

English 304

Rebecca Skidmore, ENGL 304, Spring 2006, Business/Professional Writing

Rebecca Skidmore

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English 304-W04

9:30-10:20 MWF

Woodburn G16

Office: 354 Stansbury

English 304-W05

10:30-11:20 MWF

Woodburn G16

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 three classes without penalty. At four absences, your participation grade will be lowered one full letter grade for this and each additional absence. If you miss six 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. You should have another student's email address or phone number to ask about missed work.

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. 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.

Standard of Work

All work should exhibit complete and appropriate format specific to the assignment. All writing for the course should be prepared on a computer and printed clearly. At work, even one error in spelling, grammar, or punctuation can jeopardize the effectiveness of some communications. Grading will reflect the great seriousness with which these matters are frequently viewed in the working world.

Office Hours

My office hours are _____. 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.

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 receive email communications.

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.

Social Justice

I concur with WVU's commitment to social justice and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration. If you have any special needs or concerns, please speak with me early in the semester so that we can plan accommodations.

Response and Evaluation

See attached grade descriptors for evaluation standards. Your final grade will be assessed in terms of the following:

Final Portfolio 70%

The final portfolio is an opportunity for you to gather your best work for this course and present it in a coherent form. You will not receive a grade on individual projects. You will always receive comments on your projects to give you a sense of what you need to polish and review for your final portfolio. You will receive an "in-progress" midterm grade and commentary, which will describe your work. You are welcome to talk to me if you have questions about your progress in the class.

Participation 15 %

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, to contribute your knowledge and insight to the class, and to work until the end of every class period. 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. The presentation you will be asked to do later in the semester will also be part of your participation grade. Attendance is not the same thing as participation. See attached participation grade descriptors.

Informal Writing Assignments 15 %

Informal writing will be assigned throughout the semester to accompany the formal writing assignments and to help you practice associated skills. I will explain each activity as it comes up; however, you are responsible for using your textbook and your imagination to determine how best to complete each assignment. I reserve the right to change or add any IW assignments according to progress.

IW will be evaluated as follows:

Excellent-5

Strong-4

Satisfactory-3

Weak-2

Unacceptable/ Incomplete-1

Missing or late-0

SCHEDULE OF WORK

Schedule and assignments are subject to change. Please pay attention to upcoming due dates. You are responsible for keeping up with assignments and changes.

1

1/9 Introduction to the course and to each other. What is professional writing? Buy book; read syllabus.

1/11 Course policies and procedures; minute paper. Informal Writing (IW) #1: Introductory email.

1/13 IW #1 due by close of business; voice, purpose, audience. Read Chapter 6: Correspondence.

Unit 1: Correspondence Project

2

1/16 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

1/18 Business documents and questions to ask; communication channels; introduce Correspondence Project.

IW#2: Choose a scenario from your assignment sheet and write the letter of complaint/request that you will be responding to for your Correspondence Project.

1/20 IW #2 due; discuss bad news and good news correspondence; accentuating the positive; memos and letters. Draft good news/bad news letters.

3

1/23 Peer review workshop: good news/bad news letters. Revise good news/bad news letters.

1/25 Challenger Activity #1; discuss analysis memos. Draft analysis memo.

1/27 Peer review workshop: revised letters and analysis memo. Revise letters and memo; read Chapter 7: Job Search and Application.

Unit 2: Employment Package

4

1/30 Correspondence Project due; introduce Employment Package; skills inventory; self-assessment. Find 2 job ads that you would be qualified for upon graduation.

2/1 Resume arguments; structuring the information; making it persuasive; reference request letters. Draft resume; IW #3: Reference request letter.

2/3 IW #3 due; resume speed workshop; cover letter arguments; purposes and structure. Draft cover letter and revise resume.

5

2/6 Peer review workshop: resume and cover letter; discuss analysis memos. Draft analysis memo; revise resume and cover letter.

2/8 Peer review workshop: resume, cover letter, analysis memo; follow-up letters. IW#4: Follow-up letter; read Chapter 9: Style and Clarity.

2/10 IW #4 due; style in professional writing: word choice. Revise Employment Package.

Midterm Reflection

6

2/13 Employment Package due; discuss midterm reflection; review final portfolio guidelines; sign up for conferences. IW #5: Midterm Reflection (due at time of conference); prepare for conferences.

2/15 Class cancelled for conferences. IW #5 due.

2/17 Class cancelled for conferences.

IW #5 due. Read Chapter 3: Business Writing Documents and Elements; bring in a magazine ad and an article of interest.

Unit 3: Professional Editing Project

7 2/20 Rhetorical analysis of ads and articles; introduce Professional Editing Project. Bring to class 2 possible documents for Professional Editing Project.

2/22 Challenger Activity #2; choose documents. IW #6: rewrite Challenger memo.

2/24 IW #6 due; discuss ethics in editing; discuss revision and proofreading strategies. Draft revised and edited document.

Mid-semester

8

2/27 Peer review workshop: revised and edited document; discuss analysis memos. Continue revising and editing; draft analysis memo.

3/1 Peer review workshop: analysis memos. Revise Professional Editing Project.

3/3 Misc. elements of business writing; documents of interest. Revise Professional Editing Project.

Unit 4: Literature Review

9

3/6 Professional Editing Project due; introduce Literature Review; purposes and uses; choosing appropriate topics. Brainstorm topics.

3/8 Developing research questions; choose groups and establish group contacts. Read Chapter 2: Research and Documentation; choose project topic and identify possible sources of information.

3/10 Discuss effective research and proper documentation; discuss collaborative writing. Review Chapter 1: The Writing Process; draft Literature Review.

10

3/13-3/17 Spring Break

11

3/20 Peer review workshop: Literature Review. Revise Literature Review; research on own.

3/22 In-class workshop/conferences. Revise Literature Review; research on own.

3/24 In-class workshop/conferences. Revise Literature Review; read Chapter 3, pgs. 91-100.

Last day to drop a class

Unit 5: Group Project Proposal

12

3/27 Literature Review due; introduce Group Project Proposal; purposes and uses. IW #7: Audience analysis.

3/29 IW #7 due; effective proposals; defining problems, understanding scope. Read Chapter 5: Design and Visuals.

3/31 Effective visuals. First draft of Proposal.

13

4/3 Peer-review workshop: Proposal first draft. Revise Proposal

4/5 Peer review workshop: Proposal second draft; discuss analysis memos. Revise Proposal; read Chapter 8: Presentations and Meetings.

4/7 Effective presentations. Complete tasks designated by group.

14

4/10 In-class workshop/conferences. Complete tasks designated by group.

4/12 In-class workshop/conferences. Complete tasks designated by group.

4/14 Spring Holiday Prepare for presentations.

15

4/17 Presentations: Group Project Proposal due at time of presentation.

4/19 Presentations: Group Project Proposal due at time of presentation.

4/21 Presentations: Group Project Proposal due at time of presentation. Draft portfolio letter; revise/work on final portfolio.

Portfolios and Revision

16

4/24 Review portfolio guidelines and expectations; in-class revision workshop. Revise/work on final portfolio.

4/26 In-class revision workshop; course evaluations. Revise/work on final portfolio.

4/28 Final Portfolio due.

17

5/1-5/6 Portfolios returned during final exam slot.

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 for English 304

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.