

Fall 2007 • HPAA 220: Business Writing for Health Administrators

Course Syllabus

Tuesday & Thursday 12:30-1:45 pm • Room HC 0003

Teaching Fellow/Instructor

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Course Overview

This course will help you develop professional writing and presentation skills. Effective communication is important for success in any career. During this semester, you will write several types of documents common to the workplace, including internship/job-search documents, letters, memos, position statements, proposals, and case analyses. In addition to reviewing basic writing skills, we will discuss note taking, constructing arguments, grant writing, and press releases. Finally, you will practice providing constructive feedback and delivering individual and group presentations in class. Through these various assignments you will gain practical experience in thinking critically, tailoring your message for different audiences, and presenting ideas clearly.

Course Requirements

1. **Be Present.** Attend class and actively participate in discussions. If you are unable to attend class, please let the instructor know in advance via e-mail.
2. **Be Respectful.** As required in any professional environment, I expect you to come to class on time. You may bring lunch or snacks with you as long as it does not interfere with your participation or disturb others. In your written work and class discussions you should speak professionally. Listen when others are talking. When working in small groups, be tactful when offering constructive criticism.
3. **Come Prepared.** Be sure to review the Course Outline and bring any required materials, which may include draft assignments, laptops, textbooks, or other readings.
4. **Plan Ahead.** Your success in this course requires clear thinking, specificity, brevity, and attention to detail. It also requires careful planning. An important first step for each assignment is to figure out who you are talking to and what they want to know. You must organize your ideas and highlight the most important information. You also must proof-read your work and be open to constructive feedback on how you can improve. Therefore, I encourage you to not procrastinate. Plan ahead and be sure you have enough time to do your best on each assignment.
5. **Check Yourself.** As mentioned above, reviewing your work is important to effective writing. Before you complete your assignments, ask yourself some of the following questions.

- Did I follow all instructions?
- Did I do enough research or reading before writing? Did I cite all sources used?
- Is the most important information presented first?
- Are my writing style, format, and tone appropriate?
- Are there any spelling or grammatical errors?
- Did I use a lot of unnecessary words? Do I need to add words for clarity?
- Can I do anything else to make my document easier to follow?
- Do I like what I have written?

6. **Apply What You Learned.** The quality of your work should improve as you learn and practice new skills. Therefore, assignments due later in the semester count for more of your final grade than assignments due at the beginning.

7. **Obey the Honor Code.** The Internet is an important resource often abused. You may be tempted to cut and paste material from the Internet into your assignments.

In general, when you copy more than a single full sentence from a Web site or any other source you must provide a full citation and use quotation marks or quotation formatting. If you re-word a series of sentences but keep the author's argument, the order of comments, and the underlying logic, you are using someone else's work and must provide attribution. Below is an example of plagiarism.

Paragraph from student paper with no citation

"Under this option, Medicare would pay for prescriptions once an annual deductible has been met. The lower the amount that policymakers set the deductible, the more people would benefit. However, this option may be reminiscent of the structure of current Medigap policies H, I, and J, which has a limiting maximum benefit. So, policymakers would have to decide how many beneficiaries should pay for each covered prescription—whether through a deductible or modest co-pay. Another option could be to provide beneficiaries with a voucher toward the purchase of private prescription drug insurance policies, which the federal government could choose to standardize as it has done for Medigap insurance."

Paragraph from source Web site www.nasi.org

"Under this approach, Medicare would help pay for any beneficiary's prescriptions once she paid an annual deductible. The lower that policymakers set the deductible, the more people would benefit. A key question for policymakers is whether such coverage would include a maximum benefit similar to those of Medigap policies H, I, and J in order to limit costs. Policymakers would also have to decide how much beneficiaries should pay for each covered prescription. Most employer-sponsored retiree health plans either pay 80 percent of drug costs after the beneficiary has met an overall medical spending deductible or require modest co-payments with each prescription (for example, \$5 co-payment for generic drugs, 16 \$10-\$15 for brand name drugs) but no deductible.¹⁷ Another way to structure the benefit would be to provide beneficiaries with a voucher toward the purchase of private prescription drug insurance policies, which the federal government could choose to standardize as it has done for Medigap insurance."

You will not learn to write by plagiarizing. In addition, plagiarizing is cheating and violates the UNC Honor Code (see page 5).

[Syllabus text regarding plagiarism cited from Dr. Rickett's HPAA 260 Syllabus (2001) with edits by instructor]

Course Structure

This course includes lectures, class discussion, written assignments, peer feedback, small group exercises, and readings.

Lectures. Writing is a skill best developed through practice. Therefore, class lectures will be kept to a minimum and focus on important guidelines about grammar, punctuation, and style. Lectures also will explain the importance of and strategies for writing specific types of documents. Several guest speakers will share their experiences with and perspectives on workplace communications as well.

Discussion. Most classes will include time to review reading material and discuss current issues regarding workplace communication. It is an opportunity for you to ask writing-related questions, and for us to learn from each other about effective communication.

Assignments. The best way to improve your writing skills is to practice; therefore, written assignments are the most important part of the course. You will complete several written assignments throughout the semester. Instructions for each assignment will be uploaded to BlackBoard and discussed in class.

Class Exercises and Workshops. We will complete a number of exercises during class to provide you with additional opportunities to improve your skills. Toward the end of the semester, several classes are designated as "Workshop Days" to provide you with an opportunity to work on assignments during class and receive additional instruction.

Group Work and Peer Feedback. Much of the work you do during class will be in groups. Think of your group as a team working toward a goal: to produce effective documents and presentations. We will discuss how to give useful feedback in class and you will practice providing feedback with your group members.

Reading. The required readings for the course include select chapters in George J. Searles' *Workplace Communications: The Basics* and articles posted to BlackBoard. You also may wish to purchase a writing handbook if you don't already own one, particularly if you have trouble with grammar and punctuation rules. *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White is highly recommended.

Extra Help. The instructor and teaching assistant are available to meet individually with students who need extra help. These meetings will occur on schedule conference days (see Course Schedule starting on page 6), during office hours, and by appointment. Be sure to come with specific questions. For example, you may have questions about how to complete an assignment or about grammar/punctuation rules. The instructor and teaching assistant will not read draft assignments and offer comments about all that could be improved. I strongly recommend that you go to the UNC Writing Center (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/>) for feedback on your drafts or for help with writing. I do hope that over the course of the semester, you will develop the skills and confidence to critique your own writing.

Assignments and Grading

Details for each assignment will be posted to BlackBoard prior to discussion in class. Assignment discussion and due dates appear in the Course Schedule. **Save all assignments as indicated in Table 1 and post to the designated Assignment Folder on BlackBoard BEFORE class on due date.**

We will grade your work according to standard criteria listed in assignment instructions. Although grading written assignments may appear to be highly subjective, people with experience reading student or business writing typically agree on the quality of a given document. The standard grading criteria will ensure as much consistency as possible.

Each assignment will be graded on a 100 point scale. Table 1 lists the components of your final grade and Table 2 is the grading scale.

Table 1. Final Grade Determination

Weight	Assignment [save as]
5%	Winds of Change Memo and Letter [Save in 1 file: <i>lastname_MemoLetter.doc</i>]
8%	Resume, Cover Letter, Thank You Letter [Save in 2 files: <i>lastname_Resume.doc</i> and <i>lastname_2Letters</i>]
3%	Class Exercise—Grammar, Punctuation, Style and Tone
3%	Class Exercise—Evaluating Brevity
11%	Personal Statement [<i>lastname_PersonalStatement.doc</i>]
14%	Position Statement [<i>lastname_PositionStatement.doc</i>]
3%	Class Exercise—Note Taking
3%	Class Exercise—Summarizing [<i>lastname_MurphySummary.doc</i>]
6%	Health Advocacy Presentation
3%	Health Intervention Proposal Summary [<i>lastname_HISummary.doc</i>]
18%	Health Intervention Memo [<i>lastname_HIMemo.doc</i>]
15%	Group Case Report [<i>lastname_CaseReport.doc</i>]
8%	Group Case Presentation [<i>lastname_CasePresentation.ppt</i>]
100%	Total Grade
	Extra Credit: Awards for Health Advocacy Presentation (2 percentage points awarded to up to 6 students) and Group Case Presentation (2 percentage points awarded to each group member)

Table 2. Grading Scale

90.0	→	100.0	=	A
80.0	→	89.9	=	B
70.0	→	79.9	=	C
60.0	→	69.9	=	D
	<	60.0	=	F

Appeals

If you believe that an error was made in grading, be prepared to explain why you believe the grade is incorrect. In making your argument, you should reference the assessment criteria discussed in class. Appealing a grade does not ensure that your grade will be changed.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Honor Code

The principles of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship govern the performance of all academic work and student conduct at the University as they have during the long life of this institution. Your acceptance of enrollment in the University presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in the Code of Student Conduct and a respect for this most significant Carolina tradition. Your reward is in the practice of these principles.

Your participation in this course comes with the expectation that your work will be completed in full observance of the Honor Code. Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable, because any breach in academic integrity, however small, strikes destructively at the University's life and work.

If you have any questions about your responsibility or the responsibility of faculty members under the Honor Code, please consult with someone in either the Office of the Student Attorney General (966-4084) or the Office of the Dean of Students (966-4042). To familiarize yourself with the provisions of the Honor Code, please go to <http://instrument.unc.edu/>.

Course Evaluations

The Department of Health Policy and Administration is participating in the Carolina Course Evaluation System (CES), the university's new online course evaluation tool, enabled at the end of each semester. Your responses will be anonymous, with feedback provided in the aggregate; open-ended comments will be shared with instructors, but not identified with individual students. Your participation in CES is a course requirement, as providing constructive feedback is a professional expectation. Such feedback is critical to improving the quality of our courses, as well as providing input to the assessment of your instructors.

Academic Disruption Exercise

HPAA is committed to developing and testing alternatives for continuing classes in the face of various disruptions. During this semester we may run such a test. If this course participates, you will be informed in advance about the nature of the exercise and actions to take. We appreciate your full cooperation in this very important endeavor.

Course Schedule

Wk	Session	In Class	Reading and Assignments [Complete BEFORE Class]
1	Aug 21	Introduction to Course	
	Aug 23	Why Writing Is Important	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bb "Importance of Writing" Press Releases - Searles Appendix B—Review of Mechanics
2	Aug 28	Grammar and Punctuation Review	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bb Grammar Resources
	Aug 30	Sentences and Paragraphs ★ <i>Discuss Resume, Cover Letter, Thank You Letter Assignment</i>	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Searles Chapter 2—Correspondence - Bb Letter Writing Resources
3	Sep 4	Style and Tone ★ <i>Discuss Winds of Change Memo and Letter Assignment</i>	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Searles Chapter 1—The Keys to Successful Communication - Bb Memo/Letter Writing Resources
	Sep 6	Resume Writing Guest: Cathy Padget, Career Services Coordinator, HPAA	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Searles Chapter 8—Job Application Process
4	Sep 11	Writing Job Correspondence—Cover Letters and Thank-You Notes Guest: Sharon Jones, Assistant Director, UNC Career Services	

Wk	Session	In Class	Reading and Assignments [Complete BEFORE Class]
	Sep 13	The Art of Brevity <u>Class Exercise:</u> Evaluating Brevity	Reading - Searles Appendix A—Ten Strategies to Improve Your Style - Bb Evaluating Brevity Resource Assignment Due: Winds of Change Memo and Letter
5	Sep 18	Personal Statements ★ <i>Discuss Personal Statement Assignment</i>	Reading - Bb Personal Statement Resources Assignment Due: Resume, Cover and Thank-You Letters
	Sep 20	Emails at Work ★ <i>Discuss Position Statement Assignment</i>	Reading - Bb Email News Articles
6	Sep 25	Writing Analytically ★ <i>Discuss Group Case Report and Presentation Assignment</i>	Reading - Searles Chapter 10—Long Reports, <i>Collaboration and Documentation Sections</i> - Bb Arguments
	Sep 27	Presentation Skills and PowerPoint	Reading - Searles Chapter 9—Oral Presentations
7	Oct 2	Listening, Note Taking, and Summarizing ★ <i>Discuss Summary Exercise</i> <u>Class Exercise:</u> Note Taking	Reading - Searles Chapter 5—Summaries - Bb Note Taking Resources Assignment Due: Personal Statement

Wk	Session	In Class	Reading and Assignments [Complete BEFORE Class]
	Oct 4	Reimbursement Terminology for Health Administrators Guest: James Murphy, UNC Hospitals [Reminder: Be ready to take notes for summary exercise]	Assignment Due: Position Statement
8	Oct 9	Researching Health Issues ★ <i>Discuss Health Advocacy Presentation and Intervention Proposal Summary and Memo</i>	Summary Exercise Due: 200 words or less <u>informative summary</u> of James Murphy lecture
	Oct 11	<u>Class Workshop:</u> Thinking about Health Interventions	Reading – Bb Articles <i>Improving Oral Health of Alaska Natives</i>
9	Oct 16	Library Research Session Class Meets in HSL Rm. 307 Guest: Mellanye Lackey, Public Health Liaison, HSL	
	Holiday		
10	Oct 23	Advocacy Presentations	Assignment Due: Student Presentations 1-12
	Oct 25	<u>Class Workshop:</u> Group Case Reports	Assignment Due: Health Intervention Proposal Summary
11	Oct 30	Optional Conference Day—No Class	
	Nov 1	Advocacy Presentations	Assignment Due: Student Presentations 13-24
12	Nov 6	Press Releases Guest: Gene Pinder, Marketing Director, HPAA	
	Nov 8	Advocacy Presentations	Assignment Due: Student Presentations 25-35

Wk	Session	In Class	Reading and Assignments [Complete BEFORE Class]
13	Nov 13	Grant Writing	OPTIONAL— Assignment Due: Rewrite of 1 assignment from first half of semester (WOC, job correspondence, personal statement, or position statement)
	Nov 15	Providing Good Feedback <u>Class Workshop:</u> Peer Feedback on Draft Health Intervention Proposal BRING 1 COPY OF DRAFT PROPOSAL	
14	Nov 20	<u>Class Workshop:</u> Group Case Presentations	Assignment Due: Written Case Report
	Holiday		
15	Nov 27	Group Case Presentations (1-3)	Assignment Due: All Group PowerPoint / Other Materials
	Nov 29	Group Case Presentations (4-6)	
16	Dec 4	Course Wrap-Up Advocacy and Group Case Awards	Assignment Due: Health Intervention Memo