engl 304: business/professional writing

CRN 81461 | Tuesday/Thursday 1.00-2.15 | Colson Hall G18

course overview:

English 304 will help you to develop an awareness of the rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for producing effective workplace writing, including memos, emails, application documents, formal reports, grant applications, and self-assessments. Our curriculum is informed by current research in rhetoric and professional writing and is guided by the needs and practices of business, industry, and society at large. The primary outcome of this course is an awareness of workplace genres, and the tools and conditions that shape these genres—as well as the ethical implications of your everyday professional interactions.

Our section of business writing is focused on developing skills to address and understand institutions ("institutions" meaning any organizing entity, whether it's a business, a non-profit, an educational enterprise, etc.). You will be part of institutions throughout your professional careers, and we will work this semester to figure out how institutions work so that you can effectively engage in them. We will start by focusing on institutional identities and how these are communicated internally (within the company) and externally (to potential members). The second half of the course will focus on how to understand and address institutions as you cultivate research practices, write formal reports, and assemble grant application packages meant to persuade external stakeholders.

Ultimately, it is my hope that this semester will bring all of us a greater understanding of how writing can make things happen in professional and community spaces, and help us to make ethical, informed decisions when we communicate with one another in those spaces.

course goals and means:

➢ Writing in diverse contexts, by using different technologies to communicate and compose in different genres, for a range of audiences;
➢ Designing effective and visually appealing documents; by learning principles of visual rhetoric and applying these principles to your own documents;
➢ Managing, planning, and evaluating projects, by planning and completing complicated projects in a condensed time frame while maintaining a professional personal ethos;
➢ Working on teams and individually, by collaborating with others throughout the semester; and
➢ Developing responsible and responsive research skills, by doing several kinds of research and implementing your findings into professional formats using emergent technologies.

section information:
instructor: Dr. Erin Brock Carlson, Assistant Professor of English
email: erin.carlson@mail.wvu.edu
mix email (for sharing large files)**:** ebc00001@mix.wvu.edu
office location: Colson Hall 337
office hours: Tuesdays 10-12; Wednesdays 12-2; and by appointment

required materials:

There is **no assigned textbook** for this class. Instead, you will receive all of your readings through eCampus. However, you will need access to and a willingness to develop an understanding for the following technologies to succeed in the course:

➢ Mac OSX (our computer lab is a Mac lab), **or** the ability to bring your own **reliable** device each day

➢ eCampus, because that's where readings/assignments will be located

major 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 project, so missing major components **does** lower your overall unit grade. English 304 does not have a final examination.

unit one: professional correspondence 5%

We will start the semester with a very short unit that focuses on the proper content and format of common professional documents such as letters, memos, and emails.

unit two: employment project 15%

The focus of our first major unit will be on developing a portfolio of employment documents. You will need to locate a job/internship/graduate program that you'd like to apply to sooner or later. You will then develop all the necessary materials for applying to that position, including an application letter, two types of resume (skills-based and chronological), and take part in a short interview sequence.

unit three: report writing 20%

In this unit you will write a short report. You will have a lot of choice in what topic you approach, but it will address an issue in the community, your field, or some other arena. This report will require research and document design, as you will aim to construct an engaging report.

unit four: proposal packages 25%

For the final unit of the course, you will work in teams of 3-4 in order to further the work you began in the report unit. You will pursue steps to address a problem identified in Unit 3, and may craft materials for a grant application, a press kit, or a business plan. This project is open-ended, and will require a great deal of planning, design-work, and revision.

collaborative genre guidebook 10%

Throughout the semester, you will contribute to a collaborative guidebook that outlines different genres you might encounter in the workplace. You will complete your own entry in pairs, and will be able to take this resource with you beyond our classroom.

reading responses & in-class activities 15%

You will be responsible for keeping up with the readings in the class. I will regularly assign reading responses to direct your attention to a particular aspect of these readings. I expect you to write 300-500 words in response to the reading, but you may focus on any aspect or idea within the reading

that interests you. When there are not reading responses assigned, we will engage with the reading in other ways: short, in-class writings, activities, and exercises—and potentially reading quizzes.

performance and performance evaluations 10%
This class requires you to act as you would in a workplace environment, which means that you should be 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.

grading:

letter grade	range	letter grade	range	letter grade	range
A+	100-98%	B-	83-80%	D	67-64%
A	97-94%	C+	79-78%	D-	63-60%
A-	93-90%	C	77-74%	F	Less than 60%
B+	89-88%	C-	73-70%		
B	87-84%	D+	69-68%		

Specific criteria and rubrics for each major assignment will be explained and developed in class. 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 I discuss grades with you in confidence. This means I cannot email grades to you, nor can I talk about grades with you in front of others (e.g. in the hallway after class); please come to my office hours for this purpose. I post grades on eCampus regularly, so you can also keep track of them there.

course policies:
attendance and tardiness
As an upper-level course, this class requires a high level of engagement and participation. However, I do allow you to have **three absences** during the semester (which is equivalent to more than a full week of class, so I'm being generous here). These absences can be used at your discretion, and do not negatively affect your grade—given that you don't miss a day you present, or the day of a peer review. After the fourth absence, your final letter graded will be lowered one step—i.e., from a B to a B-. If you miss **more than seven classes** (barring situations that are handled in conjunction with ODOS), you will automatically fail the course. Absences for bereavement, extended illnesses, university-sanctioned events, religious holidays, military training or deployment, or for other circumstances that I agree are unavoidable, will **not** count against this total, provided that you go through the proper channels and clear these absences with me **in writing** (via email) as soon as you can.

Being late to class is disruptive to my teaching and your learning, as well as the experience of your classmates. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be marked as absent; if you are consistently late, I will request a meeting with you to address the issue.

engagement

This classroom will be run like a work environment, meaning that you will have a fair amount of freedom. With that freedom comes the expectation that you will be not only physically present, but mentally present, and ready to work in class. I also expect you to use technology (computers, phones, etc.) with care and consideration for others—any failure to do so will be reflected in your in-class grade.

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. An assignment is considered late when it is not submitted by the time and in the manner specified, in class or on eCampus. That being said, in professional environments, you may ask for an extension on your deadlines. 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 email me to ask for an extension before the due date, your late work will not be accepted.**

Additionally, lost files, crashed computers, or other technical difficulties will not be considered a legitimate excuse for late work. This class requires you to be engaged in digital spaces. 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, Dropbox, etc.).

academic integrity

Dishonesty is not accepted here, 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 questions, 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

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.

basic needs

Any student who faces challenges securing their food, housing, or other elements of wellbeing, and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, 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.

week	readings	writing due	notes
1, begins 8/19			
2, begins 8/26	Rogers Captain Memos PDF	RR #1 Acceptance Email Assessment #1	
3, begins 9/2	Careers PDF Renzulli	RR #2 Job Posting Analysis	
4, begins 9/9	Letters of App. PDF Green	Cover Letter Draft Resume Draft	
5, begins 9/16	Smith	RR #3 Updated Drafts	
6, begins 9/23	Interviewing PDF	Interview Answers	Mock Interviews 9/26
7, begins 9/30	HBR Reading TBD on Problem-Setting	RR #4 Unit 2 Finals Assessment #2	
8, begins 10/7	Research on Public Issues		No Class 10/10
9, begins 10/14	Short Reports PDF Example Reports	Annotated Bib.	No Class 10/17
10, begins 10/21		Report Draft	
11, begins 10/28	What is a Grant PDF	Unit 3 Final Assessment #3	Pitches 10/31
12, begins 11/4	Business Plan readings Press Kit readings		
13, begins 11/11	Collaboration article	RR #5 Team Workflow Annotated Guidelines	
14, begins 11/18	Millennials in the Workforce podcast	RR #6 Status Update Memo	
15, begins 11/25			No Class, Thxgiving
16, begins 12/2		Draft of Application	
17, begins 12/9		Final Materials Assessment #4	Presentations 12/11