NUTR 220: Fundamentals of Writing About Nutrition and Health  
Fall 2021 - SYLLABUS

Class Meetings:  
Class begins asynchronously on Tuesday, September 7. Live sessions will be held Tuesdays, 5:00-6:00pm ET, Sept. 14 - Nov. 16, with the exception of Tuesday 9/28.

Instructor(s):  
Christine Perry Smith, MS, RD  
Email: Christine.Smith@tufts.edu  
Office hours: By appt. (Zoom or phone)

Teaching Asst.:  
Melissa Ferris  
Email: Melissa.Ferris@tufts.edu  
Office hours: By appt. (Zoom or phone)

Course credit:  
1.5 semester hour units

Prerequisites:  
None

Course Description:  
This introductory 10-week course is designed to teach the basic skills necessary to write nutrition- and health-related papers that are clear, accurate, and audience-appropriate. It is a practical review of grammar, writing, and revision, and will enable students to develop a clear, fluent, and readable writing style. The course will include both individual and collaborative exercises and will require several writing and editing assignments. Designated time outside of the classroom will also be required for each student to participate in asynchronous activities such as recorded lectures, self-assessments, and video conferences. NUTR 220 is a prerequisite for NUTR 306 and NUTR 322.

The goals of NUTR 220 have not changed in light of the COVID-19 crisis and current political climate. In fact, the increased need for online written communication, and the national energy to address systemic racism, make clear writing, accurate grammar, and precise word choice more important than ever.

Course Objectives:  
Students will learn to appreciate and practice clear, precise written communication. They will learn to identify and correct common errors in English grammar and punctuation, review the principles of direct, well-organized writing, and incorporate these into their work.

Texts or Materials:


Additional resources, writing models, and readings for discussion will be posted on Canvas in the module corresponding to each class.
**Academic Conduct:** Each student is responsible for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, as specified in the Friedman School’s Policies and Procedures Handbook and Tufts University’s Academic Integrity Resources. 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.

**Attendance:** Attendance at live sessions is required; students should come prepared for each class and participate in each class. Grades may be reduced for excessive or unexcused absences. Students are encouraged to join live sessions with their videos on to promote community and engagement. Substantive discussion is critical to helping you understand and integrate the concepts covered in this course. We understand that there may be situations in which personal circumstances make it difficult to attend live. If you are unable to join a live session, please let us know ahead of time.

**Classroom Conduct:** Our class will meet via Zoom during live sessions; these sessions may be recorded for students who are unable to attend or who desire future access to the information. Students should be prepared to contribute actively throughout live sessions by sharing their perspectives, questions, and reflections on the readings and other course content. Participation in class, both live and asynchronously, will be assessed based on the frequency and quality of contributions, evidence of preparation (e.g., completion of readings and assignments), and thoughtful, respectful engagement with peers and the instructor. Our rules and norms will be the same as if we were in a physical classroom: participating by asking and answering questions and respecting the views, opinions, and privacy of others.

**Assessment and Grading:** This course is letter graded. Grade weights are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research report</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer brief</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 editing assignments @10% each</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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A passing grade in the course is B- or better. Course grades will be based on the following scale (subject to revision during the course):

- A  $\geq$ 94%
- B+  87 - < 90%
- B-  80 - < 84%
- A-  90 - < 94%
- B   84 - < 87%

**Assignments and Submission Instructions:**

Assignments should be uploaded to Canvas by 5:00 pm ET on the due date, unless otherwise specified. Students who are unable to complete an assignment on time should notify the instructor by email prior to the deadline. Extensions will be granted only for exceptional circumstances. Please note that grades may be reduced for assignments received after the deadline without prior communication or appropriate reason.

**Writing assignments** will be graded for grammar, punctuation, clarity, organization, and development of content. An assignment sheet and rubric will be provided for each paper.
Students may rewrite any or all of the writing assignments one time to learn from the process of revision and possibly improve their grades. A rewrite must be substantively different from the original to be considered for an improved grade. Rewrites may be uploaded to Canvas at any time during the semester up until Tuesday, November 23, at 5:00pm ET. Submission pages will be created for each paper (under Module 12) to enable the uploads. **Rewrites are optional**, but strongly recommended to help you reinforce course concepts.

**Editing assignments** are opportunities to review class topics and build proficiency at identifying and correcting errors in grammar and punctuation. Editing assignments **may not be rewritten**.

**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:** This schedule is subject to modification at the instructor’s discretion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module #1</th>
<th>Class topic and reading covered</th>
<th>Assignment and due date</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Asynchronous Sept. 7 | Introduction to writing well  
*Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 10, 12, 19  
*Words Fail Me* - chapters 1-5, 18, 28-30  
Additional readings as posted on Canvas | Pre-Course Survey  
Introductions Forum |
| Live Session #1 Sept. 14 | Personal essay - due 9/21 at 5:00pm ET |
| Module #2 Asynchronous Sept. 15 | Basing your writing on research  
*Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 25-28, 35-37 |
| Live Session #2 Sept. 21 | Research report outline  
due Monday 9/27 at 9:00am ET  
Research report - due 10/12 at 5:00pm ET |
| Module #3 Asynchronous Sept. 22 | Punctuation  
*Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 15, 17-21, 23  
*Words Fail Me* - review p. 124-126 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Session #3</th>
<th>Optional office hours with Melissa, 5:00-5:30pm ET</th>
<th>Editing #1 - due 10/5 at 5:00pm ET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sept. 28      | Module #4  
Asynchronous  
Sept. 29 | Usage and direct writing  
*Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 11a, 13, and glossary of usage, p. 294-302  
*Words Fail Me* - chapters 6, 7, 16 |
| Live Session #4 | Effective consumer writing  
*Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 8, 9a, 9c  
*Words Fail Me* - chapters 14, 15, 17, 19  
Additional readings as posted on Canvas | |
| Oct. 5        | Module #5  
Asynchronous  
Oct. 6     | Editing #2 - due 10/19 at 5:00pm ET  
Consumer brief - due 10/26 at 5:00pm ET |
| Live Session #5 | Spelling and capitalization  
Effective consumer writing continued  
*Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 22, 24; review 37c.  
*Words Fail Me* - chapters 8, 9, 10; review p. 126-128. | Mid-Course Check-in |
| Oct. 12       | Module #6  
Asynchronous  
Oct. 13 | Direct writing continued  
Modifiers  
*Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 1, 4, 7, 9b; review chapters 17f and 18a.  
*Words Fail Me* - chapters 11-13 |
| Live Session #6 | Voice, parallelism, and perspective  
*Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 2, 3, 5, 6  
*Words Fail Me* - chapters 20-22  
Dog News, "Out of Africa," posted on Canvas | |
| Oct. 19       | Module #7  
Asynchronous  
Oct. 20 | |
| Live Session #7 |  | |
| Oct. 26       | Module #8  
Asynchronous  
Oct. 27 | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session/Module/Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>Live Session #8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 9</td>
<td>University holiday switch - No class</td>
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<td>Nov. 3</td>
<td>Module #9 Asynchronous</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Writing with sensitivity</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Pocket Style Manual</em> chapter 9d-e</td>
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<td><em>Words Fail Me</em> chapter 27</td>
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<td><em>Concise Guide to APA Style, 7th ed.</em> chapter 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>Live Session #9</td>
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<td>Nov. 17</td>
<td>Module #10 Asynchronous</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Revision and reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 23</td>
<td>No live session</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All rewrites due on Canvas by Tuesday, November 23, at 5:00pm ET</td>
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</table>

Editing #3 - due 11/16 at 5:00pm ET
Module #1: Introduction to Writing Well

Learning objectives:
By the end of this module you will be able to:
- Explain why accurate grammar is essential to good writing
- Identify common errors in the use of pronouns, plurals, possessives, and agreement, and avoid these errors in written work
- Summarize the writing process
- Describe general principles of what's considered "good" writing
- Identify areas in which to improve individual writing ability
- Begin writing a personal essay to serve as a baseline and "warm-up" for class.

Required readings:
- *Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 10, 12, 19
- *Words Fail Me* - chapters 1-5, 18, 28-30
- Model essays as posted on Canvas

Required asynchronous lecture:
- Video #1 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]

Activities:
- Self-check quiz #1: Pronouns, Plurals, and Agreement
- Discussion #1: Introductions Forum
- Live Zoom Session #1: Tuesday, September 14, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET
  - This class session is intended to help you get started on your first writing assignment, the personal essay. Please review the assignment sheet and read the model articles posted on Canvas, noting some thoughts about what you liked or did not like about each one. In class, we will review some principles of good writing and possible formats for an essay, and then discuss the models that you've read.

Assignment:
- Personal essay (due Tuesday, 9/21 at 5:00pm ET)
Module #2: Basing Your Writing on Research

Learning objectives:
By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Approach a writing project by assessing the subject, audience, and style of writing required.
- Describe how to find sources for story ideas and focus a general topic.
- Differentiate between primary and secondary research sources; describe the acceptable uses for each type and how to evaluate the credibility of a source.
- List different methods of organization and use them to structure thoughts for an outline or draft.
- Describe the various types of plagiarism and avoid it in all written work.
- Begin investigating a topic for the research report assignment.
- Locate source material for your paper using the resources available to you at the Hirsh Health Sciences Library.

Required readings:
- *Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 25-28, 35-37

Required asynchronous lecture:
- Video #2 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]

Activities:
- Live Zoom Session #2: Tuesday, September 21, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET
  - This class session is intended to help you get started on your research report. Amy LaVertu, Friedman's Librarian Liaison at the Hirsh Health Sciences Library, will present "Research Skills for a Literature Review," a workshop that will cover how to identify sources, structure a literature search, and narrow your findings. Please read the assignment sheet and come prepared with a few thoughts on what topics you might be interested in exploring.
- 1:1 instructor conferences will be held next week to discuss your essays. Please see the signup sheet in Module 3 to reserve an appointment time.

Assignments:
- Outline (due Monday, 9/27 at 9:00am ET)
- Research report (due Tuesday, 10/12 at 5:00pm ET)
Module #3: Punctuation

Learning objectives:
By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Describe the proper use of commas, colons, semicolons, quotation marks, italics, and apostrophes.
- Identify common errors in punctuation and avoid them in written work.
- Demonstrate your understanding of grammatical errors covered in the last 3 classes by completing Editing Assignment #1.

Required readings:
- *Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 15, 17-21, 23
- *Words Fail Me* - review p. 124-126

Required asynchronous lecture:
- Video #3 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]

Activities:
- Self-check quiz #2: Punctuation
- **OPTIONAL** Live Zoom Session #3: Tuesday, September 28, 5:00pm-5:30pm ET
  - There will be no live session this week to account for the time spent in 1:1 instructor conferences throughout the course. Melissa be available for 30 minutes this evening to answer questions about the Editing #1 assignment or any aspect of the material covered. Please watch the video with your favorite source of caffeine and be sure to check your understanding on the quiz.

Assignment
- Editing #1 (due Tuesday, 10/5 at 5:00pm ET)
Module #4: Usage and Direct Writing

Learning objectives:
By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of good English usage and differentiate between correct and common usage.
- Identify words and word pairs that are frequently misused or confused and avoid these errors in written work.
- List principles of direct writing and common causes of indirect writing.
- Revise written work to reduce redundant language or empty phrasing.

Required readings:
- Pocket Style Manual - chapters 11a, 13, and glossary of usage, p. 294-302
- Words Fail Me - chapters 6, 7, 16

Required asynchronous lecture:
- Video #4 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]

Activities:
- Self-check quiz #3: Usage
- In-Class Exercise #1: Direct Writing
- Live Zoom Session #4: Tuesday, October 5, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET
  - In this class, we will practice making sentence corrections to indirect language, working in small groups in breakout sessions. We will also do some peer editing to help you revise your personal essay, using the class topics covered so far. Please flag areas where you would like help with corrections or ideas for revision, and come prepared to share with your classmates. Groups will be pre-assigned so that students can exchange papers ahead of time.

Assignment:
- Continue work on research report (due Tuesday, 10/12, at 5:00pm ET).

Module #5: Effective Consumer Writing

Learning objectives:
By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Name different features of writing that will engage a lay audience.
- List tips for making a research topic more interesting to consumers.
- Re-phrase overly formal or complex wording into more direct, accessible and engaging language.
- Explain the concept of "show vs. tell" and list ways to accomplish this in a piece of writing.
- Use visuals (e.g., bullet points, sidebars) to create white space and a sense of order for the reader.
- Demonstrate understanding of the concepts covered in this class by participating in the Canvas discussion forum for Editing Assignment #2.
- Begin to write a consumer brief that adapts and "translates" the material in the research report for a lay audience.

Required readings:

- *Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 8, 9a, 9c
- *Words Fail Me* - chapters 14, 15, 17, 19
- Model consumer articles as posted on Canvas

Required asynchronous lecture:

- Video #5 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]

Activities:

- Live Zoom Session #5: Tuesday, October 12, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET.
- In this class, we will discuss how consumer articles in different styles and formats incorporate the features covered in Video #5. As a preview for your next two assignments, you will work in small groups to suggest creative ways to repackage and "translate" a research article for a lay audience. Please complete all readings, review the guidelines for both assignments, and come prepared to contribute your thoughts.
- 1:1 instructor conferences will be held next week to discuss your research papers. Please see the signup sheet in Module 6 to reserve an appointment time.

Assignments:

- Editing #2 (graded discussion; forum closes Tuesday, 10/19 at 5:00pm ET)
- Consumer brief (due Tuesday, 10/26 at 5:00pm ET)
Module #6: Spelling & Capitalization / Consumer Writing cont.

Learning objectives:
By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Recognize common causes of spelling mistakes and identify personal "problem words."
- Identify common errors in spelling, hyphenation, and capitalization, and avoid these errors in written work.
- Reduce reliance, if any, on computer spell-check programs.
- Integrate research sources into a text with signal phrases and appropriate verbs.
- Use class discussion and comments from Canvas forum groups to create or revise consumer brief.
- Incorporate feedback from peer editing sessions into a paper of your choice.

Required readings:
- *Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 22, 24; review chapter 37c.
- *Words Fail Me* - chapters 8, 9, 10; review p. 126-128.

Required asynchronous lecture:
- Video #6 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]

Activities:
- Canvas survey: Midcourse Check-in
- Self-check quiz #4: Spelling and Capitalization
- Live Zoom Session #6: Tuesday, October 19, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET
  - In this class, forum groups will present their suggestions for each member’s consumer brief. We will then spend some time on peer editing. Before class, please identify a paper to discuss (this could be a rewrite OR your consumer draft) and come prepared to share it with your classmates. Groups will be pre-assigned so that students can exchange papers ahead of time.

Assignment:
- Continue work on consumer brief (due Tuesday, 10/26 at 5:00pm ET)

Module #7: Direct Writing (cont.) and Modifiers

Learning objectives:
By the end of this module you will be able to:

- List general principles of direct writing and common causes of indirect or unclear writing.
- Identify misplaced or dangling modifiers and the patterns in which they may occur, and avoid these errors in written work.
- Revise drafts to reduce wordiness, clarify vague language, and correct poorly structured sentences.
- List different types of transitional devices and use them to create or improve the flow of ideas in a piece of writing.

**Required readings:**

- *Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 1, 4, 7, 9b; review chapters 17f and 18a
- *Words Fail Me* - chapters 11-13

**Required asynchronous lecture:**

- Video #7 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]

**Activities:**

- In-class Exercise #2: Sentence Construction
- In-class Exercise #3: Modifiers
- Live Zoom Session #7: Tuesday, October 26, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET
  - In this class, we will continue our discussion of direct writing by learning how to correct structural errors that interfere with clarity. Students will work in pairs to revise poorly structured sentences and correct modifier errors. At the end of class, we will review and discuss different types of transitional devices as preparation for the activities in Module #8.
- 1:1 instructor conferences will be held next week to discuss your consumer brief. Please see the signup sheet in Module 8 to reserve an appointment time.

**Assignment:**

- No assignment

**Module #8: Voice, Parallelism, and Perspective**

**Learning objectives:**

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Differentiate between active and passive voice, identify each voice as it appears in writing, and describe appropriate uses.
- Explain the concept of parallel structure and describe ways to construct parallel sentences and lists.
- Identify faulty parallelism and avoid this error in written work.
- Describe how perspective can be used to shape a story and why to avoid abrupt shifts of perspective in written work.
- Demonstrate understanding of the grammatical errors and writing concepts covered in this and previous modules by completing Editing Assignment #3.
Required readings:
- *Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 2, 3, 5, 6
- *Words Fail Me* - chapters 20-22
- *Dog News, "Out of Africa,)* posted on Canvas

Required asynchronous lecture:
- Video #8 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]

Activities:
- Self-check quiz #5: Voice
- In-class exercise #4: Parallelism
- Live Zoom Session #8: Tuesday, November 2, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET
  - In this class, we will share reactions to an article with jarring shifts in perspective and discuss ways to better shape the information. Students will also practice correcting faulty parallelism in a sentence revision exercise. At the end of class, we will review prompts and materials for the upcoming discussion on Tuesday, November 16.

Assignment:
- Editing Assignment #3 (due Tuesday, 11/16 at 5:00pm ET)

Module #9: Writing with Sensitivity

Learning objectives:
By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Identify different types of biased language in writing, describe strategies to correct it, and avoid introducing bias into written work.
- Differentiate between standard and evolving pronoun use and make choices appropriate to the audience and type of writing required.
- Address areas of implicit bias that might be present in your own writing or approach to a topic and identify ways to refocus or think differently about your work.

Required readings:
- *Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 9d-e
- *Words Fail Me* - chapter 27
- *Concise Guide to APA Style, 7th ed.* - chapter 3

Required asynchronous lecture:
- Video #9 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]
Activities:

• Self-check quiz #6: Gender-neutral Pronoun Agreement
• Live Zoom Session #9: Tuesday, November 16, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET
  • This class will be a discussion of how to address implicit bias in writing and use language sensitive to the needs of difference audiences. Prompts will be provided; students may also be asked to submit questions ahead of time if we have guest speakers. Please review the video and other suggested materials and come prepared with thoughts to share during the discussion.
• **OPTIONAL** Drop-In: Tuesday, November 16, 6:00pm-6:15pm ET
  • Our formal class time will end at 6:00pm. Christine and Melissa will remain present after class to answer questions, take comments, and say farewell.

Assignment:

• Continue working on your rewrites (due Tuesday, November 23, at 5:00pm ET). Submission pages are available in Module #12.

Module #10: Revision and reflection

Learning objectives:
By the end of this module you will be able to:

• Reflect on what you have learned throughout the course.
• Assess what you might like to do differently or improve in your writing.
• Identify your strengths as a writer and build on them in future work.
• Appreciate and practice good grammar and clear writing as you continue through your program.

Required readings:

• None

Required asynchronous lecture:

• None

Activities:

• This week is reserved for students to finalize their rewrites and reflect on what they have learned throughout the course. There will be no live session this evening.

Assignment:

• *All rewrites due on Canvas by Tuesday, November 23, at 5:00pm ET.*
• *Please see Module #12 for submission pages.*