

2111F: Writing in the World: Introduction to Professional WritingDistance Studies: [WRITING 2111F 654 FW20](#)Instructor: **Sonia Halpern; shalpern@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. 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). More specifically, upon successful completion of this course, you will have demonstrated the ability to

1. identify and define rhetorical contexts for professional communication;
2. identify, define, and understand ‘purpose for writing’ within those rhetorical contexts;
3. understand the relationship between context, purpose and audience and how that relationship should shape a message;
4. use that understanding to develop a persuasive argument;
5. generate ideas for a variety of communicative purposes, such as communicating a negative message with positive emphasis;
6. understand basic principles of cross-cultural communication and their significance;
7. understand basic principles of document design and apply them;
8. write cohesive and coherent prose using the grammar and conventions of Standard Written English;
9. identify and correct errors in composition, grammar, and mechanics; and
10. incorporate feedback into revisions.

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 read a case study in which those concepts are operational. You will be asked to complete a written assignment that incorporates those concepts (see ‘**Final Course Grades**’ below).

Required Texts

Locker, Kitty O. and Isobel Findlay. *Business Communication Now*. Fourth Canadian ed. McGraw-Hill Ryerson: Toronto, 2018.

Messenger, de Bruyn et al. *The Canadian Writer’s Handbook: Second Essentials Edition*. Toronto: OUP, 2017.

Custom Course Book (The BookStore, Western) for Writing 2111F/G (e-book; order through The BookStore, Western).

“Cross-Cultural Negotiation: Americans Negotiating a Contract in China” (see link on Assignment Prompts page)

Instructor postings on section Owl site.

Course Requirements and Grade Allocations

Diagnostic Paper: Audience Analysis (up to 500 words)	Ungraded
Assignment #1: Negative Message with positive emphasis (up to 1000 words)	20%
Assignment #2: Persuasive Message with visual (up to 1200 words)	25%
Assignment #3: Formal Report (up to 1250 words, excluding front and back matter)	40%
Sentence Grammar/Structure Test (online on Owl site)	15%

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 238-245.

Submitting Assignments

Assignments 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; assignments for a particular week are due by Sunday 11:55pm (so as to be received before Monday), Eastern Standard Time *unless otherwise stated*.

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

Procedure for Assignment Submission

Under policies adopted by Writing Studies, 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 4. 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, through Owl.

***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; typically any formatting errors etc. which show in the Turnitin 'preview' function will not appear on your uploaded file.

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 Owl 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) in subsequent weeks where there is a Discussion topic as indicated on this syllabus. This means at least three separate posts during each of those weeks (a week is defined *for this purpose* 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 Owl 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 must not:

- Contain disrespectful, insulting, or offensive language
- Be excessively long or excessively short
- Be unrelated to the week's topic
- Be comments that do not contribute anything, e.g. "I agree with you" or "nice comment"

Note that 'attendance' as defined in this section is **mandatory** in this course. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements as defined above for **any week where there is Discussion** *will* result in your earned final grade in this course being reduced by 3%. That penalty is cumulative to a maximum of five weeks. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements for **five or more weeks where there is Discussion** *will* result in your earned final grade being reduced by 15%.

Accommodation Policy

Note: the official Western Accommodation Policy appears below. This is in effect, but may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change.

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the

absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors by email within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are not met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

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/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). 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:

“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.”

Schedule

Unit/Week One (9 September to 20 September)

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, 2 (and 3)

***Discussion Topic:** In this first Week’s 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 (21 September to 27 September)

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 to 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; Assignment Case: 'Globe' (in Course Book)

Diagnostic Paper: Audience Analysis (Memo. to Instructor; up to 500 words/); due 11:55 p.m. Sunday Week 3

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 (28 September to 4 October)

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' (see also *Canadian Writer's Handbook* ["CWH"], Part I, chapters 1 and 2)

Please note: the test in Week Seven is multiple-choice and is based on the material in the Topics in Grammar lectures and in *The Canadian Writer's Handbook* (CWS), chapters 5, 8, 14, 15, 16, and 17.

Diagnostic Paper Submission due 11:55 p.m. Sunday Week 3

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 (5 October to 11 October)

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
- An analysis of a case: ‘Statstar’

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 7 and 8, and “Statstar” (pdf on ‘Lectures’ page); ***Assignment Case for Assignment 2:*** “Globe”

Assignment #1: *Negative Message with positive emphasis; up to 1000 words/ 20%. Due 11:55 p.m. Sunday Week 6*

Discussion Topic: *As discussed in the Unit 4 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 Five (13 October to 18 October)

Writing Positive and Negative Messages (cont.)

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 7 and 8, and “Statstar” (pdf on ‘Lectures’ page)

***Discussion Topic:** refer to Exercise 8.5 on page 200 of your text. As instructed there, compose a brief message to your boss correcting the figures. Use ‘correct numbers’ (b), and assume the second of the two variations. Post your message, and explain why you wrote it the way you did!*

Unit/Week Six (19 October to 25 October)

Overview of Basic Principles of Document Design and Use of Visuals

Objectives:

- Through this Unit’s 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

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapter 4

Assignment #1 due by 11:55 p.m. Sunday Week 6.

Assignment #2: (Persuasive Message w/ visual; up to 1200 words/25%) due Sunday Week Nine.

Unit/Week Seven (26 October to 5 p.m. Friday October 30)

Writing Persuasive Messages

Objectives:

- Through this Unit’s 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 another persuasive rhetorical situation: ‘TeknoSport’

Read: Locker/Findlay Chapter 9 and “TeknoSport” (pdf on ‘Lectures’ page); ***Assignment 2 Case:*** “Just Clean Your Hands” in Course Book

****Download, Write, and Upload Sentence Structure/Grammar Test (15%)***

{Reading Week: 5 p.m. Friday October 30 to midnight Sunday November 8}

Unit/Week Eight (9 November to 15 November)

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 "TeknoSport" and "Rocky Mountain Fitness" (pdfs on 'Lectures' page); **Assignment Case:** "Just Clean Your Hands" in Course Book

Assignment #3: (Formal Report, research based. Approximately 1250 words excluding front and back matter/40%) due end of term – last day of classes or as directed by your instructor. See end of this 'Schedule'.

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 (16 November to 22 November)

Overview of Issues in Cross-Cultural Communication; Brief Introduction to Assignment #3: Final Assignment: A Formal Report

Objectives:

Through this Unit's 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 #3

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 5, 10, and 11; and **Assignment 3 Case:** "Cross-Cultural Negotiation: Americans Negotiating a Contract in China" (purchase direct from The Case Centre; see link on Assignment Prompts page)

****Assignment #2 submission due by 11:55 p.m. Sunday Week 9***

Unit/Week Ten (23 November to 29 November)

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; Assignment Case: "Cross-Cultural Negotiation: Americans Negotiating a Contract in China"

Unit/Week Eleven (30 November to 6 December)

Employment Communications – an Overview

Objectives:

Through this Unit's readings, 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

Discussion Topic: Find an ad for a job – in either a print source or online – for which you more or less qualify now. Read the ad carefully and list the specific skills and employee attributes sought by the employer, ranking them from most to least important. Make a list of your specific present skills, education, and personal qualities that might be relevant and attempt to match the two lists. Use this as a basis to discuss strategies you could use to respond to the ad, maximizing your strengths and legitimately (without being deceptive!) minimizing your weaknesses, so as to best present yourself to the prospective employer.

***Unit/Week Twelve (7 December to 9 December [last day of classes])**

Writing Proposals and Reports:

A Few Notes on Executive Summaries, and Final Comments

Read: Locker/Findlay, Chapters 10 and 11

Assignment Case: “Cross-Cultural Negotiation: Americans Negotiating a Contract in China”

***Week Twelve**

Deadline for submission of Assignment #3 is 11:55 p.m. on Wednesday 9 December (last day of classes) OR as directed by your instructor.