**HSC 5956:**
**Writing for Professional Publications**
Department of Health Education & Behavior
College of Health and Human Performance

Version 8/23/16

**Course Instructor:**
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Associate Professor and Graduate Coordinator
Department of Health Education & Behavior

**Contact Information:**
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**Course Meeting:** Thursday 4:05-7:00pm, FLG 225

**Office Hours:** Thursday: noon-1pm, Friday: 10:30-11:30am, or by appointment. Please note that I will be out of town Aug 26, Sept 1-2, and I have a conflict during office hours on Oct. 28th

**Course Texts (mandatory):** *Writing in the Biological Sciences*; Angelika Hoffman, 2013, Oxford University Press and *Preparing Literature Reviews, 1st edition; Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 3rd edition*; M. Ling Pan, 2008, Routledge

**Supplemental Materials:** In addition to required textbook readings, you will be responsible for additional readings, most of which will be announced during the semester. See the course schedule for dates when readings should be completed.

**Course Description:**
Producing high-quality academic writing for publication in peer-reviewed scholarly journals is both daunting and one of the most important tasks for academics to master. This graduate-level course aims to pare this daunting task down to a comprehensive set of the essential components involved in the writing and publication process; to expose students to each of these steps and enhance their proficiency with each. The course will focus on the application of the following critical steps to scholarly writing in health-related professional publications: topic selection, literature searches, note taking and outlining, manuscript preparation, aspects of manuscript submission other than the writing itself including journal outlet selection and drafting a cover letter, informal and formal critique, informal and formal revision, reasons why manuscripts get accepted and rejected for publication, commenting on others’ writing both formally and informally, along with legal and ethical considerations. The course will cover two types of professional publication: 1) systematic literature review and 2) report of empirical research findings. The goal is for students to produce a manuscript that is at least close to ready for submission for publication in a scholarly journal. This goal is both ambitious and reachable!

**Course Objectives:**
At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

1) select a topic for academic writing, both at the initial, general stages and honing into a more specific topic;
2) conduct effective literature searches using multiple methods, both at initial and subsequent stages;
3) develop effective note taking techniques for documenting literature search results and for ideas regarding manuscript structure and content;
4) differentiate 2 types of publication: systematic literature reviews and reports of empirical research findings;
5) prepare an initial draft of a manuscript;
6) respond to informal critiques from collaborators and revise an initial manuscript draft accordingly;
7) master aspects of manuscript submission other than paper writing including journal selection and cover letter writing
8) respond to formal critiques from reviewers and revise a manuscript accordingly;
9) understand reasons why manuscripts are accepted and rejected for publication
10) comment effectively on others’ writing: both informally and formally
11) write with a consideration for relevant legal and ethical considerations.

Class Format/Structure:
All course sessions will be highly interactive, with a mixture of lecture and class discussions.

Some Thoughts and Key Points about this Course (my apologies to those who have taken a course with me before):

1. The use of any form of technology during meetings of this course is prohibited. Therefore, note taking must be via pen(cil) and paper only. Technology of course benefits our lives in many ways and in some respects may be beneficial to students during course meetings, however, I feel strongly that the potential of technology to distract far outweighs any benefit it might have to the learning process during course meetings. We will have a brief break during each course meeting, at that time you can feel free to engage in any emailing, texting, Snap Chatting, Instagramming, Instant Messaging, Linked-In posting, Craig’s List posting, Craig’s List responding, Facebooking and any other form of technological outreach I have omitted here.

2. My approach to a graduate course is different than an undergraduate course. I think of all of you as junior colleagues. As such, I expect that all students in this course will be highly motivated to participate and learn.

3. Prior preparation is critically important. Therefore, please complete all readings before class and come to course meetings prepared to contribute to discussion. In order to do so, read actively: take notes, think about possible questions to ask, consider “pros” and “cons” of the approaches authors chose in papers you will read. When giving oral presentations, please come prepared with detailed written notes to guide your presentation.

4. While this is a course in writing for professional publications, not in public speaking, a key part of the research process is presenting verbally. Therefore, we will have brief lecture and discussion on oral presentation style early in the course. Brief oral presentations regarding assigned readings will be required during the course.

5. When giving oral presentations, please come prepared with detailed written notes to guide your presentation.

6. While I will not be taking attendance per se, there will be a course participation component to your grade. You will find it challenging to participate in class if you are not in attendance at course meetings.

7. I will be holding office hours and in addition am available by appointment. At minimum, we will meet at least once in preparation for your final project, however please feel free to meet with me for other course-related issues and in particular, if you have issues or concerns with any aspect of the course. While there will be an “open door” policy for office hours, it would be helpful to hear from you beforehand if you plan to attend.

8. All word lengths for assignments are to be adhered to closely. A short writing assignment represents a challenge of writing thoroughly yet succinctly. If you write well beyond the assigned word count, you are avoiding this challenge. For all assignments, there will be a grace to write 10% over the assigned limit. Beyond that, I will stop reading and you will be evaluated on the portion I have read.

9. Course assignments must be submitted on-time. There will be a full letter grade penalty for each day an assignment is late. All assignments are to be submitted via email on the assigned date (typically our course meeting day) by 3:00pm with exceptions noted in the syllabus below. There will be a 15 minute grace period, after which any work submitted late (even by 1 minute) will be considered 1 day late with the only exceptions being your hospitalization/death or the hospitalization/death of your partner/member of your immediate family. This requirement works both ways. Thus, if I am late returning feedback, I will add 1 letter grade on that assignment to any student affected.

10. Presentation regarding statistics will be minimal: only the amount necessary to be able to follow assigned readings in class and for you to complete your assignments including your final project. While it will be necessary for you to have some understanding of statistics, statistical knowledge will have little relationship to your grade in this course. I recommend strongly that you take necessary foundational courses in statistics along with any course you can possibly take with my colleague in HEB, Dr. JeeWon Cheong. In addition, there are many excellent statistics courses offered in various departments at UF. Statistics are critically important to research and academic writing in health-related fields and as such deserve your attention in separate courses and would not be done justice by being crammed into this course.

11. Feel free to print a copy of this syllabus if you would like, but please consider this to be a dynamic document that may change over the course of the semester. I will be sure to inform you during class or by email of any changes.
12. The “default” style for citation and references in the course with be American Psychological Association (APA) style per the 6th edition of the APA manual. You can purchase a copy of it or feel free to copy passages from my copy. There are also a number of excellent online resources to help you with APA style. I like this one: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

**Americans With Disability Act (ADA)**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protections for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Dean of Students Office, The Disability Resource Center, 001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565. In addition, bring this issue to the attention of your instructor.

**Academic Dishonesty**
Per the University of Florida Honor Code, you [the student body] pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

The University of Florida prohibits any and all of the following conduct constituting Academic Dishonesty:

a) False or misleading statements for the purpose of procuring an academic advantage.
b) False or misleading statement relating to an honor code violation.
c) Prohibited collaboration or consultation.
d) Prohibited use of materials or resources.
e) Plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a special kind of academic dishonesty in which one person steals another person’s ideas or words and falsely presents them as the plagiarist’s own product. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Using the exact language of someone else without the use of quotation marks
2. Presenting the words or ideas of another without giving proper credit to the author
3. Arranging the material of someone else, even if expressed in one’s own words, without giving appropriate acknowledgment
4. Submitting a document written by someone else but representing it as one’s own
f) Use of fabricated or falsified information.
g) Interference with or sabotage of academic activity.
h) Unauthorized taking or receipt of materials or resources to gain an academic advantage.
i) Unauthorized recordings.
j) Bribery.
k) Submission of a paper or academic work purchased or obtained from an outside source.
l) Conspiracy to commit academic dishonesty.

To avoid misunderstandings, please familiarize yourself with the University of Florida’s Student Honor Code (http://regulations.ufl.edu/chapter4/4017.pdf). You may also visit the Division of Student Affairs’ Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution website (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcode.php)

**Consequences of Academic Dishonesty:**
Individuals caught cheating in this class will be given a failing grade for the entire course. In other words, cheating (in any form) will not be tolerated.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

Components of Grade and Percentage of Grade

1. Course Participation (10%)
In this course, participation will take two main forms: 1) involvement in general course discussions of assigned readings; and 2) brief oral presentations based on assigned readings. Your grade for course participation will be based on both of these forms of course participation.

2. Formal commentary on a very recent empirical paper of interest (10%)
Please select a very recent (i.e., published either online or in a journal issue within the past 3 months) brief report or full length empirical paper on a research topic of interest to you and prepare a brief commentary in accordance with principles for “Comments on Published Articles” for publication in the journal *The American Psychologist* (i.e., no more than 1000 words not counting title, abstract and up to 10 references). This commentary will contact 5 main components: 1) a brief summary of the published paper, particularly main findings; 2) discussion of its primary strengths; 3) discussion of its primary weaknesses or limitations; 4) discussion of the implications of the findings reported for research in the field going forward, for clinical practice and/or public health; and 5) summary and conclusions. When you submit your commentary, please also submit a PDF of the publication that forms the basis for your commentary.

3. Informal critiques of manuscripts (15% total: 5% for the first such assignment, 10% for the second)
You will be asked to complete two informal manuscript critiques in the course. One will be a brief critique of a draft manuscript I send you by email as if I were a colleague of yours asking for feedback regarding a manuscript draft. You will respond via email with an informal 500 word critical summary. Your informal summary will include the following brief components: 1) discussion of its primary strengths; 2) discussion of its primary weaknesses or limitations; and 3) description of the changes you would recommend focusing on in a subsequent draft. The second, detailed critique will be of the initial manuscript draft of one of your class colleagues. You will provide the same type of 500 word critical summary as in the first assignment along with detailed, *substantive* changes on the document itself using tracked changes.

4. Formal manuscript review (10%)
I will send you a completed manuscript draft from one of your course colleagues for your review as if you were a peer reviewer for a journal. You will read the manuscript carefully and prepare a formal, 750 word critical summary. Your critical summary will include the following brief components: 1) a summary of the manuscript including and its potential contribution to the field; 2) discussion of its primarily strengths; 3) discussion of its primary limitations and weaknesses; and 4) a description of the changes you would recommend focusing on in a subsequent draft. You will not provide edits or comments in the manuscript itself with tracked changes. You will only provide the critical summary.

5. Final Project (multiple components totaling (55%)
Your final project will be a complete, brief report-length manuscript. As part of this assignment, I will ask you to select a journal outlet for your manuscript and to provide a brief rationale for your choice. The “default” format for the final project will be a 12 page, double-spaced manuscript containing all parts as specified according to APA format, with the page limit including the text of the paper itself (i.e., the Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion), not the other parts of the manuscript (i.e., title page, abstract, acknowledgments, tables, figures and references). Please utilize 12-point font and 1-inch margins. All three drafts of the manuscript should be completed in the same format. Exceptions to the default format can be made with instructor permission to match the format of the journal outlet you selected.

You will have two options for the final project: 1) an empirical report describing results of either primary or secondary data analyses; or 2) a report describing results of a systematic review of the literature on a topic of interest to you.

Should you select the former option, if you do not have data of your own to analyze and write up, you may ask your mentor or another faculty member. I may also be able to contribute data for this purpose. I recognize that students in
the class are likely to be at differing levels in terms of their statistical skill. Thus there are a few different possibilities in terms of conducting analyses for your manuscript: 1) You may construct a simple, straightforward data analytic plan that you can carry out yourself. The statistics need not be complicated for the purposes of this project. Given the brief report format, all reports should report preliminary/descriptive results, followed by 2-3 primary findings. 2) You may conduct the analyses with the help of a collaborator: a fellow graduate student, post-doc or another faculty member. However, if you choose this option, you must declare the individual or individuals with whom you will be collaborating. If one or more of these collaborators are not at faculty level, I will ask you to provide a brief description of their qualification to collaborate with you on these analyses (e.g., coursework they have taken, empirical manuscripts published). Keep in mind, you will be responsible for getting these individuals to work with you on these analyses in a timely fashion.

For the second option, you will essentially be conducting a partial systematic review since a formal systematic review requires at least two investigators to complete. The focus of this systematic review will be the very recent literature (i.e., the past 3 years) for a topic of your choosing. The objective will be for you to identify a topic broad enough that several research groups have conducted relevant research but narrow enough so that your final report will cover approximately 12-15 papers published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. With all things being equal, I would prefer that you choose the empirical paper option. In most cases, it will be more feasible for you to produce an empirical manuscript that is nearly ready for submission than a systematic review manuscript. Again, a formal, systematic review will require at least one collaborator, so at best, during this class you will only be able to conduct about half of the work of a full systematic review during this course. Also, in many cases, the narrowness of the systematic review requirements for this class will lead to a manuscript that is not competitive for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Thus in many cases, you would have to expand your literature search beyond the course requirements in order to make this manuscript sufficient for acceptance for publication.

The final project will be completed incrementally throughout the course and will consist of the following components:

- **Manuscript topic selection and plan** (5% of final grade): You will provide the topic of your manuscript including the data set you will utilize and any collaborators who will assist you with the statistical analyses, should you choose the empirical manuscript option. Due to time constraints, I am not able to provide any statistical consultation or conduct any statistical analyses for these projects. Please also provide your primary hypotheses along with the specific variables you will examine and the statistical analyses that will be conducted in order to address these hypotheses. For the systematic review option, please include two datasets you will search for literature, an initial set of keywords you will use to search and an initial set of criteria for papers to be included in your systematic review. There is not a strict word or page limit for this assignment, however it should not require more than 2-3 pages. There may be a possibility for minor changes to hypotheses and specific variables selected with instructor permission, however your general topic and selected dataset will not be changeable except in the event of a problem that arises that will make completion of a manuscript with that particular topic and dataset impossible. Again, this change would be with instructor permission only.

- **Journal outlet selection with brief rationale** (5% of final grade): You will select a journal outlet that is appropriate given your manuscript topic along with a brief 1-2 paragraph rationale for your choice.

- **Initial manuscript draft** (5% of final grade): This will be a complete draft of your manuscript including all components as specified per APA style with the exception of the abstract, which will be omitted.

- **Response to informal critiques of initial draft of manuscript and revision** (15% of final grade): There will be two main parts to this component of the project. First, you will respond via email to two informal critiques of your initial draft, one from me and one from one of your class colleagues. Both informal critiques will include an overview via email message and comments direction on your manuscript draft. Your responses to the informal critiques via email will make up 5% of your final grade. The second part will be a revised, second complete draft of your manuscript including the abstract, which will make up 10% of your final grade.

- **Cover letter for submission of your revised manuscript to your selected journal outlet** (5%) You will complete a cover letter to accompany your revised, second complete manuscript draft. This letter will be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief of your selected journal. The cover letter will be comprised of the following: a one paragraph statement that the research and manuscript drafting processes were conducted ethically; a one paragraph overview of the results reported in your manuscript; a one paragraph description of the importance and novel
contribution to the field/extant literature that your manuscript offers; and three suggested reviewers who are experts in your subject area and would be qualified to review your manuscript, along with their contact information.

- Response to formal critiques and final version of manuscript (20%). You will receive two formal critiques of the second, revised version of your manuscript: one from one of your colleagues in the course and another from me. These formal critiques will not include comments on the manuscript draft itself. You will write a formal response in which you will address each comment made by the two reviewers, stating whether you revised the manuscript accordingly or not and if so, what changes you made. Please also identify in parentheses the page number where each change is located in the manuscript. This formal, written response will make up 5% of your final grade. Lastly, final draft of your manuscript, revised based on the two formal, written critiques will make up 15% of your final grade.
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>08/25</td>
<td>- Course Introductions&lt;br&gt;- Review syllabus &amp; discuss&lt;br&gt;- Fundamental principles of scientific writing—Part I&lt;br&gt;- Writing a formal critique of a published paper</td>
<td><a href="http://news.ufl.edu/articles/2015/09/how-brain-science-can-make-you-a-better-writer.php">http://news.ufl.edu/articles/2015/09/how-brain-science-can-make-you-a-better-writer.php</a></td>
<td>No assignment due but begin to think about project topic. If taking the empirical option, consider source of data and statistical collaborators, if needed. If taking systematic review option, begin informal reviews of literature</td>
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<td>09/01</td>
<td>*** No class meeting, read annotated presentation materials instead ***&lt;br&gt;- Literature search techniques &amp; principles</td>
<td>Hofmann, Chapters 3, 9 Pan, Chapter 5 e.g., of commentary in Am Psychologist</td>
<td>Selection for formal commentary due</td>
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<td>09/08</td>
<td>- Fundamental principles of scientific writing—Part II&lt;br&gt;- Selecting paper topic: initial &amp; fine-tuning&lt;br&gt;- Overview of 2 types of publications addressed in course</td>
<td>Hofmann, Chapter 4 Pan Chapter 2 TBD: e.g., of empirical brief report</td>
<td>Formal commentary on recent publication due: <a href="http://www.editage.com/insights/a-young-researchers-guide-to-a-systematic-review">due Friday 9/9 at 11:59pm</a></td>
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<td>09/22</td>
<td>- Completion of literature search topic&lt;br&gt;- Oral presentation style&lt;br&gt;- Brief discussion of APA style: text including in-text citations&lt;br&gt;  <strong>6pm dismissal to allow time for individual meetings re: project topic</strong></td>
<td>Leeman et al. (2015) systematic review Pan Chapter 3</td>
<td>Journal selection/rationale due</td>
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<td>09/29</td>
<td>- Informal critique of colleagues’/collaborators’ work&lt;br&gt;- Note taking and summarizing incl using tables for this purpose</td>
<td><strong>Oral presentations of readings begin</strong> Pan Chapter 6 (pp. 35-37 through Guideline 6.10), and 11</td>
<td>No assignment due, but further refinement of topic may be needed</td>
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<td>10/06</td>
<td>- Ethics: avoiding plagiarism, copyright&lt;br&gt;- Outlining &amp; initial draft, Part I</td>
<td>Pan Chapter 6 (pp. 37-39), 7, &amp; 8 Hofmann Chapter 2 (pp. 16-21)</td>
<td>Informal critique of manuscript #1 due via email</td>
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<td>10/13</td>
<td>- Outlining &amp; initial draft, Part II&lt;br&gt;- Presentation of results in text, figures &amp; tables</td>
<td>Pan Chapter 9 Hofmann, Ch. 5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>10/20</td>
<td>- Review of making informal critiques&lt;br&gt;- Responding and revising in response to informal critiques</td>
<td>Hofmann Chap.7</td>
<td>Initial manuscript draft due, I will then circulate manuscripts to reviewers</td>
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<td>10/27</td>
<td>- Abstract (structured &amp; un), highlights, brief description in cover letter/how to convey contents of papers in a very concise &amp; interesting way</td>
<td>Pan Chapter 13 TBD: selection of structured and unstructured abstracts for consideration of which are more or less effective</td>
<td>Informal critique #2 due. I will circulate these to authors, also my informal critiques will be sent to students in order received</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Reading Material/Notes</td>
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<td>11/03</td>
<td>Q &amp; A about initial draft, response to informal critiques and manuscript revision Reference lists 6pm dismissal to allow time for individual meetings regarding revision of initial draft</td>
<td>TBD: additional example of an effective empirical brief report and short systematic review Hofmann Chapter 2 (pp. 7-16)</td>
<td>No assignment due, work on second draft of manuscript</td>
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| 11/10 | • Formal critique of a manuscript  
• Other types of manuscripts | Hofmann, Ch. 13  
Pan Ch. 15 | Email response to informal critiques and second draft of manuscript due. I will then circulate drafts to reviewers |
| 11/17 | • Other ethical issues including authorship issues | TBD | Formal manuscript critique due. I will then circulate to authors, also my formal critiques to students beginning today in order received |
| 11/24 | *** No class meeting ***  
Happy Thanksgiving! | n/a | n/a |
| 12/1  | Peer review and responding to formal critiques  
Q & A in preparation for final project due date 6pm dismissal to allow time for individual meetings regarding final project completion | Pan Chap. 12 | Cover letter due |
| 12/12 | Final project due date | ----- | Written response to formal critiques and final, revised manuscript due at 11:59pm |