ENG 2760-001: Introduction to Professional Writing

Ray Watkins
Eastern Illinois University

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Course Policies: English 2760 Section 01
Introduction to Professional Writing, Fall 2003

Instructor: Dr. Ray Watkins
Class Times: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 1 to 1:50
Location: Coleman 3130, Lecture Room and 3120, Computer Room

Note: We will be in the Lecture Room on odd-numbered weeks, starting with week one, and in the Computer Room on even numbered weeks, starting with week two. See your Syllabus for more details.

Office: Coleman 339 K/3010
Office Hours: Mondays 2–4, Wednesdays and Fridays, 11 to 12
Email address: jrwatkins@eiu.edu

Textbooks:
Line by Line, Cook
Publication Manual of the APA
MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers
Chicago Manual of Style

Essays available from Booth E-Reserves: http://library.eiu.edu/ereserves/ereserves.asp

"Cooking, Mining, Gardening, Hunting: Metaphorical Stories Writers Tell About Their Composing Processes," Tomlinson
"The Process Religion and Business Communication," Hagge

To be announced...

Course Policies and Procedures

Goals: English 2760, Introduction to Professional Writing, is an advanced composition course in intellectual investigation, analysis, and argumentation that will enhance your understanding of academic and professional writing and give you practice in producing both. Our subject matter is the world of professional writing and publishing, the composition process, and the place of writing, ideas, and technology in the modern workplace. As an advanced course in writing, we will necessarily focus on honing your editorial and copy-editing expertise, from initiating and designing a research project to an oral presentation of your initial findings to a finished report.

Our goals include the refinement of skills in the following areas:

1. Using bibliographic and field research -- improve your knowledge of how libraries work and how to use them; improve your knowledge of how to go out into the world and collect information relevant to your interests as a researcher. In addition to extensive on-site workplace research, including but not limited to interviews and observations, you will familiarize yourself with library resources (reference materials, on-line catalogues, periodical indexes, electronic databases, etc.) and online information. Reasoned arguments are dependent upon knowing how to find, evaluate, and then use good information. In addition to learning how to find information, you want to
improve your skills in using that information. You cannot make use of an article or essay if you cannot summarize its basic argument and identify how it is constructed. Whatever you find in your field research must be compiled, organized, and written up in a coherent manner. Therefore, using research means finding materials, and knowing how to understand them and incorporate them into your own writing. Incorporating research materials includes knowledge of appropriate documentation styles, as well. There are several of these standardized documentation styles; we will be exploring MLA, APA, as well as Chicago styles of publication and documentation.

2. Critical reading -- improve your ability to read critically, to question, and to evaluate what you read. In order to be a more critical reader, you have to participate in what you are reading, actively deciphering the argument in all its parts rather than passively receiving strings of words. Active participation in this course will help to improve your ability to summarize what you read and then to evaluate the claims and assumptions on which the argument is based. In this course you will be required to do more than simply read and then regurgitate what you have read, you will be asked to read, and then using your understanding of the ideas you have gathered through your reading, test their validity and explanatory power. Although you will be given the chance to express your own opinions frequently in this class, the process of reading, thinking, data collection and analysis we are going to be learning is very different from simply "saying what you think" or even "presenting the facts." Writing of all kinds is less about opinions and facts per se and more about reasoned arguments. Knowing how to recognize and produce persuasive discourse is key to success in our class, in college, and beyond.

3. Constructing arguments -- improve your ability to construct your own arguments. This skill depends on your mastery of critical reading as I have described it above. The better reader you are, the better writer you can be. Again, one of our aims is to learn to distinguish between an opinion and a reasoned argument based on carefully constructed texts, evidence, and so on. A major challenge of this course lies in learning to weave together disparate sorts of information and data, gathered from the field as well as from texts. Arguments that consist of evidence of more than one kind, I believe, are both more persuasive and more engaging.

4. Collaborative learning -- improve your ability to learn from and to teach others about your own thinking and about writing. Much of your success in this course will depend on the process of drafting and peer critiques. You will practice forming honest, thorough, and constructive critiques of your writing as well as your peers' writing, and how to make use of what you have learned from your own self-critique and that of others. Collaborative work is particularly important in professional writing, and some part of your final grade will be dependent on your ability to work with others and in collaborative groups. See the section on grades, below.

5. Clean, smart prose -- improve your ability to write clear and meaningful sentences, to compose organized and developed paragraphs, and to identify and address recurring grammatical or mechanical problems specific to your own writing (these vary from writer to writer). We will spend a lot of time talking about why so-called grammatical prose is so important to your success in college and in life.

Major Writing Assignments:
A. The primary writing tasks of our course are as follows:
Collaborative Exercises:

Annotated Bibliography of Research Methodologies
Preliminary Summary: Potential Field Research Sites
Rubric for Text Collection
Layout Exercise

Individual research project:

Proposal
Interview with Professional Writer
Report on Collaborative and Individual Writing
Report on Institutional Background
Final Report (Drafts One and Two)
Oral / Preliminary Report

B. Peer Critique: You will produce a helpful, effective, 500 to 600 word critiques of a first draft of the Final Report.

C. Self-Commentaries: You will produce the following informative and insightful 500 to 600 word self-commentaries:
   - Introduction to the Writer-Researcher
   - Mid Term Writer-Researcher Check
   - The Writer-Researcher: On the Semester as a Whole

Note: The finished final report will be between 1500 and 2000 words, and include three cited sources that we have not discussed in class.

Grades: Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Average of Collaborative Exercises (Annotated Bibliography of Research Methodologies / Preliminary Summary: Potential Field Research Sites; Rubric for Text Collection; Layout Exercise) 10%
Proposal 05%
Interview with Professional Writer: 10%
Report on Collaborative and Individual Writing: 10%
Report on Institutional Background: 10%
Average of Final Report Drafts One and Two: 15%
Peer Critique / Final Report Draft One: 10%
Oral / Preliminary Report: 10%
Average of Three Self-commentaries: 10%
Website: 10%

Other matters:
E-Mail Activity: Enrollment in this class requires an EIU e-mail account, and you must check it
frequently, preferably every day, for messages pertaining to the course. You will also use this account to set up and use your own course web site (the web portfolio). E-mail is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments.

Regarding the Writing Center: Collaborative services at the EIU Writing Center are free and students may drop in or schedule appointments during working hours. I would strongly recommend that you make use of this service. Collaboration, as we shall see over and over again, is key to success in any research or writing project.

Classroom Environment: In class, I expect all of you to participate in discussions. The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested reader, writer and researcher is by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other people have the same question. I do not plan to lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment.

Finally, you must also be willing to give and receive constructive, insightful, frank criticism! I’m sure that all of you will work very hard on your projects, but try not to let criticism of your work hurt your feelings, and don’t hold back from offering helpful advice because you think it might hurt someone else’s feelings. (Also, please do not chew gum or eat food during class, activities which are too distracting to others—drinking beverages is okay. Finally, no caps, please, but if you want to wear one, turn it backwards so I can see your eyes.)

Attendance Policy: I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the daily schedule. If you have more than four absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond four. Also, missing a scheduled conference meeting without prior notification will result in the automatic lowering of your grade for the current project by ten points. Call or write to me via e-mail if you have to miss a conference; I will do the same if I have to reschedule. Regarding tardiness: this is a small class, so late arrivals are disruptive—if for some bizarre reason you wish to get on my bad side, you can easily do so by developing the habit of arriving late for class. If you will not be able to arrive for this class on time because of other commitments, drop it and take another section. Finally, you are responsible for all assignments, whether you attend class or not. Get the telephone number of one or two other students in class so you can find out about missed assignments before you come to class. You can also use our course Student E-mail Page to find email addresses.

Academic Honesty: I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the English Department’s policy on plagiarism: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—'The inappropriate or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work' (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.
Fall 2003 English 2760 Section 01 Syllabus Weeks 1–4

Meets Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays 1 to 1:50

Weeks 1 and 2: Research and Writing

Week One, Lecture Room (CH 3130): August 25–29

M Introduction to the Course and to each other.

Note: Bring disc, E.I.U. email address and password to class on Monday; send required introductory e–mail message to the course discussion list; carefully review all course materials available on the website. If you don’t have your EIU account up and running, and your password/user name by Monday, there is no reason to come to class.

Homework: See note above, clarify existence of your EIU email account/website, etc.

Reading for next class: See note above, review possible research sites, course Policy, Syllabus, Resource, and Assignments pages on our website. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (MLA), Chapter 1; 1.4

Note: Chamber of Commerce Sites and City Hall Sites (available on your Course Resources page) may help you locate a research participant and worksite.

W Introduction to the two collaborative introductory research projects (MLA/APA formats); technology worksheet, "Questions With Which We Begin," (answers posted to course list over the weekend).

Exercise: Collaborative Research Projects / Planning / Timetables

Reading: MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (MLA), Chapter 1; 1.5

F Process / Bibliographies / Field Research


Note: Post Technology Answers to List Over Weekend

Reading for next class: Line by Line, "Introduction: On Looking at Sentences."
Week Two Computer Room (Coleman 3120): September 1–5

M  No Class: Labor Day

W  Technology Workshop: Writing for the Web / Online Portfolios

Reading for next class: Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), Ch. 1, “Content and Organization of a Manuscript.”

F  Writing Workshop: Formats / Bibliography / Field Report

For next class: LBL, Ch.1, “On Loose Baggy Sentences;” Draft One of Bibliography / Field Report Due Monday, September 8; copyedited final draft due Wednesday, September 10 on website.

Weeks 3 and 4: Copyediting and the Process of Publishing

Week Three, Lecture Room (CH3130): September 8–12

M  Writing Workshop: Bibliography / Field Report / Proofreading Sentences /MLA and APA Styles

Preliminary Bibliography / Field Report Due September 8 (Hard-copies distributed to class as well for copyediting)

Note: Begin thinking about arrangements for your research contact / research methodology this week based on information in bibliography and field report.

Reading: The Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), Ch. 5

W  “House Style Sheet” Analysis

Bibliography / Field Report Due September 10 (Hard-copies distributed to class as well)

Reading: CMS, Ch. 6

F  House Style Sheet Analysis

Week Four, Computer Room (Coleman 3120) : September 15–19
Technology Workshop: "House Style Sheet" Online: Publishers / House Styles

Note: Bibliography / Field Report assignments should be available on each student's site, as well as Publishers / House Styles Assignments

Open Technology Day

Reading for next class:

Open Technology Day

Publishers / House Styles Online Web Page Due September 19

For Next Class: from E-reserves, “Cooking, Mining, Gardening, Hunting: Metaphorical Stories Writers Tell About Their Composing Processes.”