English 304: Business/Professional Writing

CRN 13767 | Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 11.30-12.20 | Colson G18

Overview:

English 304 will help you to develop an awareness of the rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for producing effective workplace writing, including but not limited to emails, letters, memos, application materials, self-assessments, and reports. 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 learning and using new genres, so that you're prepared to take on those tasks. So, 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 by engaging with a range of academic, professional, and community stakeholders.

This section of Business/Professional Writing is a Service Learning (S) course. This means that our academic work is coupled with experiential education and reflection. The "S" designation also means that upon completion of the course, you will receive service-learning credit on your transcripts. To put our academic work into context, our class will work with a community organization throughout the semester to better understand how professionals use writing, design, and research on a daily basis; and to provide our skills and talents in service to that nonprofit organization. Our partnership will culminate in a collaborative project where we create, design, and assemble a dossier of materials to serve the needs of our partner. For Spring 2020, our partner will be our local chapter of Girls on the Run, a non-profit that emphasizes youth education, engagement, and empowerment, and our final task will be to create supporting materials for their Spring 5K—the culminating event of the season!

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 ethos;
➢ **Cultivating** a critical awareness of your strengths and weaknesses as a professional writer through multiple self-assessments and reflective writing tasks;
➢ **Developing** responsible and responsive research skills, by doing several kinds of research and implementing your findings into professional formats using emergent technologies; and
➢ **Collaborating** with other students, the instructor, and community stakeholders throughout the semester.

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Office Location: Colson Hall 337
Office Hours: Mondays 2-4; Wednesdays 9-11; and by appointment

Required Materials and Course Tools:

There is **no assigned textbook** for this class, but we will be using Google Classroom, so you will need easy access to your WVU Mix account. The code to join is **qarnmxz**.

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 communication practices 10%
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, as well as overarching communication concerns for professional workplaces. Throughout the semester, you will also contribute to a collaborative guidebook that outlines different genres you might encounter in the workplace.

unit two: employment materials 15%
The focus of our first major unit will be on developing a portfolio of employment documents. You will locate a job/internship/graduate program that you'd like to apply to, whether that's 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: research and expository writing 20%
In this unit you will write a short report that examines some aspect of our partner's work, so that you are familiar with their practices and can come up with new ideas to implement as well. We will also be working on the final unit at this time. This report will require different kinds of research and document design, as you will aim to construct an engaging report for your audience.

unit four: workplace collaboration and communication plans 30%
For the final unit of the course, you will work in teams of 3 in order to build upon the work you began in Unit 3 and to meet the needs of our partner. To complete this project, your group will engage primary and secondary research and work with materials from our partner in order to assemble a thorough, useful, and polished deliverable that the organization can use immediately. As a class, we will present our projects to the organization and its members/volunteers.

documentation, performance evaluations, and reflections 15%
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, focusing especially on the connections between our work in class, our collaboration with our community partner, and your expectations for your professional future. You will also be asked to document your work with our partner through iServe and other means, which mimics the type of record keeping you might be asked to complete in the workplace (e.g. billable hours).

reading responses & in-class activities 10%

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.

Grading:

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	Less than 60%
B+	89-88%	C-	72-70%		
B	87-83%	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.

If you are unsatisfied with your grade on a major assignment, you may revise it for a higher grade; but, you must meet 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.)

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 **four 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.

Being late to class is disruptive to every member of the class. 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. This is especially true, as we will be serving as ambassadors for WVU as we work with community organizations.

Late Work

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. 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 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. 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 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

I take seriously the need to provide a respectful and supportive environment in our classroom, and outside of it as we work with our community partner. 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.

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](#), located here in Colson Hall. (On a personal note: I was a writing

center consultant during my BA and MA, and wouldn't have been nearly as successful at writing if I hadn't spent hours in there as a client, too. It's a wonderful space and I encourage you to take advantage of it.)

Further, 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 Student Advocacy Center 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.