

2111G: Writing in the World: Introduction to Professional Writing

Distance Studies (Winter 2026 - Section 651)

Instructor:

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, Marco Campagna, and Carleigh Brady. *Business Communication: A Problem-solving Approach*. Second Canadian edition. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2024. **This textbook costs between \$59.00 (180-day rental) and \$112.15 (paperback). This edition is required.**
- Messenger, de Bruyn, et al. *The Canadian Writer’s Handbook: Third Essentials Edition*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2023. This textbook costs between \$22.00 (180-day rental) and \$42.85 (paperback). **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 and Grade Allocations

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Assignment #1: Negative messages with positive emphasis (up to 750 words)	20%
Assignment #2: Proposal with visual (900-1000 words, excluding works cited)	25%
Assignment #3: Formal report with visual (1000-1200 words, excluding front and back matter)	40%
Grammar Quizzes (online on Brightspace site)	15%

Course Policies

Assignment Format

All assignments are to be electronic (typed) documents in **MS Word only** 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, Campagna, and Brady, 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 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 **Academic Accommodation**, 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. All term work must be completed by the last day of classes. Any term work not submitted by the last day of classes will receive a grade of zero without official academic accommodation.

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 Brightspace.

***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 this online 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 Brightspace 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 (new topic). Extended absences, defined as a failure to post into the Brightspace 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, which can be found here: 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.

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 Western 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 will 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.

Antirequisites

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

Academic Accommodation

University policy on academic considerations is described [here](#). 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://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. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation:

In this course, because not all elements of the quizzes (only two of three quizzes get counted) are required in the calculation of the final course grade, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for missed quizzes.

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](#).

Statement on Gender-based Sexual Violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. 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>

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.

Course Schedule

Classes begin on Monday, January 5. The first week, therefore, will run from January 5 to 11, 2026 and with all weeks thereafter similarly running from Monday-Sunday inclusive. The sole exceptions are for Reading Week and the final week of classes, with the term ending on Thursday, April 9, 2026, meaning that Week/Unit 12 will run long.

Unit/Week One (January 5-11)

An introduction to professional communication

Read: RLCB, Chapter 1, “Solving Communication Problems 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 12-18)

Audience, purpose, medium

Read: RLCB, Chapter 4, “Designing the Right Type of Message”
RLCB, Chapter 6, pp. 191-4
RLCB, Reference Chapter A, pp. A-17 to A-27
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 19-25)

Building positive relationships through communication: goodwill

Read: RLCB, Chapter 2, “Getting Positive Responses to Your Communication”
RLCB, Reference Chapter A, pp. A-7 to A-17
CWH, Section 15

Discussion Topic: Look at Skills-Building Exercises on "Using the You-Viewpoint" and "Rewriting for Courtesy and Positive Effect" (RLCB, pp. 51-2). 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.

***Grammar Quiz #1**

Unit/Week Four (January 26-February 1)

Good-news, neutral, and bad-news messages

Read: RLCB, Chapter 7, “Writing Good-News and Neutral Messages”
RLCB, Chapter 8, “Writing Bad-News Messages”
RLCB, Reference Chapter A, pp. A-7 to A-17
CWH, Sections 16-25

Unit/Week Five (February 2-8)

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

Read: RLCB, Chapter 7, “Writing Good-News and Neutral Messages”
RLCB, Chapter 8, “Writing Bad-News Messages”
RLCB, Chapter 6, pp. 176-84
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 (RLCB, p. 283-4). 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 9-14)

Persuasive messages and proposals

Read: RLCB, Chapter 9, “Writing Persuasive Messages and Proposals”
RLCB, Chapter 6, pp. 181-4
RLCB, Reference Chapter A, pp. A-17 to A-18
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.

***Grammar Quiz #2**

Reading Week: February 14-22}

Unit/Week Seven (February 23-March 1)

Visual rhetoric: document design

Read: RLCB, Chapter 5, “Communicating Your Messages Visually” (pp. 123-40)

RLCB, Chapter 6, pp. 194-201

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 2-8)

Visual rhetoric: visuals

Read: RLCB, Chapter 5, “Communicating Your Messages Visually” (pp. 140-73)

**Grammar Quiz #3*

Unit/Week Nine (March 9-15)

Cross-cultural communication

Read: RLCB, Chapter 3, “Communicating Across Cultures”
RLCB, Chapter 10, pp. 382-92 (secondary research)

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

Unit/Week Ten (March 16-22)

Research and writing (the right type of) reports

Read: RLCB, Chapter 10, “Researching and Writing Reports”
RLCB, Chapter 11, “Creating the Right Type of Report”

Unit/Week Eleven (March 23-29)

Employment Communications

Read: RLCB, Chapter 14, “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 (March 30-April 9 [last day of classes])

Reports: executive summaries; and final comments

Read: RLCB, Chapter 10, “Researching and Writing Reports”
RLCB, Chapter 11, “Creating the Right Type of Report”

**Assignment #3 submission due by 11:55 p.m. on April 9, 2026 (last day of classes) OR as directed by your instructor*