

# English 202

Sandy Baldwin, English 202, Fall 2001, Professional Writing  
**English 202: Professional Writing**  
Fall 2001

Instructor: Sandy Baldwin Class period: TR 230-345  
Office: Stansbury 359 Office hours: TR 120-220  
Office phone: 293-3103x452 and by appointment

**Required texts:** Pearsall, *The Elements of Technical Writing*  
Lanham, *Revising Business Prose*

## Introduction

English 202, Professional Writing, introduces students to the genres of writing and the writing situations that are common in the professional world. A fundamental assumption of this course is that writing is not merely informational. Writing is primarily a form of activism, of advocacy, and of action within the workplace; writing happens in response to a given situation and with a clear purpose. Accordingly, this course will focus on the strategies good writers use to accommodate multiple audiences and purposes on the job.

## The objectives of the course are:

- \* To make you more aware of the value and role of writing in professional situations.
- \* To clarify the basic rhetorical patterns of professional communication.
- \* To provide you with experience in applying these patterns.
- \* To emphasize the importance of designing communications for a specific reader.
- \* To demonstrate the importance of visual rhetoric to successful workplace writing.

## By the end of the course you should be able to:

- \* Distinguish the purpose of your communication.
- \* Identify and analyze both primary and secondary audiences.
- \* Choose appropriate strategies and genres for writing to your audience(s), given your writing purpose.
- \* Gather, interpret, and use information logically, efficiently and ethically.
- \* Design effective formats for your communications.
- \* Design usable, clear, persuasive, accessible documents.

## Requirements

### *Conferences*

Each student is required to have at least one conference with me during the semester. See me when you have questions about an assignment, when you would like to try out some ideas before

an assignment is due, when you have questions about a comment, or when you just want to talk about the course in general. You should also see me to get help with particular writing problems, to resolve differences about grades, or to suggest ways to improve the course.

## **Attendance**

You are expected to attend class every day and to have your textbooks and all your work with you. An occasional absence is perhaps understandable, but habitual absence is inexcusable. If you amass more than two unexcused absences, your final grade for the course will be lowered one full letter grade. For each unexcused absence after two, your final grade will be lowered an additional letter grade, up to and including a F.

It is particularly important for you to attend—and be prepared to participate in—in-class workshops on drafts of your paper. The more you have written before a peer review session, the more you will benefit from them. Although your drafts need not be "polished," in general they should be complete enough for you to receive substantial help from your fellow students. Under no circumstances will I accept a "final" paper unless I have seen a rough draft. An unexcused absence on the day a draft is due counts as two absences.

## **Assignments**

In this course, I will try to hold you to the professional standards that prevail in your field. For example, of the requirements listed below, your employer will take some completely for granted, such as promptness, neat appearance, and correct mechanics.

\* *Promptness*: In this course, as in the working world, you must turn in your work on time. All projects are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated on the syllabus. If you cannot be in class, your project is due in my mailbox during class-time. Assignments turned in late will be penalized one full letter grade unless you have made other arrangements with me in advance.

\* *Appearance*: All work should be neatly typed, using standard margins and spacing in a word-processing program. Whether it is a literature review, proposal, or report, your communication should exhibit complete and appropriate format. All writing for the course should be prepared on a computer and printed clearly.

\* *Grammar, Spelling, Proofreading*: At work, even a single error in spelling, grammar, or proofreading can jeopardize the effectiveness of some communications (depending on the rhetorical situation). Grading will reflect the great seriousness with which these matters are frequently viewed in the working world. I expect you to proofread your work carefully and to pay attention to the mechanics of your writing. If you would like special assistance with any of these skills, please ask.

\* *Back-up Copies*: Always prepare two legible copies of each major assignment. I will grade one copy and hand it back; the other copy will be for your own safekeeping and permanent records. Sometimes I will request a copy of one of your papers so that I can use it as a sample, to illustrate effective and problematic responses to assignments. Unless I completely obliterate any

marks that might identify it as yours, I will never use your work in class without your permission.

\* *Revisions*: You will receive feedback on your writing at various stages of the writing process. You should try to apply the comments to improve not only the particular paper you are working on at the time, but also your strategies for writing in general.

## **Expectations**

In addition to the requirements outlined above, you are expected to work until the class period has ended, complete all reading assignments on time, help your classmates learn by your responses to their writing, choose projects that require significant research and analysis, spend at least six hours per week out of class for writing and class preparation, and be courteous and considerate.

## **Social Justice Statement**

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (293-6700).

## **Grades**

When grading each of your assignments, I will ask one overriding question: "Does this paper do its job successfully?" That is, would your communication have the intended effect on the reader you are addressing? 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 chance of succeeding; an excellent performance is one that seems assured not only of success but also of winning praise:

\* *A, superior*: the work is of near professional quality. The paper meets or exceeds all the objectives of the assignment. The content is mature, thorough, and well-suited for the audience; the style is clear, accurate, and forceful; the information is well-organized and formatted so that it is accessible and attractive; the mechanics and grammar are correct.

\* *B, good*: the paper meets the objectives of the assignment, but it needs improvement in style, or it contains easily correctable errors in grammar, format, or content, or its content is superficial.

\* *C, competent*: the paper needs significant improvement in concept, details, development, organization, grammar, or format. It may be formally correct but superficial in content.

\* D, *marginally acceptable*: the paper meets some of the objectives but ignores others; the content is inadequately developed; or it contains numerous or major errors.

\* F, *unacceptable*: the paper does not have enough information, does something other than the assignment required, or it contains major errors or excessive errors.

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

Discourse Community Analysis 15%

Job Application Package 15%

Mini-Proposal 10%

Literature Review 15%

Report 25%

Participation/Daily Work 20%

**Plagiarism (Cheating)**

Talking over your ideas and getting comments on your writing from friends are NOT examples of plagiarism. Taking someone else's published or unpublished words and calling them your own IS plagiarism; a synonym is academic dishonesty. When plagiarism amounts to an attempt to deceive, it has dire consequences, as spelled out in University regulations.