



Composing Health Literacies: Perspectives and Resources for Undergraduate Writing instruction

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Editor Michael Madson once again compiles an excellent collection of scholars who speak to theoretical and pragmatic ways of teaching students about health literacies and writing practices. Similar to his previous collection *Teaching Writing in the Health Professions: Perspectives, Problems, and Practices* (Fall 2022 Programmatic Perspectives), this volume also answers the call for more scholarship on writing in the health professions by explicitly connecting health literacy with undergraduate writing instruction. In his introduction, Madson frames this book as an answer to the global health literacy crisis—a crisis of adults lacking basic knowledge about their health that leads to poor decision-making, possibly leading to hospitalization, rehospitalization, or premature death (p. 1). This well-defined exigency leads Madson to compile a book that views undergraduate writing instruction as a solution to the health literacy crisis.

What follows in the book are three major sections that examine different aspects of health literacy in undergraduate writing education. Part one explores assignments and courses. Part two examines programmatic profiles that include significant health literacy writing instruction, and three provides theories and field studies that inform classroom instruction.

The primary audience of this book are instructors teaching undergraduate students pursuing health-related professions, and instructors teaching undergraduate students seeking careers outside of the healthcare industry; critical thought about health literacy is needed regardless of one's major or career.

Part One: Assignments and Courses

The largest section of the book is dedicated to giving readers details about writing assignments and exams that can be implemented in undergraduate writing courses. In the chapter "Engaging Health Literacies Through Multimodal Projects in First-Year Writing," Karen Diane Groller provides descriptions of three major assignments in her first-year writing course that is on the topic of health literacy. Her positions as associate professor of nursing and public health and the director of first-year writing uniquely situates her to combine the fields of health literacy and composition. Through the framework of Anne Beaufort's five knowledge domains, she has her students analyze health literacy memes, compose a research paper on health literacy, and create a public service announcement with either a visual infographic or podcast.

While Groller presents three different assignments, the next chapter by Kasey Larson et al. provides analysis and rationale for an argumentative essay assignment that proposes a solution to a health literacy problem. This writing assignment is composed of several different sections: evaluating the health literacy problem through a survey of literature to determine the issues and significance of the problem; identifying a proposed original solution with an actionable component; and justifying the proposed solution with clear reasoning that also addresses potential opposition to their solution (p. 36-37).

The next two chapters focus on teaching students about a single concept within health literacy writing instruction. Allison Walker's chapter explores empathy and Jarron Slater's chapter examines rhetorical aesthetics. In Walker's chapter, she presents four assignments that she calls "empathy adventures" (p. 59) that gets students in the undergraduate writing classroom to think and experience empathy. In Slater's chapter, he explains three different exams he uses in a writing class that emphasizes health literacies where the exams specifically focus on teaching rhetorical aesthetics which he defines as the ability to listen and understand the experiences of oneself and others — a concept easily linked to Walker's definition of empathy.

The last chapter is Michael Klein's "Cross-Disciplinary Vaccine Education through Campus-Community Partnerships" where he explains his personal experience teaching the upper-division course Writing in the Health Sciences. The chapter

includes how Klein invited his students to wrestle with vaccine debates by partnering with local clients and agencies in the state of Virginia to create better health literacy education materials.

Parts Two and Three: Programs and Extensions

Part Two consists of three chapters: a chapter about a mixed methods approach to understanding faculty members' perceptions of students' writing in the Health and Science Department of one university, a chapter about a case study of the reflective writing curriculum in a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Health Sciences program, and a chapter explaining a curriculum overview of a BS in Healthcare Studies. The first chapter of this section is by Lucy Bryan Malenke and is titled "Context Matters: Identifying Strategic Opportunities to Support Health Literacies Through Writing Interventions." In this mixed methods study, the author invites Health and Science faculty to give their opinion on the state of writing in their particular program through the method of a survey with an additional follow-up interview that comprised of questions related to the quality of students' writing abilities, writing assignments, writing resources, and perceptions of the campus' Writing Center. While participating faculty agreed that writing is important, the faculty also expressed dissatisfaction or ambivalence about their students' writing abilities, not confident that the students are adequately prepared for their graduate work or future careers.

The next two chapters in Part Two are more focused on curriculum development. Yuko Taniguchi et al. use reflective writing assignments across four years of a BS in Health Studies program to empower students to think about their experiences and turn them into learning. Madson et al. also discuss curriculum by explaining in detail their curriculum for the BS in Healthcare Studies at the Medical University of South Carolina. This chapter covers the programmatic outcomes of this program and lists several of this program's courses along with descriptions for Academic and Scientific Writing, Overview of the US Health Care System, Evaluation of Health Promotion, Rural Public Health, etc.

Part Three also consists of three chapters. In the chapter "Cultural Health Navigation and Health Literacy: Implications for the Undergraduate Writing Curriculum," Katherine Morelli discusses the pedagogical implications of her research project studying a group of multilingual and multicultural health navigators who work at a refugee pediatric clinic. Based on field research, she concludes that several factors must be embedded in undergraduate writing courses including navigating differences of language and culture; understanding the rhetorical knowledge of different workspaces; adapting to new technologies and forms of communication; and engaging in service-learning projects. Like Morelli, authors Charles Woods and Noah Wason draw conclusions based on an event—in their case, the Apple Watch Series and its connection to tracking personal health. The scholars put forward the proposition that undergraduate writing students need to understand and grapple with the ethics of data tracking devices such as those implemented in the Apple Watch Series. The last chapter of the book is by Kirk St. Amant, "Creating Content for Contexts of Care: A Cognitive Approach to Achieving Health Literacies Through Usability." He argues that prototype theory

("how individuals recognize locations, persons, and items") is a helpful lens for the usability testing of healthcare materials (p. 207).

Overall, this edited work by Madson provides an invaluable resource for both TPC program directors and TPC instructors who are looking for new and innovative ways to incorporate health literacies into writing instruction and curriculum. Whether readers are looking for specific assignments for first-year writing, assignments for upper-level health literacy classes, or examples of curriculum descriptions and outcomes related to health literacy in writing instruction, this book is a wonderful reference for scholars and instructors who are both new and seasoned in the field of writing in the health professions—an excellent addition to the field of technical and professional communication.

Author Information

Lynn Russell is Assistant Professor of English at Bryan College. Recently graduated from Old Dominion University with her PhD in English, technical communication focus, Russell teaches courses in first-year composition, writing tutoring, technical communication, linguistics, and editing. Her research interests focus on TPC at small US institutions, particularly how these institutions advocate, implement, and sustain their programs.