

WRITING 1031G – Distance Studies

Global Positioning: Introduction to Rhetoric and Professional Communication

Winter 2026

Section 650

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, and effective revision, 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: Required

MacRae, Paul. *Business and Professional Writing: A Basic Guide*. Third Canadian Edition. Peterborough: Broadview, 2025. Cost (Western Bookstore): \$50.95 print; \$35.00 permanent access e-book. **This (Third Canadian) edition is preferred, but the Second Canadian edition will work for reference, even though page numbers won't line up with the course materials.**

Meseger, de Bruyn et al. *The Canadian Writer's Handbook. Third Essentials Edition*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2023. Cost (Western Bookstore): \$46.95 print; \$20.00 180-day access e-book. **This edition is preferred, but earlier editions will work for reference, even though page numbers won't line up with the course materials.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignment 1: Negative Message (up to 1000 words)	10%
Assignment 2: Persuasive Message with Visual (up to 1200 words)	25%
Assignment 3: Formal Report Exercise (up to 1250 words, excluding front and back matter)	30%
Sentence Grammar/Structure Quizzes (3 x 5%)	15%
*Final Exam (to be written <u>in-person</u> during Exam Period)	20%

Final Exam

***Note: the final exam in this course will be an in-person exam, written in the December exam period on a date/time scheduled by the Office of the Registrar.** 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.

Access to Brightspace

This course is fully online, therefore access to and familiarity with Owl (Brightspace) is essential. Further: students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If you need assistance with

the course OWL site, you can seek support on the OWL Brightspace Help page. Alternatively, you can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Assignment Format

Assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and submitted online (see ‘Submitting Assignments’ below) **as Word files**. 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 1, 2, and 3 are due on the dates specified on the syllabus Schedule. In the absence of formal academic consideration, **late papers for Assignments 1 and 2** will be penalized at 2.5% per day unless I have permitted an informal short extension of the due date. You must contact me ahead of the due date for an extension and provide a reason for the request acceptable to me. Assignment 3 is due on the last day of class. That date is a university deadline and will be extended only with formal academic consideration (see ‘**Academic Consideration and Accommodation**’ below, following the ‘**Schedule**’). Important: you are responsible for keeping an electronic copy of all assignments you submit.

Quizzes 1, 2, and 3 must be written during the weeks specified on the syllabus Schedule. As noted in the policy section ‘**Academic Consideration and Accommodation**’ (see below), if you miss a Quiz you may elect to contact me directly to see if we can agree informally to a short extension of its availability.

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 under ‘Assignments’. 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.

***Note: Pdf or other ‘read only’ formats, and compressed/zipped files are not acceptable.**
Assignments submitted in a ‘read only’ format will be graded but will not receive comments.
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’ at and participation in Discussions 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 Brightspace Owl site) 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 **two separate posts** during each of those weeks (a week is defined *for this purpose* as running from Monday to Sunday); **one must be a reply/response to another student and one must be a new post written by you that starts a new thread in the Discussion topic. Any further posts may be of either kind.**

Postings in Discussions 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% for each such week.**

Prerequisites and Antirequisite*

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.

***Note: this course does not have prerequisites, but it does have an antirequisite – Writing 2111F/G. You cannot receive academic credit for both Writing 1031F/G and Writing 2111F/G.**

Scholastic Offences

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 the university's Scholastic Offence Policy as above). See also [AI Policy](#) below.

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>.

AI Policy

In this course, the use of AI (such as automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited unless there has been discussion with and agreement by the instructor before beginning an assignment. If AI use is suspected, the instructor may ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and/or other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

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

Remember: A 'Week' for the purposes of this course begins on Monday and ends on Sunday, except as otherwise noted (*) in this Schedule.

Unit/Week 1 (Jan. 5 – 11)

➤ *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’ and Chapter 3

Canadian Writer’s Handbook (CWB) sections 3 and 4, and begin reading sections 6 – 13 as necessary

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. 12 – 18)

➤ *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. 63-75

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

Read: the ‘Globe’ case and the instructions for Assignment 1

This Week’s Discussion Topic: *Think about Lyn Smith as your ‘primary audience’ for a reply to her complaint. 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 3 (Jan. 19 – 25)

- *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

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.”

Complete Quiz #1 (5%): available 9 a.m. Monday January 19 to 11:59 p.m. Sunday January 25.

Unit/Week 4 (Jan. 26 – Feb. 1)

- *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. 80 – 86

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 8, 15

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.*

Unit/Week 5 (Feb. 2 – 8)

- *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. 86-92

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 16-25, 31m-n

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

No Discussion Required this week: Assignment 1 Due

Assignment 1 due Sunday February 8th by 11:59 p.m. (10%)

Unit/Week 6 (*Feb. 9 – 13)

- *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

This week's Discussion Topic: discuss the significance (for the effectiveness of a message) of the design (graphics, etc.) and formatting of a document. Just how important, in your opinion, are those elements?

Saturday February 14 to Sunday February 22 : Reading Week

Unit/Week 7 (Feb. 23 – March 1)

- *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)

Complete Quiz 2 (5%) available 9 a.m. Monday February 23 to 11:59 p.m. Sunday March 1.

Unit/Week 8 (March 2 – 8)

- *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

Assignment 2 due Sunday March 8 by 11:59 p.m. (25%)

Unit/Week 9 (March 9 – 15)

- *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 and ensure you are ready to submit (email) your Assignment 3 Proposal by 11:55 p.m. on Sunday Week 10

Complete Quiz 3 (5%), available 9 a.m. Monday March 9th to 11:59 p.m. Sunday March 15th.

Unit/Week 10 (March 16 – 22)

- *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 – 36 (review all; consult as required)

This Week's Discussion Topic: Thinking back to Weeks 7 and 8: your aim in the TeknoSport scenario 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 11 (March 22 – 29)

- *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 351 – 352 and chapters 15 and 16

Unit/Week 12 (*Monday March 30 – Thursday April 2; Monday April 6 – Thursday April 9[last day of classes])

Final Comments and Exam Review

Assignment 3 (30%) is due Thursday April 9 by 11:59 p.m. This is a deadline and cannot be extended unless you have secured formal academic consideration.

Exam (2 hours) written in-person during Exam Period; date/time t.b.a.

Academic Consideration and Accommodation

University policy on academic considerations is described here:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation.

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests through the Student Absence Portal, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

https://www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation, which may include a Student Medical Certificate. Recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course.

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

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 (<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>).

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 .

Other Student Support Services

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

Student Support Services

<https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login&languageCd=ENG&> provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

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