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ENG 4760-001: Special Topics in Professional Writing

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Writing 4760 / 4760Z: Special Topics in Professional Writing: Storytelling in
Professional Writing

930-1045 TR Coleman 3120/3130

Colleen Abel

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(Please allow 24 hours for a response)

Office: CH 3811

Office hours: TR, 11:00-12:00; W 8-10

Required Texts

Simmons, Annette. *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins*.

Hamilton, Cheryl. *Communicating for Results*. 9th edition.

Course Description

Storytelling is our most important tool of human connection. Yet, in professional settings, sometimes the necessity of narrative can get lost among other important goals. Learning to tell a story well, though, is a crucial asset whether you're writing to secure yourself that dream job with a cover letter, nab a grant, demonstrate how your product changes lives, or grab people's attention on social media. Through this course, you'll focus on how to use the elements of story to your best advantage in workplace writing. The class will culminate in the creation of a multifaceted client project.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester students should have learned to:

- Produce documents in a variety of professional genres
- Understand basic principles of narrative theory and learn to apply them to professional writing situations
- Apply key principles of professional writing, such as audience, tone, media, purpose, etc., in your own projects
- Analyze the use of storytelling in a variety of professional writing

- Use effective collaborative strategies to work with others to produce high quality products
- Reflect on those strategies for the purposes of better understanding and improving them
- Use primary documents to support the production of your writing
- Conduct interviews to support the production of your writing
- Write clearly and concisely, and applying editing and proofreading skills to all produced documents

Grade Breakdown

Attendance 100 points

In-class writings 100 points

Collaboration Journal 100 points

Storytelling Analysis 100 points

Exercises 250 points

Final Project 250 points

Final Exam 100 points

Note: Students taking this course for graduate credit will have slightly different requirements.

Attendance: For this class to work, you need to be here each and every day, unless there is an emergency in your life—and if there is, talk to me! I can help and can connect you with a larger support system.

For the sake of simplicity, I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences, with a few exceptions that I am legally required to make (military, religious, disability, etc.) You do not need to write me with an explanation or obtain a note. At the

end of the term I will simply calculate how much time you spent in class (i.e. you were present for 90% of classes) and that count toward 100 points of your final grade.

Collaboration Journal: Throughout the semester, you will keep a collaboration journal (viewable only by you and me) in which you will complete assigned reflections related to any collaborative work you do in the class. I will collect this on the calendar due date.

Storytelling Analysis: This assignment will involve analyzing the use of storytelling in a professional writing document of your choosing. This 3-4 page paper should use some of the insights from Annette Simmons' *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins* and apply them to a document such as a thought leadership piece, a company blog post, marketing materials, or a wide variety of other options. You will receive more detailed guidelines. (Graduate students will complete an expanded version of this assignment.)

In-class Writings: In-class writings are short, informal responses to prompts related to our readings, discussions, your process, and other pertinent issues. Being informal, I'm more interested in you getting your thoughts on paper than you producing an immaculate document. These are worth ten points each. These cannot be made up if they are missed, but I will drop your lowest score.

Exercises: Over the course of the term, you will complete five short exercises designed to give you practice in completing a variety of professional writing documents. A couple of these will be collaborative. Ideally, many of these assignments would be something you could include in a portfolio or use in your future careers in some way.

Final Project: For our final client project, we will be working with the Dining and Residence team to produce documents relating to the rich history of the campus' residence halls and dining facilities. These documents will be related to upcoming reunions and anniversaries and will incorporate interviews with important people in

EIU's history to tell the stories of these buildings and the people who have featured in those stories over time. This project will be produced in collaborative teams, and I will fill you in with more details a little further on.

Late work

Work will be docked five points for every class day they are late. The client project must be on time; just like in real life, that one can't be negotiated.

Classroom Etiquette

There are a few matters of classroom etiquette that are important to follow to ensure your success in this class.

I do not ban electronics in my classroom, as we're all adults with outside lives. However, if I see that you're paying more attention to phones or laptops than to class, I will ask you to be more respectful; if it persists, I reserve the right to adjust your attendance grade to reflect this.

Perhaps the most important classroom policy of all concerns our learning environment. A successful learning community is one in which we can learn from people whose perspectives we might not necessarily share and I ask everyone to be constructive and mindful. Speaking our minds is a fantastic privilege of this environment, but doing so in an aggressive or hostile way helps no one. If you engage in hate speech or bias toward protected groups, I am obligated to report this to the university.

EIU Policies

- Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.
- Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance

with time management, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

- If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

Course Schedule (subject to revision with written notice)

Tuesday, January 14: Introductions and Syllabus

Thursday, January 16: Simmons: Intro and Ch. 1

Tuesday, January 21: Simmons Ch. 3, 5 and 6; Hamilton pp. 410-412

Thursday, January 23: **Exercise 1 due:** Cover Letter

Saturday, January 25: **Lions in Winter literary festival**

Tuesday, January 28: Simmons Ch. 7 and 8; Hamilton pp. 1-2

Thursday, January 30: **Exercise 2 due:** Case Study

Tuesday, February 4: Simmons Ch. 15 and Hamilton Ch. 1

Thursday, February 6: Hamilton Ch. 7: "Basic Information for All Types of Interviews"

Tuesday, February 11: Hamilton Ch. 12: "Researching, Supporting, and Delivering Your Ideas"

Thursday, February 13: **Exercise 3 due:** Collaborative Biographies

Tuesday, February 18: Simmons Ch. 16

Thursday, February 20: Guest speaker: James Engelhardt (U of I press)

Tuesday, February 25: Hamilton Ch. 4: "Effective Listening"

Thursday, February 27: **Exercise 4 due:** Collaborative Proposal

Tuesday, March 3: Discussion of thought leadership and marketing

Thursday, March 5: Hamilton Ch. 13: “Professional Visual Aids”

Tuesday, March 10: **Exercise 5 due**: Blog post / Social media promo plan

Thursday, March 12: Hamilton Ch. 9: “Small-Group Communication and Problem Solving”

Tuesday, March 17: SPRING BREAK

Thursday, March 19: SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, March 24: Hamilton Ch. 10: “Participation and Leadership in Teams”

Thursday, March 26: **Analysis due**. Analysis presentations from graduate students

Tuesday, March 31: Client project

Thursday, April 1: Client project

Tuesday, April 7: **English conference: No classes**

Thursday, April 9: Client project

Tuesday, April 14: Client project

Tuesday, April 16: Client project

Tuesday, April 21: Client project

Thursday, April 23: Client project

Tuesday, April 28: Client project

Thursday, April 30: **Client project deliverables due!**

Your final is Monday, May 4 at 10:15 a.m. The final will be a self-assessment and will draw from your collaboration notebook and course experience. Your **collaboration notebook due** date is at the time of the final.