

# ENGL 420 BUSINESS WRITING



CRN 25620  Section 007  Summer 2019  
2nd 8 Week Summer Session  Online  [lhibbard@purdue.edu](mailto:lhibbard@purdue.edu)  
Mr. Lee Hibbard  Office Hours T 2:00-3:00pm, by Appt, Online

Regardless of your chosen field, writing is an invisible part of the work you do, so much so that, many of you may not think of yourselves as writers, or think of writing as part of your job responsibilities. This class is designed to help you think about and practice the kinds of writing embedded in professional workplaces, and to help you develop rhetorical awareness and effective practices for workplace writing.

## COURSE OUTCOMES

The purpose of this class is to develop your understanding of workplace writing and to help you develop writing practices that will add to your success in the workplace. This includes thinking about the rhetorical nature of communication, the value of genre and professional expectations, the importance of ethical workplace habits and communication and the role of research, design, composition and presentation in your workplace writing lives. Over the course of the semester you will think seriously about how good writing is a process of problem setting, and consider how solid writing practices are integral to your professional development.

Much of this class focuses on how we talk about producing and evaluating successful business communication in a variety of contexts. Taking this class online presents a unique set of challenges—it also makes clear the importance of developing an effective professional ethos that translates in writing and on the screen. Modern business communication is heavily moderated through a screen and relies not only on text, but on visual presentation. We will think of our classroom as a virtual office, and find effective ways to collaborate and give each other feedback as we go.

# COURSE GOALS

- **Writing in Context**: Analyzing 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.
- **Project Management**: Developing and deploying strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents, both individually and collaboratively.
- **Document Design**: Understanding and implementing design principles such as formatting and layout, through testing and revising information architecture.
- **Teamwork**: Managing distributed teams online, delivering and implementing effective feedback.
- **Research**: Locating, evaluating, and using print and online information selectively for particular audiences and purposes; triangulating sources of evidence.
- **Technology**: Using and evaluating writing technologies used frequently in the workplace, such as emailing, IM, photo and video editing, presentation design, content management and desktop publishing.

# REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- Excellence in Business Communication 13 thEd. Thill and Boveé (ISBN-13: 978-0-13-519218-4) The 12th edition is fine.
- Additional Readings as Assigned from Various Professional and Popular Sources
- A google drive account
- #Slack account
- Microsoft Office Suite (recommended)

# **STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Coursework will be broken down into the categories of generative writing, Professional Portfolio Development, and three project units. As your interests emerge and you make decisions there will be overlap between the whitepaper research and recommendation report assignments. I expect some overlap between projects two and three in terms of research needs and methods.

## **GENERATIVE WRITING: DISCUSSION POSTS, WEEKLY ACTIVITIES, MEMOS, AND SHORT PROPOSALS**

### **(300 PTS)**

You will be assigned reading and asked to lead online reading discussions. You will be asked to locate examples and asked to share your thinking with others to generate discussion and support decision making. You will be asked to articulate your goals and project planning in the form of memos, emails, and proposals. This work isn't optional or trivial. It is key to developing your content knowledge about professional writing and is designed to help you make connections between what you are doing and the underlying principles that inform your decisions.

## **SEMESTER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (150 PTS)**

This class is designed to help you experience working in a professional setting. That framework comes with some freedom, but also a responsibility to think, act, and work like a professional. Over the course of the semester, you will develop your work into a portfolio that shows your progress over the semester and documents how you develop ethos, and an effective professional persona through your work in our class.

## **UNIT 1: DEVELOPING YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY (150 PTS)**

Over the course of this unit you will develop a portfolio of employment documents. Our focus will be on employment documents as rhetorical, modular, and responsive to individual job postings and situations. There is no one perfect resume. Everything from design choice to word choice should arise out of your understanding of the job posting, the employer and your goals. In other words, job application materials are a project of problem setting and problem solving.

## **UNIT 2: BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND INFORMATIONAL REPORTING (200 PTS)**

You will be working in small groups to address a central problem or concern in professional industries right now by writing documented background reports. While you will be working individually on this assignment, you will also be building toward a final recommendation report as a team. This combination of individual work and team results is central to most workplaces. This unit will focus on background research, ongoing learning, and how to effectively present information to interested professional audiences.

## UNIT 3: RECOMMENDATION REPORTS (200 PTS)

This final assignment will be a culmination of your individual research efforts. You will submit

- An action proposal or recommendation report
- A Visual design (An infographic, video or fact sheet are just some possibilities)
- An annotated slide-deck designed for professional presentation
- A letter of Transmittal that explains how your deliverables work together to address a specific audience of decision makers.

## COURSE POLICIES AND GRADING

### GRADES

Grading is based on 1000 points possible, and will follow university guidelines for grade distribution. Grading will be updated regularly on Blackboard. **Final grades are not negotiable.** If you are concerned about grading or how to improve, talk to me before the next assignment is due, not at the end of the semester. Your work is cumulative, and you are accountable for it as it is assigned. Remember that average work, or simply meeting course requirements isn't the basis for an A grade. Cs are average. A work requires exemplary attention to coursework and consistently exceeding expectations. **(Just like in the workplace, exceeding expectations earns recognition and advancement. Meeting expectations keeps you from getting fired.)**

1000-930	929-900	899-870	869-830	829-800	799-770	769-730	729-700	699-670	669-630	629-600	590-0
93%	90%	87%	83%	80%	77%	73%	70%	67%	63%	60%	0%
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F

### LATE WORK

The course calendar will always be updated with most current deadlines, all of which will be in Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). I do not accept late work. This applies to daily work and group projects. Our calendar will always work several weeks in advance. This should allow you to plan. If you see potential conflicts with your schedule, renegotiating deadlines should happen well in advance of due dates. This is the nature of professional life, and one of the skills integral to good workplace practices.

### ATTENDANCE AND PROFESSIONAL ETHOS

Because this class is online, attendance is tricky, but still required. Attendance in this case means being present by keeping up, paying attention and scheduling your time so that you complete all work by given deadlines. The work in this class is cumulative, meaning if you get behind and miss assignments catching up is going to be difficult. You will be working with your classmates on projects so it's not only your own work, but the work of others that you have to take seriously. Respect my time and your classmates' time by showing up when needed.

# COURSE POLICIES

## EMAIL

I expect you to understand basic email etiquette when communicating with your peers and me. If you do not know what this means, please see me. I also ask you to check your email daily. I check my email twice a day at 11:00am EDT and 8:00pm EDT, so be aware that any email correspondence you send me after a certain time may not be answered until the next day.

## COMMUNICATION

I want you to be successful in our class. If you are encountering barriers, need accommodations or more explanation, or if you are experiencing physical, emotional or material difficulties please reach out so I can help you identify solutions or resources. If the issue is urgent, please denote this in any email subject lines so I can respond as expediently as possible.

## DISABILITIES

If you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please see and/or contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC), within the first week or two of class. For more information, see the site, <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/drc/welcome.php>.

## EMERGENCIES

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, calendar, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes as necessary. I will communicate information about possible changes through email. If you have questions, please email me or see the campus emergency website: [http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency\\_preparedness/](http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency_preparedness/)

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty including plagiarism and any form of copying, cribbing or reusing materials without crediting them will not be tolerated. Please see our course website or the university website for complete policies regarding dishonesty. When in doubt, let's talk about what ethical practice looks like. Keep in mind the Purdue Honor Pledge: *"As a boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - we are Purdue."*

## CLASSROOM CIVILITY STATEMENT

You are expected to contribute to a safe, professional, and welcoming classroom community both online and in our digital meetings. Our classroom will be inclusive of all students. If you wouldn't say it at work, you shouldn't say it in our classroom. You may review full university inclusion, violence, and discrimination policies in class and on blackboard. Violation of these policies may result in reduction in your professional ethos grade and could result in removal from the class. Be kind to one another. Respect your classmates. No exceptions.