programs like Office 365 and Adobe at free or reduced rates.

[UF All Access](#) The University of Florida's digital course materials program. Selected courses are available through UF All Access to provide students with the lowest prices on their eBooks and courseware products.

[UF Apps](#) Provides access to software applications from any computing device--laptops, tablets, desktops, and smartphones—from any location, at any time.

[VPN](#) The Gatorlink VPN service provides secure remote access to the University of Florida network and makes it appear as if your computer were physically attached to the campus network. By using the Gatorlink VPN client, you may access resources on the UF network that are not typically available over an Internet path.

[Canvas Quickstart Guide](#) This short guide will get you started with using Canvas.

[Training and Safety](#) UFIT offers free software and other technical training sessions for students, teachers, and staff.

[Safe Computing Practices](#) Learn how to protect your computer from threats regardless of brand, model, and operating system.

[Zoom](#) is an easy-to-use video conferencing service available to all UF students, faculty, and staff that allows for meetings of up to 100 participants.

More Resources for Online Students

Available at the [Distance Learning website](#). These include:

- Counseling and wellness resources
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please visit <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints> to submit a complaint.

WRITING FUNDAMENTALS

Accessibility and Privacy Policies

For information about the privacy policies of the tools used in this course, see the links below:

Adobe w [Adobe Privacy Policy](#)

[Adobe Accessibility](#)

Instructure (Canvas)

[Instructure Privacy Policy](#)

[Instructure Accessibility](#)

Microsoft

[Microsoft Privacy Policy](#)

[Microsoft Accessibility](#)

Sonic Foundry (Mediasite Streaming Video Player)

[Sonic Foundry Privacy Policy](#)

[Sonic Foundry Accessibility](#) (PDF)

YouTube (Google)

[YouTube \(Google\) Privacy Policy](#)

[YouTube \(Google\) Accessibility](#)

Zoom [Zoom Privacy Policy](#)



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

Yes! I will offer you an extra credit opportunity to help you boost your scores. Throughout this syllabus, you've seen some memes created by previous students for extra credit. You will create a meme in this class as part of an assignment, so you will have a different extra credit prompt. The points are not hard to earn, so don't miss your chance in Module 10.

Me reading my writing assignments before MMC2121:



Me rereading my writing assignment after taking MMC2121:



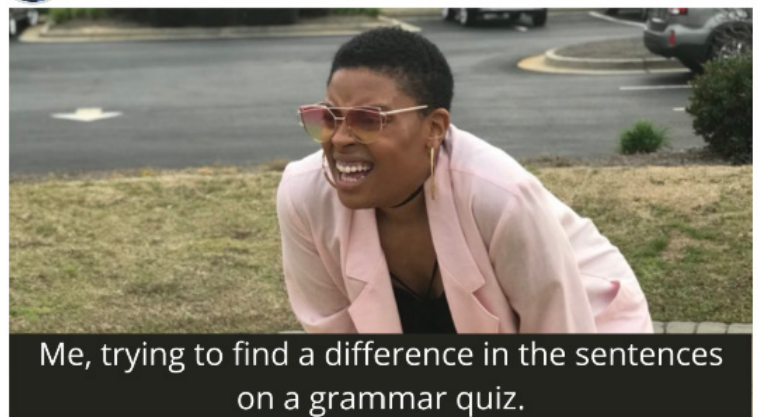
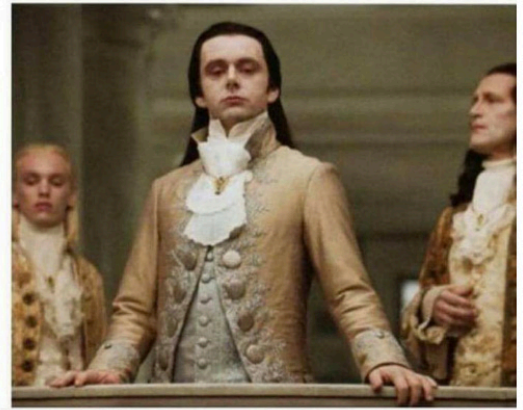
Me, feeling confident about my writing assignments because I used Grammarly premium:



Grammarly's advice to place oxford commas everywhere:



When you are losing in an argument, so you correct their grammar.



Me, trying to find a difference in the sentences on a grammar quiz.

Spring 2026 Course Schedule

Week	Modules	What's Due
Week 1 Jan. 12	Orientation Module	Orientation quiz Pre-test Introduce yourself on Canvas 11:55 p.m. Jan. 17
Week 2 Jan. 19	Module 1	Practice and graded quizzes 11:55 p.m. Jan. 24
Week 3 Jan. 26	Module 2	Practice and graded quizzes Grammar Test #1 11:55 p.m. Jan. 31
Week 4 Feb. 2	Module 3	Practice and graded quizzes Discussion post 11:55 p.m. Feb. 12/14
Week 5 Feb. 9	Module 4	Practice and graded quizzes Grammar Test #2 11:55 p.m. Feb. 14
Week 6 Feb. 16	Module 5	Practice and graded quizzes Discussion post 11:55 p.m. Feb. 21
Week 7 Feb. 23	Module 6	Practice and graded quizzes Grammar Test #3 11:55 p.m. Feb. 28
Week 8 March 2	Module 7 <i>Study, study, study for the grammar exam.</i>	First grammar exam attempt due by March 7
Week 9 March 9	Module 7 <i>You can do it, grammar warriors! Conquer that grammar exam.</i>	Second exam attempt due by 11 p.m. March 14
Week 10 March 16	<i>Enjoy spring break!</i>	Spend time away from the computer.
Week 11 March 23	Module 8	Comma quiz Writing quiz Discussion post 11:55 p.m. March 26/28
Week 12 March 30	Module 9	Writing quiz Anecdote assignment 11:55 p.m. April 4

Week	Modules	What's Due
Week 13 April 6	Module 10	Writing quiz 11:55 p.m. April 11
Week 14 April 13	Modules 11	Writing quiz Posttest Discussion post 11:55 p.m. April 16/18
Week 15 April 20	Module 12 <i>Congrats on finishing!</i>	Email assignment Writing quiz Discussion post 11:55 p.m. April 22 <i>*Note the Wednesday deadline</i>