



Writing 2111: Introduction to Professional Writing Fall 2013 (September 9—December 6)

Instructor



Christopher Lee

Office

Floating in Virtual Space + physically in 3270 Lawson Hall

Office hours

Email anytime; online chat or Skype by appointment



Course Materials:



Title: *Business Communication NOW* + included case pack
Author: Locker and Findlay
Publisher: McGraw-Hill
Edition: Second Canadian



Title: *The Canadian Writer's Handbook*
Author: Messenger, de Bruyn, et al.
Publisher: Oxford
Edition: Essential

Course Objectives

This course aims to introduce you to the basic grammatical and stylistic principles of good, clear, written English within a specific context. That context is professional writing. You will be introduced as well to basic theories and concepts in professional writing, given opportunities to develop skills applicable to writing in a professional context, and encouraged to read about and apply findings from research in professional writing. More generally, the course aims to help you develop “the ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences” (Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents’ statement on ‘University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations’ 24 October 2005).

To provide the context for the course assignments, this course makes use of case studies. You will read a chapter about concepts of professional writing in the textbook, and then either create or read in case study materials a case study in which those concepts are operational. After group discussion of the cases, you will be asked to complete a written assignment that incorporates those principles (see ‘Final Course Grades’ below).

Course Requirements

| Assignment | Due Date |
|---|--|
| Assignment #1—Audience Analysis (5%) | Final Draft: Sept 29 |
| Assignment #2—Job Package (10%) | Final Draft: Oct 6 |
| Assignment #3— (approx. 350-500 words; 15%) | Rough Draft: Oct 20 Final Draft: Oct 27 |
| Assignment #4—(approx. 750 words; 20%) | Rough Draft: Nov 10 Final Draft: Nov 17 |
| Assignment #5— (Final Assignment; approx. 1250 – 1500 words; 30%) | Rough Draft: Nov 24 Final Draft: Dec 6 |
| Sentence Grammar/Structure Test (on Sakai;10%) | Week 8 (complete by Nov 3) |
| Discussion Boards (10%) | Ongoing |

In addition to handing in final drafts on the due date for each assignment, you are required to submit a **DRAFT of Assignments 3, 4, and 5** for **PEER REVIEW** as noted on the syllabus. I will assess these drafts for **completeness**; students who do not submit a complete draft for peer review as scheduled **and** participate in peer review **will lose 10%** from the earned grade for that assignment. ‘**Completeness**’ here means that the draft you submit is ‘complete’ enough to allow meaningful comment by another student. By participating in peer review you gain another reader’s comments on how you have handled the assignment, learn how someone else has handled the assignment, and have an opportunity to offer criticism (in the best sense of that term) to someone else. I will circulate your drafts by email for peer review.

Course Policies

Assignment Format

Essays are to be typed and double-spaced. All assignments must have your name on the first page and be submitted as .doc, .docx, or .rtf format. Do not use a cover page, as these are particularly unnecessary for online submissions. When using sources in Essay 4, you will be expected to follow MLA, APA, or Chicago-style citations, which will be discussed in class and which are detailed in *The Canadian Writer’s Handbook* section 37.

Assignment Submission

Assignments are due on the dates specified on the schedule. Late essays will be penalized by **2.5% per day** unless I have permitted an extension on the due date. You must speak to me ahead of time for an extension and provide a suitable reason. Weekly class sessions will run from Monday to Sunday, so writing assignments for a particular week are due by Sunday night at 11:59PM, Eastern Time. If they’re submitted a little past midnight, say before I wake up the next morning, there won’t be any penalty. All this is designed to help last-minute, weekend editors.

Submitting Assignments (continued)



Under policies adopted by the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication, final drafts of all assignments in 2100-level writing courses must be submitted through Turnitin.com (see **Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism** below). Consequently, you will find Turnitin submission links for each of Assignments 1 to 5. You will upload your final version of each assignment through its link, **as a single file (.doc, .docx, .rtf, .wpd, or .pdf)**, titled to identify you as author. Your graded assignment, with comments (in most cases, recorded MP3 audio as well), will be returned to you in the same format via Sakai.

In addition to your final drafts, complete preliminary drafts of Assignments 3, 4, and 5 must also be submitted through separate submission links. Again, submit **only a single Word (.doc or .docx extension) file**, titled to identify you as author. I will assess your draft for completeness, and forward it (via Sakai Message) for comment (peer review) by another student and return (by that student) to you, also via Sakai Message.

You are responsible for keeping copies of all assignments submitted in case we need to discuss your writing and if you want to submit it for the annual Marie Smibert Writing Program Student Achievement Prizes in April.

Attendance/Participation

Obviously, we do not meet formally in a Distance Studies course. Therefore, attendance and participation on the Discussion Board are intertwined. While online classes are generally asynchronous, they are not correspondence or self-paced. You must attend class (defined as logging into our Sakai section and interacting, posting questions and thoughts to the set discussion topics) **on at least three separate days** as indicated on this syllabus (**Note** that there is **no graded Discussion during Weeks 7, 10, and 12**). This means at least three separate posts per week (a week is defined as running from Monday to Sunday), **at least one of which must be a reply/response to another student and at least one of which must be a 'new' post**. Extended absences, defined as a failure to post into the Sakai classroom for more than five consecutive days, must be coordinated with the instructor.

1) Quality of Posting

All posts on the Discussion Board must

- ✓ Contribute something meaningful to the board.
- ✓ Support your opinion with sufficient reasons or evidence.
- ✓ Display good grammar and organization.

Postings should not

- ⊗ Contain disrespectful, insulting, or offensive language.
- ⊗ Be excessively long (more than one screen length) or excessively short.
- ⊗ Be unrelated to the forum topic.
- ⊗ Only say things like "I agree with you" or "Nice comment!" that do not contribute any substance.

Absence Policy

Attendance is required to do well. If you miss more than two weeks your final grade will be penalized a full letter grade (an earned grade of 80% would be reported as a 70%); if you miss more than 3 weeks you will not be given a passing grade for the course. This policy will only be waived for medical or compassionate reasons as explained in the [Medical Accommodation Policy](#) below.

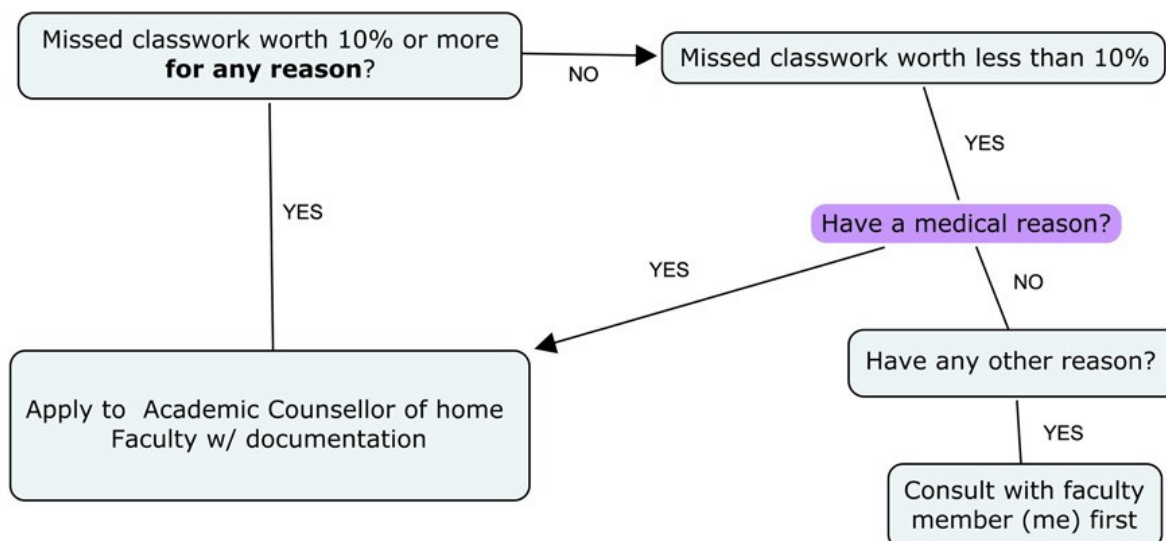
Medical Accommodation Policy

For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf. To download a Student Medical Certificate (SMC), go to <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf>.

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical or other grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds cannot be granted by the instructor or the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication, and the Program requires students in these circumstances to follow the same procedure when seeking academic accommodation on non-medical (i.e. non-medical compassionate or other) grounds.

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth less than 10% of their final grade** must also apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Where in these circumstances the accommodation is being sought on **non-medical grounds**, students should consult in the first instance with their instructor, who may elect to make a decision on the request directly, or refer the student to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an 'Attendance' policy in the course). All medical documentation must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.



Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incompletes, Aegrotat Standing

Please refer to the "Information for All Students in a Writing Course" for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that I do not have the discretion to initiate, consider, and grant (or deny) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean's office of your home faculty.

Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism

The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

Prerequisites

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

Term Schedule

Remember: A 'Week' in this course runs Monday to Sunday

Unit/Week One

Introduction: Writing/Rhetoric in a Professional Context

In general, the aim of this Unit is to provide you with an overview of the course, to elucidate some of the assumptions on which the course is predicated, and to introduce you to an historical context within which you can think about the processes and products of 'writing.' Following this discussion, we will take a brief look at Chapter 1 of our text, Locker/Findlay, and establish some key terms and concepts.

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 1 (and 2)

Discussion Topic: In this first Week's (ungraded) Discussion, introduce yourself to the class, and post any initial thoughts, comments, and questions you may have – both general, and/or as prompted by the Unit 1 lecture.

Unit/Week Two

Rhetoric: The Concept of 'Audience'; Building 'Goodwill'

Objectives:

- To understand the importance of 'audience' as a primary *rhetorical consideration in professional writing*;
- To learn how analyze potential audiences for a message;
- To understand the concept of 'multiple audiences' (primary and secondary)
- To understand how that analysis can help us *shape, structure, and organize* a message in order to maximize its potential effectiveness;
- To define the concept of 'Goodwill' (including 'You-attitude,' 'Positive Emphasis,' bias-free language, and tone) and explore the relationship of these concepts to effective writing

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapter 2, and

Case: 'Globe' (in 'Create' case pack)

Assignment #1: Audience Analysis (Memo. to Instructor; 5%); due by 11:59PM on midnight Sunday Week 2

Actions Required this Week:

Assignment #1 FINAL Submission due by 11:59PM on Sunday Week 2

Discussion Topic: Are there qualities in Lyn Smith's letter that might (wrongly) tempt you to be dismissive and/or condescending in your reply? What other qualities or features might you notice that would help you avoid falling into that trap?

Unit/Week Three

Writing Clearly: Introduction to the Grammar and Conventions of 'Standard Written English'

Objectives:

- To encourage you to develop a critical self-awareness of your writing practice
- To understand the distinction between grammatical 'conventions' and 'rules'
- To understand the notion of 'Standard Written English'
- To articulate some basic revision principles answering the question "How can I ensure that my document as a whole will clearly communicate my intended message?"

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapter 3 and Appendix 'A'

Actions Required this Week:

Preparation for Week 4: Find an advertisement for a job/position *you could realistically apply for now with your existing skills/qualifications.*

Discussion Topic: *apply the principles articulated in the Unit 3 Lecture notes to the following example. Post a revised version, and explain why you made the changes you did.*

"In spite of the fact that the educational environment is a very significant facet to each and every one of our children, some groups do not support reasonable and fair tax assessments that are required for providing an educational experience at a high level of quality."

Unit/Week Four

Employment Communications: Resumes and Cover Letters

Objectives:

- Through this Unit's discussion, you should be familiar with the following topics:
- The basic rhetorical principles underlying job applications
- The significant differences between resumes and letters of application
- The difference between solicited and prospecting applications
- Some guidelines for drafting resumes
- The distinction between the two basic kinds of resume
- Guidelines for content and organization in letters of application
- Tone in letters of application

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapter 13

Assignment #2: Prepare an 'Application Package' in response to the advertisement you have chosen (10%); due by 11:59 PM Sunday Week 4

Actions Required this Week:

Assignment #2 FINAL Submission: 'Job Package' (letter and resume) due by 11:59 PM on Sunday Week 4

Discussion Topic: *Take a look at no. 6 in Exercise 13.6 (page 356) in your text. How many lapses in tone/other errors can you find in this one example? Discuss those errors, and suggest ways in which this example might (if at all!) be improved.*

Unit/Week Five

Writing Positive and Negative Messages

Objectives:

Through the discussions and readings for these two related Units, you should be familiar with the following topics:

- The basic rhetorical principles underlying the drafting of informative, positive, and negative messages
- The formatting of letter, memorandum, and email messages
- The basic principles applicable to trying to take an essentially 'negative' message and give it a 'positive' spin
- The background to, and preliminary analysis of, 'Statstar' and Assignment #3

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 7 and 8, and

Case: 'Statstar' (pdf on 'Assignments' page)

Assignment #3: 'Statstar' (Negative Message; 15%). Draft due on Sunday Week 6; Peer Review of Assignment #3 commences Monday Week 7 and closes Wednesday Week 7; FINAL due by 11:59 PM on Sunday Week 7

Discussion Topic: As discussed in the Unit 5 lecture, assume that in the 'Globe' scenario you are instructed to write a purely 'negative' message to Lyn Smith, turning down all her requests. What kind of intangible but positive 'alternative' ('reader benefit'), that might override her obvious anticipated negative response to the main message, can you come up with? Your answer will be contingent in large part on your analysis of her as your 'primary' audience.

Unit/Week Six

Writing Positive and Negative Messages (cont.)

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 7 and 8, and

Case: 'Statstar'

Actions Required this Week:

Assignment #3 Draft Submission: 'Statstar' due by 11:59 PM on Sunday Week 6

Discussion Topic: refer to Exercise 8.5 on pages 193-4 of your text. As instructed there, compose a brief message to your boss correcting the figures. Use 'correct numbers' (b) on page 193, and assume variation (ii) on page 193. Post your message, and explain why you wrote it the way you did!

Unit/Week Seven

Writing Persuasive Messages

Objectives:

Through this Unit's discussion and readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:
 The primary and secondary purposes of persuasive messages
 Choosing a persuasive strategy: direct or indirect?
 Analyzing a persuasive rhetorical situation: 'TeknoSport'

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapter 9, and
Case: 'TeknoSport' for discussion (pdf on 'Assignments' page)

Actions Required this Week:

Assignment #3: Peer Review of Assignment #3 Monday to Wednesday.
Assignment #3 FINAL submission: 'Statstar' due by 11:59 PM on, Sunday Week 7.

Unit/Week Eight

Writing Persuasive Messages

Objectives:

Through this Unit's discussion and readings you should be familiar with the following topics:
 What we mean by 'rhetorical argument'
 The classical model of rhetorical argument
 Problems with the classical model
 The Toulmin model of rhetorical argument
 The distinction between the formal validity of an argument and its persuasiveness in a more general sense
 The importance of assumptions shared by the sender and receiver of a (persuasive) message

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapter 9, and
Case: 'TeknoSport' for discussion
Begin preparing for Assignment #4: Case: 'Rocky Mountain' (pdf on 'Assignments' page); Assignment: Persuasive Message with visual (20%); Draft due on Sunday Week 9; Peer Review of Assignment #4 commences Monday Week 10 and closes Wednesday Week 10.

Actions Required this Week:

Download, Write, and Upload Sentence Structure/Grammar Test

Discussion Topic: *Your aim in TeknoSport would be to construct an argument (a case) in which you use reasons and data to support a Claim. Your Claim is that the STP should be retained, in at least more or less its present form. Your Warrant for this Claim will involve some assumptions ('common ground') that you need to define, and that you can reasonably expect Karvinen to share with you. What might these Warrants look like?*

Unit/Week Nine

Overview of Basic Principles of Document Design and Use of Visuals

Objectives:

Through this Unit's discussion and readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:

- The importance of 'design'
- The concept of 'white space'
- Robin Williams' 'four basic principles of design'
- The concept of 'quadrant design'
- The ways in which 'visuals' can be used to good rhetorical effect
- When and why to use 'visuals'
- Some criteria for effective visuals
- An introduction to the 'Rocky Mountain Mutual' case and Assignment #4

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapter 4; and
Case: 'Rocky Mountain Mutual' (pdf on 'Assignments' page)
Assignment #4: Work on Draft of Assignment #4

Actions Required this Week:

Submit Assignment #4 DRAFT, suitable for peer review, Sunday Week 9

Discussion Topic: *As you work on your draft of Assignment #4, consider the question of what kind of visual (Table? Chart? Graph? Photographic illustration?) you intend to use, and why. Post some thoughts on this issue, considering the relative merits of various forms given the hypothetical rhetorical context in which and the hypothetical purpose for which you are writing, and the kinds of data you will be attempting to represent.*

Unit/Week Ten

Overview of Issues in Cross-Cultural Communication; Introduction to Assignment #5: Final Assignment: A Formal Report

Objectives:

Through this Unit's discussion and readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:

- The concept of 'cultural difference' and its significance for communication
- The importance of recognizing cultural variations
- Cultural context as part of the rhetorical context of any message
- Mapping 'difference' in cultural context: six key categories
- Defining 'cultures' as high- or low-context
- The importance of a clear sense of 'purpose' in Assignment #5

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 5, 10, and 11; and
Cases: 'L.A. Silks' and 'American Electrical' (pdfs on 'Assignments' page)
Assignment #5: begin working on draft of Assignment #5 (Final Assignment: Formal Report; 30%) for Sunday Week 11

Actions Required this Week:

Assignment #4: Peer Review of Assignment #4 Monday to Wednesday Week 10.

Assignment #4 FINAL submission: 'Rocky Mountain' due by 11:59 PM on, Sunday Week 10.

Unit/Week Eleven

Writing Proposals and Reports

Objectives:

Through this Unit's discussion and readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:
 General rhetorical considerations for writing formal reports
 The difference between causation and correlation
 Patterns of organization common in formal reports
 Stylistic expectations in formal reports
 The individual components of a formal report

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 10 and 11, and
Case: *Either 'L.A. Silks' or 'American Electrical'*

Actions Required this Week:

**Assignment #5: draft (minimum required: report 'body') due on Sunday
 Week 11; Peer Review of Assignment #5 commences Monday and ends Wednesday
 Week 12**

Discussion Topic: *All organizations, projects, university courses(!) ... anything can be 'improved'. Think a little bit about your experience of Writing 2111F/G Online (this course!), and compose/post a short preliminary 'purpose statement' for a report proposing some improvements to the course (from your point of view as a student). Remember: your subject is the course itself, not your particular instructor! Use the criteria for 'purpose statements' set out in Locker/Findlay Chapter 10 at page 234. Don't be afraid to be (constructively and politely!) critical.*

Unit/Week Twelve

Writing Proposals and Reports:

A Few Notes on Executive Summaries, and Final Comments

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 10 and 11, and
Case: *Either 'L.A. Silks' or 'American Electrical'*

Actions Required this Week:

Peer Review of Assignment #5 Monday to Wednesday Week 12

***Assignment #5 FINAL (complete): is due by 11:59 PM on the last day of class.**