

**NUTR 0322: Writing Well About Food and Nutrition
Fall 2018**

- Class Meetings:** Monday, 5:00-8:00 PM, Jaharis Center Room 155
- Instructor(s):** Corby Kummer, Corby.Kummer@tufts.edu
- Office Hours:** Tuesday, 10:00-12:00, Jaharis 242, by appointment
- Teaching Asst.:** Rachel Bleiweiss-Sande, rachel.bleiweiss_sande@tufts.edu
- Semester Hour Units:** 3 Semester Hour Units
- Pre-Requisite:** NUTR 0220: Fundamentals of Writing About Nutrition and Health or complete writing sample for exemption; contact Rachel Bleiweiss-Sande (rachel.bleiweiss_sande@tufts.edu) for writing sample prior to the first day of class.

Course Description:

This course is an intensive workshop on finding your own voice and using it to write clearly and powerfully about food, food policy, and nutrition. Skills acquired in this course are intended to complement other skills that Friedman School students acquire such as research design and interpretation, scholarly citation, and data analysis. Students will write a series of short and longer articles designed to help them learn to structure research and information gathered from a variety of sources into concise, persuasive, engaging narratives with a clear sense of direction that requires craft and practice.

A series of short assignments will give students a chance to practice writing a family dietary history, an informational article, solving cooking problems, and other forms. A final assignment will bring together the elements introduced in class in a long-form reported article.

Course Objectives:

By participation in this course, students will:

- Demonstrate familiarity with the goals, format, and style of a variety of food media, including newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, cookbooks, and blogs
- Improve skills in information gathering, interviewing, and other basic journalism skills
- Analyze and present data in a compelling way that is easy to follow for the layman and scientist alike
- Write about food in a variety of styles, including journalism, first-person narrative, and study analysis
- Develop critical thinking skills for analyzing and evaluating published food writing and the ethics of writing about food
- Write a research-based, long-form journalism article that incorporates recent research on diets and nutrition

Texts or Materials:

One basic text, William K. Zinsser's *On Writing Well*, will be required. Each week the instructor will assign two to three articles or chapters from books written by skilled practitioners, including Jean Mayer, Marion Nestle, Jane Brody, and Walter Willett. Additional materials will be posted on canvas or placed on reserve at the Hirsch Health Sciences Library.

Every week each student is required to identify and post to Canvas (<https://canvas.tufts.edu>) an article from a popular, political, technical, or scholarly website or journal demonstrating qualities that merit class discussion—whether because of the good or bad examples they set. For each class the instructors will identify three of the submitted articles to be discussed in class. The articles will be posted on Canvas prior 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 policies (<http://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy>). 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:

A significant portion of each student's grade will be based on class participation: familiarity with the week's reading, and particularly evaluation of fellow students' writing assignments. A significant learning objective of the class is self-editing and the ability to improve writing through criticism and revision. By listening to the instructor and fellow students, students will become familiar with the goals of editing for structure, direction, clarity, and concision. In order to achieve that goal, attendance is mandatory. All absences and tardiness should be relayed by email to the instructor and teaching assistant in advance of each class. Those who miss a class are required to submit a 1-page double-spaced opinionated summary of the assigned readings that week, addressing what each selection illustrates about the course theme.

Assignments and Grading:

Grading for the course will be based on the following:

- Class participation (attendance, class discussion and evaluations, effort during in-class exercises) – 40%
- Short writing assignments – 40% (10% per short paper)
- Final paper – 20%

Papers will be graded on the following elements

- Following the directions of the assignment, including word limits
- Original, engaging presentation of the subject
- Ability to identify, locate, and interview original sources, whether they be people including visiting guests, books, or manuscripts
- Thoughtful word choice and proper use of grammar, applying lessons and suggestions offered during weekly class discussion
- Ability to construct an argument, synthesize written research and interviews, and draw conclusions about a food topic.

Instructions for Submission of Assignments and Exams:

Weekly web reading selections chosen by students must be posted to Canvas by *Thursday at 6:00 pm*. By Sunday at 5:00 pm the instructor and teaching assistant will post the three student submissions the entire class is expected to read and evaluate for Monday's class.

Writing assignments should be posted to Canvas by *Sunday at 5:00 pm* the day before the Monday class that they are due. Assignments received after their deadline will not be accepted or graded unless extension is approved in advance. Students who are unable to complete an assignment or exam on time for any reason should notify the instructor by email prior to the deadline, with a brief explanation for why the extension is needed. Late submissions may not receive full credit. Since this course is based on an interactive, workshop format, all writing assignments will be discussed in class. Please come to class on the day that written assignments are due with *printouts for each member of the class*. If printing costs or access to printers is an issue, please tell the instructor.

Writing Assignments:

- Students will submit 3 short writing assignments (500-900 words as specified in each assignment) throughout the term and 1 final paper (2,000 to 2,500 words).
- The topics of final papers must be approved by the instructor before students begin writing, with outlines presented in class and to instructor several weeks in advance (see weekly schedule).
- Papers must be printed, double-spaced, 12-point font, and brought to class on the day they are due with copies for all students to read.

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 overview*:

All classes meet Mondays, 5:00-8:00 PM, Jaharis Center Room 155

DATE OF CLASS	COURSE TOPIC	LECTURER	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
September 10	Introduction; understanding personal histories in economic context	Kummer	
September 17	Evaluate food histories; prepare to write about improving recipe nutrition	Kummer	Food history writing assignment, 500-750 words; web/journal reading suggestions

September 24	Writing technically about food preparation	Kummer/Joanne Chang	Preliminary outline, improving recipe nutrition assignment; web/journal reading suggestions
October 1	Writing for print vs writing for the internet	Kummer/Leah Mennies	Improving recipe nutrition assignment; web/journal reading suggestions
October 9	Restaurant reviewing: what information the reader needs, and how to write with an eye toward nutrition	Kummer/Devra First	Web/journal reading suggestions
October 15	Communication for social media; prepare to write advocacy piece on food policy	Kummer/Annie Devane	Restaurant review based on nutritional value, 750 words; web/journal reading suggestions
October 22	Food policy and how best to express it; prepare to write final paper on nutrition and food policy recommendations	Kummer/Jerold Mande/Dariush Mozaffarian/Tamar Haspel	Paragraph summarizing subject of food-policy advocacy editorial; web/journal reading suggestions
October 29	Writing for different food-advocacy audiences	Kummer/Ilene Bezahler	Editorial on current issue in food policy, 600-750 words; list of ideas and sources for final project; web/journal reading suggestions
November 5	Research and fact checking; structuring articles for publication	Kummer/Francis Storrs	Character sketch in preparation for final assignment, 500 words; weekly web/journal reading suggestions
November 19	Incorporating data into papers, data visualization	Kummer/Tania Alarcon-Falconi	First draft, final assignment, 1250-1500 words; web/journal reading suggestions
November 26	Finding and evaluating news sources	Kummer/Pat Skerrett	Web/journal reading suggestions

December 3	Structuring research and advocacy articles	Kummer	Updated final assignment draft; web/journal reading suggestions
December 10	Business and challenges of operating restaurants	Kummer/Ana Sortun	Web/journal reading suggestions

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

Detailed Description of Course Topics, Assignment Schedule, and Learning Objectives:

Week 1, Monday September 10:

Overview:

- Course introduction
- Choosing blogs/publications to follow for weekly web/journal assignments
- Explanation of food history writing assignment: 2-page, 500-750 word food history of the oldest member of a student's family still living, with contrast to contemporary diets and a focus on nutrition advice and economic necessities of the time. If you don't have access to a family member two generations older, please find a family friend or teacher.

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Identify information sources for the food history assignment and write appropriate questions for the interview
- Propose approaches to organize interview notes and form into a short, concise narrative
- Link diet to economic factors and changing nutritional advice by both decade and country; consider the effect of macroeconomic forces on individual diets

Required readings:

- "Guess who's coming to dinner? Nobody," by Jean Mayer

Week 2, Monday September 17:

Overview:

- Weekly web readings
- Discussion of food history submissions
- Introduction to technical writing about food
- Explanation of improving nutrition in a common dish assignment: 3 pages 750-900 words on improving nutrition in a commonly made family dish so that a reader can follow the recipe and achieve the same (good) results

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Describe physical actions and the science behind cooking techniques
- Analyze nutritional content of recipes
- Differentiate between writing technically about food preparation and other styles of writing

- Articulate an approach to assist readers in developing a practicable skill: how to scan and modify a recipe

Assignments Due:

- Food history assignment
- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- 3 weekly web readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas
- "A lament: Is there anything left to eat?" by Jean Mayer
- "Your supermarket can be a health food store," by Jean Mayer
- "Take a vacation but not from nutrition," by Jean Mayer

Week 3, Monday, September 24:

Overview:

- Writing technically about food preparation. Guest speaker Joanne Chang, owner of Flour Bakery & Café and author of several books including *Baking with Less Sugar*

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Discuss challenges of writing technically about food: what readers do and don't need to know
- Review outlines of recipes students have chosen and critique approaches that were chosen to modify recipes; identify the rationale chosen by class members for selection of recipes and how they will be modified; discuss the scientific evidence that forms the basis for changes to be made

Assignment due:

- Outline for the improving nutrition in common recipes assignment
- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- 3 weekly web readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas
- Introduction and select recipes from *Baking with Less Sugar*, by Joanne Chang
- Select informational chapters from *Jane Grigson's Vegetable Book*
- Select historical introductions and recipes from Elizabeth Schneider's *Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini*
- *On Writing Well*, chapter 1-3

Week 4, Monday, October 1:

Overview:

- Class discussion of improving nutrition in a common dish
- Writing for print vs. writing for the internet
- Elements of assembling a print magazine focused on cooking and nutrition. Guest speakers Leah Mennies, Group Editor, John Brown Media, former food editor, *Boston Magazine*

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Discuss challenges of writing technically about food, with focus on what readers do and don't need to know
- Critique the nutrition in common recipes submissions for clarity, ease of use, and likelihood that consumers will achieve good results
- Contrast elements of writing for print vs. the internet
- Explain the rationale for how print magazines on cooking and nutrition are assembled

Assignments due:

- Improving nutrition in common recipes assignment
- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- 3 weekly web readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas
- *On Writing Well*, chapters 3-6
- "Will Scientists determine the future of food?" *Vogue Magazine*, by Jeffrey Steingarten

Week 5, Tuesday October 9: (class rescheduled for school holiday Monday October 8):

Overview:

- Continue class discussion of improving nutrition in a common dish
- Restaurant reviewing: what information the reader needs, and how to write with an eye toward nutrition
- Discussion of criteria for review of a fast-food restaurant assignment
- Guest: Devra First, writer and restaurant critic, *Boston Globe*

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Attempt to shape a personal narrative to convey only the information the reader needs to know
- Discuss critical skills to produce a sure evaluative voice that is opinionated but not antagonistic
- Teach readers how to navigate common menus and discern underlying nutritional value in commonly offered items
- Assist readers in developing a practicable skill: scan a common menu and make a nutritionally sensible choice

Assignment due:

- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- 3 weekly web readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas
- *On Writing Well* chapters 7-10;
- Recent articles and reviews by Devra First, *Boston Globe*
- Restaurant review by Ruth Reichl: *Le Cirque*, 1993, *New York Times*

"Experiencing Dominique Crenn's Adventurous, Delicious Cuisine," *Vogue Magazine*, by Jeffrey Steingarten

Week 6, Monday, October 15:

Overview:

1. Discussion of restaurant review assignment
2. Discussion of criteria for 600-750 word editorial on a current issue in nutrition or food policy
3. Guest: Annie DeVane, Director of Communications & Web Strategies. Class exercise guided by Annie Devane: Translating web and journal articles into tweets and Facebook posts

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Critique submitted restaurant review assignments focusing on the learning objectives stated for the previous week regarding menu scanning and food choices
- Describe important elements of content and style for editorial writing
- Summarize the basic elements of advocacy writing
- For a topic of interest, concisely lay out the arguments on both sides
- Form and express an opinion on a political and/or scientific matter backed by fact and present the opinion in easily grasped, persuasive prose
- Discuss the three web articles the class has read, and write three different tweets and Facebook headlines to share intended to achieve maximal audience pickup

Assignments due:

- Review of a fast-food restaurant based on two to three meals at any restaurant or cafeteria, 750 words
- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- three weekly web readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas
- *On Writing Well*, chapters 11-12, 15
- Chapter 1-3 of *Food Politics*, by Marion Nestle

Week 7, Monday October 22:

Overview:

- Continue class discussion of restaurant review assignment
- Exploration of the landscape of nutrition and food policy and state of public knowledge and goals for increasing public awareness
- Guests: Jerold Mande, and Dariush Mozaffarian, on the making of and advocacy for food policy; Tamar Haspel, writer for the *Washington Post*, on evaluating and using data sources and studies in articles for both an academic and general readership
- Initial preparation for the final assignment that is focused on reporting on food policy and making policy recommendations, 1250-1500 words. Students should begin to consider these questions: What will the policy under scrutiny be? Who will you interview? What data sets and past ongoing studies will you use as sources? Which experts will you interview? Start with guest speakers and the sources and issues they have mentioned. What question will you be looking to answer?
 - Intermediate steps for the final assignment include:
 - Developing a list of ideas and sources (due October 29)
 - Finalized idea and list of sources and interviews (due November 5)
 - Outline and two-page interview sketch (due November 5)
 - First draft (due November 19)
 - Final draft (due December 3)

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- In preparation for the final project, propose strategies for each of the following: identifying appropriate data sources; gathering data from primary research and from other sources; taking notes from data sources; organizing data; translating data to an outline for a carefully paced and structured article
- Explain the process of structuring articles including an introduction, development, and a strong, earned conclusion
- Recognize topics the reader be expected to know and need to be told at the outset

Assignment due:

- one paragraph summarizing the subject matter for food policy editorial assignment
- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- three weekly web readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas
- *On Writing Well*, chapters 20-21
- Chapter 3-4 of *Food Politics*, by Marion Nestle

Week 8, Monday October 29:

Overview:

- Guest: Ilene Bezahler, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Edible Boston* and the new *To Market*
- Class discussion of editorial on a current nutrition issue assignment
- Understand different reading audiences and how to communicate to those audiences most effectively
- Discuss and collaboratively assess student ideas and sources list for final project, helping develop ideas as a class and suggesting potential sources both printed and human. Help each student identify subject for two-page character sketch based on an interview with a primary human source, due November 5.

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Critique students' summary of food policy assignment
- Discuss principles of matching writing styles to diverse audiences

Assignment due:

- Editorial on current issue in food policy, 600-750 words
- List of ideas and sources for final project
- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- 3 weekly web readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas
- *On Writing Well*, chapters 22-24
- Select readings from *Chow Chop Suey: Food and the Chinese American Journey*, by Anne Mendelson

Week 9, Monday November 5:

Overview:

- Basics of fact checking, identifying written and internet information sources
- Guest: Francis Storrs, editor in chief, Tufts Communications
- Look at and assess student lists of sources and questions to be asked for final paper, working as a group to identify helpful additional written and human sources to best serve students' ideas
- Complete class evaluation fourth assignment, editorial on a current nutrition issue
- Evaluate outlines for final projects, read two-page character sketches

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Propose several approaches to fact checking from data obtained from interviews and other data sources

Assignment due:

- Character sketch in preparation for final assignment, 500 words
- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- three weekly web readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas
- *On Writing Well*, chapters 25

Week 10, Monday November 19:

Overview:

- Understand basics of including data graphs and charts in articles, and effective methods of data visualization
- Guest, Tania Alarcon-Falconi, on strategic use of charts and data-rich figures
- Class discussion of first drafts of final assignment

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Explain how graphs and charts favorably or unfavorably impact the quality of articles, and provide examples
- Critically review submitted final assignment drafts utilizing criteria covered in prior weeks and provide suggestions for improvement

Assignment due:

- First draft, final assignment, 1,250-1500 words
- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- three weekly web/journal readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas

Week 11, Monday November 26:

Overview:

- Seeking, interviewing, and evaluating accuracy and objectivity of sources for policy articles
- Guest, Pat Skerrett, StatNews

- Continue class discussion of final assignment first drafts

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Define accuracy and objectivity as they apply to shifting scientific fields
- Propose strategies to:
 - Identify credible data sources
 - Evaluate the accuracy and objectivity of policy articles
- Critically review submitted final assignment drafts utilizing criteria covered in prior weeks and provide suggestions for improvement

Assignment due:

- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- three weekly web/journal readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas
- Articles by Walter Willet: "Science souring on sugar," and Chapters from *Eat, Drink and Be Healthy*
- "Salad the Silent Killer," *Vogue Magazine*, by Jeffrey Steingarten

Week 12, Monday December 3:

Overview:

- Flow and structure of articles incorporating interviews, data, and narrative
- Begin class discussion of final assignment updated drafts

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Critically review submitted final projects utilizing criteria covered in prior weeks
- Discuss impact of how interviews and data are and should be incorporated into articles
- Recognize different article structures and describe the impact of each on article flow
- Describe how narrative impacts article flow and can be used to connect article introduction, data, and conclusions

Assignments due:

- Updated draft of final assignment
- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas

Required readings:

- 3 weekly web/journal readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas

Week 13, Monday December 10:

Overview:

- Challenges of operating restaurants and catering operations
- Role of women executives and owners and the potential for gender bias
- Guest: Ana Sortun, chef, farmer, owner, Oleana, Sofra, and Sarma
- Continue class discussion of final assignment drafts

Learning objectives:

By participation in this week's activities, students will be able to:

- Discuss how challenges to restaurant operation and how these challenges might be reflected in restaurant reviews
- Propose metrics that could be employed to demonstrate gender bias for treatment of restaurant executives and owners and how metrics could be portrayed in writing about restaurants
- Critically review submitted final projects utilizing criteria covered in prior weeks

Required readings:

- 3 weekly web/journal readings chosen from last week, posted to Canvas

Assignments due:

- Post weekly web/journal selection to Canvas