

## **WRITING 1031G – Distance Studies**

### ***Global Positioning: Introduction to Rhetoric and Professional Communication***

**Winter 2021**

**Section 650**

**Instructor: Brock Eays**

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**Consultation: on Sakai or Western mail anytime (response within 36 hours). No in-person office hours this term.**

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This course introduces students to the rhetorical principles and practices of writing and oral communication in professional contexts. Particular attention is paid to understanding audience, context, and purpose; the grammar of Standard Written English; modes of persuasion; and the negotiation of cultural difference.

Students learn strategies for idea generation, composing a first draft, approaching revision, peer review, and effective editing and proofreading techniques.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have demonstrated the ability to

- identify and define rhetorical contexts for professional communication;
- understand the relationship between context, purpose and audience and how that relationship should shape a message;
- use that understanding to develop persuasive messages;
- generate ideas for a variety of communicative purposes, such as communicating a negative message with positive emphasis;
- understand the basic principles of writing formal reports and apply them;
- understand the basic principles of cross-cultural communication and their significance;
- understand the basic principles of document design and apply them;
- understand the basic principles of designing individual and group oral presentations

- write cohesive and coherent prose using the grammar and conventions of Standard Written English;
- identify and correct errors in composition, grammar, and mechanics; and
- incorporate feedback into revisions.

## TEXTBOOKS

MacRae, Paul. *Business and Professional Writing: A Basic Guide*. Second Canadian Edition. Peterborough: Broadview, 2019.

Messenger, de Bruyn et al. *The Canadian Writer's Handbook. Second Essentials Edition*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2017.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Diagnostic Paper (audience analysis [up to 500 words])	Ungraded
Assignment 1: Negative Message (up to 1000 words)	10%
Assignment 2: Persuasive Message with Visual (up to 1200 words.)	25%
Assignment 3: *Formal Report (up to 1250 words, excluding front and back matter)	30%
**Sentence Grammar/Structure Quizzes (3 x 5%)	15%
**Final Exam (to be written during Exam Period)	20%

\*See also 'Attendance/Participation' below.

## Final Exam

The exam will test the skills that you have developed over the course of the semester in terms of your writing ability (purpose, coherence, cohesion, style, and grammar) and your understanding of the fundamental elements of writing for professional communication as discussed in class and in course readings.

\*\* Please note: all three of the Sentence Grammar/Structure Quizzes, and the final exam, will be delivered to you 'in advance' via Owl. Details will follow at the appropriate time. Consequently, you should not find any need to secure accommodation for additional time or to resolve any conflicts. The final exam, for example, will be scheduled during the formal exam period. It will be designed to be written in 2 hours if written 'live', but you will have 48 hours in which to write

it and submit it via Owl.

## **Assignment Format**

Assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and will be submitted online (see ‘Submitting Assignments’ below). All assignments must have your name, course name, section number and instructor’s name on the first page.

When using sources in a paper, you will be expected to follow MLA, CMS, or APA standards for documentation (as detailed in Messenger et al. Chapter 37).

## **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). Essay assignments for a particular week are due by Friday (mid)night, Eastern Standard Time unless otherwise stated.

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

### ***Procedure for Assignment Submission:***

Under policies adopted by Writing Studies, final drafts of all assignments in first-year and 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 3. 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 Sakai.

***\*Note: Pdf or other ‘read only’ formats, and compressed/ziped 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)**

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) 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.**

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".

**Note** that 'attendance' as defined in this section is **mandatory** in this course. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements in **any week where there is Discussion may result in your final grade in this course being reduced by 2.5%.**

**\*Note** further that Assignment #3 (formal report) in this course includes an initial (very brief!!) 'Proposal' stage – details will be available in the Assignment 3 prompt on the 'Assignment Instructions' page. Failure to submit a proposal as instructed there and/or to participate in the required Discussion associated with it during Week 11 may result in your earned grade on Assignment 3 being reduced by 10%.

## **Academic Consideration and Accommodation Policies**

**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](#).

(Note: if you are registered with Accessible Education, please note [see above under Assignments and Grades] that you will not need extra time for the three tests to be written throughout the term in this course, nor for the final exam. You will have a three-day window in which to write each test, each of which is designed to take 50 minutes to complete, and you will receive the final exam 48 hours before the beginning of the Registrar's official time slot/date for it.

### **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](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/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:

“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**

**Remember: A ‘Week’ in this course begins on Monday and ends on Sunday, except as otherwise noted in this Schedule.**

### **Unit/Week 1 (Jan. 11 – 17)**

- *Introduction to the course: Writing and rhetoric in professional contexts*

*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 rhetoric (persuasive communication) and ‘writing.’

**Read:** MacRae ‘Introduction to Business and Professional Writing’

***This Week’s 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 2 (Jan. 18 – 24)**

- *Rhetoric: Audience, purpose*
- *Grammar basics: Word classes, clause patterns*

**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
- To understand basic word classes (‘parts of speech’) and clause patterns

**Read:** MacRae ‘Introduction’; Chapters 1 and 2; Chapter 3, p. 61-73

**Read:** Messenger et al. Chapters 3e-g, 6 (all), 7a, 8a-d, 10-13 (all)

**Read:** the ‘Globe’ case (see ‘Assignment Instructions’ page)

***This Week’s 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?*

**Begin Work on Diagnostic Paper (see ‘Assignment Instructions’ page)**

**Unit/Week 3 (Jan. 25 – 31)**

- *Introduction to the Grammar and Conventions of 'Standard Written English'*
- *Writing Clearly and Paragraphing: Basic Principles*
- *Copy-editing*

**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:** MacRae Chapters 2, 4

**Read:** Messenger et al. Chapters 1a-g, 2

**No Discussion Required this week: Complete Online Quiz #1 and submit Diagnostic Paper**

**Diagnostic Paper due Friday by 11:55 p.m. (ungraded)**

**Write Online Quiz 1 (5%)**

**Unit/Week 4 (Feb. 1 – 7)**

- *Rhetoric: Writing Informative, Positive, and Negative Messages*
- *Writing: Verbs (voice), Commas*

**Objectives:**

Through the discussions and readings for Units 4 and 5 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'
- The concept of 'voice'
- Uses of the comma
- Use of the colon and semicolon and other punctuation marks



**Read:** MacRae Chapters 7, 8; Chapter 3, p. 81 – 84

**Read:** Messenger et al. Chapters 8, 15

**Read:** ‘Statstar’ case (on ‘Lecture Notes’ page)

***This Week’s Discussion Topic:*** *apply the principles articulated in the Week/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.”

**Begin Work on Assignment 1 (see ‘Assignment Instructions’ page)**

**Unit/Week 5 (Feb. 8 – 6 p.m. Friday Feb. 12)**

- *Rhetoric: Writing Informative, Positive, and Negative Messages (continued)*
- *Writing: Colons and Semicolons; Other punctuation*

**Objectives:**

As for Unit 4

**Read:** MacRae Chapters 7, 8 and 9; Chapter 3, p. 84-90

**Read:** Messenger et al. Chapters 16-25, 32m-n

**Read:** ‘Statstar’ case (on ‘Lecture Notes’ page)

***This Week’s 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.*

**Work on Assignment 1**

**February 13 – February 21: Reading Week**

**Unit/Week 6 (Feb. 22 – 28)**

- *Rhetoric: Visual rhetoric – The Importance of Design*
- *Writing: Sentence boundary errors – fragments and run-ons*

**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
- Some criteria for effective website design
- The concept of 'sentence boundary error': sentence fragments and run-on sentences

**Read:** MacRae Chapters 5, 6 and 14

**Read:** Messenger et al. Chapters 5a-c

**No Discussion Required this week: Assignment 1 Due**

**Assignment 1 due Friday by 11:55 p.m. (10%)**

**Begin Thinking About Assignment 2 (see 'Assignment Instructions' page)**

**Unit/Week 7 (March 1 – 7)**

- *Rhetoric: Writing Persuasive Messages (Part 1)*
- *Writing: effective sentences – the concept of agreement*

**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'
- Sentence Grammar: the concept of agreement

**Read:** MacRae Chapter 9

**Read:** Messenger et al. Chapters 7c, 9

**Read:** 'TeknoSport' case (on 'Lecture Notes' page)

No Discussion Required this week: do Online Quiz 2

**Write Online Quiz 2 (5%)**

**Begin Work on Assignment 2**

**Unit/Week 8 (March 8 – 14)**

- *Rhetoric: Writing Persuasive Messages (Part 2)*
- *Writing: effective sentences – modifiers and mixed constructions*

**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
- Sentence grammar: modifiers (placement; errors) and mixed constructions

**Read:** MacRae Chapter 9

**Read:** Messenger et al. Chapter 5d-f

**Read:** 'TeknoSport' case (on 'Lecture Notes' page)

***This Week's 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?***

**Work on Assignment 2**

**Begin thinking about Assignment 3 Proposal and report – see Assignment 3 prompt on 'Assignment Instructions' page**

**Unit/Week 9 (March 15 – 21)**

- *Rhetoric: Overview of Issues arising from Cross-Cultural Communication*
- *Rhetoric: Writing Proposals and Reports – introduction to Assignment 4 (see ‘Assignment Instructions’ page)*
- *Writing: effective sentences – the concepts of variety and emphasis (including parallelism); diction*

**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 #4
- The roles of variety, emphasis, parallelism and diction in writing effective sentences

**Read:** MacRae Chapters 17, 18, 20

**Read:** Messenger et al. Chapters 4, 5h, 14

**No Discussion Required this week: do Online Quiz 3, submit Assignment 2, and ensure you are ready to submit (email) your Assignment 3 Proposal by 11:55 p.m. on Friday Week 10**

**Write Online Quiz 3 (5%)**

**Assignment 2 due Friday by 11:55 p.m. (25%)**

**Unit/Week 10 (March 22 – 28)**

- *Rhetoric: Writing Proposals and Reports*
- *Writing: evaluating and incorporating sources; documentation*

**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
- The evaluation and use of sources

**Read:** MacRae Chapters 17, 18, 20

**Read:** Messenger et al. Chapters 33 – 37 (review all; consult as required)

**No Discussion required this week. Submit (email) your ‘Proposal’ for Assignment 3 by 11:55 p.m. on Sunday.**

**Submit Assignment 3 ‘Proposal’ (email) by 11:55 p.m. on Friday**

**Begin Work on Assignment 3**

**Unit/Week 11 (March 29 – April 1 [April 2<sup>nd</sup> and April 4<sup>th</sup> are official holidays])**

- *Rhetoric: Writing Proposals and Reports – some notes on writing executive summaries*
- *Rhetoric: an overview of the basic principles of individual and group oral presentations*

**Objectives:**

Through this Unit’s readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:

- Executive summaries: the main principles and problems
- The basic principles underlying successful and persuasive individual oral presentations

**Read:** MacRae pages 321 – 322 and chapters 15 and 16

**Work on Assignment 3**

**Unit/Week 12 (April 5 – Monday April 12 [last day of classes])**

***Final Comments and Exam Review***

**Work on Assignment 3**

**Assignment 3 (30%) is due Monday April 12 by 11:55 p.m. This is a deadline unless you have secured formal academic consideration.**

**Exam (2 hours) during Exam Period; date/time and procedure t.b.a.**