English 202D: Advanced Rhetoric & Composition/Business Writing

Instructor: Sheila Squillante
Sections 26 & 29 ∙ Spring, 2003
T/R: 11:15-12:30; 2:30-3:45
Office: 41 Scott Building; 116 W. College Ave.
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Required Textbooks

Business Communications Today, Seventh Ed., Bovée/ Thill/ Schatzman
Revising Prose, Richard Lanham

Course Packet available at Gnoman Copy

Note: The course packet contains the syllabus, schedule, course policies and some samples of the kinds of writing you’ll be doing in this course (Examples, not necessarily models!). We will refer to this packet constantly over the course of the semester, so you must read all assignments carefully and bring it with you every day. Keep in mind that grading, procedures and assignments may change according to the needs of the class community. I will announce any changes in class, so you must be alert for them.

Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property, and help to create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20).

In the age of Enron, one can easily discern the importance of forging a new commitment to efficient, effective and ethical business practice. This course operates on the belief that such change begins on the human and language-levels—in the ways we choose to approach business communication for a particular audience, in the ways we choose to accommodate their unique needs, beliefs and concerns. This course will teach you to eschew the vague, the impersonal and the hollow in favor of the specific, the intimate and the substantive. For if businesses are made up of people, one must remember the intricacies of human relationships in order to effectively communicate in a business environment. You may consider this classroom a microcosm of the larger business community that you will soon enter. As such, I will hold you to the high standards of integrity and responsibility you will surely find therein.

With this in mind, dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or work previously used without instructor-approval, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University’s Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.
Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to help you to develop the strategies that you will need to write successfully on the job and to help you understand why those strategies are appropriate and effective. During the span of the course, you can expect to:

- **Discover** and understand the discourse features that distinguish your business communities from others;
- **Discover** and specify the purpose(s) of your writing;
- **Develop** a range of writing processes appropriate to various writing tasks;
- **Identify** your readers and describe their characteristics in a way that forms a sound basis for deciding how to write to them;
- **Invent** the contents of your communications through research and reflection;
- **Arrange** material to raise and satisfy readers' expectations, using both conventional and rhetorical patterns of organization;
- **Reveal** the organization of your communications by using forecasting and transitional statements, headings, and effective page design;
- **Write** several kinds of documents that recur in business communities;
- **Observe** appropriate generic conventions and formats for letters, resumes, memoranda, and a variety of informal and formal reports;
- **Design** and use tables, graphs and business illustrations;
- **Compose** effective sentences and vibrant, interesting, persuasive prose;
- **Evaluate** your documents to be sure that they fulfill their purpose and to ensure that they can be revised if necessary;
- **Collaborate** effectively with your peers in a community of writers who provide feedback on each others' work;
- **Communicate** in an ethically responsible manner.
Course Policies

Attendance & Participation: I expect you to be present, prepared and involved at every scheduled class meeting. If you need to miss a class for a valid reason (interview, funeral, wedding, serious illness) you MUST inform me as soon as possible. If you have unexcused absences, your final grade will suffer. Additionally, all work is your responsibility—if you have been absent, you must find out what you missed, remembering that assignments and due dates may have changed in your absence.

Peer Workshops: You must attend and be prepared to participate in all in-class workshops on drafts of your assignments. The more you have written before a peer review, the more you will benefit from the session. You are responsible for making high quality comments on your classmates’ drafts as well as for considering their comments on your own work. As such, your draft should be complete enough that your classmate can offer you substantive suggestions. Note well: I look darkly upon the student who “flies through” a workshop, leaving after ten or fifteen minutes of class time. While I will not stop you—you are adults and free to make your own choices about your education—there is little you can say to convince me that you have done your fullest, best work in so short a time. This is your opportunity to better your work, and a display of minimal effort will surely manifest itself later, in your final draft and subsequent grade. If you must miss a workshop, hand in your draft early and arrange a peer review session with another class member. You must comment on theirs and they must comment on yours before you hand in your final assignment. Under no circumstances will I accept or grade an assignment if I have not seen your peer-reviewed rough draft.

Conferences: You must conference with me at least once over the course of the semester. During conference time, you will be expected to come prepared to discuss your work. This means, have a conference plan in mind with specific questions or concerns you have about a particular assignment or a writing strategy you might be struggling with. Think of my office hours as an opportunity to receive one-on-one feedback about your work as well as a way to get to know one another as members of a writing community.

Promptness: In this course, as in the working world, you must be on time and turn in your work on time. Consistent lateness disrupts class and will affect your grade. All projects are due at the start of the class period on the dates indicated on the syllabus. Late assignments will be penalized ONE LETTER GRADE PER DAY (this includes weekends!) unless you have made other arrangements with me in advance.

Assignment Format & Appearance: All work should be typed using standard margins, fonts (12 point) and spacing. Whether it is a letter, a memo or a report, your communication should exhibit appropriate format. In general, letters and memos should be single-spaced with a blank line between paragraphs and reports should be double-spaced. Any variations on the above will be announced in class. Your name, the date, assignment title and my name (spelled correctly, please!) should appear in the upper left-hand corner of all assignments. No cover sheet is necessary unless otherwise stated. Double-sided printing is acceptable unless otherwise stated. I do not accept handwritten assignments.
Grammar, Spelling & Proofreading: At work, even a single surface error can, depending on the rhetorical situation, jeopardize the effectiveness of your communications, not to mention ruin your credibility. My grading will reflect the great seriousness with which these matters are viewed in the working world. Note: This course assumes that you have a solid command of basic English grammar and syntax. If you know that you do not, or, if I see in your writing that you do not, you will be expected to make use of the Writing Center facilities on campus, to buy a supplemental grammar rule book or to seek other such practice until your level of proficiency is up to par.

Email Protocol: We will discuss the various issues surrounding appropriate email communications in this course, but for my own purposes, please follow these guidelines:

✓ Use an appropriate greeting in all email communications with me (For example, “Hello Ms. Squillante,”).

✓ Follow the rules of grammar and syntax, employing capital letters where necessary and punctuation where needed.

✓ Be specific in your question or request.

✓ PROOFREAD for spelling errors.

✓ Use appropriate tone.

✓ Close with your name and any contact information I might need in order to best respond to you.

Unless you clear it with me ahead of time, or unless I announce a change in policy to the class, I will not accept assignments via email. You are responsible for preparing hard copies of all your assignments and for getting them to me on time. If you have not been given permission to submit an assignment electronically and do so anyway, I will send your paper back to you unread and without credit. Additionally, I will not engage in lengthy email “conversations” or debates over grades or problems. For serious matters, please come to my office hours.

Revisions: If you believe you can significantly improve a paper after it has been graded, you may revise it if you consult with me during office hours about what you plan to do. If the grade for the revision is higher, it will replace the original grade. Note: Cleaning up grammatical errors or stylistic problems does not constitute significant improvement. For all papers, you will have one week from the day I hand them back to meet with me and make your revisions. You must then hand in the original with my comments, a cover note that reflects our conference and describes what you worked on, and the new completed draft. If all three of these elements are not present, you will not receive credit for your revision.
Grading

When grading each of your assignments, I will ask one overriding question: “Does it work?” That is, would your communication have the intended effect on this particular reader in the world outside the classroom? I will, of course, recognize the difference between a competent performance (a “C”) and good and excellent performances (“B” and “A”). A competent performance is one that stands a reasonable chance of succeeding; an excellent performance is one that seems assured not only of success, but also of winning praise.

Assignments

Proposal 10%
Special Topics Presentation 15%
Job Application or Business Letter Packet 15%
Progress Report 10%
Analytical Report 15%
Chapter Memos (5) 5% each (total 25%)
Homework & Participation 10%

- All Chapter Memos must be submitted or a grade of “F” will be assigned for this project.
- All projects must be completed or a final grade of “F” will be assigned.

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percent Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 to 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 to 94.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86.9 to 89.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83.33 to 86.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 to 83.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75 to 79.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>75 to 79.9</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60 to 69.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.9 &amp; below</td>
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The Penn State grading scale does not allow the option of awarding grades of A+, C-, D+ or D-.

SPECIAL NOTE: No late work will be accepted after the final day of regular classes. In order to successfully complete the course, all course work must be turned in. NO exceptions will be permitted. If you find that you are unable to complete the course during the regular semester, but you have attended all classes and turned in all but ONE assignment, you may ask for a deferred grade. If you find you are not able to attend class and cannot complete the course work, you must withdraw from the course. If you do not attend class, your papers will not be accepted for grading. In order for an assignment to be considered "turned in" it must be placed directly in my hands by the student who is responsible for the paper. If you find that you are unable to do this, you must contact me immediately and explain why you cannot do so. At that time I will decide whether the paper will be accepted or not and how to proceed from there.
Grading Standards

The Penn State Composition Department grading standards establish four major criteria for evaluation at each grade level: purpose, reasoning and content, organization, and expression. Obviously, every paper will not fit neatly into one grade category; it may, for instance, have some characteristics of B and some of C. The grade it finally receives depends on the weight the instructor gives to each criterion.

The A Project

1. The A project fulfills the assignment and does so in a fresh and mature manner, using purposeful language that leads to the knowledge making. The project effectively meets the needs of the rhetorical situation in terms of establishing the writer's stance, attention to the audience, purpose for writing, and sensitivity to context. Furthermore, the writer demonstrates expertise in employing the artistic appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos appropriately.

2. The topic is clearly defined, focused, and supported. The project has a clear thesis that is supported with specific (and appropriate) evidence, examples, and details. Any outside sources of information are used carefully and cited appropriately. The valid reasoning within the project demonstrates good judgment and an awareness of the topic's complexities.

3. The organization—chronological, spatial, or emphatic—is appropriate for the purpose and subject of the project. The introduction establishes a context, purpose, and audience for writing and contains a focused thesis statement. The following paragraphs are controlled by (explicit or implicit) topic sentences; they are well developed; and they progress logically from what precedes them. (If appropriate, headings and subheadings are used.) The conclusion moves beyond a mere restatement of the introduction, offering implications for or the significance of the topic.

4. The prose is clear, readable, and sometimes memorable. It contains few surface errors, none of which seriously undermines the overall effectiveness of the paper for educated readers. It demonstrates fluency in stylistic flourishes (subordination, variation of sentence and paragraph lengths, interesting vocabulary).

The B Project

1. The assignment has been followed and fulfilled. The project establishes the writer's stance and demonstrates a clear sense of audience, purpose, and context.

2. The topic is fairly well defined, focused, and supported. The thesis statement is adequate (but could be sharpened), especially for the quality of supporting evidence the writer has used. The reasoning and support are thorough and more than adequate. The writer demonstrates a thoughtful awareness of complexity and other points of view.

3. The B project has an effective introduction and conclusion. The order of information is logical, and the reader can follow it because of well-chosen transitions (explicit and implicit) topic sentences. Paragraph divisions are logical, and the paragraphs use enough specific detail to satisfy the reader.
4. The prose expression is clear and readable. Sentence structure is appropriate for educated readers, including the appropriate use of subordination, emphasis, varied sentences, and modifiers. Few sentence-level errors (comma splices, fragments, or fused sentences) appear. Vocabulary is precise and appropriate; punctuation, usage, and spelling conform to the conventions of Standard American English discussed in class.

The C Project

1. The assignment has been followed, and the project demonstrates a measure of response to the rhetorical situation, in so far as the project demonstrates some sense of audience and purpose.
2. The topic is defined only generally; the thesis statement is also general. The supporting evidence, gathered honestly and used responsibly, is, nevertheless, often obvious and easily accessible. The writer demonstrates little awareness of the topic's complexity or other points of view; therefore, the C project usually exhibits minor imperfections or inconsistencies in development, organization, and reasoning.
3. The organization is fairly clear. The reader could outline the presentation, despite the occasional lack of topic sentences. Paragraphs have adequate development and are divided appropriately. Transitions may be mechanical, but they foster coherence.
4. The expression is competent. Sentence structure is relatively simple, relying on simple and compound sentences. The paper is generally free of sentence-level errors; word choice is correct though limited. The project contains errors in spelling, usage, and punctuation that reveal an unfamiliarity with the conventions of Standard American English discussed in class.

The D Project

1. The D project attempts to follow the assignment, but demonstrates little awareness of the rhetorical situation in terms of the writer's stance, audience, purpose, and context. For example, the project might over- or under-estimate (or ignore) the audience's prior knowledge, assumptions, or beliefs. The writer may have little sense of purpose.
2. The project may not have any thesis statement, or at best, a flawed one. Obvious evidence may be missing, and irrelevant evidence may be present. Whatever the status of the evidence, it is inadequately interpreted and rests on an insufficient understanding of the rhetorical situation. Or it may rely too heavily on evidence from published sources without adding original analysis.
3. Organization is simply deficient: introductions or conclusions are not clearly marked or functional; paragraphs are neither coherently developed nor arranged; topic sentences are consistently missing, murky, or inappropriate; transitions are missing or flawed.
4. The D project may have numerous and consistent errors in spelling, usage, and punctuation that reveal unfamiliarity with the conventions of Standard American English or a lack of careful proofreading.
The F Project

1. The F project is inappropriate in terms of the purpose of the assignment and the rhetorical situation. If the project relates vaguely to the assignment, it has no clear purpose or direction.
2. The project falls short of the minimum length requirements; therefore, it is insufficiently developed and does not go beyond the obvious.
3. It is plagued by more than one of the organizational deficiencies of a D project.
4. Numerous and consistent errors of spelling, usage, and punctuation hinder communication.
5. It may be plagiarized: either it is someone else's project, or this project has used sources improperly and/or without documentation.
Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1
T 1/14 Course Introduction. Overview of Chapter Memo assignment.

R 1/16 Introduction to Assignments 1, 5, 6. Topics for your Proposal: Where to Look. The Rhetorical Situation. Bovee: Chapter 1. Lanham Chapter 1.
Due: Chapter Memo

Week 2
T 1/21 The Writing Process for Business Writing. Bovee: Chapters 4 and 5.
Due: Chapter Memo

Due: Paragraph description of proposal topic. Chapter memo.

Week 3
Due: Chapter Memo

R 1/30 Draft Workshop for Proposal
Due: Complete draft of Assignment #1: Proposal

Week 4
T 2/4 Overview of Special Topics Presentations, Group Assignments. Bovee: Chapter 15. Lanham Chapter 4.
Due: Assignment #1: Proposal. Chapter Memo

Due: Chapter Memo

Week 5
Due: Chapter Memo

R 2/13 Resumes/Cover Letters—Style Workshop
Special Topics Presentation #1

Week 6
T 2/18 Resume/Cover Letter wrap-up. Business writing and ethics—Topic: “Greed.” Reading TBA.

R 2/20 Business Letter Packet Introduction
Special Topics Presentation #2

Week 7
Due: Chapter Memo

R 2/27 NO CLASS
Week 8

T 3/4  Business Letters-- Style Workshop
Special Topics Presentation #3

Chapter 8. Special Topics Presentations #4
Due: Chapter Memo

Week 9

3/11-1/12—Spring Break

Week 10

and 8.C. Writing Workshop.

Bovee. Chapter 9.
Due: Chapter Memo

Week 11

T 3/25  Draft Workshop
Due: Complete draft of Job Application Packet and Rhetorical
Analysis Memo OR Business Letters and Rhetorical Analysis Memo.

R 3/27  Special Topics Presentation #5
Due: Final draft of Job packet or Business Letter Packet

Week 12

T 4/1  Description of Assignment #5: Progress Report. Parts of a progress report. Bovee:
Chapters 12 and 13.
Due: Chapter Memo

R 4/3  Special Topics Presentation #6

Week 13

T 4/8  Draft Workshop
Due: Complete Draft of Progress Report

R 4/10 Special Topics Presentation #7
Due: Final Draft of Progress Report

Week 14

T 4/15 Description of Assignment #6: Formal Analytical Report. The parts of the formal
Due: Chapter Memo

R 4/17 Special Topics Presentation #8
Elements of the Final report. Using parts of your progress report in your final
report.

Week 15

Due: Complete drafts of Intro, Body & Conclusion.
   Due: Complete drafts of the above documents.

Week 16

T 4/29  Draft Workshop
       Due: Draft of entire report.

R 5/1   Course Evaluations.
       Due: Complete Semester Portfolio. Final draft of Analytic Report.