

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Syllabus

Instructor: Professor Erin Brock Carlson **Email:** erin.carlson@mail.wvu.edu

Virtual Class: Thursdays, 1:00-2:15 p.m. via Zoom [[link to standing Zoom](#)]

Virtual Student Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00-2:15 p.m. when we don't have Writing Group meetings; and other times by appointment (just email me to set up a time!)

Weekly Course Schedule: [[link to schedule](#)]



Overview

English 304 will help you to develop an awareness of the rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for producing effective workplace writing (whether that workplace is corporate, start-up, nonprofit, governmental, academic, or something else entirely!). We'll talk a lot about genre, or a way to organize communication by examining form, content, purpose, audience, exigence, impact, etc., because that is a good entry point into mapping out the world of professional writing. After all, we can't possibly tackle every single writing task that each of you will be asked to do in the future, but we *can* practice using new genres, so that you're prepared to take on those tasks when the time comes. Central to success in this course is a willingness to understand different communication contexts, the needs of multiple sometimes conflicting audiences, a commitment to engaging with professional research and technological practices, and a desire to hone your writing, speaking, and design skills.

This is now an **online course**, which I know is not the ideal situation; however, I promise that this course is designed and paced so that you can both work at your own pace (to a certain extent), and collaborate with your peers and myself. Each week will follow the same pattern that mimics (sort of) what we would have done if we were meeting face to face, so that we can tackle course content in a range of ways so that *all of us* are engaged. Here are some key things to remember:

- We will always have one day of live class a week via Zoom: Thursdays during our designated class time of 1:00-2:15 p.m. Because of the reality that some folks might not have reliable internet access, or some people might get sick, these sessions are not required; however, they are **strongly recommended**. I promise that they will be worth your time and will help you succeed.
- Work for this class will be split into two sections each week with most weeks having **two** hard deadlines: **Thursday by class time (1:00 p.m.)**, and **Sunday by 11:59 p.m.** The first half of the week will 1) prepare you for class and 2) set the foundation for the second half of the week, which typically will contain the more substantive assignments. [The schedule for the course](#) will always be updated and clearly show you what needs to be done and when.

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Syllabus

- In addition to the weekly synchronous Zoom meetings, some weeks I will invite you to meet in smaller virtual groups with me on **Tuesdays during the scheduled class time**. Each group would meet for about 20 minutes during our typical class meeting, and these sessions would be devoted to focusing on your own writing, as we brainstorm, draft, revise, and edit. Again, these are not required, but I can say with complete confidence that you will do better in the course if you make the time for these meetings.
- More on these smaller groups: Since we can't be together in-person, I wanted to give y'all as many opportunities to work together in low-stakes situations (read: ways that don't impact your grade negatively if someone disappears) as possible. I will group you in small groups of 4-5 based on your interests, experiences with writing, and goals for the class. These will become your Writing Groups, which you'll meet with on *some* Tuesdays (with me!). In addition to these occasional meetings, I'll ask that y'all check in with one another each week via email or text or whatever, to see how things are going and if there are any questions that I can clarify or help with. My goal is that this group becomes a space for you to develop your writing skills outside of class, and to build community during this very strange semester.
- I will hold Virtual Student Hours (or Office Hours) during our class times on Tuesdays, 1:00-2:15 p.m., in weeks when Writing Groups are not meeting. These are for you to talk with me (via Zoom, phone, text chat) about the class, to ask questions, to get extra feedback on your work, to talk about more general writing concerns or college concerns; whatever. They're for you! Please shoot me an email so that we can arrange a way to meet.

Here's a quick illustration of what each week will look like:

Tuesday	Thursday	Sunday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some weeks, Writing Group meetings, a 20 minute period within the 1:00-2:15 p.m. time frame• Most weeks, Virtual Student Hours, 1:00-2:15 p.m• Check-In with Writing Group, anytime	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtual Class, 1:00-2:15 p.m.• First Weekly Deadline; Assignments due by 1:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second Weekly Deadline; Assignments due by 11:59 p.m.

Course Goals and Means

By the end of the semester, students who earn a passing grade in the course (C- or above) will have demonstrated their ability to:

- **Write** in diverse contexts, by using different technologies to communicate and compose in different genres for a range of audiences;
- **Design** effective and visually appealing documents; by learning principles of visual rhetoric and applying these principles to your own documents;
- **Manage, plan,** and **evaluate** projects, by planning and completing complicated projects in a condensed time frame while maintaining a professional ethos;
- **Cultivate** a critical awareness of your strengths and weaknesses as a writer through multiple self-assessments and reflective writing tasks;

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Syllabus

- **Develop** responsible and responsive research skills, by doing several kinds of research and implementing your findings into professional formats using emergent technologies; and
- **Collaborate** with other students and the instructor in a variety of formats.

Required Materials

There is no assigned textbook for this class, but we will be using Google Classroom as a headquarters for our class (code to join: [w6me7fq](#)). Classroom has a mobile app version. We will also be using Zoom for synchronous meetings, and I might introduce other optional technologies that are free to use throughout the semester. (For best results, please make sure that you have the latest version of Zoom.)

Major Units & Assignments

Each unit is made up of several components, including shorter writing assignments and the final product. Everything we do in this class will help you with putting together your final projects, so missing major components *does* lower your overall unit grade. English 304 does not have a final exam.

1. Practicing Professional Communication 15%

We will start the semester with a short unit that focuses on the proper content and format of common professional documents such as letters, memos, and emails, as well as overarching communication concerns for professional workplaces. You will also contribute to a collaborative guidebook that outlines different genres you might encounter in the workplace.

2. Crafting Employment Materials 25%

The focus of this unit will be on developing a portfolio of employment documents. After exploring different positions you would be interested in applying for, you will develop all of the necessary materials for one particular position. This includes an application or cover letter, two types of resume (skills-based and chronological), a personal brand outline, and a short interview sequence.

3. Managing Extended Projects and Writing Formal Reports 30%

Our last unit is long, but essentially divided into two halves. During the first, you will identify a problem in our community, your field, or some other arena. You will research that problem and plan out your work for the second half of the project, where you will propose a solution for that problem. Deliverables during this unit will include: topic memo, scope of work, research brief, written proposal, and pitch and accompanying slide deck. This project is open-ended, and will require a great deal of planning, design-work, and revision. Note: You can complete this in small groups if you wish.

Performance Evaluations 10%

This class requires you to act as you would in a workplace environment, which means that you should be mentally present, ready to engage, and willing to work with others. This behavior takes many different forms, and you will be encouraged to reflect on your own practices through self-evaluations in each unit, as well as a larger evaluation at the end of the semester.

Application Exercises, Reading Responses, and Style Practice 20%

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Syllabus

Obviously, we're working under imperfect circumstances, but our success depends on how well we can engage with the content and one another throughout the term. You will have an application activity or reading response most weeks, meant to be a more useful version of a reading quiz. These are open book, open note (of course!), and will highlight the major aspects of the reading that will be most useful to completing our final projects. You are responsible for keeping up with **all** of the readings in the class. Most weeks, I will assign reading responses in order to allow you to delve into the concepts discussed and why they matter. I expect you to write 300-500 words in these responses, and I offer questions to get you started, but feel free to talk about ideas from the reading that interest you. The most important thing to remember about reading responses is that you **should use them to illustrate that you read**: whatever approach you take, you should be directly referencing the text, showing off your understanding of the concepts central to the readings.

We will also have some activities based on style and clarity, to practice those skills. Some will be quick reviews of some common grammar concerns, while others will be exercises meant to make the writing in your assignments more focused and concise. I will also ask that people are willing to serve as class note-taker from time to time, and to share those notes in our Classroom space so that we have records from class.

Grading

Specific criteria and rubrics for each major assignment will be provided on Google Classroom; however, all of the writing you produce in this course should meet the requirements of the specific project, be well-informed and thoughtful, be respectful of audience, be grammatically and stylistically sound, and be rhetorically effective for its intended purpose.

In compliance with relevant privacy laws (FERPA), I must discuss grades with you in confidence. This means I cannot email grades to you; please set up a meeting where we can discuss virtually. **I post grades on Google Classroom regularly, so you can keep track of them there.**

letter grade	range	letter grade	range	letter grade	range
A+	100-98%	B-	82-80%	D	67-63%
A	97-93%	C+	79-78%	D-	62-60%
A-	92-90%	C	77-73%	F	59-0%
B+	89-88%	C-	72-70%		
B	87-83%	D+	69-68%		

Revision policy

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Syllabus

If you are unsatisfied with your grade on a major assignment, you may revise it for a higher grade; but, you must correspond with me about those revisions and write a brief memo that explains your changes. (After all, this is what would happen in a professional environment.)

Course Policies

Engagement and participation

Obviously, engagement and participation takes on a different meaning in our current scenario; however, this offers a valuable experience for all of us, as remote working environments are becoming more and more commonplace. (Especially, um, while we live through a global pandemic.) While our schedules might shift throughout the semester, you must still demonstrate your active involvement with the course by completing tasks on time, engaging with your peers, and asking good questions.

A note on Zoom: Zoom is weird. We will get tired of it, but it does have affordances that I plan to use to break things up (breakout rooms, polls, etc.). I will have my camera on so that you can see me and slides, but that doesn't mean that you have to always have your camera on. Please feel free to use the chat function, to ask questions, to engage in whatever respectful ways you feel comfortable with. See [this best practices guide](#) I developed for more.

Late work and technological difficulties

I set deadlines for a reason – to help you be better students and me be a better teacher. This class is modeled after real work environments, where deadlines matter. That being said, in professional environments, you may ask for an extension. An approved extension will not affect your grade, but do not over use this professional courtesy. Additionally, if you submit an assignment late, you will not get the same amount of written feedback. If you do not ask for an extension **before** the due date, your late work will not be accepted, and you will receive a zero for that assignment. Additionally, lost files, crashed computers, or other technical difficulties will not be considered a legitimate excuse for late work. Because computer problems are a fact of life, always try to complete your assignments early and ALWAYS save your work in multiple places (e.g., USB, Google Drive, etc.).

Academic integrity

Dishonesty is not accepted in our class, and will definitely not be accepted in the workplace. For more information visit the WVU [Academic Standards Policy](#). All academic honesty violations will result in a failing grade of 1% for the assignment and likely, the course. If you have any questions about this, please come and talk to me before an assignment is due.

Accommodations and accessibility

I strive to make my courses as accessible and accommodating to all persons as I can. If you require any specific accommodations, please send me an email within the first week of the term in order to discuss any necessary adjustments. For more information, consult the [Office of Accessibility Services](#).

Professional conduct and community

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Syllabus

Always feel free to email me if you have questions or concerns; I don't often check my email after 7 p.m., so if you email me after this time, you probably won't get a response until the next day. Please use appropriate email etiquette when communicating with me and your classmates.

I take seriously the need to provide a respectful and supportive environment in our classroom. You are expected to behave professionally in class and out of class (this includes while corresponding through email), and to treat everyone in our community with kindness and respect. I have a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and harassment in all forms.

Health and safety

WVU is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. If you become sick or are required to quarantine during the semester, you should notify me immediately via email. You will work with me to develop a plan to receive the necessary course content, activities, and assessments to complete the course learning outcomes. **I am here to support you however I can.**

Student success

WVU has a number of resources and offices dedicated to student success. Of special note, when it comes to writing, is the [Eberly Writing Studio](#), which will have online and phone appointments available this term.

Further, any student who faces challenges securing their food, housing, mental health, or other elements of wellbeing, and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Student Advocacy Center for support. Please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess and to try and connect you to others.

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Schedule

Schedule is subject to change based on class needs. **Previous weeks will be moved to bottom of document.**

Remember, Tuesdays are for Student Hours (to talk with me) and Writing Group Check-Ins and Meetings!

Week 1 (8/26-8/30): Introduction to Business/Professional Writing

	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	304 Syllabus and Schedule	304 Job Offer Packet Unit 1 Overview
Do	Download Zoom, set up account Join Classroom	Introduction Survey Introduction to Class Self Evaluation #1
Notes	8/27 Class: Starting from the Bottom, Then We There	

Week 2 (8/31-9/6): Workplace Genres (Messaging, Emails, Memos, Letters)

	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Professional Correspondence Any 2 Posts from AAM	Memo Reminders
Do	Application Exercise: Emails Reading Response: Workplace Fun Sign Up for Genre Guidebook Entry	Style Exercise: Memo Format Scenario Memo Email Acceptance
Notes	9/3 Class: Fwd: Fwd: Fwd: Fwd: Fwd U WON'T BELIEVE THIS	

Week 3 (9/7-9/13): Preparing Job Materials

	By Tuesday, 1:00 p.m.	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Unit 2 Overview	Careers PDF	Job Hunting Tips
Do		Reading Response: Job Advice Gather 3 Job Listings Genre Guidebook Entry	Job Ad Analysis Memo Style Exercise: Writing with Clarity
Notes	9/8 Writing Group: Job Hunts	9/10 Class: Reading Job Listings and Getting That Cash <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bring: 3 Job Listings/Internship Ads/Grad Program Requirements, depending on what you're focusing on 	

Week 4 (9/14-9/20): Resumes

	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Gen Zrs and Resumes Resumes and Bots Resumes PDF	Resume Guides and Examples

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Schedule

Schedule is subject to change based on class needs. **Previous weeks will be moved to bottom of document.**

Remember, Tuesdays are for Student Hours (to talk with me) and Writing Group Check-Ins and Meetings!

Do	Application Exercise: Job Application Packages	[Optional] 1st Resume Drafts Style Exercise: Action Verbs for Resumes
Notes	9/17 Class: Hello, Give Me Job	

Week 5 (9/21-9/27): Cover Letters

	By Tuesday, 1:00 p.m.	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read		Letters of Application PDF Cover Letter Slides	Real-Life Example of Revision
Do	Draft of ONE resume	Application Exercise: Power Impact Statement	[optional] Draft of Cover Letter Style Exercise: Parallel Structure
Notes	9/22 Writing Group: Resume Feedback	9/24 Class: "I've Done Nothing Wrong, Ever . Money Pleease!" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bring: Power Impact Statement 	

Week 6 (9/28-10/4): Packaging Materials and Document Design

	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	How Typography Shapes Perceptions How Typography Can Save Your Life Clean Design	Personal Branding More on Personal Branding
Do	Updated Drafts of Resumes, Cover Letter Reading Response: Document Design	Peer Review of Resumes, Cover Letter
Notes	10/1 Class: Don't Use Comic Sans (I'm Being a Snob)	

Week 7 (10/5-10/11): Interviewing and Sealing the Deal

	By Tuesday, 1:00 p.m.	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Appearance in Interviews Perfect Interview Outfit Interviewing Slides		
Do	Reading Response: Interviews	Application Exercise: Practice Answers	Final Chronological Resume Final Resumes Final Cover Letter Post-Interview Thanks Email Self Evaluation #2
Notes	10/8 Class: Look At Me, But	10/10 Writing Group: Practice Interview	

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Schedule

Schedule is subject to change based on class needs. **Previous weeks will be moved to bottom of document.**

Remember, Tuesdays are for Student Hours (to talk with me) and Writing Group Check-Ins and Meetings!

	Not Too Much, I'm Nervous	
--	---------------------------	--

Week 8 (10/12-10/18): Identifying and Assessing Problems in the Workplace

	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Are You Solving the Right Problem? Why Groups Struggle to Solve Problems Unit 3 Overview	
Do	Reading Response: Problem Solving	Application Exercise: Topic Brainstorm Style Exercise: Commonly Misused Words
Notes	10/15 Class: 99 Problems and That Creep Boss Is One	

Week 9 (10/19-10/25): Planning Projects and Articulating Scope of Work

	By Tuesday, 1:00 p.m.	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read		Agile Project Management Tips for Long Term Projects Project Management Slides	How to Write a Scope of Work Scope of Work Examples
Do	Preliminary Research on Potential Topics	Topic Proposal Memo Reading Response: Project Procrastination	Style Exercise: Active vs. Passive Voice
Notes	10/20 Writing Group: Landing on a Good Topic	10/22 Class: I Did the Work, Now Pay Me	

Week 10 (10/26-11/1): Researching for Business/Professional Writing

	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Know Your Subject (PDF) Business Research Slides	Your Own Sources
Do	Scope of Work Start Researching Your Topic	Style Exercise: Working with Sources
Notes	10/29 Class: Googling Around the Web <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring: 1 Source 	

Week 11 (11/2-11/8): Drafting Longer Written Documents

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Schedule

Schedule is subject to change based on class needs. **Previous weeks will be moved to bottom of document.**

Remember, Tuesdays are for Student Hours (to talk with me) and Writing Group Check-Ins and Meetings!

	By Tuesday, 1:00 p.m.	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read		Know Your Audience (PDF) Writing Topic Sentences and Crafting Paras	
Do	Come up with 3 concerns with your draft/project to talk about in Writing Group	Research Brief Self Evaluation #3 Application Exercise: Audience Analysis	Early Draft of Proposal Style Exercise: Fragments and Run-Ons
Notes	11/3 Writing Group: How Are We Doing?	11/5 Class: tl;dr	

Week 12 (11/9-11/15): Revising and Editing Written Reports

	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	Conciseness (PDF) Editing Your Work (PDF)	Revision vs. Editing Quick Guide PDF
Do	1st Draft of Proposal Application Exercise: Self-Editing	Style Exercise: Colons, Hyphens, etc.
Notes	11/12 Class: Select All > Delete > Cry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring: Current Version of Proposal 	

Week 12 (11/16-11/22): Polishing Documents and Planning Presentations

	By Tuesday, 1:00 p.m.	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read		Why Document Design and Usability Matter	
Do	Revised Full Draft of Proposal	2nd Draft of Proposal Application Exercise: Reverse Outline	Peer Review of Proposal Style Exercise: Eliminating Wordiness Self Evaluation #4
Notes	11/17 Writing Group: More Revising and Editing	11/19 Class: Save as PDF, Trust Me; Check That Zoom Background <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring: Reverse Outline 	

Week 13 (11/23-11/29): Thanksgiving Break

ENGL 304: Business/Professional Writing Schedule

Schedule is subject to change based on class needs. **Previous weeks will be moved to bottom of document.**

Remember, Tuesdays are for Student Hours (to talk with me) and Writing Group Check-Ins and Meetings!

	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read		
Do		
Notes	Take a break. Or work on your final projects. Whatever u want.	

Week 14 (11/30-12/6): Pitching Proposals

	By Thursday, 1:00 p.m.	By Sunday, 11:59 p.m.
Read	How to Give A Killer Presentation	Nine Things to Cover in Your Year-End Performance Review
Do	Prepare pitches and slides Style Exercise: Presentation Format	Reading Response: Work and Labor
Notes	12/3 Class: Pitch It, Pitch It Good <ul style="list-style-type: none">Bring: Slides	

Finals Week (12/7-12/12): Reflecting on Business/Professional Writing

Please turn in the following by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, December 8th:

- Final Written Proposal (and any necessary appendices)
- Group Assessment (if you worked in a group)
- (Cumulative) Self Evaluation #5