

Writing for Scholarly Publication

University of Wisconsin-Madison
School of Medicine and Public Health
Summer 2008 Public Health Institute

Course Syllabus

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
July 28, 30, August 1, 4, 6



The Course:

Study of the development of skills and opportunities that culminate in publishable works in public health and other health science-related professional journals, area-specific journals, cross-disciplinary journals, and other publications. Emphasis on writing, editing, reviewing, and other professional development skills that culminate in the publication in peer-reviewed professional journals and other publishing outlets. An important skill-development course for professional growth and survival in the academic world or anyplace where written communication is a necessary job-related task.

About the Instructor:

Robert J. McDermott, Ph.D., FASHA, FAAHB, FRIPH, FAAHE, FRSH
Office hours 12:00 – 1:30 on class days and by appointment
E-mail: rjmcdermott@wisc.edu

Dr. McDermott is a member of 16 professional organizations and is a peer reviewer for 14 professional journals in the fields of public health, school health, health education, psychology, behavioral science, or social marketing, and is a member of the editorial board of several of these journals. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the *American Journal of Health Education*, founder and Editor-in-Chief of the *Florida Public Health Review*, Contributing Editor of the "Inside the Academy" column of the *American Journal of Health Behavior*, and Contributing Editor of the "Training Ideas" column of the *Social Marketing Quarterly*, and Consulting Editor to *Psychological Reports*. He is the author or co-author of three textbooks (each in multiple editions), and covering the period from 1980 to 2007, of approximately 55 book chapters, 200 articles in peer-reviewed professional journals, and 200+ abstracts, technical reports, non-peer-reviewed papers, Internet publications, computer software, and other publications.

Textbooks for this course:

Henson, K. T. (2005). *Writing for Publication – Road to Academic Advancement*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, Inc. (Required)

Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E.B. (1999). *Elements of Style*, 4th edition. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Also online at [--http://www.bartleby.com/141](http://www.bartleby.com/141) (Optional)

It is highly recommended that the Henson text be read cover-to-cover before the beginning of the course, and that individual chapters be reviewed in conjunction with the topics presented below in the course outline. Some handouts will be provided. Course participants are encouraged to perform selected readings from the extensive bibliography. In addition, blinded manuscripts will be distributed for out-of-class individual review and in-class group review.

Topics:

Why write?

Preparing to write; reading to write; reading outside of your primary field; good and bad writing styles

Developing the habit to write while still in graduate school

Writing as a creative outlet and as an intellectual exercise

Writing as a means to clarify ideas in your head as well as to communicate thoughts to others

The role of writing in professional advancement

Outlets in your particular interest area of public health - forums for writing and breaking into print

Writing as a professional tool and benefit

Where ideas for writing come from and how they get from your head to the page

Writing articles vs. creating other written products (books, posters, abstracts)

Communicating with editors and reviewers and discovering what reviewers and editors look for

Publication manuals and styles

Avoiding sexist language and other bias

Authorship, co-authorship, order of authorship, and ethical considerations in publishing

Directing one's writing to the correct literacy level

Editing your own work and that of others

Dealing with writer's block

Other topics as requested by course participants

Grading and Expectations

There are no exams for the course. Feedback will be provided throughout on writing and editing, and other performance. In addition to attendance (50%), there are a few assignments: (1) letter to the editor of 500 words – 10%; (2) written editorial/commentary/position paper of 1000-1250 words – 30%; (3) editing and other exercises – 10%. *Plagiarism* will be a topic of discussion during the course, but please do not let it become an object of discussion as well. All written work should be your own. The instructor reserves the right to: (1) request that assignments be submitted as electronic files and (2) submit assignments electronically to **SafeAssignment** where written work is compared automatically with a database of journal articles, web articles, and previously submitted papers. The instructor receives a report showing exactly how a student's paper was plagiarized.

Course Schedule and Assignments:

Meeting 1: July 28 **DUE (July 29):** E-mail (rjmcdermott@wisc.edu) a list of 5 or more questions that you would like to have answered about writing, publishing, life in academia, or related issues. (None of these questions should be ones identified by Henson in Chapter 9.)

READ: Henson, Chapters 1,9

Meeting 2: July 30 **DUE:** Submit a draft of a 500-word letter to the editor of a professional journal (name the journal) in your field that takes issue with a particular article, practice, or editorial policy. In addition to a copy that you keep for yourself, submit a hard copy (that has your *name* and a *pseudonym* on it that you will use during the course) to the instructor, and two hard copies containing just the pseudonym (that will be reviewed by two peers in the class).

DUE: Seek out, photocopy, and submit the "Information for Authors" guidelines from 5 professional journals in your particular field of interest in which you could conceivably publish in the next year. Some of these may be available on-line.

READ: Henson, Chapter 3

Meeting 3: August 1 **DUE:** Submit peer-edited/reviewed letters with name of reviewer

READ: Henson, Chapters 4,5,7,11

Meeting 4: August 4 **DUE:** First draft, 1000-word to 1250-word editorial, commentary, or position paper (topic and journal of your selection); same format as letter regarding copies

READ: Henson, Chapters 6,16

Meeting 5: August 6 **DUE:** Submit peer-edited and reviewed editorial/commentary/position paper with name of reviewer

DUE: Revised letter to the editor (final version) with edited copies attached.

READ: Henson, Chapters 2,8

Conclusion: August 15 **DUE:** Final version of 1000- to 1250-word editorial/commentary/position paper (submitted electronically – rjmcdermott@wisc.edu)