

Tufts University, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy

NUTR 205: Communicating Health and Nutrition Information to Diverse Audiences

Spring 2017

- Class Meetings:** Tuesdays, 6:00-9:00pm, Jaharis 156
- Instructor(s):** Kathy Brenner
kbrenner@hsph.harvard.edu
N/A
- Office hours:** By appointment
- Teaching Assistant:** None
- Graduate Credits:** 1.0 credit
- Prerequisites:** N220: Fundamentals of Writing and Nutrition and Health or exemption approved by the Program Director for NUTR 220
- Course Description:** Nutrition communicators are often called upon to reach a variety of audiences, from consumers and patients to low-literacy individuals, other health and nutrition professionals, funders, and more. This course will help students tailor communications for these diverse audiences across a range of media.
- Course Objectives:** Students will learn to identify the audiences for nutrition communications and craft content for each type of audience.
- Texts or Materials:** Required texts: *Tufts Nutrition* magazine issues (provided by the instructor); no required textbook; supplementary readings, broadcasts, and video will be provided by the instructor. Some class materials will come from *The Friedman Sprout*, assorted nutrition websites, NPR, YouTube.
- February 14 class:** TBA
- Academic Conduct:** Each student is responsible for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, as specified in the Friedman School's Policies and Procedures manual (<https://www.nutrition.tufts.edu/student/documents/policies-procedures>) and Tufts University policies (<http://uss.tufts.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>). It is the responsibility of each student to understand and

comply with these standards, as violations will be sanctioned by penalties ranging from failure on an assignment and the course to dismissal from the school.

Classroom Conduct: Students are expected to come prepared for each class and participate in each class. Assignments must be submitted on their due dates. Contact the instructor by email with questions or to schedule appointments. Use of electronic devices is limited to class-related activities.

Assessment and Grading: Grades are based on the following:

Homework assignments	80%
Class participation	20%

Assignments and Submission Instructions: Assignments must be submitted on their due dates. An assignment received after its deadline will not be accepted or graded unless an extension is approved in advance. Students who are unable to complete an assignment on time for any reason should notify the instructor by email or text message well before the deadline, with an explanation for why the extension is needed.

Accommodation of Disabilities: Tufts University is committed to providing equal access and support to all students through the provision of reasonable accommodations so that each student may access their curricula and achieve their personal and academic potential. If you have a disability that requires reasonable accommodations please contact the Friedman School Assistant Dean of Student Affairs at 617-636-6719 to make arrangements for determination of appropriate accommodations. Please be aware that accommodations cannot be enacted retroactively, making timeliness a critical aspect for their provision.

Course Schedule: Note: This schedule is subject to modification at the instructor's discretion.

Week	Topic	Assignment (due date)
1	Introduction: Identifying audiences for nutrition communication	Based on content provided by the instructor, write a 300-500-word critique that includes a brief (1-2 sentence) summary of the content, identification of the audience, what the communication did well and did poorly, and what strategies it used to reach its audience (due class 2).

2	Finding reliable and legitimate nutrition information	Summarize the results of a study provided by the instructor. Describe where this kind of study falls in the hierarchy of evidence. Identify similar research. Explain how strongly the results of this study should influence what a nutrition expert might convey to consumers or patients (due Class 3). PubMed workshop by Tufts librarian.
3	Another week on scholarly writing	Additional work on IMRaD + Abstract and the interpretation of scholarly literature. Additional writing assignment due Class 4).
4	Writing for individuals with specific nutrition-related needs (consumer/patient education materials)	Write a 500-750-word article for a lay audience on one aspect of nutrition, such as healthy fats, whole grains, the Mediterranean diet, etc. (due class 4)
5	Writing for low literacy groups	Write a 500-750-word article on one of the topics provided by the instructor for a low-literacy audience using the strategies covered in the class (due class 5).
6	Writing for the news media	Based on a nutrition topic provided by the instructor, write a 500-750-word article or script for a consumer news media audience (due class 6).
7	Writing for professionals/peers	Write a 500-750-word piece on any nutrition-related topic for another nutrition communicator or professional (due class 7).
8	Writing a call to action	Write a 500-700-word call to action for the general public, using the 4-profile format (due class 8).
9	Writing press releases/promotional materials	Write a 500-750-word press release on a nutrition topic of your choice. It can promote new research, a product, an award, or other topic (due class 9).
10	Writing longer articles for the Sprout	Write an 800-1000-word article suitable for <i>The Friedman Sprout</i> (due Class 11).
11	Writing for social media and the Web	Write a 500-750-word nutrition-related blog post. Find appropriate image(s). To promote the post, also create a Tweet and the text for a Facebook post (due class 10).
12	Writing that incorporates mixed media	Using the blog post writing assignment from the previous week, hyperlink mixed media to coordinate with the blog (due Class 13).

13	Final class project: TBA by the instructor	The final class project will be an expansion of the previous writing assignment.
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Class Topics, Learning Objectives, In-class Activities, and Assignments

NOTE: This schedule is subject to modification at the instructor's discretion.

NOTE: During most classes, time will be made for student/teacher workshops: One-on-one advising and critiquing of student work. Students need to understand comments, suggestions, and correction feedback on writing assignments. These workshops will provide a springboard for more successful writing.

Class 1: Identifying audiences for nutrition communication

Overview: Nutrition communicators are often called upon to reach a variety of audiences. Developing strategies for communicating solid, evidence-based information to different audiences is an essential skill for these professionals.

Learning objectives:

- List various audiences for nutrition communications
- Explain what makes for effective nutrition communication
- Describe what is known—and what isn't—about healthful eating.

In-class activities: The writing process, cultural aspects of writing; brainstorming techniques for generating ideas and organizing thoughts; introduction to peer editing and peer writing groups (some material covered first class, some during second class)

Assignment: Based on content provided by the instructor, write a 300-500-word critique that includes a brief (1-2 sentence) summary of the content, identification of the audience, what the communication did well and did poorly, and what strategies it used to reach its audience (due class 2).

Class 2: Finding reliable and legitimate nutrition information

Overview: Nutrition communicators need to know how to quickly and efficiently find reliable information. This class would include a library workshop on PubMed and other data base search methods, Mesh search

Learning objectives:

- Understand the basics of searching PubMed and nutrition-specific databases
- List cues for sorting reliable nutrition information from promotional materials or hucksterism
- Assess the hierarchy of evidence for reliability and applicability of study results

In-class activities: Review basic searches on PubMed and the use of the USDA's Food Composition database. Explore The Nutrition Source and other reliable sites for nutrition information. Cover the hierarchy of evidence for reliability and applicability of study results. Identify sketchy sources of nutrition information. Analyze the components of the article's content used for writing assignment 1. Review website "Resources" and comments on writing assignment 1.

Reading: "Social Network Concordance in Food Choice Among Spouses, Friends, and Siblings", American Journal of Public Health, 2011

Assignment: Summarize the results of a study (above) provided by the instructor. Describe where this kind of study falls in the hierarchy of evidence. Identify similar research. Explain how strongly the results of this study should influence what a nutrition expert might convey to consumers or patients (due Class 3).

Class 3: Interpreting scholarly literature (continuation of Class 2)

Overview: Nutrition communicators need to be able to interpret scholarly literature, so that this material can be translated for any reading audience.

Learning objectives:

- Understand individual IMRaD sections
- Understand the required components for each section
- Analyze language and structure used to tell the research story

In-class activities: Analyze and discuss scholarly nutrition literature in detail: section by section, and all components. Develop a clear understanding of what is required of the author to communicate the novelty of findings. Review website "Resources" and comments on writing assignment 2.

Peer editing

Assignment: Summarize another study provided by the instructor. Follow the instructions for the Class 2 writing assignment (due Class 4).

Class 4: Writing for individuals with specific nutrition-related needs (consumer/patient education materials)

Overview: Creating handouts or other content to help individuals improve their eating patterns or lose weight is a fundamental task for nutrition communicators.

Learning objective:

- Explain the elements of effective consumer/patient education communication

Reading: health.usnews.com/best-diet/Mediterranean-diet

In-class activities: Discuss the goals of consumer/patient education communications. Dissect an effective consumer/patient education article. Discuss audience, content, structure and organization, style, document design, and cultural sensitivity and appropriateness. Review website “Resources” and comments on writing assignment 2.

Peer Writing Groups

Writing resources: Complex sentence structures/grammar and rhetorical conventions (compounding, subordination, transitional words and phrases; gerund, past participle, preposition extensions; introductory phrases; apposition)

Assignment: Write a 400-500-word article for a lay audience on one aspect of nutrition, such as healthy fats, whole grains, the Mediterranean diet, etc. with an accompanying handout with visuals (300 words). This will appear as a 2-page spread in a magazine (due class 4).

Class 5: Writing for low literacy groups

Overview: Millions of Americans have trouble reading or understanding complex written information. They need clear, plain-language nutrition information.

Learning objectives:

- Explain the need for low-literacy communication
- List the elements of plain-language communication

- Describe where to find information about and support for writing plain-language communication

Videos, readings: www.cookingmatters.org (Who We Are/What We Do videos); educational tools (Cooking matters in your food pantry/handouts, p.53)

In-class activities: Read examples of low-literacy communications and identify the strategies used to make them easier to read. Perform a low literacy translation of an article provided by the instructor. Explore the elements of the plain-language movement. Review website “Resources” and low literacy resources. Review comments on writing assignment 3. Write a low literacy translation from a specific article.

Peer or writing group edit

Writing resources: Strength of claim - hedging and boosting (modals of probability)

Assignment: Develop, modify, and write a 500-750-word article using the 2-page spread writing assignment 3 for a low-literacy audience utilizing the strategies covered in the class (due class 5).

Class 6: Writing for the news media

Overview: Nutrition communicators can have a powerful effect on public health by disseminating accurate and timely nutrition information to the general public via the news media.

Learning objectives:

- Identify what makes content "newsworthy"
- Identify effective communication strategies for reaching consumers via the news media
- Create compelling leads supported by body copy

In-class activities: Using the Newswise Nutrition Wire or Statnews as a source, select three "newsworthy" stories and describe what puts them in this category. Discuss the importance of nutrition communication via the news media, and how it can be good and bad. Explore various channels for nutrition communication, including traditional news media (newspapers, television, and radio) and "new" media (blogs, social media, and more). Review website “Resources” and comments on writing assignment 4.

Peer editing

Writing resources: Lexical nuance

Assignment: Based on a nutrition topic provided by the instructor, write a 500-750-word article or script for a consumer news media audience. In addition, read, analyze, and break down the components of an assigned reading. Annotate the article in detail (due class 6).

Class 7: Writing for professionals/peers

Overview: Communicating effectively with peers and other professionals are a lifelong skill for anyone who is employed or seeking work.

Learning objectives:

- Describe various types of professional communications
- List the elements of peer-to-peer or professional-to-professional communications
- Use these elements to create effective peer-to-peer or professional-to-professional content

In-class activities: Review various types of peer-to-peer or professional-to-professional communications, from business/marketing plans to white papers and letters of recommendation to cover letters. Evaluate strategies for making these types of communications more effective. Review website “Resources” and comments on writing assignment 5.

Peer editing

Writing resources: Peer review both the lay and low literacy writing assignments. Provide feedback from what was discovered.

Assignment: Write a 500-750-word piece on any nutrition-related topic for another nutrition communicator or professional (due class 7).

Class 8: Writing a call to action

Overview: A call to action is persuasive image or text that prompts the reader to take action. There are calls to action for Congress and calls to action for the general public. Whatever the audience, the writing task is to motivate the reader to take action.

Learning objectives:

- List various types of actions
- Identify the components of a call to action

- Describe the purposes of a call to action

In-class activities: Discuss the components of an actual call to action. In addition to the format, consider the language, vocabulary, and structure used to express the action. Examine content and purpose. Review website “Resources” and comments from writing assignment 6.

Peer writing groups

Writing resources: Punctuation (use of the comma, semi-colon, colon, and dash; i.e. and e.g.)

Assignment: Write a 500-700 word call to action for the general public, real or imagined. Consider either the sample format in the “Resources” on the course website or 4-profile format handed out in class, or perhaps design a format of your own creation. In addition, read, analyze, and break down the components of an assigned reading. Annotate the article in detail (due class 8).

Class 9: Writing press releases/promotional materials

Overview: Promoting the achievements of your department, hospital, company, or organization can improve its reputation, attract the attention of funders or opinion leaders, boost sales, or have other beneficial effects.

Learning objectives:

- Become familiar with various types of press releases
- Identify elements common to press releases
- Create compelling leads and headlines

In-class activities: Explore nutrition-related press releases on the American Heart Association, Newswise, PRWeb, and other press release services, as well as recent nutrition-related releases from Tufts and Harvard School of Public Health. Discuss effective and ineffective releases. Briefly explore advertising as a career option for nutrition communicators. Review website “Resources” and comments on writing assignment 7.

Peer editing

Assignment: Write a 500-750-word press release on a nutrition topic of your choice. It can promote new research, a product, an award, or other topic. In addition, read, analyze, and break down the components of an assigned reading. Annotate the article in detail (due class 9).

Class 10: Writing longer articles for publication (*The Friedman Sprout, Tufts Nutrition Magazine*)

Overview: Writing longer articles for publication require more detail, description, and explanation. Familiarity with the topic, writing a suitable, catchy title, and including sidebars, inserts, visuals, and hyperlinks are all fundamental elements of good nutrition writing.

Learning objectives:

- Explore *The Sprout and Tufts Nutrition Magazine*
- Become more familiar with the components of longer articles
- Analyze longer articles for clarity, flow, and cohesion

In-class activities: Using these publications, explore a selection of longer articles in more depth. Break down, analyze, and discuss the writing, the components, the organization, clarity, and flow. Consider the use of visuals, hyperlinks, and inserts. Review website “Resources” and comments from writing assignment 8.

Peer editing

Assignment: Write a publishable, 800-1000-word article suitable for *The Friedman Sprout* on a timely nutrition topic of your choice (due Class 11).

Class 11: Writing for social media and the Web

Overview: Once considered "new" media, blogs, social media, and other online outlets are now mainstream channels for nutrition communication. Writing for these outlets requires some different skills than writing for traditional print media.

Learning objectives:

- Identify differences between traditional and new media
- Identify audiences for new media
- Explore effective strategies for new media communication

In-class activities: Survey new media nutrition communications, including blog posts (Real Life Nutrition [WebMD], Well [New York Times], Huffington Post), Facebook (EatRightNutrition, SimplyNutritionDietitians, UVA Nutrition, The Nutrition Doctor Is In), Pinterest, Instagram, and more. Discuss what makes for effective nutrition communication on the Web, and how it differs from print. Review website “Resources” and comments on writing assignment 9.

Peer writing groups

Assignment: Write a 500-750-word nutrition-related blog post. Find appropriate image(s). To promote the post, also create a Tweet and the text for a Facebook post. At this time, some additional instructions will be given for the final in-class project (due class 10).

Class 12: Writing that incorporates mixed media

Overview: An analysis of mixed media and how they expand on written content for reader awareness and interest. Today, the inclusion of mixed media (and visuals) has become a critically important part of writing for nutrition.

Learning objectives:

- Explore broadcasts, podcasts, video, digital stories
- Analyze various sources of media
- Consider effective strategies for communication

In-class activities: Survey mixed media and their sources, including NPR, PBS, TED, and YouTube. Discuss what makes for effective nutrition communication on the Web, and how it differs from print. Review websites “Resources” and comments on writing assignment 10.

Peer writing groups

Assignment: Utilizing the previous blog post writing assignment, select two forms (a video and a radio broadcast or podcast) of mixed media to coordinate with the blog. The blog post and the two forms of mixed media will be used as content for the final class project. You will receive further instructions in class (due Class 13).

Class 13: Final Class Project

Assignment: Based on the previous week’s writing assignment, students will complete the final project in class. The instructor will provide details in class. Prior to beginning the final project, there will be a review of writing comments for writing assignment 11.