Master Syllabus

HLT 211: Communicating about Health and Illness

**University Studies Cluster Requirement 1C: Intermediate Writing.** This University Studies

Master Syllabus serves as a guide and standard for all instructors teaching an approved

course in the University Studies program. Individual instructors have full academic freedom

in teaching their courses, but as a condition of course approval, agree to focus on the

outcomes listed below, to cover the identified material, to use these or comparable

assignments as part of the course work, and to make available the agreed-upon artifacts for

assessment of learning outcomes.

**Course overview**

Communicating about Health and Illness is an introduction to the communication genres and styles within the health and society discourse community. Students learn to read and comprehend articles from academic journals and from the healthcare field; evaluate the rhetorical situation in a variety of the communication settings they may encounter; analyze and evaluate communications in their fields; apply of language skills in written and oral form for a variety of audiences; correctly explain and use appropriate jargon and word choices; develop assignments through assignment analysis, drafting and research, workshops, peer review, and revision; write at least one discipline-specific paper following the conventions of that genre; and develop one oral presentation. The course is designed to be theme-based: individual students can select a topic within the theme as the focus for individual assignments, and at same time, work in groups to create a communication product on the common topic. In this course, students are invited to join their academic and professional communities, as they receive instruction in selecting, evaluating, and integrating sources into their work.

**Course-Specific Learning Outcomes.** After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain key conceptual frameworks of language usage, i. e., rhetoric, audience, purpose, logos and ethos, content, tone and style, organization, and evidence
2. Build skills sets in language, communication, and cultural competency
3. Communicate, in writing and with oral presentations, with selected audiences and varied purposes from disciplinary perspectives
4. Apply of information literacy and documentation with competence

**Cluster 1C Learning Outcomes.** After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Read with comprehension and critically interpret and evaluate written work in discipline-specific contexts.
2. Demonstrate rhetorically effective, discipline-specific writing for appropriate audiences.
3. Demonstrate, at an advanced level of competence, use of discipline-specific control of language, modes of development and formal conventions.
4. Demonstrate intermediate information literacy skills by selecting, evaluating, integrating and documenting information gathered from multiple sources into discipline-specific writing.

**Texts and/or Assigned Readings**

* *Writing for Today’s Healthcare Audiences*. Robert J. Bonk. Broadview Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-55481-149-6.

**Assignments, Expectations, and Assessments**

* Major assignments: 30%
* Writing Journal: 15%
* Short assignments: 25%: summaries, analyses, worksheets
* Peer review, workshops, participation: 25%
* Annotated Bibliography

**Common Assignment: The Policy Memo**

As a major, Health & Society prepares students for a number of career paths. As a document, the Policy Memo demands many important skills of the student. To meet the goals of the assignment, the student will locate a health-related issue in the community, research the need, its context, its impact, its history, and a potential solution. The student will identify a specific audience for the memo and propose a new policy intended to address the need and provide a solution.

Paper must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the following:

• Audience: A career policy maker – public administrator, politician, NGO leader

• Purpose(s): To identify and propose a new policy designed to solve an issue of public health

• Student author ethos: Established through various means, including accuracy, expertise, logic, and appropriate use of language

The goals of this assignment demonstrate the following University Studies learning outcomes:

1. Read with comprehension and critically interpret and evaluate written work in discipline-specific contexts.
2. Demonstrate rhetorically effective, discipline-specific writing for appropriate audiences.
3. Demonstrate, at an advanced level of competence, use of discipline-specific control of language, modes of development and formal conventions.
4. Demonstrate intermediate information literacy skills by selecting, evaluating, integrating and documenting information gathered from multiple sources into discipline-specific writing.

The goals of the assignment are also to address the specific course-based learning outcomes. These build on the US learning outcomes.

1. To write an academically rigorous, evidence-based, persuasive memo to propose change about a specific issue concerning health and/or illness in American society
2. To identify and address a specific audience with power to enact change
3. To write in a non-academic environment
4. To anticipate the assumptions, concerns, and questions of the audience
5. To synthesize their research in meaningful ways in order to advocate for change

**Audience**: Policy maker with the ability to initiate the proposed change

**Purpose**:

* To recommend a new government policy backed by logical reasoning and credible and essential facts
* To clearly explain an issue and why it matters; why we should care
* To clearly assess and explain the current political environment in which the issue exists and in which your recommendation will be useful
* To clearly articulate a course of action that is concrete, tangible, and suitable to the current political environment
* To write the memo so that it is likely to be adopted by the government official. This includes all aspects of professional-level writing, including use of jargon that the official can understand and academic language, credible sources cited correctly (using APA), and meaningful sentences and paragraphs.

**Instructions**:

* Research and identify the precise actual person to whom you will send your policy memo. This is your audience. Who is this person? What is the person’s job title? What is their work focused on? What does this person have the power to do?
* Think about your purpose: to make a specific recommendation that will lead to action to resolve (at least partially) a matter of concern to society and health. What is the course theme for the semester? What health issue have you identified? Is the issue related to mental health or physical health?
* Research the topic/issue to find supporting evidence for your memo. Remember that research is not intended to find sources that duplicate your recommendation! You will research the issue sufficiently to write a summary, discover the factors that you then discuss in the background section, and support your claims about the issues around the topic. Options and the recommendation will also need support.
* Understand that policy is in the hands of government. How are policies written? How are policies adopted?
* Understand the political climate in which you are writing your memo
* Understand the policy you are creating (throughout the process of writing it)
* Research current policies about the issue to make sure you are not duplicating something that already exists

*Format:*

“Memo” is a writing format. You must format your policy memo to look professional. Here are the headers for your policy memo:

To:

From:

Date:

Re:

Executive Summary: this summarizes the topic and your memo. It ties the memo together so that the rest of the sections makes sense as they come along for the reader. 2-3 paragraphs

Background: this provides context needed about the topic, political situation, current policy, and any other context needed by your audience. YOU must determine what they need to know. YOU must not assume they have any knowledge at all about the topic. 3-4 paragraphs

Issues: What is actually happening to people? What are the large-scale concerns? Systemic issues? 3-4 paragraphs

Options: What might work? Be sure to support options with evidence. Be sure to explain how your recommendation is viable. Be sure to explain any negative aspects of all options. In the end, your recommendation should be clearly the strongest idea. 2-3 paragraphs

Recommendation: Clearly state your recommendation and how it should unroll. Be sure to plan ahead – do not make the audience figure out how this will work. Tell them. 1 paragraph

**Mechanics**: Use a reference manual to correctly create citations in APA format. Integrate your sources well. Proofread, run spellcheck (never trust spellcheck), run grammarcheck (trust grammarcheck even less), look at your paper. Double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-pt font, black ink.

**Rubric for assessment**: In an accomplished paper, audience needs and purpose are clearly

met at all times; author establishes ethos; and the content, structure, and style are as follows:

**Content**

Thesis statement 10 Brief, arguable, clear

Comprehensive 10 Introduction, body, and conclusion complete and satisfying;

authority established; jargon used correctly

Analysis & Synthesis 10 Clear and expanded analysis of information and points leading

to synthesis**;** articulate expression of the problem, the causes, and the solution; development of how writer arrived at that knowledge

Data & references 10 Highly skilled use of source material and integration into

text; citations and reference page correct

**Structure**

Coherence 10 Fluid; transitions

Organization 10 Content is organized logically

Format 10 Used memo format correctly

Paragraphs 10 Paragraph structure is honored; paragraphs are coherent

**Style**

Tone 5 Tone is appropriate and skillfully developed

Word Choice 5 Academic English and jargon as appropriate; no slang or or “youthspeak”

Sentences 5 Elegant and correct; error free

**Mechanics**  5 Grammar and citations

Sample Weekly Schedule

UNIT 1: Foundations: **Personal Statement of Purpose**

* Section 1.1
  + Introduction to the course and topic selection
  + Exploring the semester theme (basis for research and writing)
  + Preface and Chapter 1: Preliminaries of healthcare writing
* Section 1.2
  + Audience, transparency, cultural competency
  + Chapter 2: Audiences for healthcare information
* Section 1.3
  + Collaboration; Fridays in LARTS 208
  + Chapter 8: Writing mechanics for healthcare

UNIT 2: Genres of Writing about Heath and Illness: **Rhetorical Analysis**

* Section 2.1
  + Information literacy overall; medical journals
  + Chapter 5: Reliable sources of information
* Section 2.2
  + Academic research
  + Meet with HLT librarian for database search instruction
  + Chapter 3: Simple strategies by purpose and context
* Section 2.3
  + Reading academic journals and healthcare publications
  + Chapter 12: Revision to finalize documents and peer review

UNIT 3: Proposing Change: **Policy Memo**

* Section 3.1
  + Writing process
  + Chapter 4: Complex and nested strategies
* Section 3.2
  + Academic English and jargon
  + Chapter 6: Evidence through text argumentation
* Section 3.3
  + Revision
  + Chapter 10: Managerial focus for administrators
* Section 3.4
  + Peer review
  + Chapter 11: Scientific duality of practitioners

UNIT 4: Public-Facing Communication: **Social Media Project**

* Section 4.1
  + Social media
  + Chapter 9: Generalist audience of laypersons
* Section 4.2
  + Visual rhetoric and infographics
  + Chapter 7: Evidence through visual displays
* Section 4.3
  + Presentation skills
  + Chapter 13: Legal and ethical responsibilities