

**2111F/652 Fall: Writing in the World: Introduction to Professional Writing**

**Distance Studies; Fall**

**Instructor:**                 **Melanie Chambers**  
  **mchambe4@uwo.ca**

**Course Description and 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).

**Required Texts**

Locker, Kitty O. and Isobel Findlay. *Business Communication Now*. Second Canadian ed. McGraw-Hill Ryerson: Toronto, 2012 (including ‘Create’ case pack). Additional Student resources, including supplements on grammar and chapter ‘self-tests’ are accessed through the text website ‘Library’. Register using the McGraw-Hill Connect access code provided with your textbook.

Messenger, de Bruyn et al. *The Canadian Writer’s Handbook: Essentials Edition*. Toronto: OUP, 2012.

Instructor postings on section Sakai site.

**Course Requirements and Grade Allocations**

<b>Discussion Board Participation .....</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Assignment #1 (approx. 250 words) .....</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Assignment #2 (“Job Package”) .....</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Assignment #3 (approx. 350 – 500 words.....)</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Assignment #4 (approx. 750 words) .....</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Assignment #5 (Final Assignment; approx. 1250 – 1500 words) .....</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Sentence Grammar/Structure Test (on Sakai).....</b>	<b>10%</b>

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**

All assignments are to be typed and double-spaced, and must have your name, course name, section number, and instructor’s name on the first page. Do not use a cover page; these are particularly unnecessary for online submissions. When using sources in a paper, you will be expected to follow MLA, APA, or Chicago citation practice. See text (Locker/Findlay), pages 251 – 256.

### **Submitting Assignments**

Assignments (including drafts, where applicable) are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Late papers **will be penalized at 2.5% per day unless** I have permitted an extension of the due date. You must contact me ahead of time for an extension and provide a suitable reason (*see also the section ‘Medical Accommodation Policy’* below). Our class ‘week’ runs from Monday to Friday\*, so assignments for a particular week are due by Friday (mid)night, Eastern Standard Time, **unless otherwise stated**.

**Important: you are responsible for keeping a copy of all assignments you submit.**

**\*In Fall term the first Thursday/Friday of class is included in ‘Week 1’; e.g. Week 1 Fall 2012 ends Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>.**

### **Procedure for Assignment Submission**

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 Word (.doc or .docx extension) file**,\* titled to identify you as author. Your graded assignment, with comments, will be returned to you in the same format via Sakai email.

**\*Note: Pdf or other ‘read only’ formats, and compressed/zipped files are not acceptable. Please note also that Turnitin will not accept more than a single file submission. In other words, do not try to submit an assignment twice, or in parts as two or more files. Also note that I access your original uploaded Word file; any formatting errors etc. which show in the Turnitin ‘preview’ function will not appear on your uploaded file.**

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 email) for comment (peer review) by another student and return (by that student) to you, also via Sakai email.

### **Attendance/Participation (Please *note* posting requirements)**

Obviously, we do not meet formally as a ‘class’ in a Distance Studies course. Therefore, ‘attendance’ and participation on the Discussion Board are intertwined. While Distance Studies classes are generally asynchronous, they are not correspondence or self-paced. You must attend class (defined as logging into our Sakai section) and participate by introducing yourself, and posting questions and thoughts during the first week, and by posting (by participating in a given week’s set discussion topic) **on at least three separate days** in subsequent weeks 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.

Postings on the Discussion Board must have the following characteristics:

- Must contribute something meaningful to the Board;
- Must support your opinion with sufficient reasons or evidence;
- Must display good grammar and organization.

Postings should not:

- Contain disrespectful, insulting, or offensive language;
- Be excessively long or excessively short;
- Be unrelated to the week’s topic;
- Say things that do not contribute anything, e.g. “I agree with you” or “nice comment”.

I will track your postings to the Discussion Board on a weekly basis, and assess each week’s contribution on a 10-point scale, ultimately arriving at a cumulative grade out of 100 that will constitute your 10% ‘Discussion Board Participation’ mark.

**Note** that ‘attendance’ as defined in this section is mandatory in this course. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements for **three weeks** may result in your final grade in the course being reduced by 10%. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements for **four or more weeks** **will result in a failing grade for the course**.

### **Medical Accommodation Policy**

For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>

(downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading)

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, Incomplete Standing, 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, or grant (or not) 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/handbook/appeals/scholoff.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). Plagiarized work will receive an 'F'(ranging from 0 to 49) and may result in failure in the course as a whole.

"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:

"Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded and that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If the student does not have the requisites for a course, the University reserves the right to

remove the student from the course and to delete it from the student's record. This decision may not be appealed. A student will receive no adjustment to his or her fees in the event that he or she is dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

### **Schedule**

**Remember:** A 'Week' in this course runs Monday to Friday (in Fall terms starting on a Thursday, the Thursday/Friday is included in Week 1).

### **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 midnight Friday Week 2***

**Actions Required this Week:**

**Assignment #1 FINAL Submission due midnight Friday 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 midnight Friday Week 4**

**Actions Required this Week:**

**Assignment #2 FINAL Submission: ‘Job Package’ (letter and resume) due midnight Friday 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 Friday Week 6; Peer Review of Assignment #3 commences Monday Week 7 and closes Wednesday Week 7; FINAL due midnight Friday 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 midnight Friday 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 midnight, Friday 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 Friday 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 Fitness’ case and Assignment #4

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

**Actions Required this Week:**

**Submit Assignment #4 DRAFT, suitable for peer review, Friday 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 Friday 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 midnight, Friday 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 Friday 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 midnight Wednesday, Week 13 (FALL/WINTER), or midnight Friday, Week 12 (SUMMER).***