

Written Professional Communication (ENGCMP 400-1200)
Summer (s2), 2016 | University of Pittsburgh | M/W 12-3:15 | Cathedral of Learning 204

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is centered around the analysis, rehearsal, and revision of writing for professional communicative situations. You will begin by researching a company and profession of interest to you, and will analyze the written media produced by that company, as well as how active participants find, secure, and professionalize careers in that field. Based on this research, you will develop a professional portfolio of materials as though applying to and hired into an aspirant career. Because professional communication in the digital age increasingly happens over social networks, students will also develop a professionally-oriented Twitter profile for content sharing with classmates and for reaching out to and interacting with individuals, professional organizations, and corporations associated with a career and/or intellectual areas of interest. In the second half of term we will enter into discussions regarding workplace ethics, from which you will develop a report and memo series pitching a company policy based on that issue. Students who engage in this work thoughtfully will obtain theoretical and practical knowledge of professional rhetoric that will be useful for future careers and beyond.

COURSE MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES

There are no required purchases for this course. All readings will either be provided via PDF or hyperlink on Courseweb. If you prefer to read from hardcopies, it will be your responsibility to print them. Keep in mind that by providing scanned or electronic documents to you I am operating under fair use best practices for copyrighted material. Please do not distribute.

All assignment prompts, the assignments themselves, and my feedback will be provided via Courseweb. We will also occasionally use the collaborative composition affordances of Box, which you are provided as a student at Pitt (like Google Drive or Dropbox).

We will spend ample amount of time in-class looking at web texts and composing, so you should bring your laptop to each class session. Please see me if the technological demands of this course will be a challenge for you.

COURSE GOALS

Written Professional Communication (WPC) is a writing-intensive course that allows students to become stronger writers as they explore forms of reading and writing that are typical of professional settings. Students in the course create documents that showcase their ability to successfully enter the workplace. The class encourages students to create a writing process to use throughout their careers, from

composition and revision through editing and proofreading. A core course in Pitt's Public and Professional Writing (PPW) Certificate Program, WPC has five main goals for students:

- **Understand what it means to be a professional:** Students read closely and critically as they analyze the characteristics of and barriers to professional discourse. As students work to develop a professional identity, they study ethical responsibilities and learn how to conduct sound primary and secondary research. Most sections of WPC also deal with collaborative writing and the role of the team in today's workplace.
- **Consider a wide range of audiences and the consequences of writing:** This class helps students create reader-centered texts for a variety of audiences. Students will engage with issues such as multiple readers, specialized and non-specialized writing, bias, diversity, jargon, and information overload. Students work to develop their voice and tone in professional documents.
- **Communicate effectively through common workplace genres:** Students produce at least 25 pages over the course of the term, usually in the form of one large project and a series of smaller assignments. Frequently these assignments enable students to focus on their own career paths. Students learn to communicate in a variety of forms such as memos, letters, emails, career search materials, reports, proposals, instructions and procedures, press releases, Website writing, multimedia texts, and oral presentation materials.
- **Engage actively in the process of revision:** In addition to receiving feedback from their teacher, students have opportunities to receive feedback on drafts from their classmates in both small and large groups. Since much of the writing in WPC allows students to concentrate on their own academic and professional goals and interests, many of the substantially revised documents (often in the form of a professional portfolio) may also benefit students as they progress in their careers.
- **Write with awareness of textual conventions:** Like other courses in the PPW Certificate, WPC helps students improve their ability to compose according to accepted conventions of Standard Written English. Students practice writing with attention to grammar, style, clarity, conciseness, objectivity, organization, and effective sentence and paragraph structure.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THIS COURSE

Participation, Active Engagement, & Preparedness (15% of final grade)

This is a discussion-oriented seminar and engagement in our conversations is mandatory. Individuals who are actively engaged arrive on time, take notes, ask questions, and interact with peers and the ideas of your peers with curiosity and respect. Engagement is evidenced in the body (making eye contact, putting your cell phone away, etc.) as much as through verbal contributions. *If you do not appear engaged I will assume you are unprepared for class. I will not provide warnings or call you out, but if I notice that you are attending to something other than this course your participation grade will be lowered.*

Included in this part of the grade is your preparedness in terms of the timely and thorough completion of project drafts, participation in in-class workshops, and completion of in-class writing activities. Incomplete, late, or minimal drafts and in-class compositions will lower your participation grade by 2 percentage points.

Twitter Participation (5% of final grade)

While there are more conventional professional social networks like LinkedIn, Twitter can be a powerful networking tool as well as a place to quickly capture web media and share it with others. As a part of this course you'll put together a professionally-oriented Twitter and will reflect on your desired public persona via this particular social network.

Commonplace Log (10% of final grade)

As a part of your preparation for class I'll often ask you to contribute something to a commonplace log, a repository for points of engagement from the reading as well as examples and resources that will help you and your classmates prepare for class discussion and your composition projects. We'll build ours collaboratively through the discussion forum feature on Courseweb.

Meeting Agenda and Meeting Minutes (5%)

Once during the term and in small collaborative groups, you will be responsible for coming up with a reading or small set of readings related to an issue of professional ethics. I will provide one of the readings, and your group must come up with a case example or examples, and any other supplementary readings you feel might benefit your classmates.

Portfolio 1 (25%)

At the midterm you'll turn in the final drafts for the first half of your major composition projects along with a reflective introduction:

- Company Profile Analysis
- Career Profile, Cover Letter & Resume

Portfolio 2 (30%)

- Report on an ethical issue for the workplace
- Memo series on an issue of professional ethics
- Twitter Reflection & Rationale

Final Presentation (10% of final grade)

On the final day of term you will offer a formal presentation on/from one of the projects you put together for either portfolio, complete with take-away materials (handouts) or powerpoint to distribute/show your classmates.

MY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THIS COURSE

Fostering a Fun and Safe Collaborative Learning Environment

As a discussion-based seminar, my role in this course is to design activities that have you engaged in applied learning through collaborative problem-solving (working together to figure something out), critical analysis (analysis by inquiry and interpretation), and critical making (aiming to understand a thing by making that thing). I'll try to design activities that make this as meaningful as possible.

Facilitating Workshops

I will often bring examples from student writing being generated for this class for discussion and writing activities. The purpose of these workshops is not to have you critique the examples; rather, the idea is that

you'll learn something by looking at works-in-progress about the challenges (and excitement!) of learning professional communication. Each student can expect to have their work brought in front of the class at least once (if not twice) over the course of the term.

Making Myself Available for One-on-One Conversation Outside of Class

Especially because of the condensed timeline for this course, I will not be able to provide written feedback until you turn in portfolios, after which point grades are final. I am, however, happy to meet for one-on-one or small group conversations. Please especially see me at the first sign of confusion or difficulty understanding or getting through the process (this is another reason to start writing early -- you don't want to hold off and then panic). Unless otherwise noted, I will hang out in my office (CL 617F) for around an hour or so after class. We can also meet by appointment, with advanced requests.

I am generally available over email, though I try to keep regular "business hours" and do not typically respond past 6pm unless the matter is urgent. Please reread this syllabus and other course materials to find out if your question is answerable without me before contacting me. If you do email, please use proper business email etiquette (see below).

Evaluating Your Work

Your participation and course projects will be evaluated through letter grades and the following numerical equivalents: A/95 = Superior Attainment, B/85 = Meritorious Attainment, C/75 = Adequate Attainment, D/65 = Minimal Attainment, F/55 = Failure. I may offer pluses or minuses to reflect movement toward the next level of attainment up or down (+/- 3, so a B+ is an 88, a C- is a 72, etc.). Final grades will be determined by the following scale: A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 88-89, B = 83-87, B- = 80-82, C+ = 78-79, C = 73-77, C- = 70-72, D = 60-69, F = below 60. Participation will be evaluated based on the criteria described above. Compositions will be evaluated as follows:

- **Compositions evaluated at the "A" level** exceed expectations. This work impresses in terms of the sophistication and nuance of the work and the student's grasp of the requirements as functional aspects of the given genre. "A" papers are delivered entirely free of typos and major grammatical errors. *I do not offer "A"s liberally.*
- **Compositions evaluated at the "B" level** are moving toward nuance and sophistication, but may still be working something out, in terms of the conventions of the genre, sense of audience, or interpretation of the requirements. *I do offer "B"s liberally.*
- **Compositions evaluated at the "C" level** complete all requirements to some degree, but are lacking a robust interpretation of the requirements or reflect a misunderstanding of genre conventions. Any evidence that the project is also an assignment (e.g. attending to me as your audience instead of your professional audience) will merit a "C".
- **Compositions evaluated at the "D" level** have some aspect of the genre in question, but have dramatically misunderstood the requirements, have turned in something without the appropriate depth and breadth, have "phoned it in" etc.
- **Compositions evaluated at the "F" level** were turned in late (see policy below).

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, as each class relies on the last and builds up to the next. Students missing any more than one class session will be at risk of not passing this course, as your grade will drop one full letter grade per additional absence. There is no way to “make up” missed in-class work. Chronic lateness at the start of class or after break will count as an absence.

Due Dates/Late Penalties

Just like in any professional context, you must meet your deadlines. Project drafts and portfolios must be turned in on time without exception, barring extenuating circumstances (which you must communicate to me prior to the due date, not after). ***Portfolios turned in late will automatically receive an “F” (55).*** ***Portfolios not turned in will receive a zero.*** There will also be interim due dates for working drafts of your projects for in-class workshops. As stated above, late, incomplete, or insignificant drafts will reduce your participation grade. Missing drafts will reduce that portfolio grade by 5 points. *Students missing assignments should not expect to pass this class.*

Respectful Use of Technology

We will take advantage of technology in this class, and you are welcome and expected to use your laptops/tablets/phones for class purposes. If we are not having a discussion that relies on your access to your personal tech, please close them/put them away.

Email Etiquette

Especially because this course is a professional writing course (but, take this advice for all your professors), please use professional diction and decorum when sending me or your classmates emails. Use an appropriate salutation, an email body with appropriate language and without typos, in detail with what you are offering/asking, and a signature line. If you email me without proper business etiquette I will not respond. If you need some help learning about email etiquette, [here is a decent resource](#).

CAMPUS POLICIES & RESOURCES

Writing Center

I highly recommend planning for multiple Writing Center sessions, as the tutors in the Center will serve as wonderful early audiences for your work. The Center has provided the following language for instructors to include on syllabi for the University of Pittsburgh:

Located on the third floor of the O’Hara Student Center, the Writing Center offers events, courses, and one-on-one tutorials for undergraduate students. Although consultants do not correct, edit, or proofread papers, they can teach you strategies for organizing, editing, and revising your writing. You can meet with a consultant once or regularly over the course of the semester. In some cases, your teacher may send you to the Writing Center for help on a particular problem; otherwise, you can seek assistance on your own. Their services are free. You can browse the services they offer or make an appointment by visiting www.writingcenter.pitt.edu.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to adhere to the standards of academic honesty. Any student engaged in cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic dishonesty would be subject to disciplinary action. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating the University Policy.

Disability Services

If you have a disability, contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 216 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.