English 202D  spring ‘06
Advanced Rhetoric & Composition/Business Writing
Sections 13 & 15
Instructor: Sheila Squillante
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Phone: 865-0009/Email: sks172@psu.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Required Materials:


A copy of the syllabus, course schedule, assignment sheets and additional readings can be found on our ANGEL course site: https://cms.psu.edu/

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)

Course Overview

In this age of corporate scandal and fiscal mismanagement, 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 attend to 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. You should, for all intents and purposes, consider me your employer for the next 16 weeks and conduct yourself in much the same manner you would on the job.

With all of this in mind, dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Academic 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. If you are caught plagiarizing a project in this course, you will automatically earn a failing grade (F) for the project itself, as well as a failing grade (F) for class participation. No exceptions. Students who are found to be academically dishonest may also receive academic sanctions and be reported to the University’s Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary action. For more
information on English department policy regarding plagiarism, please visit http://english.la.psu.edu/details.asp?element=447&id=105.

Accommodation and Alternative Formats: The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If any student anticipates needing any type of accommodation in this course, or has any questions about physical access, she or he should notify me as soon as possible.

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:

- Write several technical documents that recur in professional communities.
- Develop, in conjunction, your writing, reading and analytical skills.
- Discover and specify the purpose(s) of your writing.
- Identify readers and describe the characteristics of your readers in a way that forms a sound basis for deciding how to address 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.
- Observe appropriate generic conventions and formats for letters, resumes, memoranda, and a variety of informal and formal reports.
- Compose grammatically 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.
- Communicate in an ethically responsible manner.

Course Policies

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. 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, university-sanctioned athletic event, funeral, wedding, serious illness) you must inform me as soon as possible. If you have excessive absences, your final grade will suffer up to and including course failure. 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.

Class Participation: Participation is defined as: to take part in or have a share, as with others; to participate in a conversation. Your participation grade will be based on your contribution to the class community. The class participation grade reflects preparation for class discussions, attendance, providing support through active and effective participation in peer review sessions,
volunteering answers and reading out loud, completion of all assignments, quizzes and other aspects of a student's involvement identified as important by the instructor. Simply coming to class and doing the assignments will earn you an average (C) grade for participation. Similarly, being disruptive, sleeping, text messaging or reading the paper during class counts as being absent and not participating. If you are someone with serious anxiety about vocal participation, please see me to discuss alternate projects that will bolster your participation grade.

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 including weekends unless you have made other arrangements with me in advance. Anticipate technology failures. Unreadable discs, printing problems, etc. are not valid excuses for failing to submit an assignment when due. In general I am flexible about extending deadlines as long as you come to me before the day the project is due.

Peer Workshops: You must attend and be prepared to participate in any in-class workshops on drafts of your assignments. You are responsible for making high quality comments on your classmates' drafts as well as for considering their comments on your own work. If you must miss a workshop, arrange a peer review session before the final due date with another student from our class only. Under no circumstances will I accept or grade an assignment if I have not seen your peer-reviewed rough draft.

Conferences: I will be available to you outside of class time as needed. Feel free to make an appointment to come to my office to discuss your work as often as you need or like. During conference time, I will expect you to be prepared to discuss your work. This means, have a conference plan in mind with specific questions about a particular assignment or a writing strategy you might be struggling with. I will not read rough drafts in their entirety. Think of this time 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.

Assignment Format & Appearance: All work should be typed using standard margins, fonts and spacing. Whether it is a letter, a memo or an email, your communication should exhibit appropriate format. No cover sheet is necessary unless otherwise stated. Double-sided printing is acceptable unless otherwise stated. I do not accept hand-written assignments. All work should be stapled or paper-clipped.

Grammar, Spelling & Proofreading: At work, even a single surface error can 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. I have no tolerance for sloppy work. 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: I will use the email utility in ANGEL to provide important clarifications and announcements. As such, you must check your Penn State ANGEL email prior to each class. I will answer all emails as promptly as I can, but understand that response will likely NOT be
toward your attendance grade for the course, and toward your grade for the Business Journal assignment. The instructor will monitor these discussions randomly and in real time. All chat room discussions will be logged and evaluated for strength of content and professionalism. The instructor will assign the groups and they will remain in place for the duration of the class.

Virtual Company Project: For the major project of the course, students will collaborate in groups to construct a virtual State College-based company, and then create documents such as mission statements, press releases and an organizational newsletter to support it. While the bulk of this assignment will be completed collaboratively and graded as such, there are several documents within it that students will complete individually and for which they will receive individual grades.

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. For more information on English department grading standards, please see our ANGEL course site.

Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Application Packet/Business Letter Packet</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Business Response Journal</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Office Correspondence Project</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Company Collaboration Project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Statement (individual)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Release #1 (individual)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Release #2 (collaborative)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter (collaborative)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Analysis (collaborative)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Minutes (collaborative)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References (collaborative)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual effort</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

=100%

All elements of the Inter-Office Correspondence project must be completed or a grade of "F" will be earned.
All projects must be completed or a final grade of "F" will be assigned for the course.
immediate, and that I generally do not check email after 9pm or over the weekend. Please also note that ALL student email must come to me via ANGEL. Any emails that arrive in my inbox otherwise will not be read. 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.
- Use appropriate tone.
- PROOFREAD for spelling errors.
- Close with your name and any contact information I might need in order to best respond to you.

While you may be asked to make use of ANGEL drop-boxes for some assignments, in general, I will not accept assignments electronically. 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, your paper will remain unread and without credit. Additionally, I will not engage in lengthy email “conversations” or debates over grades or problems. For serious matters, please make an appointment to speak with me privately.

Revisions: If you believe you can significantly improve an assignment after it has been graded, you may revise it if you first consult with me about what you plan to do. Your final grade will consist of the average of the original and the revised grade. Cleaning up grammatical errors or stylistic problems does not constitute significant improvement. For most assignments, 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:

1. The original with my comments;
2. A cover note that reflects our conference and describes what you worked on, and
3. The new, completed draft.

If all three of these elements are not present, you will not receive credit for your revision. I will not accept revisions in the last week of the course.

Written Requirements

Job Application Packet/Business Letter Packet: We will learn the basics of resume and cover letter writing, as well as the fundamentals of business letter writing in this course, and students will complete one of these two assignments depending on personal interest and experience.

Interoffice Correspondence Project: Emails and memos are the workhorses of daily business communication. For this assignment, students will gain practice writing routine request and persuasive emails, as well as informational memos.

Online Business Journal: On Fridays, all class members will meet online during their regular class time in a designated ANGEL chat room to take part in small group discussions. These discussions will focus on your responses to various (provided) articles about topics germane to the business world. Attendance in these chat room discussions is mandatory and count both
Grading Scale

A  95 to 100
A- 90 to 94.9
B+ 86.9 to 89.9
B  83.33 to 86.8
B- 80 to 83.32
C+ 75 to 79.9
C  70 to 74.9
D  60 to 69.9
F  59.9 & below

The Penn State grading scale does not allow the option of awarding grades of A+, C-, D+ or D-.
When tabulating final grades I do not “round up.”

A Final Word of Caution for Graduating Seniors:

Do not expect to pass this course based solely on your semester standing. Be forewarned that students who ignore attendance policies and deadlines have perennially suffered grade-wise despite their relative skill or proficiency. Decide early on what you need to do in order to succeed in 202D and then do it. Do not ask me to care about your grade if you do not. I would encourage you to check in with me at any point in the semester if you are unsure as to where you stand. I do not make it a policy to chase students whose grades are slipping but I am always happy to have a conversation about how you can stay on track or improve.

Please be assured that if you take this course seriously and apply yourself, it will provide important, practical tools and information you can use with confidence in your business lives.

Welcome to our course!