ENG 4760-001: Professional Writing

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Policies English 4760: Professional Writing

Instructor: Dr. Ray Watkins
Monday and Wednesday 3 to 4:15
Coleman 302/3120, Computer Room (CR), and 303/3220, Lecture Room (LR)
Office: Coleman 3210/339 K
Email address:
Website:
Office Phone: 581-5214
Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, 1:45 to 2:45; F, 9:45 to 10:45

Textbooks:

Strategies for Business and Technical Writing, Harty
The Blair Handbook, Fulwiler, Hayakawa

Materials and Essays in Course Packet (available at Copy Express in the student union):

Policy Statement
Syllabus
“Competition, Cooperation, and the Future of the Workplace,” Jon Wisman
“The Reciprocal Relationship of Workplace Culture and Review,” Susan Kleimann
“Confronting Class in the Classroom,” bell hooks
“White Privilege and Male Privilege: Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies,” Peggy McIntosh
Chart: Differences Between Literary and Business English

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Goals: English 4760 is an advanced 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 work, and the place of writing and ideas 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 essay.

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 using MLA, but if you have a strong preference for another style (APA, for example) you are welcome to use that.

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. Although you will be given the chance to express your own opinions frequently in this class, the process of 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 the difference between these two forms of discourse—in other words, 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. The better reader you are, the better writer you can be. Again, one of our aims is to learn to distinguish between “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 the most persuasive kind.

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.

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:**

The course assignments will be divided into three major sections:

A. The Writing in the Wild research project includes:

- A formal letter confirming the arrangement at your research site.
- A formal one-page proposal for your research project.
- An informal, two-page written report on the preliminary findings of your research.
- A formal oral report on your research findings.
- A formal, ten-page report on the findings of your research.
B. Peer Critiques: You will produce the following helpful, effective, one-page peer critiques:

- On a Draft Formal Introductory Letter
- On a Draft Proposal
- On an Oral Presentation
- On a Draft Formal Report

C. Self-Commentaries: You will produce the following informative and insightful one-page self-commentaries:

- On Formal Letter and Proposal Writing
- On the Oral Presentation
- On the Semester as a Whole

You final analytic report must be based on fifteen to twenty hours of fieldwork, including observation of professional writing “in the wild”; interviews with your contact/subject, and with at least two other participants in the writing and/or writing process of your contact/subject; and on a critical analysis of your findings based in your own research (see handout Research in Workplace Writing). The finished report will be at least ten pages, and include five cited sources that we have not discussed in class.

You will be asked to do research into one of several key issues relevant to writing in the workplace in contemporary society, including but not limited to cooperative vs. competitive environments, collaborative and individual writing processes, and the ways that class, race, and gender shape writing and writers. You will be introduced to these issues through reading assignments and class discussions. Your oral presentation will explore the preliminary findings of your on-going research.

Grades: You final grade will be determined as follows:

A formal one-page proposal for your research project 10%
A formal letter confirming the arrangement at your research site 10%
An informal, two-page written report on the preliminary findings of your research 10%
A formal oral report on your preliminary research findings 10%
A formal, ten-page report on the findings of your research 20%
A formal concluding letter to your contact 10%
Average of four peer-critiques 10%
Average of three self-commentaries 10%
Web Portfolio 10%

100.00%

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 website (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**: Tutoring services at the EIU Writing Center are free and students may drop in or schedule appointments during working hours. If you have had problems with any aspect of the writing process, from planning to grammar, punctuation, and spelling, to finishing final drafts, I would strongly recommend that you make use of this service.

**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 and writer 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 will take attendance, and 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.

**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 appropriation 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.”
English 4760 Syllabus

Week One, Computer Room (Coleman 302): August 20 to 24

M    Introduction to the Course and to Each Other
W    Introduction to the Research Project; Introduction to the Technology

Reading for next class: Strategies for Business and Technical Writing (SBTW), “Part 3: Business and Technical Correspondence,” (105), “How to Write a Business Letter,” (108) and “Letters that Sell.” (122) Read each of these pieces, bring two to four sentence descriptions of each of their respective rhetorical strategies for correspondence—a total of four to eight sentences—to class today for discussion. How would you describe the intended audience or audiences each author is addressing? What effect does each author seem to want to have on these audience or audiences? Why?

Note: Bring Disc, E.I.U. email address and password to class on Friday; send required introductory e-mail message to Dr. Watkins; pick up packet at Copy Express. Please note that the central task of this course is an ethnographic on-site research project. Consequently, you must identify a primary research contact/subject well before Wednesday, September 5, the due date for the first draft of your introductory letter. Begin thinking about and locating your research contact/subject today, you only have about two weeks to complete your arrangements. If you do not hand in your draft letter September 5 (and so confirm that you have a primary research contact/subject) you will need to drop the class. Additionally, periodically you will be asked to turn in a Research Log/Schedule in which you list the times you have conducted on-site research, as well as your future plans, etc.

Week Two Lecture Room (Coleman 303): August 27 to 31

M    Writing Workshop: Introductory Letters (Preliminary Research Questions)
W    Writing Workshop: Introductory Letters, Continued (Preliminary Research Questions)

Reading for next class: SBTW, “The Writing Process” (112) and “Making Your Correspondence Get Results” (112); Blair Handbook (BH), Chapter One.

Week Three, CR: September 3 to 7

M    Labor Day, No Class
W    Draft One, Introductory Letter, Due (On Disc); Research Log/Schedule Due (On Disc); Peer Critiques Assigned

Technology Workshop: File Transfer Protocol (FTP) and Hyper Text Mark-up Language (HTML); Writing Workshop on Peer Critiques: “Reading Critically to Think Critically,” “Responding to Writing” and “The Editing Process.” (Preliminary Research Questions)

Reading for next class, BH, “Designing Documents” Writing Research Essays” and
“Conducting Field Research”

**Week Four, LR: September 10 to 14**

**M** Draft One, Introductory Letter, Peer Critiques Due (On Internet); Discussion: “Designing Documents,” “Writing Research Essays” and “Conducting Field Research” (Preliminary Research Questions)

Reading for next class: SBTW, “How to Use Bottom-Line Writing in Corporate Communications,” “E-Mail: A New Medium for Technical Correspondence” and “The File Cabinet Has a Sex Life”

**W** Introductory Letter Draft Two Due (On Internet); Proposal Assigned; Discussion: “How to Use Bottom-Line Writing in Corporate Communications,” “E-Mail: A New Medium for Technical Correspondence” and “The File Cabinet Has a Sex Life”; Preliminary Research Questions

Reading for next class: SBTW, “Clear Writing Means Clear Thinking Means...”; BH, “Conducting Library Research” and “Conducting Internet Research”

**Week Five, CR: September 17 to 21**

**M** Internet Research Workshop; Discussion: Preliminary Research Questions


**W** Proposal Draft One Due (On Disc); Peer Critiques Assigned; Research Log/Schedule Due (On Disc); Peer Critique Workshop; Internet Research Workshop; Discussion: Preliminary Research Questions

Reading for next class: Course Packet (CP), Jon D. Wisman, “Competition, Cooperation, and the Future of the Workplace”

**Week Six, LR: September 24 to 28**

**M** Discussion: Wisman (Analytic Research Questions)

**W** Discussion: Wisman (Analytic Research Questions)

Proposal Draft One Peer Critiques Due (On Internet)

Reading for next class: CP, Susan Kleimann, “The Reciprocal Relationship of Workplace Culture and Review”

**Week Seven, CR: October 1 to 5**

**M** Discussion: Kleimann (Analytic Research Questions)

Reading for next class: CP, Chart: “Differences between Literary and Business English”

**W** Proposal Draft Two Due (On Internet); Research Log/Schedule Due (On Disc); Discussion: Literary v. Business English (Analytic Research Questions)

Reading for next class: bell hooks, CP, “Confronting Class in the Classroom”
Week Eight, LR: October 8 to 12

M Discussion: hooks (Analytic Research Questions)
W Self-Commentary One, Due (On Internet); Discussion: hooks (Analytic Research Questions)
Reading for next class: CP, Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correlations through Work in Women’s Studies”

Week Nine, CR: October 15 to 19

M Discussion: McIntosh (Analytic Research Questions)
W Preliminary Report Draft One Due (On Disc); Research Log/Schedule Due (On Disc); Discussion: McIntosh (Analytic Research Questions)

Week Ten: LR, October 22 to 26

M Discussion: Analytic Research Questions
W Discussion: Analytic Research Questions
Reading for next class: BH, “Arguing Positions” and “Making Oral Presentations”

Week Eleven, CR: October 29 to November 2

M Discussion: Analytic Research Questions
W Open Lab Day; Preliminary Report Draft Two Due (On Internet); Research Log/Schedule Due (On Disc)

Week Twelve, CR: November 5 to 9

M Oral Presentations
The “Oral Presentation Peer Critiques” deadline is one week after the presentation you have been assigned to critique; The “Self-Commentary Two” deadline (on your Preliminary Report and Oral Presentation) is due one week after your own presentation—both must be posted on your website, and you must also notify me and your writer via an e-mail message that you have completed each item.
W Oral Presentations

Week Thirteen, LR: November 12 to 16

M Oral Presentations
W Oral Presentations
Reading for next class: SBTW, "What to Report" and "How to Lie with Statistics"

**Week Fourteen: CR, Thanksgiving Holiday**

**Week Fifteen, LR: November 26 to 30**

**M** Discussion: Analytic Research Questions; **Research Log/Schedule Due (On Disc).**
Reading for next class: **BH**, "Shaping Strong Paragraphs" and "Improving Openings and Closings"

**W** **Final Report, Draft One Due (On Disc); Peer Critiques Assigned; Editing Workshop**

**Week Sixteen, CR: December 3 to 7**

**M** **Final Letter Draft One, Due (On Disc); Editing Workshop**

**W** **Final Report Draft One Peer Critique Due (On Disc); Course Evaluations; Open Lab**

Note: Final Draft of your Final Report, Third Self-Commentary, Final Draft of your Concluding Letter, and your Website Portfolio are due next Thursday, December 14 by 9AM, on the Internet. There will be no final for this course.