

MMC 2121: Writing Fundamentals for Communicators

“It’s none of their business that you have to learn to write. Let them think that you were born that way.”

-Ernest Hemingway

Instructor Information

Dr. Martin-Kratzer (you can call me Prof. MK to make it easier)

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cell: 573.356.2346 - feel free to call or text me between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Office hours: Unfortunately, we won’t be able to meet in person because I’m in Columbia, Mo. However, I’m always eager to talk to you by phone or webcam. The best way to do this is to set up a specific time. I’m also available by email or text, so please don’t worry that you won’t be able to get help in this online course.

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 style, such as whether to abbreviate *August* or capitalize *president* as a title. 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.
- Avoid passive voice.
- Avoid “dead” construction.
- 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.
- Use introductory clauses correctly.
- Spot ambiguous comparisons and fix them.

- Determine when to use a colon and when to capitalize the following word.
- 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 whether one or two apostrophes are used for a compound subject.
- Correctly place an apostrophe involving plural possessives.
- Form plurals of common and proper nouns.
- Form a possessive involving common and proper nouns.
- Handle apostrophes involving businesses names.
- 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.
- Discern agreement errors.
- Determine whether a collective noun such as *family* or *class* is singular or plural.
- Ensure a pronoun agrees with its antecedent.
- Ensure a verb agrees with its subject.
- Determine pronoun use based on whether it is used a subject or an object.
- Determine which pronoun to use for compound subjects and objects.
- Determine which pronoun to use in comparisons.
- Determine when to use *who* and *whom*.
- Discern when to use *lay* or *lie*.
- Correctly use *affect* and *effect*.
- Avoid the use of incorrect phrases such as “try and catch the fish.”
- Correctly use word pairs such as *fewer* vs. *less*.
- Practice principles of good writing (not discipline-specific, but media-related), emphasizing the areas of mechanics, concision, clarity, professional tone, structure, organization, assimilating information, translating messages across platforms and creating social-media messages.

Required Equipment

Because some of this course is an online course, you must have:

1. A Macintosh or Windows computer with Internet access.
2. A computer that either has (a) a built-in webcam with a microphone and speakers or (b) a webcam as an attachment and headphones with a microphone.

Textbooks

- “Writing Tools,” Roy Peter Clark (required)
- “When Words Collide” by Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald (recommended)
- The Associated Press Stylebook, updated annually. It can be purchased as a book, a subscription [website](#) or an [app](#) for the iPhone and iPad. The punctuation guide at the end of the book is especially helpful. A spiral-bound print version is usually available only through the UF Bookstore or directly from the [Associated Press](#). (recommended)

Course Structure

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, for a total of 61 chapters. Each chapter has an instructional video, usually less than 10 minutes long. After you watch the video for each chapter, you can take a practice question. At the end of each module, you will take a short quiz. After finishing all 12 modules, you will take the final exam. You can have two tries at the final, and only the higher score will count. You will complete this grammar portion in the first six weeks of class.

For the writing portion: The course has 10 writing modules. You will complete one writing module a week. Each module includes instructional videos that cover a variety of writing skills. After each video, you will take a quiz over the lecture material. You are expected to review the lecture and complete the readings before taking the quizzes. In addition, there are six writing assignments that allow you to practice your skills. You will participate in peer critiques to get feedback on your writing.

Pacing: You Can Work Ahead

Each online module has a deadline (posted on the course website) by which the material must be viewed and the quiz taken to keep you on track. You can always work ahead – weeks or even months ahead. However, you must participate in the three required peer critiques during the week that these are assigned.

Deadlines Are Firm; No Extensions or Makeups Allowed

Deadlines are firm. Because you can work ahead in this course, extensions or makeups are never allowed, no matter the reason – whether illness, emergency, court dates, death in the family, etc. Instead of waiting until the last minute and getting derailed by an unplanned event, work ahead.

Let’s say that you wait until an hour before a quiz module closes only to discover that the Internet is down or your computer has died. Deadlines are firm, so you’ll have to count that as a quiz score to be dropped. No extensions are possible, no matter the reason.

Or let's say the midterm deadline falls on a religious holiday you observe. Take the test before that religious holiday. The fact that the religious holiday happens to coincide with the last possible day to complete the assignment does not mean the deadline will change.

Again: Deadlines are firm.

Assignments: Pre-Test

The course begins with an ungraded pre-test so you can see what's expected in the course.

Grammar Module Quizzes

At the end of each of the 12 grammar modules, you will take a quiz of five questions drawn at random. You'll have seven minutes to take each quiz. Each quiz is cumulative.

The highest 10 of 12 possible scores will count for 20 percent of the grade. The two drops are allowed to cover computer glitches, personal conflicts, etc. No other drops will be given, no matter the circumstances. And no "do-overs" are allowed, no matter the reason.

Writing Module Quizzes

At the end of the 10 grammar modules, you will take a quiz of five questions drawn at random. You will have seven minutes to take each quiz. Each quiz is cumulative. All 10 of these quizzes will count toward your final grade.

Writing Assignments

There are six writing assignments that you will complete. Each assignment is worth 60 points. Remember the discussion above about the deadlines being firm? **That means late assignments are not accepted.** You should work ahead so that any issues that arise will not cost you points. The specific assignments are listed toward the end of the syllabus.

Assignments: Final Exam

The final exam is 80 percent of the grade for the grammar portion. You will have 60 minutes to answer 40 questions worth 5 points each and drawn at random by Sakai. You can take the final exam twice if you desire. If you take it twice, only the better of the two scores will count toward your grade. You cannot take the final exam more than twice. Each time you take the final (whether once or twice), you will take it through [Proctor U](#).

Proctor U is an online test-taking service that requires you to take the exam on a Windows or Macintosh computer with a Web browser running Adobe Flash Player. Your computer must either have a webcam, microphone and speaker built in or you must have a webcam along with headphones and a microphone. If you're unsure whether your computer and webcam setup are suitable, you can run a [test](#) ahead of time. **You must register with ProctorU at <http://go.proctoru.com> for each exam at least four days in advance.** See instructions on our Canvas Course.

As long as you contact Proctor U at least four days before when you want to take each exam to schedule a time, the fee Proctor U charges is included in your course fees. However, if you wait until less than four days to schedule an exam or if you choose to reschedule it for any reason, you will have to pay a \$5 fee directly to Proctor U.

You can take the exam at home or in any quiet, well-lit, private room. You'll need to have a photo ID to take the exam as well as a reflective surface to show the edges of your monitor to the proctor.

When taking an exam, no books, handouts, cheat-sheets, notebooks, scratch paper, cellphone, PDA, tablet, music player or anything else will be allowed. You will not be allowed to use your computer to see or reference anything other than the exam.

When you take the exam through Proctor U, the online proctor will verify your identity and then release the exam to you.

For more information on Proctor U, see the course handbook on Sakai.

Sample Questions

All graded 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.

By the way, the correct answers are 1c and 2a.

Grading

Grammar Module (34%)

Pre-test (ungraded)	0%
Quizzes (top 10 out of 12)	20%
Final (best out of two tries)	80%

Writing Modules (66%)

Lecture quizzes	21%
Writing assignments:	74%
Participation:	5%

Total Points

Grammar quizzes:	50 points (10 quizzes x 5 points each)
Grammar final:	200 points (40 questions x 5 points each)
Total grammar:	250 points

Writing quizzes:	100 points (10 quizzes x 10 points each)
Writing assignments:	360 points (6 assignments x 60 points each)
Participation:	25 points (3 discussion board posts)
Total writing:	485 points

Course total: 735 points

Grading Scale

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

Scores are rounded to the nearest whole point: 89.4 rounds down to 89 (B+) while 89.5 rounds up to 90 (A).

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

UF Grading Policy

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

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.

How to earn a good grade

1. Complete the weekly readings
2. Watch all the instructional videos for each module
3. Review the material before you take each quiz
4. Spend time studying for the grammar final
5. Put effort into all the writing assignments and complete them on time
6. Participate in the peer reviews on the discussion board

How Do I Earn Participation Points?

You will earn points by showing me that you have put time and thought into your peer critiques. You will LOSE points by being late on assignments, by failing to participate, by acting unprofessional or by putting in little effort on assignments.

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 (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) 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.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

The statement below, written by Professor David Carlson, has been endorsed by the Department of Journalism faculty. Consider it the law of the department.

It is expected that you will exhibit ethical behavior in your classes. Students are expected to do their own work, use their own words in papers and to reference outside sources appropriately. Students are further expected to observe intellectual property rights and to comply with copyright laws. That means you must obtain written permission to use copyrighted materials in any work you submit for a class. It also means you will 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 Web. 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.

Georgetown University offers a useful tutorial on plagiarism. It says:

“If you use someone else’s ideas or words, cite the source.
If the way in which you are using the source is unclear, make it clear.
If you received specific help from someone, acknowledge it.”

If you find yourself wondering whether you have crossed the line of plagiarism, you almost assuredly have. When in doubt, ask the professor.

It is true that students sometimes plagiarize unintentionally or by accident. That is neither a defense nor an excuse. To avoid accidental plagiarism, it is extremely important to keep careful notes about what came from where, especially when doing online research. If you are cutting and pasting paragraphs from Web sites to your notes, you are in very risky territory; save the citations along with the material.

Your work will be checked for plagiarism, so just don’t do it. **Failure to uphold the standards of academic honesty will result in a failing grade for the course and, potentially, other serious disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.**

If you are aware of a climate that promotes academic dishonesty, please notify the instructor or contact the Student Honor Court (392-1631) or the Cheating Hotline (392-6999).

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 by students at the University of Florida, 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:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>

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.

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.

Discussion board prompts

Week	Discussion board info	Due Date
Available the entire course	<p>Heading General Course Questions</p> <p>Prompt: Please post general questions that you have about the course to this thread. That way, if others have the same question, then they can also see the answer. If you want to discuss a grade or a personal situation, then email me instead.</p>	
Week 6	<p>Exam week</p> <p>Heading Reflection on grammar</p> <p>Prompt: What grammar rules did you learn that you that were new to you? What grammar topic was the most difficult for you to learn and why? How has your ability to use grammar improved in the past six weeks? Please post your answers by 11:55 p.m. Mon., Feb. 9. Respond to at least two classmates by 11:55 p.m. Sat., Feb. 14.</p>	<p>Post answer to discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Mon., Feb. 9</p> <p>Respond to at least two classmates by 11:55 p.m. Sat., Feb. 14</p>
Week 8	<p>Module 15</p> <p>Heading Peer Critique: Bio</p> <p>Prompt: Post your bio and photograph to the discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Mon., Feb. 23. You should put your first and last name as the heading. You will be assigned to read 3-4 bios and to answer</p>	<p>Post assignment to discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Mon., Feb. 23</p> <p>Complete peer critique by 11:55 p.m. Fri., Feb. 27</p>

	<p>questions about them. The specific instructions will be posted on the discussion board by 11: 55 p.m. Feb. 23. You have until 11:55 p.m. Fri., Feb. 27 to leave your constructive feedback.</p>	
Week 12	<p>Module 18</p> <p>Heading Peer Critique: Elevator Pitch</p> <p>Prompt: Post your elevator pitch to the discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Mon., March 23. You should put your first and last name as the heading. You will be assigned to read 3-4 pitches and to answer questions about them. The specific instructions will be posted on the discussion board by 11:55 p.m. March 23. You have until 11:55 p.m. Sat., March 28 to leave your constructive feedback.</p>	<p>Post assignment to discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Mon., March 23</p> <p>Complete peer critique by 11:55 p.m. Sat., March 28</p>
Week 16	<p>Module 22</p> <p>Heading Peer Critique: Social Media</p> <p>Prompt: Post your social media posts to the discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Mon., April 20. You should put your first and last name as the heading. You will be assigned to read 3-4 entries and to answer questions about them. The specific instructions will be posted on the discussion board by 11:55 p.m. April 20. You have until 11:55 p.m. Wed., April 22 to leave your constructive feedback.</p>	<p>Post assignment to discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Mon., April 20</p> <p>Complete peer critique by 11:55 p.m. Wed., April 22</p>

Writing Assignments

Week	Discussion board info	Due Date/Rubric
Week 7	<p>Assignment #1: Bio</p> <p>Write a short biography that would be appropriate for an About Me page on your blog. Topics to address include your interests, your major, your career goals and at least one fact about yourself that might surprise people. Choose your words carefully so that you avoid repetition and unnecessary words. Your bio should be written in the active voice. The expected length is 2-3 paragraphs. Include a picture of yourself.</p>	<p>11:55 p.m. Sat., Feb. 21</p> <p>Grading criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar, spelling, punctuation • Addresses the topics • Well written • Includes a photograph
Week 8	<p>Assignment #2: Cut story</p> <p>Your task is to take the story that is provided and cut it down to 300 words. That means you will be cutting out the unnecessary and repetitive words. You should NOT rewrite the article. Instead, preserve the writer's voice and delete the material that doesn't contribute to the main message.</p>	<p>11:55 p.m. Fri., Feb. 27</p> <p>Grading criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deleted adverbs • Deleted unnecessary sentences • Preserved the writer's voice • Cut to 300 words or less
Week 11	<p>Assignment #3: email</p> <p>Write a concise email to a professor with a question related to an upcoming test. Demonstrate your ability to write concisely with simple phrasing, a professional tone,</p>	<p>11:55 p.m. Sat., March 21</p> <p>Grading criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple phrasing • Grammar, spelling and punctuation

	<p>correct formatting and proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. Your email should include a subject line, salutation, message, closing line and signature.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional tone • Correct Formatting
<p>Week 13</p>	<p>Assignment #4: Elevator pitch</p> <p>Your parents have dragged you to a social event where you are introduced to the boss of your dream company. After you get over your shock, you express your admiration for this company and admit that you dream of working there. The boss smiles and says, “Tell me about yourself and why I should hire you.” This is your chance to give your elevator pitch, a 30-second speech about why you are the right candidate for this job. For this task, you need to include a link to your dream job (company website or a specific job listing) and then write an elevator pitch that specifically targets that job and includes concrete details about your skills and qualities.</p>	<p>11:55 p.m. Sat., April 4</p> <p>Grading criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging • Concise • Organization • Includes specific details • Targets the dream company • Grammar, spelling and punctuation
<p>Week 15</p>	<p>Assignment #5: Social media</p> <p>You are the social media manager for a major chain of ice cream stores. A new product is being added to the menu. Your company wants to announce this addition through social media. Write appropriate announcements for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These three</p>	<p>11:55 p.m. Sat., April 18</p> <p>Grading criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messages tailored to each social media platform • Content is concise and clear • Content is engaging and informative • Grammar, spelling,

	<p>messages should be tailored to the strengths of each social media platform. You should brainstorm and decide what this new product will be and whether it is wise to include an image with your posts. In one Word document, please submit three posts clearly labeled as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. If your social media posts include photographs, include those as part of your document. Do not attach images separately.</p>	<p>punctuation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional tone
<p>Week 16</p>	<p>Assignment #6: Cover letter</p> <p>Search for a job listing online. Read through the want ad to note the job duties as well as the qualifications that are required. Write a one-page cover letter in which you tailor your message to the particular skills and requirements that are listed in the ad. Maintain a professional tone as you discuss what makes you a good fit for this job. Use proper formatting for a business letter. Include a link to the job listing in your Word document.</p>	<p>11:55 p.m. Wed., April 22</p> <p>Grading criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter tailored to the specific job • Best fit for job • Well written • Grammar, spelling, punctuation • Professional tone • Properly formatted

Spring 2015 Course Schedule

	Week	Module	Deadline
Grammar	Week 1	Pre-test Post your introduction on discussion board Module 1	11:55 p.m. Sat., Jan. 10
	Week 2	Modules, 2, 3	11:55 p.m. Sat., Jan. 17
	Week 3	Modules 4, 5, 6	11:55 p.m. Sat., Jan. 24
	Week 4	Modules 7, 8, 9	11:55 p.m. Sat., Jan. 31
	Week 5	Modules 10, 11, 12	11:55 p.m. Sat., Feb. 7
	Week 6	Take Grammar Final Exam Discussion Board: Reflection	11:55 p.m. Sat., Feb. 14
Writing	Week 7	Module 13, 14 Writing Assignment #1	11:55 p.m. Sat., Feb. 21
	Week 8	Module 15 Discussion Board: Critique Assignment #1 Writing Assignment #2	11:55 p.m. Fri., Feb. 27
	Week 9	<i>Enjoy spring break</i>	11:55 p.m. Sat., March 7
	Week 10	Module 16	11:55 p.m. Sat., March 14
	Week 11	Module 17 Writing Assignment #3	11:55 p.m. Sat., March 21
	Week 12	Module 18	11:55 p.m. Sat., March 28
	Week 13	Module 19 Writing Assignment #4	11:55 p.m. Sat., April 4
	Week 14	Module 20 Discussion Board: Critique Assignment #4	11:55 p.m. Sat., April 11

	Week 15	Module 21 Writing Assignment #5	11:55 p.m. Sat., April 18
	Week 16	Module 22 Discussion Board: Critique Assignment #5 Writing Assignment #6	11:55 p.m. Wed., April 22

Writing Modules - Titles

Module 13: The Value of Verbs

Module 14: Writing Concisely, Part 1

Module 15: Writing Concisely, Part 2

Module 16: Focus on Clarity

Module 17: Ladder of Language

Module 18: Elements of Storytelling

Module 19: Rhythm in Writing

Module 20: Effective Endings

Module 21: Social Media Writing

Module 22: The Craft of Writing