

**NUTR 220: Fundamentals of Writing About Nutrition and Health  
Fall 2022 - SYLLABUS**

**Class Meetings:** Class begins asynchronously on Tuesday, September 6.  
Live sessions will be held Tuesdays, 5:00-6:00pm ET, Sept. 13 - Nov. 15.

**Instructor(s):** Christine Perry Smith, MS, RD  
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Office hours: By appt. (Zoom or phone)

**Teaching Asst.:** Ingrid Zhou  
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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 and self-assessments. NUTR 220 is a prerequisite for NUTR 306.

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:**

*A Pocket Style Manual*, 9th ed., with Exercises, by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2021. ISBN 978-1-319-34196-1 (Exercise Edition)

*Words Fail Me: What Everyone Who Writes Should Know About Writing*, by Patricia T. O'Conner. New York, NY: Mariner Books, 2000. ISBN-13: 978-0-156-01087-0

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:

|                 |     |                                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|---------------------------------|-----|
| Essay           | 20% | 3 editing assignments @10% each | 30% |
| Research report | 20% | Class participation             | 10% |
| Consumer brief  | 20% |                                 |     |

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  | ≥ 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 22, 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.

|                                       | <b>Class topic and reading covered</b>  | <b>Assignment and due date</b>   |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Module #1<br>Asynchronous<br>Sept. 6  | Introduction to writing well<br><i>Pocket Style Manual</i> - chapters 10, 12, 19<br><i>Words Fail Me</i> - chapters 1-5, 18, 28-30<br>Additional readings as posted on Canvas | Pre-Course Survey<br>Introductions Forum   |
| Live Session #1<br>Sept. 13           |   | Personal essay - due 9/20 at 5:00pm ET   |
| Module #2<br>Asynchronous<br>Sept. 14 | Basing your writing on research<br><i>Pocket Style Manual</i> - chapters 25-28, 35-37   |  |
| Live Session #2<br>Sept. 20           |   | <b>Research report outline<br/>due <u>Monday 9/26</u> at 9:00am ET</b><br>Research report - due 10/11 at 5:00pm ET |

|                                       |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Module #3<br>Asynchronous<br>Sept. 21 | Punctuation<br><br><i>Pocket Style Manual</i> - chapters 15, 17-21, 23<br><i>Words Fail Me</i> - review p. 124-126   |  |
| Live Session #3<br>Sept. 26           |  | Editing #1 - due 10/4 at 5:00pm ET   |
| Module #4<br>Asynchronous<br>Sept. 27 | Usage and direct writing<br><br><i>Pocket Style Manual</i> - chapters 11a, 13, and<br>glossary of usage, p. 311-319<br><i>Words Fail Me</i> - chapters 6, 7, 16                                      |  |
| Live Session #4<br>Oct. 4             |  |  |
| Module #5<br>Asynchronous<br>Oct. 5   | Effective consumer writing<br><br><i>Pocket Style Manual</i> - chapters 8, 9<br><i>Words Fail Me</i> - chapters 14, 15, 17, 19<br>Additional readings as posted on Canvas                            |  |
| Live Session #5<br>Oct. 11            |  | Editing #2 - due 10/18 at 5:00pm ET<br>Consumer brief - due 10/25 at 5:00pm ET |
| Module #6<br>Asynchronous<br>Oct. 12  | Spelling and capitalization<br>Effective consumer writing continued<br><br><i>Pocket Style Manual</i> - chapters 22, 24; review 37c.<br><i>Words Fail Me</i> - chapters 8, 9, 10; review p. 126-128. | Mid-Course Check-in  |
| Live Session #6<br>Oct. 18            |  |  |
| Module #7<br>Asynchronous<br>Oct. 19  | Direct writing continued<br>Modifiers<br><br><i>Pocket Style Manual</i> - chapters 1, 4, 7; review<br>chapters 17f and 18a.<br><i>Words Fail Me</i> - chapters 11-13                                 |  |
| Live Session #7<br>Oct. 25            |  |  |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Module #8<br/>Asynchronous<br/>Oct. 26</p> | <p>Voice, parallelism, and perspective</p> <p><i>Pocket Style Manual</i> - chapters 2, 3, 5, 6</p> <p><i>Words Fail Me</i> - chapters 20-22</p> <p><i>Dog News</i>, "Out of Africa," posted on Canvas</p> |  |
| <p>Live Session #8<br/>Nov. 1</p>             |   | <p>Editing #3 - due 11/8 at 5:00pm ET</p>  |
| <p>Module #9<br/>Asynchronous<br/>Nov. 2</p>  | <p>Writing with sensitivity</p> <p><i>Pocket Style Manual</i> - review chapter 9d</p> <p><i>Words Fail Me</i> - chapter 27</p> <p><i>Concise Guide to APA Style</i>, 7th ed. - chapter 3</p>              |  |
| <p>Live Session #9<br/>Nov. 8</p>             |   |  |
| <p>Module #10<br/>Asynchronous<br/>Nov. 9</p> | <p>Wrap-up and discussion</p>   |  |
| <p>Live Session #10</p>                       |   | <p><b>All rewrites due on Canvas by Tuesday,<br/>November 22, at 5:00pm ET</b></p> |

## Course Topics, Learning Objectives, and Assignments

### 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 13, 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, 9/20 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 20, 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.

### Assignments:

- Outline (due **Monday**, 9/26 at 9:00am ET)
- Research report (due Tuesday, 10/11 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
- Live Zoom Session #3: Tuesday, September 27, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET
  - In this live session, we will review the answers to the self-check quiz on punctuation, which is posted in Module 3 of your class files. Please be sure to complete the quiz before class so that you can actively participate in the discussion. Ingrid and Christine will be available after the review to answer any questions about the editing assignment, your essays, or any aspect of the material covered so far in class. Please watch the video with your favorite source of caffeine and come prepared to check your understanding.

### Assignment

- Editing #1 (due Tuesday, 10/4 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. 311-319
- *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 4, 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, 10/11, 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 your research report for a lay audience.

**Required readings:**

- *Pocket Style Manual* - chapters 8, 9
- *Words Fail Me* - chapters 14, 15, 17, 19
- The "High" Risk of Energy Drinks. *JAMA*. 2011 January 25; 305(6): 600-601. Posted on Canvas.
- Model consumer articles as posted on Canvas

**Required asynchronous lecture:**

- Video #5 [Annotated PPT recorded using Zoom]

**Activities:**

- Live Zoom Session #5: Tuesday, October 11, 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 the Editing #2 and consumer brief assignments, and come prepared to contribute your thoughts.

**Assignments:**

- Editing #2 (graded discussion; forum closes Tuesday, 10/18 at 5:00pm ET)
- Consumer brief (due Tuesday, 10/25 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 comments from Canvas forum groups to draft or revise your 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 18, 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, 10/25 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; 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 25, 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.

**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 1, 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 8.

**Assignment:**

- Editing Assignment #3 (due Tuesday, 11/8 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* - review chapters 9d and 12a
- *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 8, 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 different audiences. Prompts will be provided. Please review the video, reading, and other suggested materials, and come prepared with thoughts to share during the discussion.

### **Assignment:**

- Continue working on your rewrites (due Tuesday, November 22, at 5:00pm ET). Submission pages are available in Module #12.

## **Module #10: Wrap-up and Discussion**

### **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:**

- Self-check quiz #6: Gender-neutral Pronoun Agreement
- Live Zoom Session #10: Tuesday, November 15, 5:00pm-6:00pm ET
  - This session is an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned in this course and to share takeaways from last week's facilitated discussion. We will also have a group Q & A to provide additional feedback as you finish revising your papers. Please self-assess your work throughout this course and come prepared to share questions; these can be about specific areas of your drafts or on general issues with your writing. Please also be ready to provide suggestions or comments to classmates.

### **Assignment:**

- *All rewrites due on Canvas by Tuesday, November 22, at 5:00pm ET.*
- *Please see Module #12 for submission pages.*