

# Professional Communication

## Sample Syllabus

**Instructor:** Dr. Matthew Overstreet

**Email:** -----

### Course Description:

In this course students will learn about writing at work. What kinds of writing will you be expected to do in the workplace? How can you do that writing well? To answer these questions, students will read popular and scholarly texts, and examine real-life business documents. They will also do first-hand research, interviewing a working professional about their experience writing at work, and researching a specific “discourse community” and the language and literacy forms used by that community.

To get better at writing, you have to write. As such, in this course students will produce a range of textual and multimodal documents, including a job application cover letter, resume and professional website, as well as a report conveying the findings of their first-hand research and a business proposal related to their field of study. Students will also give several multimodal presentations.

### Learning Goals:

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

- Identify the rhetorical conventions of common workplace documents;
- Assess the relationship between audience, purpose and rhetorical conventions;
- Articulate how “professional” writing differs from other forms of writing;
- Effectively compose a variety of professional genres;
- Write with clarity and precision, and appropriate language, syntax and tone;
- Create documents appropriate for use in job searches.

### Assessment:

There are no quizzes or exams in this course. Your final grade will be based on the degree to which you: 1) complete every assignment as directed; 2) present evidence of sustained effort and engagement; and 3) progress towards achievement of the course learning goals.

The relative weight of each task is as follows:

Class Participation	20%
Job Materials (CV, cover letter, website)	20%
Research Report	20%
Business Proposal	20%
Multimodal Presentations	20%

## **Course Materials:**

### *Primary Course Readings:*

- 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)

## **Computers & Software:**

In this class, we will use the following software programs:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Audacity (audio editor)

Please bring your laptop to every class.