

**2111G: Writing in the World: Introduction to Professional Writing  
Distance Studies (Winter 2024, Section 656)****Instructor:****Contact:****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: Third Essentials Edition*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2023.

## Course Requirements and Grade Allocations

<b>Assignment #1: Negative messages with positive emphasis (up to 750 words)</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Assignment #2: Proposal with visual (up to 1200 words)</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Assignment #3: Formal report with visual (1200-1400 words, excluding front and back matter)</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Sentence Grammar/Structure Quizzes (online on OWL site)</b>	<b>15%</b>

## 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. With the exception of the formal report, 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: Third Essentials Edition*, Sections 36a and 36c.

### 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, and they will not receive comments. 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.

\***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; or
- 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](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>).”

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools for information gathering and preliminary research purposes only (unless otherwise indicated in the assignment instructions). These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. It is essential, however, that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize, develop, and articulate their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration, but students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism in any form. Note that for all assignments completed outside of class, the instructor can require you to attend an in-person interview to discuss your work before a mark is finalized. Assignments should always reflect students’ own thoughts and constitute independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, supports independent inquiry, and encourages original written contributions.

### **Antirequisites**

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

### **Academic Accommodation**

Senate language requires all requests for accommodation for a grade component of 10% or more to go to academic counselling. That same section, however, allows for (and encourages) instructors to deal directly with accommodation requests for grade components less than 10%. Here’s the relevant Senate language:

“Accommodation by Instructor for work worth less than 10% of the overall grade in a course: Instructors are encouraged, in the first instance, to arrange participation requirements and multiple small assignments in such a way as to allow students some

flexibility. A student seeking academic accommodation for any work worth less than 10% must contact the instructor or follow the appropriate Department or course specific instructions provided on the course outline.

In arranging accommodation, instructors will use good judgement and ensure fair treatment for all students. Instructors must indicate on the course outline how they will be dealing with work worth less than 10% of the total course grade. In particular, instructors must indicate whether medical documentation will be required for absences, late assignments or essays, missed tests, laboratory experiments or tutorials, etc. Where medical documentation is required, such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Academic Counselling/Dean's office, who will make the determination whether accommodation is warranted. Given the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy ([https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/general/privacy.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/privacy.pdf)), instructors may not collect medical documentation.”

### **Medical Accommodation Policy**

“The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean's office (the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration/home Faculty) together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. These documents will be retained in the student's file and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy. Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic accommodation shall be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty. Academic accommodation shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration, and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities. (Note – it will not be sufficient to provide documentation indicating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill.”)

Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must

follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.”

### **Documentation from Family Physicians/Nurse Practitioners and Walk-In Clinics**

A Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is required where a student is seeking academic accommodation. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. An SMC can be downloaded at

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

### **Documentation from Student Health Services**

At the time of illness, students should make an appointment with a physician/nurse practitioner at Student Health Services. During this appointment, request a Student Medical Certificate from the Physician/Nurse Practitioner.

### **Documentation from Hospital Urgent Care Centres or Emergency Departments**

Students should request that an SMC be filled out. Students may bring this form with them, or request alternative Emergency Department documentation. Documentation should be secured at the time of the initial visit to the Emergency Department. Where it is not possible for a student to have an SMC completed by the attending physician, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that their ability to meet their academic responsibilities was seriously affected.”

**Please note** that individual instructors **will not under any circumstances** accept or read medical documentation directly offered by a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds or for related 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 or Undergraduate office of a student’s home Faculty.

**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: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation\\_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.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. 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.

### **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.

### **Statement on Gender-based Sexual Violence**

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, here. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

### **Other Student 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/>

### **Intellectual Property and Copyright**

All instructor-written materials (e.g., PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

## **Schedule**

**Classes begin Monday, January 8. All weeks run Monday-Sunday, with exceptions for Reading Week (Week 6 ends on Friday, February 17) and the final week of classes (which ends on Monday, April 8).**

### **Unit/Week One (January 8-14)**

#### **[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 and comments that you may have – both general and as prompted by the Unit 1 lecture.*

## **Unit/Week Two (January 15-21)**

### **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?*

***\*Grammar Quiz #1 (5%)***

## **Unit/Week Three (January 22-28)**

### **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 29-February 4)**

### **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

**\*Grammar Quiz #2 (5%)\***

**Unit/Week Five (February 5-11)**

**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 12-16)**

**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: Friday, February 17 to Sunday, February 25}**

**Unit/Week Seven (February 26-March 3)**

**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.*

***\*Grammar Quiz #3 (5%)\****

**Unit/Week Eight** (March 4-10)

**Visual rhetoric: visuals**

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

**Unit/Week Nine** (March 11-17)

**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, Week 9\****

**Unit/Week Ten** (March 18-24)

**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 25-31)

**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 1-8 [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 Monday, April 8 (last day of classes) OR as directed by your instructor**