English 420, "Business Writing" Syllabus

Instructor and Course Information

English 420, "Business Writing"
Instructor: Daniel Liddle
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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 Text

Professional Writing Online by Patricia Sullivan and James Porter.
(www.pearsonhighered.com/pwo)

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.
- Select and use appropriate technologies that effectively and ethically address professional situations and audiences.
- Build 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 white paper, 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 publicly on the Internet 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 will specify 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. In addition to each 300-word post, you will include at least one discussion question that attempts to clarify or complicate the reading.

To facilitate the atmosphere of a class discussion, you should also post comments and replies to other posts on the class forums. All comments and replies to another's forum 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

Backgrounder (White Paper) Project 25%
Group Project 30%
Employment Project (individual) 25%
Weblogs, Reading Responses, Project Logs, Peer Review, etc. 10%
Ethos Grade 10%

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.

Weblogs, 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 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.

Professional Ethos
For this class you will be evaluated on the professional ethos you present throughout the semester. This grade serves a similar purpose to the common "participation" grade, except that your ethos grade will include not only how often you participate, but the behavior and attitude you exhibit in class. You will receive an update of this grade at least three times during the semester so that you know where you stand. If you have any questions or concerns about this grade during the

semester it is your responsibility to come talk to me during my office hours. I will not discuss your ethos grade over email. During the last week of class you may not challenge your ethos grade, as you will have had ample time to adjust your attitude and behavior before this time.

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 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.

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.

Attendance

Attendance is required at all scheduled electronic and face-to-face (F2F) meetings. Since you will be working in project teams much of the semester, you also will be required to attend any scheduled out-of-class meetings with your team to complete course assignments. **Three** absences will result in your final grade being lowered by as much as a letter grade. More than three absences can result in a failing grade for the course. Excused absences may be granted for religious holidays or university-sponsored events, provided you make a written request to me no less than two weeks in advance and that you complete any required work before the due date. Being excessively or regularly late for class or team meetings, both electronic and F2F, can also be counted as an absence.

Academic Integrity

Purdue students and their instructors are expected to adhere to guidelines set forth by the Dean of Students in "Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students," which students are encouraged to read here:
http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academicintegritybrochure.php
The preamble of this guide states the following: *"Purdue University values intellectual integrity and the highest standards of academic conduct. To be prepared to meet societal needs as leaders and role models, students must be educated in an ethical learning environment that promotes a high standard of honor in scholastic*

work. Academic dishonesty undermines institutional integrity and threatens the academic fabric of Purdue University. Dishonesty is not an acceptable avenue to success. It diminishes the quality of a Purdue education, which is valued because of Purdue's high academic standards."

Academic dishonesty is defined as follows: "Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [University Regulations, Part V, Section III, B, 2, a] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972]"
If you have any questions about this policy, please ask.

In Case of a Campus Emergency
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. You can acquire updated information from the course website, by emailing me, or by contacting me through the English Department at 765-494-3740.