Capstone Course I
Guidelines for Writing

1 Why is Capstone writing intensive?

Simply put, the end goal of this course is you will all be submitting reports to a client. Writing a consulting report is not something you can slap together at the last minute, nor is it something that you can do without practicing your writing. All the writing assignment we have been handing out this semester are designed to allow you the opportunity to practice your writing skills. The ultimate goal is to learn how to clearly and accurately describe statistical concepts to people who may not necessarily be statisticians themselves. We encourage you to look at these assignments as a way to practice before tackling the consulting projects. To use an analogy, would you form a sports team and then go to the field for the big game without practicing before hand? And if you did what do you think the results would be?

An important aspect of successful writing is your first draft is simply your first draft. We guarantee you that every piece of literature, newspaper article, technical report, textbook, and so on has been thorough dozens if not hundreds of rough drafts, first drafts, second drafts, corrections, rewrites, revisions, and reformats. Think of your first draft as your initial thoughts and ideas. First drafts do not have to necessarily be written documents. Things like outlines, writing out ideas, and even thinking about what you want to say are important parts of the process.

2 Helpful hints for writing assignments

1. Read the assignment.

2. Seriously, read the assignment.

3. Get clear on who the intended audience is.

4. Think about what you are going to say, how you are going to say it, and in what order you are going to say it.

5. Write down your ideas.

6. After writing the initial draft, let it sit for at least 24 hours. Then go back and reread it.

7. At this stage DO NOT simply correct grammar. Look at the whole thing. Ask yourself questions: Does it speak to the intended audience? Is what I wrote clear? Is there a better way I could have organized this?

9. When in doubt have someone else read it or read it aloud.

3 General guidelines for Capstone writing assignments

1. Unless otherwise specified, assume your audience is your client. This means they are most likely not familiar with statistical jargon and concepts.

2. Always type. Do not handwrite last minute corrections.

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