English 202D:
Business Writing

Required Texts

All other required readings will be made available online, through photocopy, or at the regular reserve desk in Pattee library.

Course Description

Welcome to the D. This course will introduce you to the strategies that you as a business professional will need in order to write successfully on the job. It is designed in a way that will allow you to integrate your own skills, knowledge, and areas of specialization into the final assignments and projects. By the end of the semester, you will have not only the ability to produce and revise a variety of different business communication documents, but also a grasp on the key rhetorical situations involved in generating such documents.

Course Policies

**Attendance:** I expect you to attend class everyday and to have your textbook and any other assigned materials with you. You will be permitted two unexcused absences. If you accumulate additional unexcused absences, your class grade will be lowered incrementally. Excused absences must be arranged in advance and all missed work must be made up. In an emergency, please contact me.

**Class Participation:** In addition to regular attendance and active class participation – including resume workshops and online workshops – it is particularly important for you to be prepared to participate in draft workshops. You are responsible both for making high quality comments on your classmates’ documents and for considering classmates’ comments in revising your own work. On draft days, your document drafts must be complete and presented in a formal manner. If you must miss a workshop, you are responsible for making arrangements with classmates to review your draft outside of class.
Assignments: You are responsible for all writing assignments, including those that not yet listed on the syllabus that may be assigned progressively throughout the semester. If you miss class, you are responsible for any additional homework assigned. I am not responsible for filling you in on work missed due to unexcused absences. Please note also the following additional requirements:

Promptness: All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated on the syllabus. Assignments turned in late will be penalized one letter grade per day unless you have made other arrangements with me in advance. All major projects must be completed in order for you to pass English 202D. A final portfolio that includes all six assignments must be submitted at the end of the semester.

Electronic Submission: All documents must be submitted to appropriate drop boxes on ANGEL by or before the beginning of class on the day assignments are due. I will grade documents electronically.

Appearance: All work must be completed in a professional manner, using formats appropriate to the particular type of document assigned. Please refer to the Handbook for general guidelines for routine document design. Assignments must be free of spelling, grammar, and proofreading errors. The Handbook also provides guidelines for grammar, style, and punctuation. For additional guidelines and examples, see the style guides posted on the wiki, and the Wikipedia.

Grading and Distribution

Your final grade will be determined by the grades you receive on written assignments and class participation, according to the following weighting:

1. Proposal 20 points
2. Writing in the Workplace Memo 30 points
3. Job Application Packet 40 points
4. Progress Report 20 points
5. Business Letter Packet 30 points
6. Final Project 50 points
7. Participation 10 points

A description of Composition Department grading criteria is available on ANGEL. Grades will be determined based on percentages according to the following scale: A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (70-76); D (60-69); F (0-59).
University Policies

**Nota Bene**
It is Penn State's policy to not discriminate against qualified students with documented disabilities in its educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for modifications in this course, contact your instructor and the Office for Disability Services at University Park (located in 116 Boucke Building) at 863-1807 or the Disability Contact Liaison at your Penn State location. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible. You may refer to the Nondiscrimination Policy in the Student Guide to University Policies and Rules 1997.

**Academic Integrity**
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 create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, 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 and to their colleges for possible further disciplinary sanction.

**Course Policy on Plagiarism**
Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. In addition to being subject to university sanctions, students caught plagiarizing will receive a 0 (zero) for the assignments in which the infraction occurred. They will also receive a 0 (zero) for their participation grades. Students caught plagiarizing online posts will receive a 0 (zero) for the participation grade and be subject to further university sanctions. Any appeals to these grades must be handled by the students at the departmental level. For a detailed discussion of types of plagiarism and how to avoid them, please see the “Plagiarism” document available on ANGEL.
# Class Schedule

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<th>Week 1</th>
<th>5/16</th>
<th>Welcome to the D – Introduction to Course and Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5/17</td>
<td>Rhetorical Situation and Proposal Writing</td>
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<td>Review of Document One</td>
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<td>Textbook reading</td>
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<td>5/18</td>
<td>Doing the D: Style, Tone, and the Writing Process: How to Business Write</td>
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<td>5/19</td>
<td>Proposal Writing Exercise</td>
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<td>Textbook reading</td>
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<td><strong>Due: Topic Description</strong></td>
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<td>5/20</td>
<td>The Joy of Problem Statements</td>
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<td>Proposal Examples</td>
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<td>Alred, “Proposals”; Textbook reading</td>
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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>5/23</th>
<th>Draft Workshop</th>
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<td><strong>Due: Complete Draft of Proposal Memo</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>5/24</td>
<td>Introduction to the Job Application Packet</td>
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<td>Introduction to Writing in the Workplace Memo</td>
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<td>Writing Effective Resumes</td>
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<td><strong>Due: Final Draft of Proposal Memo</strong></td>
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<td>5/25</td>
<td>The Job Hunt: Knowing Your Market and Your Resources</td>
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<td><strong>Business Library Visit: 302 Paterno</strong></td>
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<td>5/26</td>
<td>Writing Effective Resumes, Redux</td>
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<td>Alred “Resumes”; Textbook reading</td>
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<td>Resume Examples</td>
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<td>5/27</td>
<td>Writing Effective Cover Letters</td>
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<td>Alred, “Application Letters”; Textbook reading</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>5/30</th>
<th>No Class</th>
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<tr>
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<td>5/31</td>
<td>Resume Workshop</td>
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<td>6/1</td>
<td>Resume Workshop <strong>Presentation</strong></td>
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<td>Resume Workshop</td>
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<td>Letter Workshop <strong>Presentation</strong></td>
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<td>6/3</td>
<td>Resume Workshop</td>
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<td>Letter Workshop <strong>Presentation</strong></td>
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| Week 4 | 6/6 | Draft Workshop  
Due: Draft of Job Application Packet |
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| 6/7 | Introduction to Progress Reports; Format and Layout  
Alred, "Progress Reports"; Textbook reading  
Due: Final Draft of Job Application Packet |
| 6/8 | Introduction to Business Letter Packet – Company Groups Assigned |
| 6/9 | Business Letter Formats and Exigence  
Letter Pairings Assigned  
Alred "Correspondence"; Textbook reading  
Due: Final Progress Report |
| 6/10 | Writing Bad News and Persuasive Letters  
Textbook reading  
Due: Letter of Request |

| Week 5 | 6/13 | Writing Routine and Good News Messages  
Bovee Chapter 7  
Presentation |
|---|---|---|
| 6/14 | Draft Workshop  
Due: Complete Drafts of Business Letter Packet |
| 6/15 | Introduction to Formal Recommendation Reports  
Due: Final Business Letter Packet |
| 6/16 | Recommendation Reports  
Presentations |
| 6/17 | Recommendation Reports  
Presentations |

| Week 6 | 6/20 | Draft Workshop  
Presentations  
Due: Writing in Workplace Memo |
|---|---|---|
| 6/21 | Draft Workshop  
Presentations |
| 6/22 | Draft Workshop  
Presentations |
| 6/23 | Draft Workshop |
| 6/24 | Due: Final Recommendation Report and Complete Portfolio  
Due: Cool Parting Gifts for your 202-D Instructor |

General Instructions

For this assignment you are to write a formal proposal memo seeking my approval for the project that will become your final assignment. The proposal is the first document in a series that includes assignments four and six. Address your memo to me. Your job here is to identify (1) a significant problem in a real organization and (2) that you are in a position to investigate it and offer potential solutions. It will be the work of your final report to present your recommendations formally. For this first memo, however, you do not need to present specific solutions. You do, though, need to convince me that you understand the nature of the problem and that you are aware of the resources necessary to recommend solutions.

The problem you address may involve a specific institutional, technical, or public policy issue that you are working on or have worked on in your other courses; or it may be something related to an organization to which you belong; or it may be related to a job or internship that you have held or now hold; or it may be a new area that you are interested in. The solution to the problem may involve coming up with an original design, choosing between available alternatives, or providing needed information.

Points to consider

1. Have you clearly defined the problem your proposal will address?
2. Have you assessed who is affected by the problem, who the audience will be for your final analytic report, and why addressing this problem is important for that audience?
3. Have you begun to think toward what a final feasible solution to the problem might look like?
4. Have you demonstrated that you are qualified to solve this problem?
5. Have you begun to anticipate the types of research you will need to do to complete this project successfully?
6. Have you established a feasible work plan for the completion of your project?

Format

This document will be an internal memo addressed to me. Select your information and organize it in such a way that it is persuasive and accessible. Remember, this proposal is not merely informative: it is an argument for why your topic should be approved. Your proposal will most likely include the following sections:

1. An introduction that tells my why you are writing.
2. A problem section that both defines the problem and explains its significance. This section would be best articulated by including an effective problem statement.
3. A research section. Convince me that you know what kind of information you will need and where to find it. Include an analysis of your readers and what information they will need in order to adopt your solution.
4. A discussion of your qualifications. Convince me that you have the background and resources necessary to conduct your research.
5. A work schedule. Convince me that you know what activities your research will require and that you can get them done on time.
6. A conclusion that formally requests permission to proceed.
Document Two: Writing in the Workplace Memo

General Instructions

For this assignment you will interview someone currently working professionally in your field about writing in the workplace. Your goals will be to contact a working professional in your field, set up an in-person or over-the-phone interview (email is not acceptable), and inquire about the types of writing you can be expected to do day to day on the job. Organize your information in a memo addressed to me that provides a clear summary and cogent analysis of what you learned.

I am not requiring any specific format or organization for the memo, but it will most likely include most of the following:

- A detailed introduction of your interviewee, including an analysis of his or her current company, position, and work and education history
- A description of the general types of writing required for the field and/or for specific positions
- A description and analysis of major writing requirements, such as what is required for larger projects and reports
- A description of the major publications or trade journals you'll need to keep up on
- A survey of what you might want to be focusing on now, before you go on the market
- An analysis of “pet peeves,” or of “I wish I knew then what I know now” information
- An analysis of what we “get right” or “get wrong” in English 202-D at Penn State, according to the experience of your interviewee

Format

This will be an internal memo addressed to me. You may wish to cc your interviewee and send him or her your final draft. While I am not requiring any specific structural format, your memo should be clearly organized and make effective use of headings, lists, and shorter paragraphs.
Document Three: Job Application Packet

General Instructions

For this assignment you will write:

1. Two résumés and two cover letters addressed to two different prospective employers for two separate positions. The documents should highlight different aspects of your experience relevant to each position.

2. A brief cover memo (1-2 pages) addressed to me that gives an overview of the two positions, reviews what you know about these particular employers, and describes how you have adapted your letter and résumé to each situation. I expect to see this information reflected in your résumés and cover letters to the employers. The purpose of this memo is to make it easy for me to understand the decisions about audience and purpose that you have made in your résumé/cover letter packet.

Format for Resumes

1. **Purpose:** The résumé should describe your qualifications for a specific type of position. You will create two different résumés for this assignment, each addressing a specific position. The résumés may overlap in content somewhat, but should differ in order of presentation, content, and emphasis.

2. **Content:** Your résumé should include contact information and relevant details about your education, professional training, special accomplishments, and skills. A résumé is not a life history, but rather an argument that you are qualified for a particular position and that you would be a capable, responsible employee who communicates effectively.

3. **Format:** Your format may be traditional or innovative, as long as the information is highly accessible and highlights the most important items from the employer's perspective.

4. **Style:** Your style should be fairly formal. You need not use complete sentences, but you should use active voice and pay particular attention to parallel structure.

Format for Cover Letters

1. **Purpose:** The cover letter is addressed to a specific employer and is designed to persuade that employer to grant you an interview. Tailor your choice of details and explanations to the employer's values and interests.

2. **Content and Organization:** The opening of your letter should establish who you are, what position you are applying for, how you learned of this position, and why you would like to work for this particular company. Your goal is to show the reader both that you know what the specific company needs and that you are qualified for the job. Preview the body of the letter by stating your major qualifications for the position. The body of the letter develops each qualification with specific, illustrative evidence. You may organize this section in various ways: around your training and experience or around what the position or the company requires. The letter should close by inviting a response and making it easy to arrange an interview.
3. **Style:** While cover letters should be polite and fairly formal, you also want them to sound individualized and reflect your personality. The best policy is to address your reader as directly and naturally as possible, avoiding bombastic or overly esoteric vocabulary.

4. **Format:** Use conventional business letter format.

**Format for Cover Memo**

Your cover memo will probably be one to two pages in length. It should be easily accessible and designed to supplement your packet's four major documents. You will most likely use lists and short passages to make the memo as efficient as possible. The memo should include the following three sections for each document:

1. **Job Description:** You may want to base your job descriptions on listings that you find in professional or trade journals, in newspapers, on the Internet, or at the Career Services Center. Specify any particular qualities or experience that the company may be looking for in candidates for the position. Cite all external information (such as information from websites) properly using a citation method of your choosing.

2. **Audience Analysis:** Investigate the particular companies to which you are applying. Information on many companies is available from the library, the net, and Career Services Center. You may also contact the personnel office of the company directly. Describe the company and its values: when was the company founded, where is it located, what does the organization do, how many employees does it have, what character traits does it look for in its workers? Note in this section any special connections you may have through personal acquaintance, an internship, or the company's involvement with a Penn State class or program.

3. **Rhetorical Analysis:** Justify your rhetorical choices for each document, especially how you have adapted each résumé and cover letter for the particular position, company, and reader. Think about the various changes you made in content, arrangement, and style. Normally, your reasons will be closely related to the information in the job description and audience analysis.
Document Four: Progress Report

General Instructions

Write a memo apprising me of the progress that you are making on your final project. Your report should:

1. Remind me briefly what your project is: tell me about your audience, the problem you are solving or helping to solve, and how you propose to solve it. If your project or the problem has changed, address the changes.

2. Summarize what you have done so far in enough detail and with enough specificity to convince me that you are making substantial and appropriate progress toward being able to write a report at the end of the semester. What resources have you used? What experts have you interviewed? What kinds of research have you done?

3. State what remains to be done.

4. Describe what problems you’ve had or foresee that you will have in finishing this project by the end of this term. Please do not hesitate to see me to discuss any problems you are having in this area.

5. Explain any changes in your work schedule that have emerged since you wrote your proposal.

Format for Report

This will be an internal memo addressed to me. Organize your letter into a beginning that includes your purpose, a middle that carries out your purpose, and an ending.
Document Five: Business Letter Packet

General Instructions

For this assignment you will demonstrate your ability to apply a variety of writing strategies to specific situations by writing four business letters and a cover memo to me explaining your rhetorical choices in each letter.

This assignment will develop through 4 phases. First, the class will be split into six separate groups, each of which will form its own fictional company providing a specific product or service. Second, you will write a proposal or request letter to a member of another group. I will assign these pairings. Third, you will write both a “bad news” and a “good news” response to proposal letter you receive. Finally, you will write a fourth letter of a type of your choosing. The form of this last letter must be approved by me, but it does not have to be related to the fictional group situations. (For example, you might try writing a thank-you letter for a job interview, or a letter of acceptance.)

Your cover memo to me will describe the situations for and rhetorical strategies of each of the four letters.

Format for Letters

Use standard block or modified block format. Single-space all documents, create letterheads where appropriate, and be creative. Have some “mandatory” fun here, while maintaining an appropriate and professional demeanor.

Format for Cover Memo

Briefly describe the situation for which each letter was written. Provide a brief analysis of your rhetorical considerations for crafting each letter. Think about your selection of details, style, format, and organization.
Document Six: Formal Recommendation Report

General Instructions

Write the formal recommendation report that you described in assignment one. See this report as a kind of final exam, a place to demonstrate everything that you have learned about writing in this course. The report must:

1. Define a problem
2. Analyze the criteria for a satisfactory solution
3. Propose one or more alternative solutions
4. Argue for the solution that satisfies the criteria best

Format for Report

Your report should include:

1. A cover page
2. A letter or memo of transmittal
3. An executive summary
4. A table of contents
5. At least one graph or visual aid
6. References or works cited
7. Appendices
8. No grammatical or stylistic errors

Length

Excluding front and end matter, your report needs to be as long as it needs to be, but probably between 10 and 20 pages.
Super-Bonus-Extra-Credit Extravaganza:
Class Presentation and Memo

General Instructions

Living with regrets? Or are you looking for an insurance policy against potential future catastrophes? Here’s your big shot at redemption and confidence about the future. To earn extra credit, pick an aspect of business communication that we do not cover completely in class and give a fifteen- to twenty-minute presentation on that topic. Most likely, you will make use of PowerPoint slides. You will submit to me a brief memo that overviews what you will be showing to the class. Remember, though this is a formal business presentation, your audience is a class of Penn State students, many of whom will be interested in the issues you’re discussing. Design and deliver a presentation that effectively educates them and stimulates their thinking about your topic. You can earn up to a total of 10 extra credit points to be added to your class total.

You must choose to present on one of the topics listed below. If you’d like to present on something else, you must get my okay in advance. Topics will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis. They include:

1. Ethics issues in written documents
2. Specific documents we haven’t covered in class (email, correspondence, TPS reports, etc.)
3. Book report on a text appropriate to class
4. Effective PowerPoint presentations
5. Using visual aids; Using Excel to create graphs, charts, and diagrams and integrate them with documents.
6. Penn State’s e-portfolio
7. Career Center Services not covered in class
8. Job interviewing strategies
9. Introductions to Organizations or Professional Organizations
10. Resume sites like Monster or CareerBuilder
11. Get-rich-quick schemes that really really work

The goal of this assignment is not only to allow you to explore a particular area of business communication in greater detail, but also to allow you to steer the class in a direction that best addresses your interests. Oh, and also all that business about redeeming past mistakes and stuff.

Format

1. You will be giving a “real” business-like presentation: this means that you will need to dress and present yourself and your topic in a way that is appropriate to your audience. There will be feedback from me in the form of a grade, but we will also discuss both your topic and your presentation afterwards as a class. If you require any special equipment for your presentation (television, DVD player, 8-track player, Beta VCR, holodeck, two cans and a string, etc.), please let me know. You will be responsible, however, for arranging the delivery or pick-up for any of your equipment.
2. You must meet with me during an office appointment before you will be allowed to proceed. Be prepared to discuss your topic and how you plan to take on your presentation.
3. You will submit a summary of your presentation (not a word-for-word transcription) to me in as a formal memo. This memo should be submitted to me the day you are due to give your presentation.