

2111G: Writing in the World: Introduction to Professional Writing**Distance Studies (Section 655)****Instructor: Sonia Halpern; e-mail: 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,” December, 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 the 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.

Required Texts

Rentz, Kathryn, Paula Lentz, and Marco Campagna. *Business Communication: A Problem-solving Approach*. First Canadian edition. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2021.

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

Course Requirements and Grade Allocations

Assignment #1: Negative messages with positive emphasis (up to 1000 words)	20%
Assignment #2: Proposal with visual (up to 1200 words)	25%
Assignment #3: Formal report with visual	40%

(1200-1400 words, excluding front and back matter)

Sentence Grammar/Structure Test (online on OWL site)

15%

Course Policies

Assignment Format

All assignments are to be typed 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 Rentz, Lentz, and Campagna, Reference Chapter B, and *The Canadian Writer's Handbook: Second Essentials Edition*, Appendix B.

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 **Medical Accommodation Policy**, below). Our class week runs from Monday to Sunday, so assignments for a particular week are due by Sunday (mid)night, 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 assignment. 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.

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>.

***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 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: 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%.

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>).

Antirequisites

The antirequisite for this course is WRIT 1031F/G. You cannot take this course if you have taken WRIT 1031F/G.

Academic Accommodation and Consideration

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 within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. 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. All requests for consideration for assessments worth more than 30% of a final grade must be directed to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.

In this course, all requests for academic consideration must be directed to the Academic Counselling office of the student's Home Faculty if a SRA will not be used.

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.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, 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 your instructor does 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.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain

help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Schedule

(Classes begin Monday, January 10. The first week, therefore, runs from January 10 until January 16. All subsequent weeks also run Monday-Sunday, with exceptions for Reading Week and the final week of classes, where classes end on Friday, April 8.)

Unit/Week One (January 10-16)

[An introduction to professional communication](#)

Read: RLC, Chapter 1, “Communicating in the Workplace”
CWH, Sections 3-4

***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 (January 17-23)

[Audience, purpose, medium](#)

Read: RLC, Chapter 2, “Writing Effectively for Your Audience, Purpose, and Medium”
RLC, Chapter 5, pp. 150-2
RLC, Reference Chapter A, pp. A-13 to A-22
CWH, Section 5

***Discussion Topic:** You work as a student intern in the office of the CAO (Chief Administrative Office) in Mediumtown. The Chair of the Committee of Adjustment (which is composed entirely of volunteers) sent the attached letter (see Forum) to the CAO, and the CAO has asked you for a preliminary analysis of the primary audience for the City’s response. What can you learn about the letter writer from the letter itself, and what would you recommend the response look like on that basis? Do other audiences need to be considered?*

Unit/Week Three (January 24-30)

[Building positive relationships through communication: goodwill](#)

Read: RLC, Chapter 6, “Building Positive Relationships through Communication”
RLC, Reference Chapter A, pp. A-2 to A-13

CWH, Section 15

Discussion Topic: Look at Skills-Building Exercises on "Using the You-Viewpoint" and "Rewriting for Courtesy and Positive Effect" (RLC, pp. 189-90). Pick any sentence, and rewrite that sentence according to the instructions. Comment as necessary. Try and pick a sentence no one has done (some will get done more than once, but many different rewrites are possible!). Remember to comment on other people's work.

Unit/Week Four (January 31-February 6)

Good-news, neutral, and bad-news messages

Read: RLC, Chapter 8, "Writing Good-News and Neutral Messages"
RLC, Chapter 9, "Writing Bad-News Messages"
RLC, Reference Chapter A, pp. A-2 to A-13
CWH, Sections 16-25

Unit/Week Five (February 7-13)

Good-news, neutral, and bad-news messages (continued)

Read: RLC, Chapter 8, "Writing Good-News and Neutral Messages"
RLC, Chapter 9, "Writing Bad-News Messages"
RLC, Chapter 5, pp. 136-43
Statstar case (under Unit 5/Week 5 content)

****Assignment #1 due by 11:55 p.m., Sunday, Week 5***

Discussion Topic: Refer to Problem-Solving Case #1 (RLC, p. 283). Compose a brief message to the Rim Ridge Community Arts Association that declines the offer to serve on their board. Post the message, and explain your choices in composing it.

Unit/Week Six (February 14-18)

Persuasive messages and proposals

Read: RLC, Chapter 10, "Writing Persuasive Messages and Proposals"
RLC, Chapter 5, pp. 141-3
RLC, Reference Chapter A, pp. A-13 to A-14
CWH, Section 8

Discussion Topic: What appeals would be appropriate for the following products when they are being sold to consumers? How might the appeals differ depending on the age and/or gender of the target audience? Think about the broad categories (pathos and logos), but also think of specific appeals that might work with different consumer groups. Choose one product from the list to comment on.

{Reading Week: Saturday, February 19-Sunday, February 27}

Unit/Week Seven (February 28-March 6)

Visual rhetoric: document design

Read: RLC, Chapter 3, “Designing Documents with Visual Appeal”
RLC, Chapter 5, pp. 153-9
CWH, Section 2

Discussion Topic: Find an online example of a document/website that violates one of the four main principles of design: contrast, repetition, alignment, or proximity. Link to the document/website, explain the problem, and offer a solution.

Unit/Week Eight (March 7-13)

Visual rhetoric: visuals

Read: RLC, Chapter 4, “Communicating with Visuals”

**Download, write, and upload sentence structure/grammar quiz (15%): the quiz will be available from Monday, March 7, 12:05am to Tuesday, March 8, 11:55pm. This test was designed to take approximately 1 hour to write; however, you will have one 3-hour period to complete it. Please note that this quiz is not considered a take-home test, and, as such, external sources (books, internet, classmates, etc.) must NOT be consulted.*

Unit/Week Nine (March 14-20)

Cross-cultural communication

Read: RLC, Chapter 7, “Communicating Across Cultures”
RLC, Chapter 11, pp. 372-85 (secondary research)

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

Unit/Week Ten (March 21-27)

Research and writing (the right type of) reports

Read: RLC, Chapter 11, “Researching and Writing Reports”
RLC, Chapter 12, “Creating the Right Type of Report”

Unit/Week Eleven (March 28-April 3)

Employment Communications

Read: RLC, Chapter 15, “Communicating in the Job Search”

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 (April 4-8 [last day of classes])

Reports: executive summaries; and final comments

Read: RLC, Chapter 11, “Researching and Writing Reports”
RLC, Chapter 12, “Creating the Right Type of Report”

***Assignment #3 submission due by 11:55 p.m. on Friday, April 8 (last day of classes) OR as directed by your instructor**