

January 2008

Marlboro College Graduate Center
Syllabus
Business Writing

3 credits

Description

Effective writing skills are among the most valuable skill for managers, particularly information systems managers, whose communications must be clear and concise. This course provides students with advanced business writing skills in memo, letter, report, analysis, and technical writing formats.

Course work is individual, paired, and/or in teams. You will demonstrate mastery of the elements of business writing through reflective papers, weekly discussion responses, written assignments, and a final project.

Intended Audience and Rationale

Students enrolled in the BS/MIS Program or students interested in learning more about effective business writing.

Prerequisites: Com 300 or permission of the instructor or Academic Director.

Faculty

Dr. Carolyn N. Stevenson

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Course Goals

This course will help students to better understand the writing process as well as to master the appropriate writing formats for typical business situations. Students will also be able to write difficult communications, electronic communications, and persuasive communications, including cover letters and resumes.

Goals and Learning Objectives

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- 1) Students will learn advanced communication techniques including skillful use of words, parallelism, emphasis, unity, tone, and style.
- 2) Students will apply acceptable grammar and punctuation rules in business correspondence and reports.

- 3) Students will develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills by analyzing business problems, the resolution of which results in functional business documents: memoranda, letters, and reports.
- 4) Students will identify the characteristics of effective communication in business.
- 5) Students will demonstrate an understanding of the principles for creating effective job-related documents.
- 6) Students will demonstrate the ability to create effective job-related documents.
- 7) Students will create a résumé and letter of application based on specific guidelines presented in class.

- 8) Students will analyze the importance of communication in their chosen career field and specify the specific skills learned in the course that they will use most frequently.

Instructional Resources

Required Texts:

Business and Administrative Communication by Kitty O. Locker - 7th Edition - McGraw Hill-Irwin Publishing.

Instructional Procedures

Business Writing is a completely on-line course. Communication with the instructor will occur via email and instant messenger. Communication with classmates will be through discussion forums in the course. Asynchronous 'work' between the classes is approximately 12 hours a week, the majority of which individual, asynchronous and work.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Grading:

Weekly discussion board participation: 20%

Peer Evaluations: 10%

Reaction Journal: 15%

Written Assignments: 40%

Final Project: 15%

Grading Scale

A 93 – 100 Distinguished

A-	90 - 92	Excellent
B+	87 - 89	Very Good
B	83 - 86	Good
B-	80 - 82	Satisfactory
C	79 - 73	Needs Improvement, Unacceptable for the Graduate Level
F	Failure	

Course Assignments:

- 1. Weekly Discussion Posts:** 20%. Students will actively engage in the discussion question on a weekly basis. The discussion forum allows students the opportunity to share views on the class information as well as respond to class members' posts. The grading rubric for discussion participation is listed below:

Grade:	Grading Criteria for Discussion Participation
100 - 90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are on topic, original, and contribute to the quality of the discussion. • Responses make frequent, informed references to lesson material. • Responses are clearly written. • Responses meet posted length requirements. • Two or more responses to classmates that are thoughtful and advance the discussion.
80 – 89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are on topic, largely original, and contribute to the quality of the discussion. • Responses make some informed references to lesson material. • Responses are generally clearly written. • Responses meet posted length requirements. • One response to a classmate that is thoughtful and advances the discussion.
70 - 79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are on topic, but lack originality, and lack a significant contribution to the quality of the discussion. • Responses make vague or summary references to lesson material. • Responses have several mechanical or stylistic errors. • Responses do not meet posted length requirements. • Response(s) to others does not advance the discussion.
60 and below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are not related to the question. • No responses given.

2. Grading Criteria for Written Assignments Final Project

In addition to your final project listed below, you will complete and submit written assignments including resumes, business memos, narrative responses to questions, and short report. Your written assignment will be graded according to the following:

- Quality of Answer** 60
- Thoroughness
 - Use of theory
 - Use of examples

- Correctness of answer

Use of Resources 20

- Minimum of one direct reference from text book
- Other resources may be specified in individual projects

Writing Style and Accuracy 20

- Organization
- Punctuation, grammar, spelling

Total Points 100

3. Reaction Journal: 15% You will keep a journal in which you will record a minimum of 1 entry per week on your reactions to the readings or current events. Responses may be informal in nature, but would reflect the readings and/or the discussions of the week. Guiding questions: What were the main points of the chapter? In what ways can you apply this information to your current employment or future career? What new information did you learn from the readings? A minimum of 5 entries are due Week 8. A minimum of 10 entries are due week 11.

Evaluation rubric for Reaction Journal:

90 - 100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are on topic, original, and contribute to the quality of the discussion. • Responses make frequent, informed references to lesson material. • Responses are clearly written. • Responses meet posted length requirements.
80 - 89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are on topic, largely original, and contribute to the quality of the discussion. • Responses make some informed references to lesson material. • Responses are generally clearly written. • Responses meet posted length requirements.
70 - 79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are on topic, but lack originality, and lack a significant contribution to the quality of the discussion. • Responses make vague or summary references to lesson material.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responses have several mechanical or stylistic errors.• Responses do not meet posted length requirements.
60 - below	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responses are not related to readings.• Assignment not complete.

4. Final Project - total of 40%

During this course you will identify key concepts in business writing and apply these techniques to your final project. For your Final Project, you will prepare a formal report that addresses a current issue in business, such as developing a crisis communication plan, feasibility report, or recommendation report.

The formal report should be a minimum of 5 pages in length. This does not include the title page, references list or appendices. For ideas on your final project, please see exercise 14.9 "Writing a Library Research Report" (p.438). There are several ideas you may use to write your report. However, you may also select another topic that you are interested in learning more about.

	CONTENT	ORGANIZATION	WRITING STYLE	MECHANICS
A	Paper carefully analyzes the document for meaning, conciseness, clarity, effectiveness, and ethical implications. Shows original thought. Develops main points clearly.	Should be very well-ordered. Each section must have a strong internal organization. Transitions found between and within section are clear and effective.	Appropriate to the assignment, fresh (interesting to read), accurate, (not far-fetched, unsupported comments), precise (say what you mean), and concise (not wordy).	Includes a title page and reference page. Project is in 12-point font. Narrative sections are double-spaced. Project meets length requirement. Project is free of serious errors; grammar, punctuation, and spelling help to clarify the meaning by following accepted conventions. Citations follow APA guidelines.
B	Paper generally analyzes the document for meaning, conciseness, clarity, effectiveness, and ethical implications, but needs greater detail. Shows original thought. Develops the main points clearly.	Should be well-ordered. Each section has good internal organization. Transitions found between and within sections are generally clear and effective.	Should generally be appropriate to the assignment, accurate (no far-fetched, unsupported comments), precise (say what you mean), and concise (not wordy).	Includes a title page and reference page. Project is in 12-point font. Narrative sections are double-spaced. Project falls _ page short of length requirement. Project contains some generally minor grammatical and punctuation errors. Few misspellings. Citations generally follow APA guidelines (perhaps one or two minor

				errors).
C	Paper briefly analyzes the document for meaning, conciseness, clarity, effectiveness, or ethical implications, but many important points are left out. Shows too little original thought. Main points are adequately defined in only some areas of the paper; points may be over-emphasized or repeated.	The organization has a few problems. Sections lack transitions. The overall structure of the assignment is not effective.	Appropriate in places, but elsewhere language is vague and/or inappropriate. Sentences may be monotonous or confusing.	Numerous grammatical and punctuation errors. Misspellings are more frequent, but they are the sort spell checkers do not catch, such as “effect/affect.” An attempt at APA citation was made, but there are multiple errors larger than a misplaced period. Narrative sections are not double-spaced. Project falls 1-page short of length requirement.
D	Paper briefly addresses one or more of the required elements, but includes minimal analysis and needs major expansion. The essay’s main points are developed inconsistently or repetitiously. Shows little revision from draft.	The organization has multiple problems. Most sections lack transitions. The overall structure of the assignment is not effective.	Inappropriate and vague writing interferes with the development and clarity of the main points. Sentences are often monotonous or incomprehensible.	Many serious and minor grammar or punctuation errors; frequent misspellings, including those that should have been caught by the spell checker. Citation meets few APA guidelines, or no reference page is included. Paper falls 2 or more pages short of length requirement.
F	It meets no or few of the assignment’s guidelines. Shows no significant revision from draft. The components outlined for a “D” paper are not met. Project may be plagiarized (Plagiarism Explanation).			

Week 4: Identify your Final Project topic and have the topic approved by the instructor.

Week 7: Submit an outline to your instructor.

Week 8: Post your final project outline on the discussion board.

Week 12: Peer evaluation of your project and instructor feedback.

Week 13: Final Project must be submitted.

Your final project will be 5 to 7 pages long and must adhere to APA guidelines.

Course Overview:

Week Beginning	Assignments
Week 1	Getting Started, Chapter 1; Course Expectations; Experiences Written report on problem/solution to an organizational problem
Week 2	Chapter 2, The Importance of Business Writing Written Assignments
Week 3	Chapters 3 & 4, Written Assignments
Week 4	Chapter 5 Written Assignments
Week 5	Chapter 6, Written Assignments
Week 6	Chapters 13 & 14 Business Interview Due
Week 7	Chapter 15, Presentation Graphics, Written Assignments
Week 8	Chapters 7 & 8; reaction Journal due (5 entries)
Week 9	Chapters 9 & 10 Persuasive Writing Assignment; Fund-Raising letter
Week 10	Chapter 11 Written report on cultural diversity
Week 11	Chapters 17 & 18 Resume and Interview Questions Due Reaction Journal due (10 entries)
Week 12	Chapter 19 & 16, Peer Evaluation and Instructor Feedback on Final Projects
Week 13	Final Project due Course Wrap-Up

Additional Resources:

Course materials will be drawn from the primary text in the class.

Additional materials will be drawn from these online sources - please bookmark:

All papers and assignments must following the guidelines of APA formatting. All sources must be documented both within your assignment as well as at the end of the assignment in a reference list in APA style.