

English 304

Rebecca Skidmore, ENGL 304, Fall 2005, Business/Professional Writing

Rebecca Skidmore

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English 304-W01

2:30-3:45 MW

123 Armstrong

COURSE OVERVIEW

English 304 is designed to introduce students to the expectations for and forms of writing common to professional office settings. It does this by helping students define and practice significant genres and by helping students understand the rhetorical situations of professional writing.

COURSE TEXT

Alred, Gerald J., Charles T. Brusaw, and Walter E. Oliu. *The Business Writer's Companion*. 4th ed. Boston, Bedford/St.Martin's, 2005.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

Because of the interactive nature of this course, daily attendance is essential. You may miss two classes without penalty. At three absences, your participation grade will be compromised. If you miss four classes, you will receive a failing grade for the course. I will take attendance at the start of every class, and no distinctions will be made between excused and unexcused absences. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain any handouts or assignments.

Late Work

I do not accept late work for any reason. Should you have a problem with a particular deadline, speak with me in advance. All work is due at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. Homework is due at the beginning of the class period after it is assigned, unless otherwise

specified. I do not accept emailed submissions unless I have given you prior permission. If you know you must miss a class when an assignment is due, you should make arrangements to turn it in prior to the due date.

Participation

Participation includes arriving to class prepared and on time. Habitual lateness will affect your participation grade. You are expected to bring your textbook to every class, to take active part in class discussion, to ask questions, and to contribute your knowledge and insight to the class. Preparation is crucial. You cannot participate effectively if you have not done the required reading and writing for class. If you show up for a workshop or a conference unprepared, you will be asked to leave and counted absent. Please be aware that participation is a significant part of your grade, and it is not an easy A. Attendance is not the same thing as participation. See attached participation grade descriptors.

Email

This class requires you to activate your free MIX account, provided by WVU automatically when you begin attending classes. You may receive important information via email, including but not limited to, emergency cancellations, preparation information for group conferences, and assignments. After week 1, there will be no acceptable excuse as to why you do not check your MIX account.

Office Hours

My office hours are: M/W 12:30-1:30. Office hours provide us with an opportunity to talk one on one. You may drop in during these times or make an appointment with me to talk about any questions or comments you may have about your progress in the course. I'd be happy to talk with you via email as well, and you can expect that I will respond to you within 48 hours Monday through Friday.

Academic Honesty

I do not tolerate academic dishonesty of any kind. Forms of plagiarism include misrepresenting another's work as your own, whether in part or whole; submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without the written consent of all instructors concerned; interfering with another's work. Cases of cheating or

plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and appropriate academic discipline. If you have any questions regarding this issue or proper documentation rules, please speak with me.

Assignments and Grading

See course schedule for upcoming assignments and due dates. You will receive additional handouts for each individual assignment. See attached grade descriptors for evaluation standards. I do not give grades; you earn them. Your final grade will be assessed in terms of the following:

Informal Writing 15%

Correspondence Assignment 15%

Employment Portfolio 15%

Project Proposal 15%

Newsletter Project 30%

Participation 10%

SCHEDULE OF WORK

Schedule and assignments are subject to change. Please pay attention to upcoming due dates so you will know what to expect. You are responsible for keeping up with assignments and changes.

- **8/22** Introduction to the course and to each other. What is professional writing? Buy books; read syllabus.
- **8/24** Course policies and procedures; principles of business/professional writing; principles of rhetorical writing; assignment overview. Informal Writing (IW) #1: self-assessment.

UNIT I: Correspondence Project

- **8/29** Introduce correspondence project. Uses of correspondence and communication channels. Analysis of audience and purpose. *Read Chapter 6: Correspondence*; IW#2: complaint letter.

- **8/31** Document design; memos and letters. Rhetorical analysis of document design. Draft good news/bad news letters and analysis memo.
- **9/5 Labor Day Recess**
- **9/7** Peer review workshop: memos and letters. Revise good news/bad news letters and analysis memo; read Chapter 9: Style and Clarity.
- **9/12** Style in professional writing: clarity and concreteness. Revise good news/bad news letters and analysis memo.

UNIT II: Employment Portfolio

- **9/14** Final correspondence project due; introduce employment portfolio. Read Chapter 7: Job Search and Application; Find 2 job ads that you would be qualified for upon graduation.
- **9/19** Resume arguments; structuring the information; making it persuasive. Draft resume; IW#3: letter of inquiry.
- **9/21** Resume workshop; cover letter arguments; purposes and structure. Draft cover letter and analysis memo.
- **9/26** Peer review workshop. Revise resumes and cover letters; Read Chapter 9: Style and Clarity.
- **9/28** Style in professional writing: word choice. Revise employment portfolio; prepare for conferences
- **10/3 Class cancelled for conferences** Revise employment portfolio; IW#4: interview follow-up letter.

UNIT III: Group Project Proposal

- **10/5** Final employment portfolio due; Introduce proposals. Purposes and uses. Read Chapter 3: Business Writing Documents and Elements; IW#5: advertisement.
- **10/10** Proposal assignment and overview of group newsletter project; brainstorm project ideas; choose groups. Choose project; establish group contacts; identify possible sources; preliminary research; read Chapter 2: Research and Documentation.

- **10/12** Discuss collaborative work; discuss research strategies and documentation. Review Chapter 1: The Writing Process; background research.
- **10/17** In-class writing workshop. Draft proposal and analysis memos.
- **10/19** Peer review workshop. Revise proposal; prepare for conferences.
- **10/24 Class cancelled for group conferences.** Revise proposal.

UNIT IV: Group Newsletter Project

- **10/26** Final project proposal due; review newsletter project; revisit proposals as project plans. Review Chapters 2 and 3; IW#6: proposal revision.
- **10/31** Purposes of newsletters as business writing documents; audience awareness; using sources. Read Chapter 5: Design and Visuals; IW#7: customer profile.
- **11/2** Discuss newsletter content, design and layout; in-class writing and design session. Draft newsletter articles; prepare for conferences.
- **11/7** Class cancelled for group conferences. Draft newsletter articles with design and layout.
- **11/9** Peer review workshop. Meet with group members outside of class for research and writing.
- **11/14** Class cancelled for out-of-class group meetings. Read Chapter 8: Presentations and Meetings; continue to revise newsletter.
- **11/16** Discuss presentations and expectations. Outline presentation; revise newsletter.
- **11/21-11/25 Thanksgiving Recess**
- **11/28** Practice presentations; final editing workshop. Prepare for presentations.
- **11/30** Presentations: Final newsletter project due at time of presentation.
- **12/5** Presentations: Final group newsletter project due at time of presentation.
- **12/7** Wrap-up; course evaluations.

- 12/12-12/16 Finals

Grade Descriptors for English 304

A—Superior work demonstrates originality and initiative. The content is mature, thorough, and well-suited for the audience; the style is clear, accurate, and forceful; the information is well-organized and formatted so that it is accessible and attractive; genre conventions are effectively used; mechanics and grammar are correct. The portfolio demonstrates a range of well-edited, well-written, well-argued, and well-documented texts that a company could use without further revisions, and might even use as examples when training new employees.

B—Strong work. The documents generally succeed in meeting their goals in terms of audience, purpose, and genre without the need for further major revisions. They may need some minor improvements in content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics. In the workplace, a company would be able to use the documents without major revisions.

C—Satisfactory work. Documents are adequate in all respects but require some substantial revisions of content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics; they may require further work in more than one area. For instance, central ideas may be generally apparent but may often lack adequate explanations or documentation necessary for different audiences and purposes. In the workplace, the documents would be functional for an immediate deadline but would require further revisions before being distributed or made part of a permanent record.

D—Documents are unprofessional. They generally require extensive revisions of content, presentation, writing style, and/or mechanics before the documents could be used by a company. The writer has encountered significant problems meeting goals of audience, purpose, and genre. In the workplace, a company would most likely have to reassign the project to another writer for successful completion.

F—Documents do not have enough information, do something other than is appropriate for a given situation, or contain major and pervasive problems in terms of content, presentation, writing style, and/or mechanics that interfere with meaning. The portfolio may be incomplete, or plagiarism may compromise the portfolio on ethical grounds. A company would most probably dismiss the writer from current projects.

Participation Grade Descriptors

A—Superior participation shows initiative and excellence in written and verbal work. The student helps to create more effective discussions and workshops through his or her verbal and written contributions. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshops and conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, thorough, specific, and often provide other student writers with a new perspective or insight.

B—Strong participation demonstrates active engagement in written and verbal work. The student plays an active role in the classroom but does not always add new insight to the discussion at hand. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time and with attention. In workshops and conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, specific, and helpful.

C—Satisfactory participation demonstrates consistent, satisfactory written and verbal work. Overall, the student is prepared for class, completes assigned readings and writings, and contributes to small group workshops and large class discussions. In workshops and conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful and prompt, but could benefit from more attentive reading and/or specific detail when giving comments.

D—Weak participation demonstrates inconsistent written and verbal work. The student may be late to class, unprepared for class, and may contribute infrequently or unproductively to classroom discussions or small group workshops. Reading and writing assignments are incomplete or insufficient. In workshops and conferences, suggestions to group members may be missing, disrespectful, or far too brief and general to be of help.

F—Unacceptable participation shows ineffectual written and verbal work. The student may be excessively late to class, regularly unprepared, and unable to contribute to classroom discussions or small group workshops. The student may be disruptive in class. Reading and writing assignments are regularly missing or insufficient. In workshops and conferences, the student has a pattern of missing, being completely unprepared, or being disruptive.