



WRITING FOR SOCIAL WORK

SOWK 3890 | 3 credit hours
Class Meetings: TBD

Instructor: TBD

Office: TBD

Office Phone: TBD

Email: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Department: Grace Abbott School of Social Work

Main Office: 206 CPACS

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COURSE INFORMATION

Description

This course emphasizes the process of critical thinking and analysis and the process of effective professional writing as required for generalist social work practice. Students will apply selected generalist social work concepts to prepare writing samples such as research/term papers, client progress/ psychosocial reports, analytical reviews, professional development papers, business communications, and grant proposals. Research and writing skills emphasized are: conducting electronic literature searches, outlining, paragraph and sentence structure, revising, using APA format, and proofreading for correct grammar, word usage, and punctuation.

Rationale/Overview

This course enables students to produce the range of effective written communications required for professional social work practice. It includes reviews of grammatical, organizational, and stylistic principles that support the critical thinking, analysis, and presentation methods required in professional writing.



Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes

1. Apply core features of standard American English for professional written communication, e.g., grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation.
2. Use NASW ethical principles in professional writing tasks through the lens of anti-racism and anti-oppression.
3. Competently use word processing and web-based social media for social work practice.
4. Demonstrate competency in writing academic policy analyses and advocacy reports that include thesis statements, electronic literature searches, APA format, and anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (A DEI) principles.
5. Demonstrate writing ability regarding agency-based communications for Generalist practice settings, i.e., email, formal letters, policy statements, memos, process recordings, case reports, grant proposals.

REQUIRED TEXT(S)/SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Required Text(s)

TBD

COURSE STRUCTURE/FORMAT

Class lectures, discussions, in-class assignments, audio-visual aids, and guest speakers will be used to present course materials.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Session/Date	Topic	Assignment
Session 1 [date]	Introduction to the course and review syllabus	
Session 2 [date]	Lecture: Introduction to basics and APA	Read: APA Publication Manual: Introduction Read: Crediting Sources (p. 169-173) You and Your Writing (part 1)
Session 3 [date]	Lecture: Resumes, cover letters, and professional correspondence	Read: 3.05-3.11 (APA)
Session 4 [date]	Lecture: Professional writing and case notes In-class: Practice writing case notes	Read: 70-77 (APA) Resume and cover letter
Session 5 [date]	Lecture: Report writing	Read: 61-63 and 174-179 (APA) Resume and cover letter (cont.)
Session 6 [date]	Lecture: Professional writing and report writing (cont.)	Read: 180-188 (APA) Resume and cover letter (cont.)
Session 7 [date]	Lecture: Report writing (cont.)	Read: 87-96 (APA) Quiz #1
Session 8 [date]	Library: Finding professional journal articles	Read: 9-11 (APA) In-class journal article quiz Literature review topic and draft outline



Session/Date	Topic	Assignment
Session 9 [date]	Lecture: Professional writing and report writing wrap-up	Read: 101-107 (APA) Journal article worksheet and final outline
Session 10 [date]	Library: Advocacy letters In-class: Practice writing advocacy letters	
Session 11 [date]	Visit UNO Writing Center in person (class does not meet)	Literature review rough draft peer review
Session 12 [date]	Lecture: Literature reviews (cont.) and grant writing In-class: Grant writing activity	Read: Ch. 7 (APA) Literature review peer feedback
Session 13 [date]	Lecture: Grant writing (cont.) In-class: Grant writing workshop	Literature review final draft
Session 14 [date]	Library: Agendas and meeting minutes In-class: practice writing agendas and meeting minutes	You and Your Writing (part 2)
Session 15 [date]	Lecture: Course wrap-up	Final literature review

IMPORTANT DATES

Last day to drop a course (via MavLink) and receive a 100% refund	TBD
Last day to withdraw from a course (via MavLink) with a grade of “W”	TBD

NOTE: This syllabus is written as an expectation of class topics, learning activities, and expected learning outcomes. However, the instructor reserves the right to make changes in this schedule that may result in enhanced or more effective learning for students. These modifications will not substantially change the intent or objectives of this course.

ASSESSMENTS (ACTIVITIES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EXAMS)

Reflections (2) Two reflections worth 20 points each.	40 points (total)
Resume and Cover Letter (1) One peer review worth 10 points and one final draft worth 50 points.	60 points (total)
Literature Review (1) One literature review worth 150 points.	150 points (total)
In-Class Assignments (7) Seven in-class assignments worth various points each.	70 points (total)
Attendance and Participation	80 points (total)
	400 points (total)



GRADING SCALE

Percent	Final Grade	Quality Points
98–100%	A+	4.00
94–97.9%	A	4.00
91–93.9%	A-	3.67
88–90.9%	B+	3.33
84–87.9%	B	3.00
81–83.9%	B-	2.67
78–80.9%	C+	2.33
77–77.9%	C	2.00
71–73.9%	C-	1.67
68–70.9%	D+	1.33
64–67.9%	D	1.00
61–63.9%	D-	0.67
Below 60.9%	F	0.00

WRITING GUIDELINES

Students should make sure that writing assignments are free of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Papers should adhere to the most recent citation style outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA).

PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

In this course, students will submit written work by making use of information and ideas found in print or online sources. Whenever material from another writer is used, it is important that students quote or paraphrase appropriately and cite the source.

The UNO Academic Integrity policy defines plagiarism as "presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source) and submitting academic work in whole or in part as one's own when such work has been prepared by another person or copied from another person."

Failure to cite sources appropriately is plagiarism, a serious academic offense. Plagiarized work will not be accepted. Consequences for plagiarism are up to the discretion of the instructor; they may range, for example, from rewriting all or part of a paper to a grade of F for the course. Students who plagiarize more than once are subject to disciplinary action, which may include expulsion from the university.

Students SHOULD NOT GUESS when it comes to using or citing another writer's work. Students should contact the instructor or a consultant at the UNO Writing Center with questions. Students should take a printout of the original source as well as the paper that is being written to the consultation.



ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

The maintenance of academic honesty and integrity is a vital concern of the University community. Any student found responsible for violating the [policy on Academic Integrity](#) shall be subject to both academic and disciplinary sanctions. Violations of the policy on Academic Integrity include, but are not limited to, the following: cheating, fabrication and falsification, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials and/or equipment, complicity in academic dishonesty, falsifying grade reports, and/or misrepresentation to avoid academic work. More information about these areas and the procedures addressing academic integrity is available from the Office of Academic and Student Affairs (EAB 202 | 402.554.2262).

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to arrive on time to class meetings. Students should come to class well prepared, meaning readings and other assignments have been completed. Students are expected to be respectful of their classmates and the instructor. Distracting and/or disrespectful behaviors will not be tolerated.

CELL PHONES, MOBILE DEVICES, AND LAPTOPS

Students are welcome to use cell phones, mobile devices, and/or laptops in class provided they are used for academic purposes such as note taking, accessing course materials, or researching course concepts and their use does not disrupt fellow classmates. Please silence devices if at all possible. A student who receives a phone call or text, should step outside the classroom to respond. DO NOT take pictures or video during class.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Students will be expected to have access to a computer frequently, as all writing assignments used will be typed out and not handwritten. The software students use to write assignments is irrelevant, as long as the writing guidelines outlined in this syllabus are followed. It is recommended that students have access to a computer weekly. Public computers are available on the UNO campus. Consult [Information Technology Services](#) and the [Criss Library](#), for more information on equipment locations and availability.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Technical support for common university systems, including Canvas and email, is available from Information Technology Services [technical support](#) located in Eppley Administration Building (EAB) 104.

ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Reasonable accommodations are provided for students who are registered with Accessibility Services Center (ASC) and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact ASC (Location: H&K 104, Phone: 402.554.2872, Email: unoaccessibility@unomaha.edu)



CRISS LIBRARY

UNO's Criss Library offers a wide variety of resources that support student learning. Subject specialist librarians have in-depth knowledge of researching within specific disciplines and can provide guidance for a specific area of study. Students are encouraged to explore customized resources featured on the [Criss Library](#) website.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The University of Nebraska at Omaha is prepared for a wide range of emergencies. Students should familiarize themselves with procedures and assistance available on UNO's [emergency information page](#). If travel to campus is not feasible due to a declared emergency, a combination of Canvas, teleconferencing, and other technologies will be used to facilitate academic continuity. Students will be notified of procedures through Canvas course site announcements and email as appropriate.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, students should use his/her best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. Students who are not able to attend class due to adverse weather conditions, should contact the instructor as soon as possible. Similarly, if the instructor is unable to reach the class location, students will be notified of any cancellation or change as soon as possible (by approximately 1 hour before class starts and by posting an announcement in Canvas). Students who cannot get to class because of weather conditions, will be provided allowances relative to attendance policies as well as any scheduled tests, quizzes, or other assessments.

PREFERRED NAME AND PREFERRED GENDER PRONOUNS

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. The instructor will gladly honor a student's request to be addressed by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise the instructor of this preference early in the semester so that instructor records may be changed appropriately.

WRITING CENTER

The UNO Writing Center offers free one-on-one consultations with trained consultants to all students, faculty, and staff. Their goal is to help writers improve their writing skills and confidence in all types of writing, in all subject areas, and at all stages of the writing process. For more information about their hours and locations or to schedule an appointment, go to unomaha.edu/writingcenter or visit their main location in Arts and Sciences Hall (ASH) 150.



SPEECH CENTER

The [UNO Speech Center](#) provides free consulting and coaching services to all UNO students, faculty, and staff in preparing oral presentations. The Speech Center Consulting Room can help students with presentation preparation, outlining, effective delivery techniques, along with any other presentational needs. Speech consulting will help at any stage in the speech-making process. For more information, visit the UNO Speech Center in Arts and Sciences Hall (ASH) 183 and 185.

STUDENT SAFETY

A variety of resources are available to support student safety and security. Students have experienced or are experiencing a difficult personal situation, should consult the resources available through the [Division of Student Success](#).

OUTCOMES MAP AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Competencies

The student learning outcomes for this course are built upon the following nine social work core competencies set forth by the CSWE's 2022 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) which is required for all accredited social work programs.

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.
2. Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
3. Engage in anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) in practice.
4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice.
5. Engage in policy practice.
6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.
9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

This map is intended to show how course topics, content, and activities align to the student learning outcomes outlined above. Course objectives are italicized to distinguish them from the core competencies set forth by the CSWE's 2022 EPAS.



EPAS Competency*	Course Objective/Student Learning Outcome	Assignment	Dimension*
1 = Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	<p>1. Apply core features of standard American English for professional written communication, e.g., grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation.</p> <p>2. Use NASW ethical principles in professional writing tasks through the lens of anti-racism and anti-oppression.</p> <p>3. Competently use word processing and web-based social media for social work practice.</p> <p>5. Demonstrate writing ability regarding agency-based communications for Generalist practice settings, i.e., email, formal letters, policy statements, memos, process recordings, case reports, grant proposals.</p>		K, S, V, CAP
3 = Engage in Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Practice	<p>4. Demonstrate competency in writing academic policy analyses and advocacy reports that include thesis statements, electronic literature searches, APA format, and anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) principles.</p>		K, S, CAP



*Dimensions Key:

K = Knowledge

S = Skills

V = Value

CAP = Cognitive and Affective Processing

REFERENCES AND SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

References

- Cronley, C., & Kilgore, C. D. (2016). Social work students and faculty: Testing the convergence of perspectives on student writing abilities. *Journal of Social Work Education, 52*(2), 214-233.
- Healy, K., & Mulholland, J. (2019). *Writing skills for social workers* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Jani, J. S., & Sarmiento Mellinger, M. (2015). Beyond “writing to learn”: Factors influencing students’ writing outcomes. *Journal of Social Work Education, 51*(1), 136-152.
- McDonald, D., Boddy, J., O’Callaghan, K., & Chester, P. (2015). Ethical professional writing in social work and human services. *Ethics and Social Welfare, 9*(4), 359-374.
- The New Social Worker. (2024). *The New Social Worker: The social work careers magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworker.com/>
- Purdue Online Writing Lab. (2024). *APA formatting and style guide*. Retrieved from owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html
- Tamburro, A. G., & Harris, M. (2016). Enhancing social work writing skills using project-based learning. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work, 21*(1), 51-61.
- Weisman, D. (2017). *Professional writing for social work practice* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.
- Writing guide for social workers. (2024). Retrieved from <https://socialworklicensure.org/resources/writing-guide/>
- Young, D. J. (2015). *The writer’s handbook: 12 workshops for effective writing: For social workers*. Ogden Dunes, IN: Writer’s Toolkit Publishing.

Classic References

- Woody, J. D., Zeleny, M., D’Souza, H. J., Harder, J., Reiser, J., & Szto, P. (2014). Progress in a social work writing course: Self-efficacy, course objectives, and skills. *Journal of Social Work Education, 50*, 507–524.

