

MMC 6047: Academic Writing for Mass Comm Spring 2025

*(January 6th version; syllabus is subject to change,
always refer to Canvas for the most recent version)*

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Office Hours: Mon. 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm, or by appointment.

Course Meeting Times: Mon. 9:35 am – 12:35 pm
Course Dates: January 13 – April 21, 2025
Course Location: [Weimer Hall \(WEIM\) 1092](#)

Course Description and Goals

MMC 6047 is designed to provide graduate students with practical knowledge and skills in various academic writing formats. A primary goal is to improve each student's ability to produce manuscripts for publication and professional development goals. This hands-on, interactive course helps students build healthy creative practices that enhance their productivity and confidence as writers who craft coherent, concise, and compelling writing. To this end, the class offers students the knowledge, resources, and tools they need to excel at academic writing.

This course introduces students to three types of writing outputs: 1) social scientific conference papers and research articles, 2) supplementary documents and publications, and 3) career/professional development materials such as personal statements, CVs, cover letters, and research statements. Supplementary writing products include but are not limited to extended abstracts, conference presentations, letters to journal editors, responses to reviewers, and IRB protocol documents.

Due to this seminar's interactive and personalized nature, assignments and class materials may be tailored to each student's background, interests, and career goals. As such, the syllabus is subject to modification to meet each student cohort's unique needs.

Course Learning Goals

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of the conventions of academic writing in the social sciences, with a particular focus on developing research papers.
- Understand the distinctions between strong quantitative and qualitative writing.
- Learn how to incorporate and cite sources in written work effectively.
- Communicate research findings clearly and concisely.

- Become aware of how the peer review process operates.
- Practice how to give honest and helpful feedback to peers and effectively respond to feedback received.
- Practice writing for different genres and audiences.
- Compose important written documents for academic careers, such as personal statements, cover letters, or CVs.
- Improve overall writing skills, including clarity, concision, and organization.
- Create a strategy for identifying and addressing personal obstacles to productive writing.
- Know yourself better as a writer.

Course Values Around Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along several dimensions, including gender identity, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, class, and religion.

We must create an inclusive learning environment that makes everyone feel comfortable and welcome in class. Many times, learning something new entails feeling uncomfortable and challenging preconceived ideas. This is a desired outcome of any learning environment because it encourages us to exercise rigor, fairness, and creativity.

The goal is not to agree on everything or find consensus as a class but to educate each other and respectfully discuss different topics. Thus, curiosity and respect towards different viewpoints, experiences, and ideas will not only be a necessary path to success in class but also for both personal and intellectual growth. For this, we all must exercise respect, courtesy, civil dialogue, and empathy toward one another. The diversity we all bring as a group is a strength, and I am committed to including class material that reflects a diversity of experiences, contexts, and identities.

Remember that individuals with unique viewpoints have written the material we will read in this class. I want everyone to feel comfortable sharing their observations and critiques about the material.

Feel free to contact me if anything makes you uncomfortable or if you have any suggestions on building this communal space for all of us to grow together. I am eager to collaborate with all of you to achieve these goals.

Course Requirements

Course materials:

- The class will be tailored as much as possible to each student's needs, career stages, and research interests. As such, the reading material will be partially chosen by the

students themselves, in addition to being suggested by me after we get to know one another during the first few weeks of the semester.

- ***Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (2020)*** – AND – ***A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Ninth Edition (2018)***.
- Additional required material will be available through Canvas, either linked or attached as a PDF.
- To access the material through the provided links, you must be connected to UF Wi-Fi or the UF network via our **VPN** software if you are off campus. Refer to this [video for instructions on how to connect to the VPN](#).
- We will use textbook chapters, academic journal articles, book chapters, and nonacademic sources (news articles, videos, documentaries, etc.).

Assignments:

- This is a hands-on course focused on the practice of academic writing. Therefore, frequent assignments will be geared towards improving skills and knowledge about different academic writing formats.
- Students will read, analyze, and critique published academic papers. Some of these assignments will require students to select the material to analyze, depending on their interests.
- Students will practice writing different sections of a research paper. If students are already working on a research project, it is convenient to work on that material unless it is a finished draft ready to submit to a conference or journal.
- Students will practice different forms of academic writing related to publishing. For example, letters to journal editors, writing peer reviews, writing responses to reviewers, etc.
- Students will also get familiarized with different forms of career writing, depending on their career goals and stages. For example, cover letters for academic job applications, etc.
- Although "good writing" is subjective, this course will focus on mastering the most standardized academic writing formats in the social sciences, emphasizing producing precise, concise, and succinct written work.

- In academic settings, meeting deadlines is crucial to the success of any project, and this class is no exception. Students are expected to adhere to all deadlines set forth in the course syllabus. Failing to meet deadlines is detrimental to your progress and can also be unfair to your classmates. If you foresee any issues meeting a deadline, you must inform me as soon as possible so I can plan accordingly.

Class attendance and participation:

- Students should come to class having read/listened/watched all class material for that class.
- Students can miss 1 class without medical justification but are expected to notify me as soon as possible.
- This is a small class, and we will do activities in class, so your engagement and participation are crucial to its success.
- If you attend a conference in person and must miss class, please let me know as soon as possible.
- Class participation won't be graded, but it is highly encouraged.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). Students need to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

You must complete a course evaluation online via [GatorEvals](#) at the end of the class. Course evaluations are critical, as they will help me plan and adjust the syllabus for subsequent iterations of this class. They are also crucial for future students who will indirectly benefit from your feedback. Students are expected to offer professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. [Guidance on how to give input professionally and respectfully is available](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through an email from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or [online](#). [Summaries of course evaluation results](#) are available to students online.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to respect the [UF student honor code and conduct code](#). The following are some of the potential issues that are particularly pertinent when writing academic

texts:

- **Misrepresentation:** Any practice that aims at deceiving (e.g., lying about data collection processes).
- **Fabrication:** Cases of falsification of original or third-party data.
- **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is using someone else's work or ideas as your own without proper attribution or citation. This can take the form of copying and pasting text from a source, paraphrasing a source without giving credit, or using someone else's ideas or research in your work without acknowledging the source of origin. When in doubt, please review the [plagiarism guide by UF's Library](#).

Assignments

In the class, we will do the following assignments. For each one, students will receive specific and clear instructions on Canvas and resources and/or examples from which they can draw.

Research writing:

1. **Summary of existing research project:** Students must submit a summary of a research project they intend to work on throughout the semester. This may be a paper for which data has already been collected but has not yet been written. It could also be a research proposal for a future paper or research that could be included in their MA thesis or PhD dissertation. Please note: The project summary should not come from a fully completed manuscript ready for submission. This exercise allows students to consider a project at the beginning of the class that can be used for various assignments throughout the semester. It is recommended that students choose an existing project to make meaningful progress on a topic that will be valuable for their academic advancement. Office hours will be available for discussion and guidance if a student is unsure about selecting an appropriate project. (200 – 400 words).
2. **Analysis of published research papers:** Based on shared interests between students in the class, we will select papers to analyze individually before the class and collectively during the class. We will read qualitative and quantitative papers in the social sciences. Students will have to hand in a one-page analysis based on guiding questions about the writing style and structure of the paper. These assignments aim to identify the standardized academic writing format for social scientific research papers. (500 – 600 words each)
3. **Writing abstract of existent paper:** Students will have to read a paper I will select without reading the abstract. Then, they will have to write the abstract themselves. Students commit *not* to Google search the abstract in advance. This assignment aims to help students become more proficient in reading academic papers and writing abstracts. (200 words).
4. **Writing a literature review:** Students will write a literature review for a social scientific research paper. Ideally, they work on their selected project from assignment #1.

Students should discuss with me in advance during office hours the literature they will be reading, sources they are including, etc. Students will use the examples analyzed in assignment #2 to work on their project. This assignment aims to help students become more proficient in reading and writing literature reviews for social scientific papers. (1000 words).

5. **Writing a methods section:** Students will write a methods section for a manuscript of a social scientific research paper. Ideally, they work on their selected project from assignment #1. Students will use the examples analyzed in assignment #2 to work on their project. This assignment aims to help students become more proficient in reading and writing methods sections of social scientific research papers. Word count will vary depending on whether it is a quantitative or qualitative project.
6. **Writing an introduction:** Students will write the introduction section for a manuscript of a social scientific research paper. Ideally, they work on their selected project from assignment #1. This assignment aims to help students become more proficient in reading and writing the introduction sections of social scientific research papers. (500 words)

Supplementary publication writing:

7. **Writing a cover letter to a journal editor for the first and R1 submissions:** Students will write a letter to a journal editor for the first submission of a manuscript and the submission of a revised version after receiving a “revise and resubmit” (R&R). This activity aims to help students become familiar with and develop a template for communicating with journal editors.
8. **Writing a referee report for a journal submission and responding to one:** Students will write an alleged anonymous peer review about an unpublished manuscript. Ideally, students will review a classmate’s work submitted for assignments #4 to #6. Students will then write a letter to respond to their peer review as if they had addressed the changes suggested by the reviewer after an “R&R.”

Career/professional development writing:

9. **CV and Cover letter:** Students will write their CVs and a 1–2-page cover letter depending on their career goals and stages and will review a classmate’s CV and cover letter.
10. **Research Statement – OR – Public Scholarship Essay:** Students can write a 1-3-page research statement (articulating topics of interest, preferred methodologies, theoretical orientations, and intellectual aspirations) or write a research-based piece for a media publication like *The Conversation* or *Columbia Journalism Review*.

Grading

Deadlines and grades

Assignment	Deadlines	Points
#1 Summary of existent research project	Jan. 21	5
#2 Analysis of published research papers	Feb. 3 (paper #1) Feb. 10 (paper #2) Feb. 17 (paper #3)	15
#3 Writing abstract of existent paper	Feb. 24	10
#4 Writing a literature review	March 3	15
#5 Writing a methods section	March 10	10
#6 Writing an introduction	March 24	10
#7 Writing a cover letter to a journal editor for the first and R1 submissions	April 7	5
#8 Writing a peer review for a journal submission and responding to a peer review	April 14 (peer review and response to peer review)	15
#9 CV and Cover letter	April 21	5
#10 Research statement OR public scholarship	April 28	10

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percent	Letter Grade	Percent	Letter Grade	Percent	Letter Grade	Percent
		B+	89-87%	C+	79-77%	D+	69-67%
A	100-93%	B	86-83%	C	76-73%	D	66-63%
A-	92-90%	B-	82-80%	C-	72-70%	D-	62-60%

For information about UF grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Class Schedule

Class 1 (January 13):

- Introduction to the class.
- Basic structure of a social scientific research paper.
- Students schedule office hours' time to discuss research project ideas.

NO CLASS JAN. 20 for MLK

Class 2 (January 27):

- In-class analysis of research paper structure.
- Each student shares their research project ideas for the semester. Group discussion.

Class 3 (February 3):

- In-class analysis of paper #1.
- Focus on the general structure of a research paper.
- Special attention to the writing style and structure of the abstract and the introduction.

Class 4 (February 10):

- In-class analysis of paper #2.
- Focus on the literature review and methods section.

Class 5 (February 17):

- In-class analysis of paper #3.
- Focus on findings.
- Revision of abstract structure for assignment.

Class 6 (February 24):

- Analysis of discussion sections of papers #1, #2, and #3.

Class 7 (March 3):

- Revision of the literature review structure for the assignment.
- Citation styles and practices.
- Group activity on students' literature review assignment.

Class 8 (March 10):

- Revision of the methods section for the assignment.
- Group activity on students' assignments in the methods section.

NO CLASS MAR. 17 for Spring Break

Class 9 (March 24):

- Revision of an introduction section for the assignment.
- How to write a research proposal.

Class 10 (March 31):

- The peer review process. Good and bad practices.
- How to write a cover letter to a journal editor for an initial manuscript submission and after obtaining a referee report.

Class 11 (April 7):

- How to write a referee report.
- How to respond to a referee report.
- Group activity about each student's research projects.
- Peer review discussions before assignment.

Class 12 (April 14):

- The curriculum vitae in academia. Good and bad practices.
- Analysis of examples.
- The cover letter and personal statements for academic job applications.
- Research statements. Good and bad practices.

Class 13 (April 21):

- Public scholarship publications. Good and bad practices.
- Conclusion.