English 420—Business Writing
Time: 10:30 – 11:20 p.m. MWF
Location: WTHR 212

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overview

English 420 teaches students the rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for producing effective business letters, memos, reports, and collaborative projects in professional contexts. The curriculum is informed by current research in rhetoric and professional writing and is guided by the needs and practices of business, industry, and society at large, as well as by the expectations of Purdue students and programs. All sections of English 420 are offered in networked computer classrooms or exclusively online to ensure that students taking the course are prepared for the writing environment of the 21st-century workplace. The course teaches the rhetorical principles that help students shape their business writing ethically, for multiple audiences, in a variety of professional situations.

required texts:

- Porter, Sullivan, and Johnson-Eilola, *Professional Writing Online 3.0* (ISBN 0205652123)

This is an electronic resource. Codes can be purchased online, through Pearson or Amazon, or in person at the University Bookstore. You **must** access the text by the second day of class. Other texts—including websites, .pdfs, and Microsoft Word documents—will be posted at the class website, usually about a week before you need to have them read. In order to access the text, you must buy an access code. Don't purchase used access codes, as they will expire before the course ends.

course website: courses.rhetorike.org/wallin2

Aside from the syllabus and first calendar, you will not be given a physical copy of any handouts, readings, or assignment sheets. All readings will be posted to the course website, and all announcements will be made via the course website.

Because the course website is such an integral part of this class, it is vital that you check it several times a week. Unless you're told to do otherwise, you should begin each class by logging into the website. Much of our in-class instruction will have some kind of online component—you'll be posting things to the site, or following links to the day's reading, etc.—so you need to be logged in and ready to go at the start of class.

course goals

writing in context

Analyze professional cultures, social contexts, and audiences to determine how they shape the various purposes and forms of workplace writing, such as persuasion, organizational communication, and public discourse, with an emphasis on

- writing for a range of defined audiences and stakeholders
- negotiating the ethical dimensions of workplace communication

project management

Understand, develop, and deploy various strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents both individually and collaboratively, including

- selecting and using appropriate technologies that effectively and ethically address professional situations and audiences
- building professional *ethos* through documentation and accountability

document design

Make rhetorical design decisions about workplace documents, including

- understanding and adapting to genre conventions and audience expectations
- understanding and implementing design principles of format and layout
- interpreting and arguing with design
- drafting, researching, testing, and revising visual designs and information architecture

teamwork

Learn and apply strategies for successful teamwork and collaboration, such as
- working online with colleagues
- determining roles and responsibilities
- managing team conflicts constructively
- responding constructively to peers' work
- soliciting and using peer feedback effectively
- achieving team goals

research

Understand and use various research methods to produce professional documents, including
- analyzing professional contexts
- locating, evaluating, and using print and online information selectively for particular audiences and purposes
- triangulating sources of evidence
- selecting appropriate primary research methods, such as interviews, observations, focus groups, and surveys to collect data
- working ethically with research participants

technology

Use and evaluate the writing technologies frequently used in the workplace, such as emailing, instant messaging, image editing, video editing, presentation design and delivery, HTML editing, Web browsing, content management, and desktop publishing technologies.

course projects and activities

unit 1: the backgrounder

The focus of Unit 1 is the backgrounder, a common report genre in the professional world. White papers are used in business, industrial, and governmental contexts to sum up the gist of what's known about a subject and, often, to market a product. During this project you will learn about
- the white paper genre through collaborative creation of a white paper.
- new writing and communication technologies that support business writing in college and the workplace, with attention to open source and other freely available software or writing spaces (online networks, blogging, etc.)
- collaboration, project management, and strategies for writing and revising.
- producing a text for the web in HTML that integrates visual content, such as screenshots, tables, and flowcharts

unit 2: group project

For Unit 2, you will work collaboratively in project teams on a client-based service-learning project that teaches you to manage complex writing challenges in real contexts that matter. You will learn principles of project management, collaboration, document cycling, oral presentation, and client-based research. Because you will work with real clients—either in the community or online, you will also learn important principles of professional and ethical communication.

unit 3: employment project

You will be asked to locate a job for which you are qualified and apply for it. Step 1 of the project asks you to learn about and use various web-based resources for job seekers and ultimately to select one job or internship to pursue. Steps 2 and 3 ask you to prepare the all-important "Job Application Letter" and a resume specifically designed for the job or internship you've selected in Step 1. In Step 4, you will assess your experience in a "Project Assessment Document." In the process of completing each step, you will work closely with your peers and your instructor to shape your writing so that it represents you and your experience fully and effectively, given the rhetorical circumstances. You will also study and respond to examples from the textbook.

weblogs

Much of your writing for this class will be posted on the course site to your individual weblog or our community weblog home page. Weblog posting assignments will include drafts, project logs, and research notes, among other types of content. The calendar specifies what you should post to your weblog and by when, so let that be your guide.

reading responses

We will have many readings each week, and you are responsible for writing one, 300-word forum post as a reading response. The reading responses will synthesize the readings and your reactions to them, much like class discussion.

comments and replies

All comments and replies to another's blog post should follow effective rhetorical strategies for networking with others on the Web. (Readings from the course text provide guidelines to follow.)

- Keep threads alive and relevant.
- Follow-up comments with further discussion.

Think of your comments and replies as part of a lively class discussion in which everyone participates.

grading

breakdown

backgrounder project	25%
group project	25%
employment project	25%
ethos, weblogs, reading responses, , peer review, etc.	25%

The three major projects in the course will be comprised of several components, each of which will be worth a percentage of your final grade.

All major assignments will be graded on the standard plus-minus letter-grade scale: A=100-94, A-=93-90, B+==89-87, B=86-84, B-=83-80, C+=79-77, C=76-74, C-=73-70, D+=69-67, D=66-64, D-=63-60, F=59 or below.
Students must participate in all of the three major projects and complete a majority of the required weblog posting assignments in order to pass this class. Students with questions about final grades should review university policies regarding grade appeals, which are outlined by the Dean of Students here: http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/gradeappeal.pdf. The University regulations are here: http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu_conduct/stu_regulations.html.

class participation, reading responses, peer reviews

This portion of your grade will be based on

- How well you implement the guidelines and best practices for posting comments and creating reading responses, as presented on our course site and discussed in the textbook.
- The degree to which your your peer reviews and responses offer insightful feedback and suggestions on your classmates' drafts.
- The degree to which your reading responses and comment posts demonstrate learning of the course content.

The degree to which your reading responses and comment posts engage with and contribute to the learning of others in the course.

late work

The majority of missed class assignments cannot be made up. If a serious and unavoidable problem arises, however, you should contact me in writing prior to the deadline to determine whether or not an extension for the work will or will not be granted.

technology

system requirements

In order to participate fully in the course, you should already be able to use the technology platform and applications listed below.

- Mac OS X or Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7
- Microsoft Office for the PC or Mac (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) or Apple counterparts (Pages, Keynote, Numbers)
- Web Browser (e.g., Firefox, Safari, or Internet Explorer 8)
- Email Program (e.g., Purdue Webmail, Thunderbird, Gmail, etc.)
- Adobe Acrobat and Reader (for PDF documents, collaborative review)

technology responsibilities

Familiarity with certain technologies is crucial for participation and success in the course. If you need any assistance now or at any point during the semester, please do not hesitate to ask.

During the semester, you'll need regular access to the Internet and email. Because the course home page is the main locus of the class community, you are responsible for reading and keeping current with all content posted there, including what has been submitted by both the instructor and your fellow students. You'll be responsible for configuring your system to access course materials, to read course email and participate in online discussions, and to submit your work. Very early in the semester, you will be asked to demonstrate that you can meet these responsibilities:

- Register for the course website and complete your profile information.
- Post a message about yourself and your interests
- Read the course description and calendar, then ask questions when you are uncertain about requirements or activities.
- Set up your @purdue.edu email or an alternative that you can access regularly and reliably
- Become proficient sending and receiving email attachments, resolving file compatibility issues, and following email decorum.
- Check the course calendar before each class meeting.
- Become proficient participating in the class Drupal space.
- Become more proficient with unfamiliar computer technologies and applications, including
- Web editing software, document cycling systems, desktop publishing applications, and graphics programs.
- Maintain back-up copies of all assignments via your home directory, disks, USB drives, or CDs.

If at any time you have problems accessing the Internet from home, you'll need to find a public lab or connection point. Problems with computers will not be an excuse for falling behind or failing to complete required assignments. If your Internet service goes down, find another connection point. If your computer breaks, use another one. In other words, find a way to complete the assignments on time. Because computer problems are a fact of life, always work to complete your assignments early and make frequent backups to multiple media.

policies
collaborative work

Teamwork is a required component of the course. You and your project team members are responsible for updating one another and me about assignment development and progress. In addition, you also are responsible for negotiating together all aspects of your work, including planning, drafting, revising, file managing, and scheduling of assignments. When a collaborative project is assigned, you will receive explicit guidelines for successful collaboration.

behavior

This course relies heavily on discussion. We'll be doing a lot of reading, and discussing most of the reading in class. While it can be intimidating to make comments in front of your peers, you're expected to make a good effort to do so. Being nervous about class discussion is completely understandable. It's also appropriate to react and respond to the comments people are making in class. Learning to think quick and respond coherently in face-to-face interaction is an important rhetorical skill. But the class must **always** be considered a safe zone—a place where you can comment without fear of being mocked or belittled. Inflammatory remarks, personal attacks on me or other class members, racism (serious or humorous), or other hurtful comments will not be tolerated. If you make these types of comments I'll first call it to your attention. If, after you've been warned, you continue, I will ask you to leave class. If you consistently violate the Purdue University Student Conduct Code,(the above incidents are covered under sections 3, 4, 7, and 11), I'll call campus security and have you escorted to the Dean's office.

attendance

If you have three (or less than three) absences, your grade won't be adversely affected by attendance, and you'll be well on track to receiving full credit for participation. For each absence you accrue over the allowed limit (3), you will lose 1/3 of a full letter grade from your final grade. That means, if you have earned an A, but have missed class five times, you will receive a B+. However, if you miss more than 11 class periods, you will fail the course, even if you've completed and submitted all major assignments.

Attention to personal life while in class (Facebook, email, texting, etc) will result in you being marked absent for the day. If you're texting or sleeping regularly during class, I'll notify you out of class. If you don't stop, you'll be marked absent. If you are consistently late, you stand to forfeit a portion of your attendance/participation grade, depending on the frequency and severity of your lateness. Generally speaking, if you're late three times, it counts as a full absence.

If my attendance policy is unclear, please drop by my office and we'll talk about it (HEAV 308A).

grief absence policy

Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS). GAPS Policy: Students will be excused for funeral leave and given the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for misses assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student's family.[....]
A student should contact the ODOS to request that a notice of his or her leave be sent to instructors. The student will provide documentation of the death or funeral service attended to the ODOS. Given proper documentation, the instructor will excuse the student from class and provide the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for missed assignments or assessments. If the student is not satisfied with the implementation of this policy by a faculty member, he or she is encouraged to contact the Department Head and if necessary, the ODOS, for further review of his or her case. In a case where grades are negatively affected, the student may follow the established grade appeals process.

plagiarism

This is the copying, deliberate or not, of another person's work and/or ideas without the proper citation. This can result in failure of the project, the failure of the course, dismissal from Purdue University, and other disciplinary action. We will discuss it further in class, but you also need to be aware of what it is and how to avoid it. When in doubt, you can always check with me.

disability

If you have an ongoing condition that interferes with your ability to complete assigned work in the class, you should contact the Disability Resource Center to inquire about accommodation. If you have a documented disability that requires special accommodations (you already have an accommodation letter), please see me privately within the first week of class to make arrangements.

pandemic and catastrophe

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Information about possible changes will be communicated by me through email. If you have questions, please email me, and for more information, see ITAP's Campus Emergency website: http://www.itap.purdue.edu/tlt/faculty/