

# WRTC 458. SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL COMMUNICATION

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Section 1 (14562)

T/TH 11:10-12:25 (Online)

Spring 2022

Dr. Michael J. Klein: kleinmj@jmu.edu

Office Hours: T/TH 10:00-11:00 and by appointment at <https://jmu-edu.zoom.us/my/kleinmj>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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In this seminar, we'll explore two public health challenges facing America: the COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustice. Topics will include the changing nature of scientific and medical language, the social construction of the concept of race, responses to COVID-19 and the intersection of race and public health. Students will conduct analyses of health-related texts' effectiveness in communicating with a specific audience and compose health-related texts appropriate for a general audience.

From the catalog: Introduction to the context and use of language in scientific and medical disciplines. Emphasis is placed on understanding the rhetorical nature of scientific discourse. Primary topics include examining different forms of scientific and medical writing in traditional and digital contexts; the nature of communication within professional communities; and composing texts for general readers.

*Prerequisites:* WRTC 200 and WRTC 201, or permission of instructor

*Fulfills:* WRTC TSC elective; medical humanities minor elective, science and technology in society minor elective

## COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES (LOS)

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Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to

1. Identify and explain the norms and values of a scientific discourse community
2. Analyze scientific authors and texts' effectiveness in communicating with a specific audience
3. Compose scientific texts appropriate for a general audience

## COURSE MATERIALS

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All materials are available through the Canvas course site.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

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- Keep up with the readings and assignments—you'll get more out of the course if you've done the preliminary work
- Talk to me—if you need help with a project or are unclear about a concept, email me
- Push your boundaries—there may be topics we cover that challenge your beliefs or assignments you complete that stretch your perceived abilities; embrace these as signs that you are learning
- Take care of yourself—you're taking this course during unprecedented times; make sure to find time to relax, unwind and manage your own wellness.

## COURSE RESOURCES

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### COURSE WEBSITE

The course website—located on Canvas—contains readings, assignment prompts and activities.

### UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

Providing online writing consultations through chat and video, the University Writing Center is staffed by trained peer, graduate, and faculty consultants who offer free assistance with all types of academic and non-academic writing. UWC consultants can help you identify your writing ideas and questions, narrow your focus, organize your ideas, shape your work for different purposes and audiences in different genres and disciplines, incorporate and document your sources, and develop your revision strategies. To schedule an online session or to find what you need in a library of online writing resources, visit [www.jmu.edu/uwc](http://www.jmu.edu/uwc).

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

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You will be completing several assignments that will help you achieve the objectives of this course:

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Assignment 1 – Participation</b>                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Weight 15%</b> | <b>Due throughout semester</b>    |
| You will attend and fully participate in class discussions, read critically by annotating course materials using Perusall and complete short writing assignments throughout the semester. |                   |                                   |
| <b>Assignment 2 – Rhetorical Analysis</b>                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Weight 25%</b> | <b>Due March 10 at 5 p.m. EST</b> |
| You will compose a rhetorical analysis on a text related to racism and health.                                                                                                            |                   |                                   |
| <b>Assignment 3 – Feature Article</b>                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Weight 40%</b> | <b>Due May 5 at 5 p.m. EDT</b>    |
| You will compose a feature article about race and health for a general audience.                                                                                                          |                   |                                   |
| <b>Assignment 4 – Reflective Essay</b>                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Weight 20%</b> | <b>Due May 12 at 8 a.m. EDT</b>   |
| You will write a reflective essay that interrogates the concept of race and health.                                                                                                       |                   |                                   |

## GRADING POLICIES

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I am using a labor-based approach to the evaluation of class work this semester. Labor-based grading assigns a grade based on completion of work. **Work that meets all requirements and is submitted on time will receive a grade in the C range or higher.** See the scale below.

### GENERAL GRADING CRITERIA

- A Work meets all requirements detailed in the assignment prompt, is submitted on time, and does at least ONE of the following:
- Was reviewed by a writing tutor at the UWC (provide evidence that you kept the appt)
  - Goes beyond minimum requirements
- AND ONE of the following:
- Offers evidence of nuanced thinking about the topic (going beyond the obvious, taking a risk with the claim, topic, or research, offering astute analysis of the research)
  - Offers a mature writing style and grammatically correct writing
- B Work meets all requirements detailed in the assignment prompt, is submitted on time, and does at least ONE of the following:
- Was reviewed by a writing tutor at the UWC (provide evidence that you kept the appt)
  - Was conferenced by the instructor
  - Goes beyond minimum requirements
  - Offers evidence of nuanced thinking about the topic (going beyond the obvious, taking a risk with the claim, topic, or research, offering astute analysis of the research)
  - Offers a mature writing style and grammatically correct writing
- C Work meets all requirements detailed in the assignment prompt and is submitted on time.
- D Work is submitted no more than one week late or falls short of meeting one of the assignment requirements or the peer review assignment.
- F Work falls short meeting two requirements or is submitted late and fails to meet one of the requirements.

Work that is plagiarized will receive a zero. It may be redone for a grade no higher than a C after consulting with the professor.

Work submitted more than one week late without an extension will receive a 0.

### GRADING SCALE

98%-99% = A+	88%-89% = B+	78%-79% = C+	68%-69% = D+
94%-97% = A	84%-87% = B	74%-77% = C	64%-67% = D
90%-93% = A-	80%-83% = B-	70%-73% = C-	0%-63% = F

## COURSE POLICIES

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### LATE WORK AND MAKEUP WORK

As noted above, the highest-grade late work will receive is a C if it is no more than one week late. You may ask for an **extension** on any assignment at least 24 hours in advance to avoid the late penalty. **Late work must be submitted within one week of the original deadline, or it will not be accepted.** See the policies below on Prolonged Illness.

### ATTENDANCE

We will be meeting using Zoom during our assigned class period (T/TH 11:10-12:25). I expect you to participate in at least 18 scheduled class meetings. Participation means having your camera on and contributing to discussion.

I do not have a high stakes policy that penalizes your final grade. HOWEVER, attendance is a small portion of your participation grade. Just as important, I WILL consider a student's attendance record when making decisions about extensions, accepting late work, or bumping up borderline grades. The benefits of attending class are that you'll have opportunities to talk out ideas, ask questions and get answers on-demand, and get feedback from your peers and instructor. You'll also benefit from others' questions and the help they receive. Please note that assignment due dates and times still apply to all assignments whether one attends class or not. Please find a class buddy you trust to keep you up to date if you are not in class.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

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### PROLONGED ILLNESS

If you become ill with COVID-19 or with any other sickness that prevents you from completing classwork on time, please email me as soon as possible. I will work with students to the greatest extent possible on making up work.

### DISABILITY

If you receive accommodations through the Office for Disability Services, please share your signed accommodations form with me at the beginning of the term so that we can create a plan together.

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

JMU is a community dedicated to diversity and inclusivity. Learning environments should support a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, experiences, and identities. This is especially true given the course topic. I invite you to share anything that might help create a more inclusive and welcoming learning environment.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

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University policies on Attendance, Academic Honesty, Adding/Dropping Courses, Disability Accommodations, Disruptive Behavior, Inclement Weather, and Religious Accommodations can be found at <http://www.jmu.edu/syllabus>. Decisions about holding class when the university is closed due to inclement weather will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Week 1 January 17	Course Introduction
<b>Tues: No Class—Snow Day</b>	
<b>Thurs:</b> Review Course Syllabus	
Week 2 January 24	Language: Viruses, Pandemics and COVID
<b>Tues:</b> Who the intended audience for these articles is and how you made that determination.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.livescience.com/53272-what-is-a-virus.html">https://www.livescience.com/53272-what-is-a-virus.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.livescience.com/56598-deadliest-viruses-on-earth.html">https://www.livescience.com/56598-deadliest-viruses-on-earth.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.livescience.com/pandemic.html">https://www.livescience.com/pandemic.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.livescience.com/worst-epidemics-and-pandemics-in-history.html">https://www.livescience.com/worst-epidemics-and-pandemics-in-history.html</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Thurs:</b> Consider ways in which language shapes, and in turn is shaped, by social change:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://public.oed.com/blog/the-language-of-covid-19/">https://public.oed.com/blog/the-language-of-covid-19/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://public.oed.com/blog/using-corpora-to-track-the-language-of-covid-19-update-2/">https://public.oed.com/blog/using-corpora-to-track-the-language-of-covid-19-update-2/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMpiCIEOOcU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMpiCIEOOcU</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://public.oed.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Language-of-Covid-19-webinar_10-09-20_presentations.pdf">https://public.oed.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Language-of-Covid-19-webinar_10-09-20_presentations.pdf</a></li> </ul>	
Week 3 January 31	Rhetoric and Rhetorical Analyses
<b>Tues:</b> Covino and Jolliffe “What is Rhetoric?” ( <b>Annotation assignment in Canvas</b> )	
<b>Thurs:</b> Introduction of the Rhetorical Analysis Assignment ( <b>due March 10</b> ).	
Week 4 February 7	Historical Responses to Pandemics
<b>Tues: No Class—Assessment Day</b>	
<b>Thurs:</b> These texts examine responses to the 1918 influenza outbreak. <b>How are they similar/different from responses to COVID?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stern et al “1918-19 Influenza pandemic in the U.S.” <a href="https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2862329/pdf/phr125s30006.pdf">https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2862329/pdf/phr125s30006.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2022/02/06/1918-flu-fourth-wave/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2022/02/06/1918-flu-fourth-wave/</a></li> <li>• The Influenza Archive—Skim the entire archive and read the city entries about Richmond, D.C., and the city closest to your hometown (<a href="http://www.influenzaarchive.org">http://www.influenzaarchive.org</a>)</li> </ul>	
Week 5 February 14	Language: Race and Racism
<b>Tues:</b> We’re looking at language again, this time about the concept of race:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.open.edu/openlearn/languages/linguistics/hearing-race-can-language-use-lead-racism">https://www.open.edu/openlearn/languages/linguistics/hearing-race-can-language-use-lead-racism</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://theconversation.com/we-need-to-unpack-the-word-race-and-find-new-language-138379">https://theconversation.com/we-need-to-unpack-the-word-race-and-find-new-language-138379</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Thurs: No Class</b> —please register for and attend the <b>virtual AAAD Conference (2/16-2/19)</b> ( <a href="https://sites.lib.jmu.edu/aaadjmu/?_ga=2.81240471.1802785055.1643039563-1177100125.1594519654">https://sites.lib.jmu.edu/aaadjmu/?_ga=2.81240471.1802785055.1643039563-1177100125.1594519654</a> )	
Week 6 February 21	Race and Healthcare
For the next two weeks we will be reading articles/editorial about the intersections of race and healthcare.	
<b>Tues:</b> Solomon “The Rhetoric of Dehumanization” ( <b>Annotation assignment in Canvas</b> )	
<b>Thurs: How do the authors present complex information to support their claims?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-by-race-and-ethnicity/">https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-by-race-and-ethnicity/</a></li> </ul>	
Week 7 February 28	Race and Healthcare (cont.)
<b>Tues:</b> Roberts “The Social Immorality of Health in the Gene Age” ( <b>Annotation assignment in Canvas</b> )	
<b>Thurs: How does the author use data to enrich their narrative?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/17/health/racial-disparities-health-care.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/17/health/racial-disparities-health-care.html</a></li> </ul>	
Week 8 March 7	<b>Work on Rhetorical Analysis Due March 10 at 5 p.m.</b>
<b>No Class</b> —continue work on Rhetorical Analysis Assignment both days on your own	
Week 9 March 14	<b>Spring Break</b>

Week 10 March 21	Communicating Science and Medicine
<p><b>Tues:</b> These short articles provide suggestions about being an effective science and medicine communicator. <b>What examples do you already employ and what are others you will employ in your own work?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/epub/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.116.023297">https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/epub/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.116.023297</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-021-01528-x">https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-021-01528-x</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0960982220309040">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0960982220309040</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://academic.oup.com/abm/article/54/12/985/6069337">https://academic.oup.com/abm/article/54/12/985/6069337</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Thurs:</b> Introduction of the Feature Article Assignment (<b>due May 5</b>).</p>	
Week 11 March 28	Racism and Health in the Time of COVID
<p><b>Tues:</b> Today's selections come from the CDC website on Racism and Health. For each link, read that content and explore the links to external materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/index.html">https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/index.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/director-commentary.html">https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/director-commentary.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/impact-of-racism.html">https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/impact-of-racism.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/cdc-efforts.html">https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/cdc-efforts.html</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Thurs:</b> These series of readings come from the online publication <i>Black Perspectives</i>. <b>How does the tone, content purpose and audience differ between these and the CDC texts?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.aaihs.org/racializeddiseaseandpandemic/">https://www.aaihs.org/racializeddiseaseandpandemic/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.aaihs.org/if-bitterness-were-a-whetstone-on-grief-history-and-covid-19/">https://www.aaihs.org/if-bitterness-were-a-whetstone-on-grief-history-and-covid-19/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.aaihs.org/from-hiv-aids-to-covid-19-black-vulnerability-and-medical-uncertainty/">https://www.aaihs.org/from-hiv-aids-to-covid-19-black-vulnerability-and-medical-uncertainty/</a></li> </ul>	
Week 12 April 4	Racism and Health in the Time of COVID (cont.)
<p><b>Tues:</b> Krishnan et al “Historical Insights on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the 1918 Influenza Pandemic, and Racial Disparities” (<b>Annotation assignment in Canvas</b>)</p> <p><b>Thurs:</b> TBD (student choice)</p>	
Week 13 April 11	Case Study: Race and Masks
<p><b>Tues:</b> Hearne and Niño “Understanding How Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Shape Mask-Wearing Adherence During the COVID-19 Pandemic” (<b>Annotation assignment in Canvas</b>)</p> <p><b>Thurs:</b> <b>How does these two texts differ in the way the address the issue of Black men and masking?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.statnews.com/2020/05/13/black-man-think-twice-wearing-face-mask-in-public-racism/">https://www.statnews.com/2020/05/13/black-man-think-twice-wearing-face-mask-in-public-racism/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/us/coronavirus-masks-racism-african-americans.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/us/coronavirus-masks-racism-african-americans.html</a></li> </ul>	
Week 14 April 18	Case Study: Race and Vaccines
<p><b>Tues:</b> <b>How does these three texts differ in the way the address the issue of race and vaccines.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/09/opinion/racism-covid-vaccine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/09/opinion/racism-covid-vaccine.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306411">https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306411</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/latest-data-on-covid-19-vaccinations-by-race-ethnicity/">https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/latest-data-on-covid-19-vaccinations-by-race-ethnicity/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Thurs:</b> TBD (student choice)</p>	
Week 15 April 25	Course Wrap-Up
<p><b>Tues:</b> Introduction of the Reflective Essay Assignment (<b>due May 12</b>).</p> <p><b>Thurs:</b> <b>No Class—I will be at a conference</b></p>	
Week 16 May 2	Work on Feature Article Due May 5 at 5 p.m.
<p><b>No Class</b>—continue work on Feature Article Assignment both days on your own</p>	
Finals Week May 9	Work on Reflective Essay Due May 12 at 8 a.m.