Instructor: Gilbert C. Gee, Ph.D.
Course Time: Tuesdays, 9 am – 12 pm
Room: A1-241 CHS
Office: CHS 46-081
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-4 pm and by appointment
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e-mail: gilgee@ucla.edu
Class website: see the Google Sites

Course Description

The goal of this class is to help advanced doctoral students develop skills for writing peer-reviewed journal articles. It is expected that students will have taken a minimum of one graduate class in epidemiology and two in statistics. It is also highly recommended that students have taken CHS 219 and/or have been working on a paper for publication. The class will examine a range of publications (e.g. literature reviews), but the focus will be on theoretically-informed empirical research papers.

Objectives: By the end of the quarter, students will:

1. Learn strategies to overcome writer’s block and procrastination.
2. Understand that professional publications are part of a larger dialogue.
3. Review the steps necessary to produce a scientific manuscript, including the selection of a journal, organizing the work, and negotiating authorship and responsibilities.
4. Develop and revise drafts of a research paper.
5. Practice reviewing papers and responding to reviews.

This class emphasizes the iterative process of writing, and writing for your audience. Accordingly, you will notice that the course topics are not organized in a traditionally linear fashion. For example, the section on writing the introduction comes near the end of the quarter, whereas the writing of tables comes at the beginning of the quarter. We will discuss the rationale for this ordering during the quarter.

Class motto 1: Good writing is rewriting.
Class motto 2: A page a day brings tenure, they say.

Google Documents

You will write all of your drafts using Google Drive. Once you set up the account, invite me as a collaborator. Please invite chsclasses@gmail.com, not my other e-mail accounts. I’ll explain how to set up an account in class.

Class Readings

The articles flagged with asterisks in Table 1 shall be read intensively. Read the article once for content. Next, reread the article and study the logic, structure, and “salesmanship.” Reread it a third time and focus on the micro-level writing issues, such as sentence construction. Be sure to read everything, including all the figures, tables, footnotes (skim the references). After all, you will be producing the same. Be prepared to discuss the assigned paper in detail during the class session.

There are 2 required textbooks and several recommended ones. Read them for content and inspiration.
Textbooks

Required


Recommended

General writing resources


Academic writing resources


Graphics and figures


Authorship


Additional articles for your interest only.


**Grades:**

10% Class participation

80% 4 assignments worth 20% each (Assignment #1 is not graded, but simply checked off)
- Assignment #2: Identifying journals
- Assignment #3: Critique
- Assignment #4: Responding to the critique (revising and resubmitting)
- Assignment #5: Re-writing your own paper

10% Everyday writing**

* I expect that you spend at least 20 minutes *per weekday* on a writing product during the entire quarter. This product may involve your CHS 219 project, a paper related to your dissertation, or some other project. You will use Google Drive to write this product (no exceptions). Google Drive has a wonderful feature where it records all of your writing activities, including the start and end times. I will check on your writing progress. **This begins tomorrow.**

I will randomly sample days over the quarter (Mondays-Fridays) and will inspect the time that you spent writing (this can include pre-writing, brainstorming or revising) on those days. Your grade will be the proportion of sampled days where you spend at least 20 minutes in writing activities.

Internet Explorer does not seem to like Google Drive. If you have problems, try using Firefox or another browser.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Silvia, Chapters 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/9</td>
<td>Reading text as a <em>producer</em>, not consumer.</td>
<td>Miller, Chapters 1-3.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-diagnosis of writing challenges</td>
<td><strong>In-class exercise</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>DUE:</strong> E-mail a copy of the paper for Assignment #1 to <a href="mailto:chsclasses@gmail.com">chsclasses@gmail.com</a>. This paper is due at the start of class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/16</td>
<td>Writing a critique</td>
<td>We will discuss the Gee article in class. Read the files in this order:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|         | Responding to a critique. | 1. Gee_Drugs_1st_Submission  
2. Gee_Drugs_Review_Round1  
3. Gee_Drugs_Reply_Review_Round1  
4. Gee_Drugs_2nd_Submission  
5. Gee_Drugs_Reply_Review_Round2  
6. Gee_Drugs_3rd_Submission  
7. Gee_Drugs_Published |
| 3.      | Figures and Tables, continued. | Miller, Chapters 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14 |
| 4/23    | **DUE:** Assignment #2 and Assignment #3. Both are due at the start of class. |
|         | Writing the Discussion section | Miller, Chapters 12 and 16 |
| 5.      | Writing the Introduction, Abstract, and Title | Silvia, Ch 5, 6  
Miller, Ch. 11 |
<p>| 5/7     | <strong>Guest:</strong> Margie Kagawa-Singer (<em>1st</em> half of class) |
| 5/14    | An editor’s view |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DUE: E-mail a copy of Assignment #4 to <a href="mailto:chsclasses@gmail.com">chsclasses@gmail.com</a>. This is due at the start of class.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Literature reviews, framing papers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Diagnosing papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Closing</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/4</td>
<td>Dealing with rejection and staying positive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Writing for the long haul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>No class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/10</td>
<td>DUE: Your revised paper, Assignment #5. Due by 4 pm in my office or the mailboxes on A-level.</td>
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</table>
Assignment #1: Submitting your paper

Submit a paper that you would like to undergo peer review. The paper should be complete, with a title, abstract, body, and bibliography. If you have a journal in mind, feel free to use that journal's standards for formatting. If you don't have a specific journal in mind, use a 12 point font, 1" margins, and a standard bibliographic format.

Ideally, you are first author on this paper. You may submit a paper where you are not the first author, but you will be responsible for responding to the critiques received. The most appropriate papers will be ones that show empirical findings using qualitative and/or quantitative techniques. Review articles are also acceptable, although empirical papers are preferred.

Please do not submit grant proposals or papers that have already been published.
**Assignment 2: Identifying a Journal**

The choice of a journal is very important. The goal of this assignment is for you to learn about journals that may be relevant to your area of interest.

The assignment is as follows:

1. Select 5 journals that you might consider for submission. One of these journals should be the American Journal of Public Health. You are welcome to include more than 5 journals.

2. Create a table like the one below.

3. Compare the journals. Which one seems most appropriate for your paper idea? Why? Write a 1-2 paragraph summary of your musings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Name</th>
<th>Types of articles accepted</th>
<th>Word limit (or page limit) for articles</th>
<th>Number of tables and figures.</th>
<th>Titles of 5-6 research articles from the most recent issue</th>
<th>Other notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Stuff</td>
<td>1. Empirical articles</td>
<td>1. 7500 words (inclusive of bibliography, abstract, and text)</td>
<td>1. Max of 4 tables and/or figures</td>
<td>1. What’s Stuff Got to Do with It?</td>
<td>Journal accepts student papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Commentaries</td>
<td>2. 7500 words</td>
<td>2. n/a</td>
<td>2. Association between Stuff and Neighborhood Poverty on Depression.</td>
<td>Ranked 4th among 7 journals in Stuffology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Life, the Universe, and Stuff</td>
<td>Statistics are fairly rudimentary.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Disparities in Stuff between Siblings: Results from the National Longitudinal Study of Stuff.</td>
<td>Introduction tends to be long, theory heavy.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>A public health oriented journal, topics are all on stuff, but there is a wide range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuffology</td>
<td>1. Empirical Articles</td>
<td>5000 words (text only)</td>
<td>No stated limit, but they prefer fewer than 5 tables.</td>
<td>1. Measuring Stuff among Indigenous Rabbits.</td>
<td>Articles focus on measurement, many heavy on psychometrics.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2. Factor structure of the Scale of Stuffiness.</td>
<td>No qualitative studies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Lifetime prevalence of stuff: a regional study.</td>
<td>Impact factor is 3.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Stuff accumulation among teenage girls, development of a new instrument</td>
<td>Most authors are psychologists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. The Index of Stuff.</td>
<td>Tables seem very dense. About half of the studies use SEM.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignment 3: Critique

This assignment has two parts. In the first part, you will write a critique of another student’s paper. In the second part, you will respond to a critique you received.

You will be assigned a paper written by a fellow student. Write a 2-3 page critique of this paper. We will adapt the format from the Journal of Health and Social Behavior. Please note that other journals use different formats. Your critique will have 3 parts: (1) summary evaluation; (2) comments to the editor; (3) report to the author. Note that parts 1 and 2 are intended only for the editor (and not the author), so please ensure that the report to the author begins on a new page.

Summary evaluation: Check the appropriate box after each item.

1. Contribution to knowledge  □ Substantial □ Modest □ Limited □ Negligible
2. Method of analysis  □ Commendable □ Appropriate □ Some problems □ Serious flaws
3. Stimulate research?  □ Substantially □ Modestly □ A limited extent □ Negligibly
4. Estimate that authors can successfully revise the manuscript.  □ 0-25% (Very unlikely) □ 26-50% (Unlikely) □ 51-75% (Likely) □ 76-100% (Very likely)
5. Recommendation  □ Reject □ Revise & resubmit □ Conditionally accept □ Accept

CONFIDENTIAL COMMENTS FOR THE EDITOR:
REPORT TO THE AUTHORS

In this section, please provide a 1-3 page critique. Begin with a brief (1-2 sentence) review of the study’s main claims. Then, summarize the overall quality of the paper. This evaluation can include the writing style, central claims, contribution to the field, methodological rigor and logic. You do not need to mention every little thing, just the major ones. This evaluation can include both positive and negative points. Do not state your recommendation for publication.

Next, provide a detailed review of the paper. Organize it as follows:

Major points
   - Introduction
   - Methods
   - Results
   - Discussion
   - Tables/Figures

Minor Points

Number all of your points in sequence. Do not begin with new numbers across different sections.
Assignment # 4. Responding to the Critique

You will now respond to all of the points made by your reviewers. Your response should restate the critique and then your reply. You may disagree with the reviewer, but you must do so explicitly (and politely). Some writers like to provide summary reviews (e.g. “all reviewers cited problems with the statistical model”). In this assignment, do not write summary reviews: you should respond to each reviewer individually, and point-by-point. Use the examples from the 2nd week of class as a guide.

Some critiques may ask you for additional analysis. You should strongly consider doing these analyses if they are appropriate and strengthen your paper. However, if you are unable to do the analyses, or if the analyses are unnecessary, then you should provide a reasonable justification for excluding the analysis.

Be mindful that questions raised by one reviewer may be raised by other readers. When addressing critiques, consider whether you need to amend the text for the benefit of all readers, rather than respond to a single reviewer.

After writing your response, it is helpful to put it aside and reread it after a few days. Pay particular attention to your tone when rereading. We can be irritated by some reviews, but we should never communicate that irritation back to the editors or reviewers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Association of Schools of Public Health competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Learn strategies to overcome writer’s block and procrastination. | F.7. Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating with different audiences in the context of professional public health activities  
A.10. Develop written and oral presentations based on statistical analyses for both public health professionals and educated lay audiences  
C.8. Communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences |
| 2. Understand that professional publications are part of a larger dialogue. | F.7. Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating with different audiences in the context of professional public health activities  
A.10. Develop written and oral presentations based on statistical analyses for both public health professionals and educated lay audiences  
C.8. Communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences  
F.1. Describe how the public health information infrastructure is used to collect, process, maintain, and disseminate data  
J.11. Value commitment to lifelong learning and professional service |
| 3. Review the steps necessary to produce a scientific manuscript, including the selection of a journal, organizing the work, and negotiating authorship and responsibilities. | F.7. Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating with different audiences in the context of professional public health activities  
A.10. Develop written and oral presentations based on statistical analyses for both public health professionals and educated lay audiences  
C.8. Communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences  
F.1. Describe how the public health information infrastructure is used to collect, process, maintain, and disseminate data |
| 4. Develop and revise drafts of a research paper. | F.7. Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating with different audiences in the context of professional public health activities  
A.10. Develop written and oral presentations based on statistical analyses for both public health professionals and educated lay audiences  
C.8. Communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences |
| 5. Practice reviewing papers and responding to reviews. | F.7. Demonstrate effective written and oral skills for communicating with different audiences in the context of professional public health activities  
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C.8. Communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences  
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