

ENGL 304: Business and Professional Writing

West Virginia University, Fall 2017

Instructor: Prof. John Jones

Email: john.jones@mail.wvu.edu

Office: Colson 231

Getting started

Contacting me

Welcome to English 304! The best way to contact me is via email at john.jones@mail.wvu.edu. If you would like to speak with me on the phone, meet in my office, or chat online, you should contact me via email to schedule an appointment. My scheduled office hours are from 1–2 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays. If you are not free during those times, I am available by appointment most weekdays (M–F) between 9–4 and some evenings. Barring emergencies, I will respond to all emails M–F within 24 hours; my responses may take longer on weekends and holidays.

Required texts and readings

You must have the required textbook for this course.

- Sheryl Lindsell-Roberts (2006). *135 Tips for Writing Successful Business Documents*. ISBN: 978-0-618-65991-3

You can purchase this textbook at the WVU Bookstore, or via the bookseller of your choice. I will provide you with pdf versions of the first week's readings (see the **Course Schedule** on Ecampus), but after that you will be responsible for acquiring the book yourself.

Course information

Description

This course is designed to introduce you to the writing situations and the forms of writing that are common in the workplace, including job application materials, routine correspondence, and recommendation reports. Drawing on the expertise developed in your major, you will explore professional writing through topics and issues important to the work you plan to do. Because a primary assumption of this course is that all writing

For some assignments, you may be required to locate additional reading material on your own using the Internet or WVU Libraries' search tools (<http://lib.wvu.edu>). I will share some additional readings via our Ecampus site. **The library will be your primary search portal for the assignments related to the report, so be sure that you are familiar with the site and its search tools.** Additional readings provided by me can be found in the "Weekly Coursework" section of our WVU Ecampus course site.

Other requirements

- Regular access to a computer and the Internet (on-campus computer access is provided by the Office of Information Technology and the WVU Libraries)
- A MIX email account
- Reliable access to Ecampus

In order to make sure you don't miss important information, **you should check your MIX email and the announcements section on Ecampus at least once a day, M–F.** Most work will be submitted via Ecampus as attached documents (rich text [.rtf], MS Word [.doc, .docx], or PDF [.pdf]). This means your computer and Internet connection must be reliable. Prepare a back-up plan for yourself in the case that some technology mishaps occur.

emerges from and responds to a particular problem, audience and purpose, the course focuses on helping you develop multiple strategies for persuading your audience to your purpose.

Objectives

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

- Learn the nature, role, and conventions of professional writing in the workplace.
- Understand and apply rhetorical principles of professional communication; be able to articulate rhetorical analyses thoroughly and specifically. That is, students will learn to analyze and set goals for writing before writing begins; to use appropriate expression and professional style in workplace documents; to meet the needs of different readers in different contexts; and to develop practical arguments for the workplace.
- Learn the formats, strategies, and basic approaches of professional writing; that is, how to structure, style, and correctly format letters, memos, informational documents, and professional reports.
- Learn to design and professionally lay-out workplace documents and visuals.

- Learn to construct competitive employment documents to secure a place in the world of work.
- Work collaboratively as members of a team on professional writing projects.
- Apply research and professional writing techniques to professional situations to develop effective oral and written professional reports.

In line with the goals of the WVU BA Program in English, these objectives will enable students who successfully complete the course to

- Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
- Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

Course work and grading

You will be graded on your scores on homework, quizzes, in class assignments, and a range of technical communication assignments (major assignments) — a collection of job materials, correspondence, and a report (including a proposal and presentation). The point breakdown for these assignments can be found in **Table 1**.

	%	TOTAL POINTS
Quizzes & homework	15%	150
Job materials	20%	50/100 (1st/2nd submission)
Correspondence	20%	60/140 (1st/2nd)
Proposal & annotated bib.	10%	100
Report	20%	60/140 (1st/2nd)
Presentation	15%	150

Table 1: Course points by assignment

Grading

Grade descriptors. The following descriptors will give you an idea of the expectations that I have when evaluating your work.

A: Excellent – Represents excellent participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with very high quality in all course work.

B: Above average – Represents above average participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with consistently high quality in course work.

C: Average – Represents good participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with generally good quality overall in course work.

D: Below average – Represents uneven participation in course activities; some gaps in assigned work completed, with inconsistent quality in course work.

F: Inadequate – Represents minimal participation in course activities; serious gaps in assigned work completed, or very low quality in course work.

+/- Grades. I will use +/- grades for the final course grades. The +/- grades correspond to the numeric ranges below.

A+: 97+	C+: 77–79	F: 0–59
A: 93–96	C: 73–76	
A-: 90–92	C-: 70–72	
B+: 87–89	D+: 67–69	
B: 83–86	D: 63–66	
B-: 80–82	D-: 60–62	

Unless extenuating circumstances intervene, **I will provide you with grades on all of your major assignments within one week of their due date (this does not apply to work turned in late; feedback on late work may take longer).** If I am unable to grade your projects in this time frame, I will inform you of this fact as soon I am able to do so.

Additional information about the major assignments will be provided throughout the semester as these assignments become due.

Quizzes

For each week in which readings are assigned you will take a quiz or complete a related homework or in-class activity. These quizzes and activities are designed to ensure that you are reading the material and to help you remember that material as you prepare for the major assignments. The quizzes are comprehensive of that week's readings and material previously covered

in the course and/or posted to the Ecampus site. I will occasionally assign additional homework or graded in-class assignments. These projects will be averaged under the quiz category. Any time you are assigned an out-of-class or in-class assignment you should neatly print or type the assignment and include header information such as your name, the date, and a description of the assignment. This will ensure that you receive credit for your work when I collect the project.

Schedule

The course schedule can be found on Ecampus.

Policies

Professional conduct

This course is part of the Professional Writing and Editing (PWE) program at WVU. The PWE program is designed to prepare students for careers as professional communicators, and for this reason many aspects of PWE courses are designed to replicate professional experiences. In this course, you are expected to conduct yourself as a professional both in your work as well as in your interactions with the professor and your fellow students. As is the case with professionals, **you are expected to complete all of your assigned work and take part in all activities, to reply to course communication in a timely manner, and to respond to all course activities and assignments as you would to comparable work activities and assignments.**

Social justice

The English Department and the Professional Writing and Editing Program support WVU's commitment to social justice. In this course, you will work with your classmates to create a positive learning environment based on open communication and mutual respect.

Inclusivity

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. 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 Accessibility Services (304-293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

Office hours

If you have questions about the readings, assignments, or any other issues related to the course, come talk to me; I am happy to help you in any way I can. The best time to meet with me will be during my office hours.

In-person. My in-person office hours will be held on Mondays and Tuesdays from 1–2; my office is 231 Colson Hall. If you would like to meet with me but are not free during any of my scheduled office hours, please contact me directly via email and I will be happy to arrange an alternative meeting time that fits both of our schedules.

If for some reason it becomes necessary for me to cancel or reschedule my regular office hours or a meeting with an individual student, I will notify the class or the student as soon as possible. Similarly, if you need to cancel a scheduled meeting with me, you should contact me as soon as possible.

Official communication

In addition to our class meetings, there will be two primary avenues of official communication for the course: your WVU email accounts and Ecampus.

I will conduct most official communication with the class or individual students via email. I will send these messages to your MIX email addresses.

Updates to our course Ecampus site—such as changes to the course schedule, or additional information about assignments—will be posted as announcements to that site. In order to make sure you don't miss important information, you should regularly check your MIX email accounts and our course Ecampus site. I will do my best to respond to your messages within 24 hours during the work week (M–F); on the weekends and holidays my responses may take longer.

Late work

If you cannot turn your work in by the date an assignment is due, you should discuss a make-up date with me before the due date. If you do not contact me before the time an assignment is due, the assignment will be considered late.

Major assignments that are turned in after they are due will be penalized by ten (10) percentage points for each calendar day they are late.

Homework, quizzes, and any other assignments will not be accepted late.

Although each situation is unique, in general a problem with technology will not be considered an acceptable excuse for late or incomplete work. If your computer malfunctions, it is your responsibility to find a different place to work. If your Internet goes out, you will need to find a different access point. And you should create multiple, redundant backups of your work in case you accidentally erase, overwrite, or otherwise lose your files.

Attendance

In this class we will cover a large amount of information in our face-to-face meetings that will be essential to how you understand the content of the course and ultimately inform how you complete your assignments. We will also frequently engage in workshops and other in-class learning activities designed to teach you a number of skills that you will be expected to develop incrementally over the course of the semester. For these reasons, it is important that you attend class, arrive on time and bring any assigned work and necessary materials, take detailed notes, and participate in all in-class writing, workshopping, and discussion sessions.

There are no excused absences in this course. This includes absences for illnesses, university-sponsored events, or any other unavoidable conflicts. For this reason, all students should reserve their absences for truly unavoidable emergencies. If you participate in university-sponsored events that will require you to miss class, you should reserve your absences for these events.

You will be allowed four (4) absences without it affecting your grade. If you are absent five (5) times, your grade will be lowered by 10 percentage points. For each absence over five (5), your final grade for the course may be lowered by 5 additional percentage points.

Additionally:

- If you arrive to class more than 5 minutes late or leave class more than 5 minutes before it is dismissed, you may be counted absent.

- If you come to class unprepared on the day of a peer-review session, conference session, or workshop—that is, without a draft to discuss with your classmates or myself or in any other way unprepared to workshop or discuss your project—you may be counted absent.

Finally, as is common in professional settings, if you find that an unavoidable conflict prevents you from attending class or being on time, you should discuss this conflict with me prior to the absence (if possible). Otherwise, you should contact me about any absences as soon as possible. As with other aspects of the course, you should keep a record of your absences and the reasons for them in case there is a discrepancy in our records.

Course participation

This course is designed to be a participatory learning experience, combining discussions with in-class workshops and other learning activities. As such, it is important that you fully participate in all in-class activities, committing yourself to the learning community consisting of your classmates and myself.

What does this class participation look like? Participation can take different forms for different people. However, some participatory behaviors hold true for everyone. First, you cannot participate if you do not attend class or if you regularly show up late or otherwise interfere with course activities. For these reasons, course attendance is a necessary prerequisite for participation. Conversely, **attending class does not equal participation**, for it is possible to be in every class meeting without engaging with or contributing to the learning that occurs in class. Second, it will be impossible for you to participate in course learning if you come to class unprepared or leave class with no record of our discussions or activities. You can prepare in the following ways:

- Complete all assigned readings and homework before each class meeting.
- Bring or be able to access all course materials during each class. This includes course texts, including the textbook and any additional readings; your notes; homework; assignment files and research sources; notes from previous meetings, and any other relevant materials.
- Take notes during all course discussions and activities.
- Actively engage with your classmates and myself during all discussion, peer-review, workshopping, or proposal meeting sessions, giving your full attention to discussions and taking notes (as appropriate).

All of these activities allow you to engage with and make the most of your learning experience in the course, and, consequently, improve the course experience for everyone. **While preparation times may vary depending on our weekly schedule, you should generally plan to spend 6 hours a week — or,**

2 hours for every hour of class time — working on course assignments and preparing for class meetings.

Academic integrity

Don't plagiarize in this course.

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Catalog at <http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification/#academicintegritytext>. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me **before** the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Work visibility

Due to the nature of the course, you will be sharing your work with your fellow classmates as part of class discussions and peer review sessions. By taking this course, you are indicating that you accept these requirements. **If you have any questions or concerns about this policy please contact me immediately.**