

WRA 491-02: Medical Rhetoric & Science Writing

MW 5:00-6:20pm
224 Bessey Hall
Spring 2016

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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THE COURSE

Introduction & goals of the course

Medical rhetoric and science writing skills are valued within a variety of professions including (but not limited to) health, medicine, the environment, engineering, law, as well as journalism and professional writing. Given this scope, The American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) describes two types of medical and science writers: scientific medical writers and non-scientific medical writers. Scientific medical writers typically are tasked with communicating scientific information to professional medical or scientific audiences within scientific journals. Non-scientific medical writers typically are tasked with communicating less-technical content to a lay audience via newspapers, magazines and patient education materials.

This course then recognizes the interdisciplinary purposes (and audiences) of medical rhetoric and scientific writing. Specifically, this course will examine theories, methodologies, and ideologies that undergird medical and scientific writing with an eye towards both critique and imitation of scientific writing styles. As such, this course is designed as a survey course in medical rhetoric and science writing. The course will be structured around the following units:

1. Medical and Science Writing as a Genre
2. The Rhetorical Construction of Medicine and Science
3. Medical Narratives

Students will leave the course with...

- An articulation of what characterizes medical rhetoric and scientific writing.
- An understanding of how their discipline (and/or future profession) interacts with medical rhetoric and science writing.
- An understanding of how rhetorical choices construct meaning, particularly in medicine and science.
- Rhetorical tools to engage in medical rhetoric and science writing practices.
- A recognition on the importance of reflection as both future medical and science writers as well as users of medical and science writing.

To achieve the outcomes articulated above, this course requires students to...

- Use writing to investigate complex, relevant topics and address questions.
- Produce writing that reflects an awareness of context, purpose, and audience, particularly within the written genres (including genres that integrate writing with visuals, audio or other multi-modal components) of their major disciplines and/or career fields.
- Demonstrate that they understand writing as a process that can be made more effective through drafting, reflecting and revising.

In order to accomplish this work, you will be expected to do a substantial amount of reading and writing in various genres, analyze the products you create, and be an active participant in our learning community. This means working in a variety of individual and group activities. Further, you are expected to come to class having thoroughly prepared the readings. Notice this does not say you must have read every word on every page. Rather, you should read for content and themes, taking main ideas and significant occurrences from the texts we cover and critically examining them. You should always be prepared to offer notes, questions, and ideas about the readings. Active reading and thorough preparation will be critical to your success in the course.

Required Materials

The following materials are required for this course, and **it is your responsibility to make sure you have access to these materials**. Students should have access to all materials no later than the start of the second week of classes.

Textbooks

Penrose, A. M., & Katz, S. B. (2010). *Writing in the sciences: Exploring conventions of scientific discourse* (3rd ed.). New York: Pearson Longman. ISBN: 9780205616718. **(This text can be rented on Amazon.com at a significantly reduced cost. Please feel free to rent and not buy this textbook.)**

Readings

Additional readings will be provided to you.

Other materials

An account with Eli Review (<http://www.elireview.com>) (free)

Ability to read additional readings provided as PDF and Microsoft Word documents

Digital storage capability

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

- Contribution to class participation 20 PTS
This class uses discussion as a basis for collaborative learning, and engaged participation makes for a more enriching and productive learning environment for the entire class. Engaged participation is a minimum requirement for this course. Participation may mean speaking in class—and you should plan to do so *at least once each class period*—but it is also evidenced by non-verbal engagement such as paying attention, nodding, making eye contact, and so on. In order to fully participate, it is essential that you adequately prepare readings and other homework assignments. Preparing readings and homework means coming to class with the work completed and with a list of relevant questions and/or notes. If you arrive in class without being prepared to participate (e.g. you have not prepared the readings, fall asleep, or are disruptive), you will be counted absent for the day.
- Module 1: Field Research Assignment 15 PTS
Module 1 will correspond to the unit “Medical and Science Writing as a Genre” by gathering information on how medical and science writing is discussed and used throughout various disciplines. Students will be asked to complete an investigation of the communications and research practices of a field within the sciences. This assignment should be submitted as a formal report that must include: 1) a brief summary of the field chosen; 2) a list of sources (journals, magazines, websites, conferences, interviews) relevant to the field and detailed annotations of those sources; 3) a list of research topics relevant to the field chosen; and 4) a general analysis of how science and/or medicine is communicated in the field, including identifying the various stakeholders to whom information is communication.

- **Module 2: Social Media & Science** 15 PTS
Module 2 will correspond to the unit “The Rhetorical Construction of Medicine and Science.” Students will be asked to track the social media of a particular medical/science organization or popular medical or science-related hashtag over the period of two weeks. Students will then create a one-page infographic document analyzing the rhetorical use and conversations around the hashtag. (Storify is a particular useful tool to gather such data.) A 500-word reflection detailing the rhetorical moves the student witnessed by gathering this data will be turned in along with the infographic.
- **Module 3: Patient Narratives in Medicine** 20 PTS
Module 3 will correspond to the unit on “Medical Narratives” and help prepare for Module 4. Students will be asked to reflect on patient relationships within a medical setting. Medical narratives are commonly used by physicians in training to reflect on their experiences working with patients and navigating medical decisions. Collecting and understanding patient perspectives in medical settings are equally as important and provide key insight into potential gaps in medical communication. This module will focus on creating a patient narrative as a source of inquiry as you work on creating Module 4.
- **Module 4: Health-Decision Making Guide Document** 30 PTS
To end the course, we return to the course unit “Medical and Science Writing as a Genre”. Students will work in groups to create a health-decision making guide document for a particular health topic. Health-decision making guides can be commonly found in medical waiting rooms and are valuable pieces of information that translate medicalized language for laypersons (aka patients, families of patients, etc). See <http://ipdas.ohri.ca/what.html> for examples. It is intended that this deliverable could be included in your PW portfolio, if you so choose.

100 PTS

GRADING SCALE

Percentage	Grade
100-94	4.0
93-87	3.5
86-82	3.0
81-77	2.5
76-72	2.0
71-67	1.5
66-62	1.0
61-below	0.0

POLICIES

Class Communication

As a co-taught course, we ask that you communicate directly with Maria Novotny and (cc) Bill Hart-Davidson on matters. Maria and Bill will be in frequent communication with each other to assure that your questions will be known and addressed by both of us.

Twitter is another tool to communicate with the two us (@mariatnovotny or @billhd). When tweeting for class, please use the hashtag #wra491. If comfortable, I encourage you to use twitter as a resource to connect with your peers to engage in conversations about the course. Please remember that Twitter is a

public forum where you shape your digital identity. When tweeting, think about how you can start shaping your digital identity to best suit how you want to be perceived by future peers and employers.

Attendance

Please come to class. This class requires collaboration and discussion. As enrolled students in the course, you are expected to participate as respectful collaborators and learners. You may miss one week of class (i.e. two classes) without affecting your grade. You should reserve these absences to address the observance of religious holidays not acknowledged by the University calendar, family events, serious illness, etc. If you miss more than one week of class, your final grade for the course will be lowered .3 for each additional individual absence. Coming to class late (more than 5 minutes after we begin) 3 times will equal one absence. Sleeping in class or engaging in activities not related to class will also be counted as absences.

With this said, if there are personal issues, severe illnesses or other serious issues impacting your attendance for this class, please feel free to notify us. We are willing to make arrangements if serious factors outside of your control are impacting your course attendance.

Academic Honesty

We take academic honesty seriously. Plagiarism will not be accepted and/or tolerated in this class. If plagiarism is evident and/or suspected, we will pursue it in accordance with University Policy. Michigan State University’s Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that, “The student share with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” Further, we will adhere to the policies indicated in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of scholarship and Grades, the all-University Policy on Integrity of scholarship and Grades, and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. You are expected to develop original work for this course. Please do not submit work already created for a previous course.

Accommodations

If you have a disability registered by the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, please speak to us about it as soon as possible. If you feel you need additional support or adaptations during the semester, do not hesitate to discuss with us. For more information, visit the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at <http://rcpd.msu.edu/>, or call 517-884-7273.

SCHEDULE

Please be advised that as co-instructors we reserve the right to revise the syllabus to meet students’ or university needs. If revision is necessary, we will make every effort to work with you and ensure that you are notified as far in advance as possible.

Tentative course calendar

Week (Begin date)	Activities and Preparation <i>Note that assigned readings that are not from the Penrose & Katz text are either hyperlinked or are available as PDFs.</i>
Week 1 (Jan. 11) <i>Introductions, Locating Rhetoric & Writing in Science & Medicine</i>	Monday: Introductions. Read the syllabus, procure the textbook, and familiarize yourself with the course. What is Rhetoric? What is Writing? Define scientific writing & medical rhetoric. What are some ethical issues we as rhetoricians/communicators need to consider? (see Chapter 9 in Penrose & Katz). Familiarize yourself with Chapter 1 in Penrose & Katz. Wednesday: Introduction to Module 1. Read Chapters 1, 2 (2.1-2.3) in Penrose & Katz. Researching Science & Medical Fields. Discuss genre, finding journals, library resources. <i>Homework: Create a project plan for Module 1, due to D2L by Monday Jan 18th.</i>

<p>Week 2 (Jan. 18)</p> <p><i>Module 1 & Getting Started with Research</i></p>	<p>Monday : Martin Luther King Day! No class today. <i>Work on Preparing Your Project Plan for Module 1.</i></p> <p>Wednesday : Annotations. Bring a draft of 3 annotated sources. Group work on objectivity, social constructionism, hard science. Read Chapter 4 in Penrose & Katz.</p> <p><i>Homework: Submit to Eli Review Drafted Analysis for Module 1, identifying stakeholders</i></p>
<p>Week 3 (Jan. 25)</p> <p><i>Module 1 Wrap-Up & Begin Module 2</i></p>	<p>Monday : What makes a good analysis? What are its components? Eli Review of Analysis. Read the Science of Scientific Writing from <i>American Scientist</i>.</p> <p><i>Homework: Submit to D2L revision plan based on peer-review by Tuesday Jan 26.</i></p> <p>Wednesday: Introduce Module 2. Social Media 101.</p> <p>Module 1 Due Friday January 29th by 11:59 pm to D2L</p>
<p>Week 4 (Feb. 1)</p> <p><i>Module 2: Public Audiences, Social Media as Research</i></p>	<p>Monday : Writing Science/Medicine for Public Audiences. Creation of Project Plan for Module 2. Read Chapter 2 (2.4-2.8) & 8 in Penrose & Katz.</p> <p>Wednesday : Ethics in writing for the public. Read Chapter 3 in Penrose & Katz.</p>
<p>Week 5 (Feb. 8)</p> <p><i>Module 2: Infographic & Document Design</i></p>	<p>Monday : Update on identified trends, peer review. Read Chapter 6 in Penrose & Katz.</p> <p>Wednesday : TBD</p>
<p>Week 6 (Feb. 15)</p> <p><i>Module 3</i></p>	<p>Module 2 Due Monday February 15th by 11:59 pm to D2L</p> <p>Monday : TBD</p> <p>Wednesday : TBD</p>
<p>Week 7 (Feb. 22)</p> <p><i>Module 3</i></p>	<p>Monday : TBD</p> <p>Wednesday : TBD</p>
<p>Week 8 (Feb. 29)</p> <p><i>Module 3</i></p>	<p>Monday : TBD</p> <p>Wednesday : TBD</p> <p>Module 3 Due Friday March 4th by 11:59 pm to D2L</p>
<p>Week 9 (Mar. 7)</p>	<p>Spring Break No classes this week.</p>
<p>Week 10 (Mar. 14)</p> <p><i>Introduction to Module 4</i></p>	<p>Monday : Shared-decision Making as a Cultural Practice</p> <p>Read: “Clarifying Values”</p> <p>http://bmcmmedinformdecismak.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6947-13-S2-S8</p> <p>Read and present in groups on AHRQ examples:</p> <p>http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/tools-and-resources/patient-decision-aids/</p> <p>Wednesday : Guest Speakers from MSU Center for Ethics in Humanities and Life Sciences</p> <p>http://www.bioethics.msu.edu/ ; Writing task 1: Guiding Decision-Making</p>
<p>Week 11 (Mar. 21)</p>	<p>Monday : Rhetorical Moves for Guiding Decision-Making; Submit draft in Eli for “Definitions” review</p> <p>Wednesday : Review 2, Description and Presenting Options</p>

<i>Guiding Decision Making</i>	Read: "Coaching & Guidance" http://bmcmidinformedecismak.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6947-13-S2-S11
Week 12 (Mar. 28) <i>Decision Aids - Standards & Process</i>	Monday : Review (become familiar with this): CMS.gov Toolkit https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Outreach/WrittenMaterialsToolkit/index.html In class: Planning your decision aid process Wednesday : Review of inquiry & drafting plans
Week 13 (Apr. 4) <i>Decision Aids - Patient Review of Copy</i>	Monday : Conducting patient reviews, an outcomes-based, patient-centered approach to evaluating your writing In class: developing your patient review prompts Wednesday : No class. CCCC conference.
Week 14 (Apr. 11) <i>Decision Aids - SME Reviews of Copy & Figures</i>	Monday : Subject matter expert reviews; presenting information and evidence Wednesday : DA drafts ready for first peer review round (submit in Eli); Review: guiding decision moves
Week 15 (Apr. 18) <i>Decision Aids - Design & Editing</i>	Monday : Review de-brief and revision planning; Designing decision aids Wednesday : Peer review II of decision aids: visual presentation and style (submit PDF versions in ELI)
Week 16 (Apr. 25) <i>Decision Aids - Final Version & Reflection</i>	Monday : Review debrief and revision planning; Reflection prompt Wednesday: Final draft walkthroughs (in class presentations) for Center for Ethics in Humanities and Life Sciences
Week 17 (Finals)	Final Exam Time Monday May 2nd 5:45-7:45pm