

ENG 430: Advanced Writing Workshop

“Composing Information to Guide Health Decisions”

Dr. Maria Novotny

3 credit undergraduate course

Virtual, synchronous

Spring 2021

course description

This section of English 430 will focus on advanced writing practices related to the health professions, broadly, and more specifically the moments when patients encounter health writing. As students living in a global pandemic, who are consumers of health, this class will introduce you to the multiple genres that construct and shape how we consume, understand, and rely on written health information to make health-based decisions as patients.

This past decade, the healthcare industry has undergone a transformation with *where*, *how*, and *why* writing happens. For example, what health and medical professions conceive of as “documentation” or “charting” IS writing, even though practitioners call it by another name. And the technologies by which such writing is happening is also changing – drastically. Additionally, most writing in healthcare settings is now also multimodal, incorporating textual, digital, visual, and aural content (telehealth, m- and e-health, etc.). Multimodal composition is another area where writing studies and the English major, broadly, has much to offer the health and medical professions. As such, this course operates on the assumption that English students, with writing preparation, can serve as critical contributors to how and for whom health information is made available and is understood.

Students in the class will read, discuss, and consider the rhetorical situation of when, who, and how writing is used in healthcare. The semester culminates with students working in groups creating a multimodal deliverable that encapsulates a particular writing practice — the health decision aid (DA). DAs are frequently used in the clinic to address issues of power and health literacy when a patient is confronted with a healthcare decision. This class considers the writer and rhetorician behind the DA – how the DA is created, what content is included, and why it is used. The DA will act then as a capstone project in this course, emphasizing how its genre prompts students to engage in a series of writing modalities – visuals, narrative, texts – as well as the application of user experience and design.

course goals

- Understand health communication from an interdisciplinary perspective
- Understand the rhetorical construction of health information

- Practice communicating health information through advanced writing practices (such as writing, storytelling, and visual design)
- Recognize how health decisions rely on writing and rhetoric practices

course texts

- Access to your UWM Canvas account
- Access to your UWM email
- Access to Microsoft Teams (available via UWM's Office 365 subscription)

course units

- Health Communication
- Writing Patients Narratives
- Designing & Composing Health Information

course assignments

Because this course applies advanced writing strategies, there will be both [group assignments](#) and [individual assignments](#). The combination of assignments is meant to mimic that of a “real-world” professional environment. If at any point you feel as if a group member is not contributing in the manner your team requires, please contact me via email. I will do my best to remedy issues related to team composing.

Assignment 1: A Personal Health Journal (10 pts)

- Each week you will enter a journal entry (of at least 500 words) where you reflect on the intersections between writing, design, and health. Consider this a personal journal where you think about yourself as a consumer of health information and how such information can influence the decisions we make as patients. The goal of this assignment is for you to document your development as a consumer of health. You must complete 10 journal entries over the semester.
- [Individual assignment.](#)

Assignment 2: Health Information Presentation (10 pts)

- Each week a student will share with the class a relevant news story featuring a connection between a health issue and writing/communication of that issue. Students will share a link to the article, spend 5 minutes overviewing a summary of the piece and how you see it connecting to this class, and develop guiding questions for us to discuss the piece as a class.
- [Individual assignment.](#)

Assignment 3: Field Research Assignment (20 pts)

- This assignment asks students to gather information about the writing practices of health and medicine. Specifically, this assignment asks students to conduct research and develop a report that focuses on a specific health issue (i.e. asthma or acne) or medical profession (i.e. epidemiologist or radiation therapist). After selecting a specific focus, the student will report on: the genre of health/medicine that is produced, the training that person receives to write about that topic, who their audience or stakeholders are (who consumes that information), and the challenges they face in writing that information. A works cited page will be submitted with the report along with a 1-page reflection about what was interesting, surprising, or challenging in doing this assignment.
- [Individual assignment.](#)

Assignment 4: The Patient Narrative (20 pts)

- This assignment asks students to explore the purpose of a patient narrative. Patient narratives are often used to either help medical school students and/or broadly health profession students (i.e. nursing students, physical therapists, etc.) to gain unique insight into patient experiences regarding a particular health condition. Patient narratives are also used by health communicators to offer lived experience “data” in the context of a health decision. This assignment asks students to identify, interview, and compose a patient narrative that documents their lived experience with a health condition.
- [Individual assignment.](#)

Assignment 5: Health Decision Aid Document (40 pts)

- The work throughout this course ends with the “capstone” assignment: the health decision aid (DA) document. Students will work in teams to create a health decision aid document for a particular health topic. Health decision aids are commonly used by physicians, physician assistants, and nurses to help communicate, inform, and guide the patient decision making process. These are highly designed and rhetorically effective documents that walk patients through a series of narratives, tools (such as quizzes and ranking systems), and information to assist patients in making the most informed decision regarding their health. See <http://www.ipdas.ohri.ca/> for examples.
- [Group assignment.](#)

grading criteria

As a course focused on advanced writing practices and supportive of drafting and learning how to effectively revise pieces of writing and design work, I’ve elected to grade all assignments as either **accept, revise, fail**. The only way to receive a failing grade on an assignment is to not submit a draft by its deadline (or within the two-day grace period, see below). I will accept partially completed assignments, which will be given a revise grade and offer the opportunity to

turn in a final draft a week from the date I return the draft to you. If you neither turn in an assignment by its deadline (or two-day grace period) nor email me to discuss an alternative due date, you will receive a '0' on that assignment.

accommodations & accessibility statement

I strive to make my classes as accessible as possible. Not only will I work with you if you need accommodations, but I dedicate myself to learning all I can about inclusive teaching with the goal that all of your individual needs will be accommodate without asking prior. With that, please know that I am not perfect and may not be meeting your needs to my best ability. As such, if you have a disability/in in which you feel that you need additional accommodations, beyond what I can offer, please contact the Accessibility Resource Center at UWM.

covid-19 statement

Because we are living in a pandemic, your health and safety should always be a priority. If you need additional time to work on a reading or assignment because you are sick, please communicate that ASAP. Additionally, I understand that the pandemic may also create challenges beyond one's health and safety, such as economic uncertainty, anxiety and childcare-related struggles (to name a few), please know that I am more than willing to provide necessary accommodations to reduce *any* pandemic-related challenge you may face.

course schedule

Please be advised that as the instructor, I reserve the right to revise the syllabus (including this schedule) to meet student/s or university needs. I try to act as a responsive and engaged instructor. As such, there may be moments during this semester where some readings may no longer appear applicable or useful. Therefore, when the syllabus will change. If this happens, you will be notified with ample time so as not to impact the progress of your work.

Note: There are three guiding "units" in the course that build off of each other so that you can complete the "capstone" final project.

Wk	Topic	Tasks for the Week
UNIT 1: HEALTH COMMUNICATION		
Wk 1	Introductions & Getting Started	<p>Tuesday: No in-person class. For homework: read the syllabus, the article "The Importance of Effective Communication in Healthcare Practice" and skim the article "How Low Health Literacy Affects Outcomes for Heart Failure Patients". Be prepared to discuss on Thursday.</p> <p>Thursday: First "official" class on Teams. For homework: read "Healthcare Writing" (the Intro, Medical Journalism, SOAP Notes, Patient Education Materials, Writing as a Professional Nurse) on the Purdue Owl.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p>
Wk 2	Introduce Field Research Work (planning)	<p>Tuesday: Introduce Field Research Assignment. For homework: read Ch 1 Preliminaries of Healthcare Writing & Ch 2 Audiences for Healthcare Information (posted on Canvas).</p> <p>Thursday: Come to class prepared to discuss readings. For homework: work on your plan.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p>
Wk 3	Field Research Work (gathering)	<p>Tuesday: Come to class with your plan for review. For homework: make revisions to your plan.</p> <p>Thursday: No Teams meeting. Work instead on gathering your data.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
Wk 4	Field Research Work (drafting)	<p>Tuesday: Bring your data to class and be prepared to discuss it. *Reading to be assigned at a later date.</p>

		<p>Thursday: Bring to class a draft of your field research report. Will peer review and discuss in class.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
UNIT 2: WRITING PATIENT NARRATIVES		
Wk 5	Introduce Patient Narrative)	<p>Tuesday: Reflect and share out the field research assignment.</p> <p>Thursday: Introduce the patient narrative assignment. For homework: draft a plan and submit by Saturday night.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
Wk 6	Patient Narrative (planning)	<p>Tuesday: Discuss drafted plan. For homework: read “interviews” by Craig Klugman and revise your plan. *Additional readings will be assigned at a later date.</p> <p>Thursday: Continue in class to prepare for patient narrative.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
Wk 7	Patient Narrative (gathering)	<p>Tuesday: No Teams meeting. Work in groups to gather patient narrative.</p> <p>Thursday: No Teams meeting. Work in groups to gather patient narrative. Submit an update to Maria via email by end of the week with how data gathering is going.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p>
Wk 8	Patient Narrative (drafting)	<p>Tuesday: Bring in data and we will work on taking data and transforming into a narrative.</p> <p>Thursday: Bring in draft of narrative and be prepared to develop feedback from participants.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
SPRING BREAK		

Wk 9	Patient Narrative (finalizing)	<p>Tuesday: Report out on feedback from participants. What did they think of the narrative? What revisions were needed?</p> <p>Thursday: Work on finalizing patient narrative and submit it to Canvas by Saturday.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
UNIT 3: DESIGNING & COMPOSING HEALTH INFORMATION		
Wk 10	Introducing the Health Decision Aid (DA)	<p>Tuesday: No class but come prepared for Thursday to discuss the podcast No Easy Answers in Bioethics and read the draft of “The Patient Decision Aid as a Pedagogical Tool”.</p> <p>Thursday: Introduce the DA. In class, form teams and begin brainstorming the DA.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
Wk 11	The DA (planning)	<p>Tuesday: Work in teams to create a project proposal.</p> <p>Thursday: Bring project proposal to class and discuss how to turn the proposal into a storyboard.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p>
Wk 12	The DA (gathering)	<p>Tuesday: Conferences with Maria to discuss storyboard of each team’s DA.</p> <p>Thursday: Conferences with Maria to discuss storyboard of each team’s DA.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
Wk 13	The DA (drafting)	<p>Tuesday: Bring in mock-up of DA (without any design done to it). Maria to introduce visual design principles and why/how to apply principles to the DA.</p> <p>Thursday: Introduce user testing. What it is and why it matters to the DA. In class we will develop user testing criteria.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>

<p>Wk 14 5</p>	<p>The DA (testing)</p>	<p>Tuesday: Bring in complete draft of DA. Conduct user testing of the DA across teams.</p> <p>Thursday: No face-to-face class. Use this time to conduct your user testing with a patient.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
<p>Wk 15</p>	<p>The DA (revising)</p>	<p>Tuesday: Share out testing results & implement plan to make revisions to address testing needs.</p> <p>Thursday: Wrapping Up & Sharing out current drafts of your DA.</p> <p>**Remember: Saturday evenings your health journal entry is due.</p> <p>Health Information Presentation By: _____</p>
<p>Finals Week</p>	<p>Finalizing the DA</p>	<p>The health decision aid needs to be turned in to Canvas by Tuesday, May 18th by 11:59pm. All of your personal health journal entries should be completed at this time too.</p> <p>Any outstanding work must all be submitted by 5/18/21.</p>