

UWS 50B-1 Public Health: Writing with Data



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T/F: 9:35am-10:55am, Rabb 119

Rabb 226
Student Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30pm
and by appointment

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description

Over the past year, particularly with the COVID-19 pandemic, we've seen an increasing reliance on public health data to inform public policies, monitor progress, and guide individuals' health decisions. Public health data has been spun into narratives about right versus wrong, infographics that motivate action, and graphs that illustrate trends, among others. Since we've been inundated with quantitative data, you likely know what it's like to experience data as an audience member, however in this course, you'll become the composer with data at your communicative disposal. This course will encourage you to think about questions like: What is public health data? How is data generated and collected? How is public health data used or misused in academic, professional, and societal contexts? How do writers frame data to achieve certain ends? How does data visualization relate to communication? We will explore these questions across a variety of texts including CDC and NIH publications, TedTalks, and academic articles. After analyzing public health data use in different genres, you'll then embark on your own quantitative reasoning journey by crafting a research essay that incorporates public health data and strategic data visualization.

Success in this 4-credit hour course is based on the expectation that you will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (e.g. readings, responses, essays, etc.), in addition to regular scheduled class time.

UWS Learning Objectives

The University Writing Seminar introduces you to the power of writing as a means of communication and as a process of thinking and understanding. You will formulate meaningful arguments, support them with observations and evidence, and convey them clearly and persuasively. You will gain the tools to be a successful and confident writer in any discipline and become an active participant in critical conversations across the University and beyond. Most importantly, these skills will prepare you to engage as an informed citizen in a global society.

By the successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand writing as a recursive process of thinking and communication.
- Articulate elements of effective writing and integrate them into their own work.
- Participate in critical conversations by responding to openings, problems, or contradictions in existing scholarship.
- Assess your own and others' writing with respect to audience and purpose.
- Generate original questions and pursue independent research.
- Identify and evaluate sources and use them responsibly.
- Develop awareness of disciplinary differences in writing and adapt your writing to different genres and contexts.

First Year Experience

UWS is the centerpiece of the First Year Experience, which introduces students to the rich intellectual life of the university. As part of the UWS, students will **attend one [Critical Conversation](#)** between faculty from different departments. The goals of the Critical Conversations are to build first year cohort identity and introduce students to Brandeis' scholarly discourse and the variety of ways in which our faculty engage with the world and each other. Each seminar will also assign a brief experiential learning activity to expand the boundaries of the conventional classroom. All students taking UWS are encouraged to participate in faculty-led small group discussions to connect with faculty and other members of your cohort.

Our course has been assigned to attend "A Year of Climate Action/A Devised Participatory Performance" September 22, 2022, Spingold Theater Hall, Time TBA.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Required Materials

All course materials will be made available on our LATTE course page. Texts and readings should always be brought to class. Failing to do so will negatively impact your writing community membership grade, as it will be more difficult to discuss the day's readings without the proper text.

Writing Resources

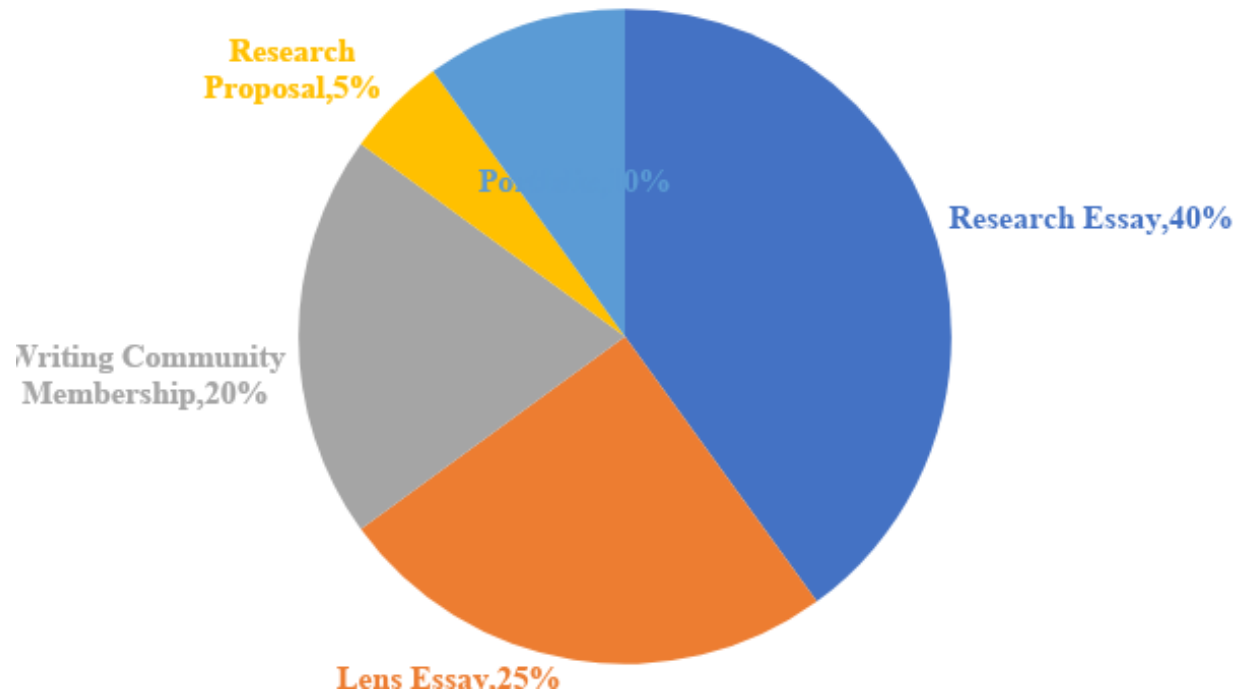
For additional helpful resources, check out:

- [Brandeis Writing Resources](#)
- [University Writing Center](#)

- [Write Now!](#)
- [UWS Research Guide](#)
- [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#)

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Grading Breakdown



Assignments

Briefly, the major assignments are as follows (each assignment will have more detailed instructions on LATTE)

1. **Lens Essay:** For this assignment, you will draw on insights from a lens text to arrive at a deeper understanding of a primary text.
2. **Research Proposal:** For this assignment, you will select a course-related topic of your own and write a detailed research proposal that includes your research questions, a literature review, and an annotated bibliography.
3. **Research Essay:** Having posed research questions in your research proposal, you will examine those questions in the context of a sophisticated argument supported with evidence from scholarly sources.

4. **Writing Community Membership:** This includes your active class participation, professional communication with your instructor and classmates, Critical Conversation reflection, Comparative Genre Analysis, LATTE posts, experiential learning reflection, etc.
5. **Portfolio:** This includes your pre-draft assignments, peer review letters, and end-of-the-semester reflective cover letter.

Drafting

Four steps precede the final draft of each essay:

- **Pre-Draft Assignments:** Each essay will be preceded by a number of pre-draft assignments—short pieces of writing designed to help you develop ideas. These assignments will be marked as complete or incomplete, and will count towards your portfolio grade.
- **First Drafts:** You are required to turn in a first draft of each essay. These drafts are important opportunities for you to receive feedback from me and your classmates in peer review. I do not expect these drafts to be perfect, but I do expect them to be complete—otherwise we cannot give you helpful advice.
- **Peer Review:** You will form a group with two of your classmates, read each other's drafts, and provide feedback for each other in class. These activities increase your audience awareness and give you an opportunity to reflect on concepts we've discussed in class.
- **Conferences:** Each student will have two conferences with me over the course of the semester—one to discuss the first draft of the lens essay and another to discuss the first draft of the research essay. Attendance is required; missing a conference is equivalent to missing a class.

Formatting

Submit all assignments to LATTE as **Word documents (no .pdf or .pages!)**. I utilize Word's comment feature to provide feedback. Microsoft Office is available to all Brandeis students for free. You can download it from [Information Technology Services](#). For document sharing with your peers, use Google docs.

Essays must use 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font. Double space your text, indent each paragraph, and include a title for every essay. Similarly, for every written piece of work (e.g. essays, reflection letters, etc.) include your name, my name, the course name, and the date in the upper left-hand corner.

COURSE POLICIES

Class Participation

You are a valued and integral part of our writing community and, as such, have important responsibilities to our class regarding on-time arrival and consistent participation. Your primary obligation is social in nature: your commitment is to our course community and to making it

work well. Thus, you are expected to contribute to a community atmosphere that promotes a supportive exchange of insights and ideas.

Before class, complete and puzzle over assigned reading and/or viewing and finish all homework and/or other assignments. Since much of our class time will be spent in class activities and workshops, your preparation is critical both to your success and the success of others.

While in class, (1) volunteer meaningful comments and contribute to small group discussions to move discussions forward, (2) listen actively, (3) give useful and thoughtful input to members of our writing community, and (4) welcome all community members to share, learn, think, and grow.

Each of you has something exceptional to contribute, and we look forward to learning from you. As of this fall, all in-person undergraduate and graduate classes in the School of Arts & Sciences will no longer have an option for remote participation. See Writing Community Membership instructions.

Attendance

Your experience in our UWS writing community relies on collective attendance. Studies show that academic student success is highly correlated to attendance. One of the benefits of the UWS is its small class size, and this benefit is best realized when everybody regularly attends. That said, you are permitted to miss up to **three class sessions** regardless of the reason; there is **no distinction between excused and unexcused absences**. **Each additional absence beyond the 3 permitted will lower your attendance grade by one full letter grade.** For example, if you miss 4 classes, you'd earn a B.

If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the assignments, class notes, and course changes from a classmate. It is also your responsibility to keep track of and complete the missing work.

Grade Queries

In addition to substantive comments designed to encourage opportunities for your writing development, each major assignment will be accompanied by a letter grade. It is reasonable for you to have queries about their grades and to strive to understand how to improve your performance. To increase transparency and to ensure fairness to all students, here is how to initiate a grade discussion: (1) Email me a one-half to one-page written summary of what about your grade is unclear to you and/or what area you are struggling with. Your written explanation should refer directly to the assignment overview and the grading rubric. Along with this summary, include a copy of your assignment; (2) Schedule a 20-minute meeting with me to discuss the assignment. Please note I do not hold grade discussion meetings in the first 24 hours after returning grades to allow you sufficient time to review your grades properly against the assignment overview and the grading rubric. Similarly, I will not discuss a grade if more than two weeks have passed since the grade was given.

Late Work, Extensions, and Minimum Page Requirements

I am usually willing to offer extensions, given legitimate reasons. **If you're afraid your work will not be completed in time, please contact me more than 24 hours before the due date to arrange for an extension.** Otherwise, late work will lead to a reduction by one-third of a letter grade per day. (For example, if you earned a B on an essay but turned it in one day late, you'd receive a B-.) To clarify: If an essay is due electronically at 11:55pm and you submit it at 11:56pm, it is late. Additionally, final essays that do not meet the minimum page requirements will receive a third of a letter grade reduction for each page that the essay falls short.

Conferences

Twice throughout the semester we will meet in a 20-minute, one-on-one conference to discuss your work. These conferences should active conversations, not simply a time for me to tell you what I think. Please come to each conference having re-read your essay and prepared to discuss ideas, questions, problems, etc. You should plan on taking notes during our discussions.

Laptops

Laptops are permitted in class to access course materials.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to be honest in your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually in section 4 of the [Rights and Responsibilities](#). Violating academic integrity is considered a serious offense by the University and is treated accordingly. Violation of academic integrity includes, but is not limited to, all of the following: cheating on exams, having unauthorized possession of exams, not properly citing sources, and in any way submitting the work of another person as your own (plagiarism). Academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade for the particular assignment or exam, a failing grade for the entire course, suspension or expulsion from the university. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. To avoid plagiarism, be sure to acknowledge the source, using the conventions of an appropriate academic documentation style (i.e. MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, ACS, etc.). Citation and research assistance can be found at [Brandeis Library Guides](#).

Preferred Name & 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. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In the University Writing Program, we welcome writers wherever they are in their writing and work with them as they discover how best to use their writing voice. We aim to push all students in their thinking and use of language while respecting each person's agency to express themselves in ways that reflect their choice of Englishes, languages, pronouns, stories, and perspectives.

In this course, we will work together to ensure that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives will be well served. The diversity and identities which students bring will be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. To this end, we will engage with materials and activities that respect and honor each student's unique experiences and perspectives. If anyone says something in class that makes you feel uncomfortable, angry, threatened, and/or excluded, please talk to me about it (anonymously, if you prefer). Furthermore, if you feel like your performance in this class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to contact me. I want to be a resource for you.

Classroom Health and Safety

Register for the [Brandeis Emergency Notification System](#). Students who receive an emergency notification while attending class should notify their instructor immediately. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, call 911. As a precaution, review [this active shooter information sheet](#). On the Brandeis campus, all students, faculty, staff and guests are required to observe the university's policies on physical distancing and mask-wearing to support the health and safety of all classroom participants. Review up to date [COVID-related health and safety policies](#) regularly.

Accommodations

Brandeis seeks to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students, and I want to support you in your learning. If you think you may require accommodations, you will need to work with Student Accessibility Support (SAS) (781-736-3470, access@brandeis.edu). You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the [SAS website](#), including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS. If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as you can so that I can ensure effective implementation of accommodations for this class.

Teaching Continuity

Current events have reminded us all that campus closures, long-term absences, and other disruptions are possible at any time. As your instructor I will communicate with you about any changes to our course schedule and assignments via email and via our LATTE page's "Announcements" section, located near the top of the page. I also expect you to communicate with me about any unforeseen circumstances that might affect your performance in the class. If you have any questions about how unforeseen events might be impacting our course, please let me know in person or via email.

RESOURCES

Library

[The Brandeis Library](#) collections and staff offer resources and services to support Brandeis students, faculty and staff. Librarians and Specialists from Research & Instructional Services, Public Services, Archives & Special Collections, Sound & Image Media Studios, MakerLab, AutomationLab, and Digital Scholarship Lab are available to help you through consultations and workshops.

Writing Center

For the writing assignments in this class, I encourage you to make use of the [Writing Center](#), which offers free writing support to all Brandeis community members in the form of 60-minute face-to-face appointments over Zoom and asynchronous e-tutoring document-drop appointments. Writers of all levels in all subjects—working on anything from their first college essays to lab reports, senior theses, dissertations, and job and fellowship materials—are welcome. The Writing Center feedback balances larger writing issues, such as organization and use of evidence, with more mechanical concerns, such as sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation. For both options, feedback will be guided by issues that you raise. Regardless of your chosen format, you will receive clear steps to improve your writing from a trained consultant.

Every semester, the University Writing Center also holds a series of UWS workshops on each of the three major assignments. All UWS students are welcome to [register for these workshops online](#).

Student Support

Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. If a student, faculty, or staff member wants to learn more about support resources, the [Support at Brandeis](#) webpage offers a comprehensive list that includes these staff colleagues you can consult, along with other support resources:

- [The Care Team](#)
- [Academic Services](#)
- [University Ombuds](#)
- [Office of Equal Opportunity](#)