

Written Professional Communication

Sample Syllabus

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Course Description:

In this course we will think about writing at work. What kinds of writing will you be expected to do in the workplace? How can you do that writing well? In answering these questions, you'll read popular and scholarly sources, and examine a number of real-life business documents. You'll also do first-hand research, interviewing someone about their experience writing at work, and researching a specific "discourse community" and the language and forms used by that community.

To get better at writing, you have to write. As such, in this course you'll produce a number of written documents, including a job application cover letter, a resume, two PowerPoint slide decks, a multimedia presentation, a research report and a business proposal.

Learning Goals:

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify the rhetorical conventions of basic workplace documents
- Use these conventions to shape your own documents
- Assess the audience and goals of various professional genres
- Write with clarity and precision, and appropriate language, syntax and tone
- Create documents that you can use in job searches

You will also have some idea about:

- What it means to be "professional"
- How professional writing differs from other types of writing
- How one can create a "professional self" via writing

Course Materials:

- Kristin Byron – "The Communication of Emotion by Email"
- Elizabeth Wardle – "Identity, Authority, and Learning to Write in New Workplaces"
- Kathryn Rentz – "The Value of Narrative in Business Writing"
- Linda Flower – "Writer Based Prose"
- Maxine Hairston – "What Business People Think About Grammar and Usage"
- John Swales – "The Concept of Discourse Community" (Excerpt)
- Ian Parker – "Absolute PowerPoint"

Supplementary Material:

- Mona Chalabi – “Against Grammar Snobs” (video)
- David JP Phillips – “How to Avoid Death By PowerPoint” (TED Talk)
- David JP Phillips – “The Magical Science of Storytelling” (TED Talk)

Schedule (7 week course):

Introduction / Discuss professional writing -- --	Discuss email Read: Byron on email & emotion Due: Blog Post #1
-- -- Due: Interview / Blog Post #2	Read: Hairston on error Watch: Chalabi Due: Blog Post #3
Read: one article of your choice (Wardle, Rentz or Flower) Due: Blog Post #4	Discuss: brevity / multimedia presentation Watch: Phillips Due: Blog Post #5
Discuss resumes & cover letters Due: Multimedia Presentation Draft	-- --
Workshop Resumes Due: Resume & Cover Letter / MMP Final	Workshop Cover Letter Read: Swales on Discourse Communities
-- -- Due: Research Report #1	Discuss PowerPoint Read: Parker Due: Research Report #2
Due: Draft of proposal & PPT	Due: Final draft of proposal & PPT

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