

ENGL 420: Business Writing

Purdue University Fall 2018

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays
8:45am – 9:45am and by appointment

Course Information:
CRN/Section: 14800/021
Meeting Times: MWF, 7:30am – 8:20am
Meeting Place: Wetherill Hall of Chemistry 212

Course Description

English 420 teaches students rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for producing effective business letters, memos, reports, and collaborative projects in professional contexts. The curriculum is informed by current research in rhetoric and professional writing and is guided by the needs and practices of business, industry, and society at large, as well as by the expectations of Purdue students and programs. All sections of English 420 are offered in networked computer classrooms or exclusively online to ensure that students taking the course are prepared for the writing environment of the high-technology workplace. The course teaches the rhetorical principles that help students shape their business writing ethically, for multiple audiences, in a variety of professional situations.

This section of English 420 centers on the broad theme of business writing as negotiation. Different forms of negotiation drive business, diplomacy, and innovation. Further, the ways in which professionals present themselves, build character and reputation, and engage with professional communities can also be understood as a form of social negotiation. At minimum, negotiation is a way of interacting that ensures all parties feel their interests are fairly represented – nobody leaves feeling cheated. At best, processes of negotiation enable everyone involved to feel that their participation has provided them with an advantage of some kind. This communicative backdrop will underlie the assignment structure in this course. It is also my intention that through discussions of business communication as negotiation that you feel empowered to represent your own interests, and carefully consider the interests your peers in order to produce a learning experience reflected not only in academic credit but also in long-term communicative dividends.

Required Course Texts

- *Excellence in Business Communication*, 12th edition. By John Thill and Courtland Bovée, Pearson, 2017. ISBN 987-0-13-431905-6
- Supplementary readings will be announced in class and distributed on Blackboard.

Course Outcomes

The Professional Writing Program identifies the following outcomes for Business Writing:

Writing in Context: analyzing professional cultures, social contexts and audiences to determine how they shape the various purposes and forms of workplace writing – such as persuasion, organizational communication, and public discourse.

Project Management: Developing and deploying strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents, both individually and collaboratively.

Document Design: Understanding and implementing design principles such as form and layout, through testing and revising information architecture.

Teamwork: Managing distributed teams online, delivering and implementing effective feedback.

Research: Locating, evaluating, and using print and online information selectively for particular audiences and purposes; triangulating sources of evidence.

Technology: Using and evaluating writing technologies used frequently in the workplace, such as emailing, IM, photo and video editing, presentation design, content management and desktop publishing.

Course Structure

This course is organized into three main units.

<p>Unit One Job Documents: Building Professional Ethos</p>	<p>Unit One provides you an opportunity to prepare a collection of documents designed to establish and communicate your professional identity. These documents are practically oriented so that you will have prepared resources for job, internship, graduate school, or other professional applications. Each student will complete an explanatory skill inventory and job announcement analysis in order to draft and revise a résumé and cover letter.</p> <p>Deliverables: A portfolio of professional documents including a skills inventory and job announcement analysis, a résumé, a cover letter, and reflective commentary identifying what parts of these documents you see as malleable in different applications (200 points).</p>
<p>Unit Two Negotiating Knowledge: Designing, Conducting, and Reporting Research</p>	<p>Preparing and presenting research in professional and business settings is just as important as it is in academic work. In Unit Two, we will consider different approaches and methods for conducting research as well as how to compose your findings. The broad theme of negotiation will serve as a common reference point for everyone's topic, but you are invited to select your own particular workplace related topic for research. We will read a few different perspectives about negotiation as a class, but your research will be your own.</p> <p>Deliverables: A research plan that situates your topic as related to negotiation, an annotated bibliography of your resources, a white paper reporting your findings, documentation of your participation in draft workshop (250 points).</p>

Unit Three Business Writing as Negotiating Action: Proposals, Recommendations, and Crisis Response	<p>Writing in business contexts often has the purpose of initiating or directing action within the context of an organization and the broader public. In this unit, students will form small task-force groups. Together, you will select a case study that warrants some form of corporate action and articulate the available means for negotiating the situation in a written plan. You might decide to author a business proposal or recommendation for starting or improving a business. Alternatively, your plan could be a corporate media kit designed as a PR response to a corporate crisis. In addition to organizing as a team and preparing a written negotiation plan, you will also present your work to the class.</p> <p>Deliverables: Group work plan, progress memo, final negotiation plan, group presentation of negotiation plan, self and group evaluation of project execution (350 points).</p>
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Evaluation:

Final letter grades in this class will be based on the cumulative total of the points that you have earned on the assignments in this class. 1000 total points are possible. Detailed evaluation rubrics for deliverables for units 1,2, and 3 will be distributed in class. In addition to these deliverables, your professional ethos throughout the duration of the course and course participation will factor into your final grade.

Professional Ethos – (100 points)

As this is an upper-division course in business writing, we will treat the class as a professional setting. We will spend a significant amount of time considering what a professional ethos is during unit one. In summary, professional ethos can be understood as the kind of character you comport yourself with in professional settings or the professional reputation you build for yourself. Attending class on time, engaging constructively with your peers, and promoting a generative and distraction-free workspace are a few characteristics of good ethos. Everyone will start the class with full credit in this category and I will check in with you, either verbally or by email, if any potential reasons to re-assess your credit for professional ethos arise. Please note that professional ethos is related to other items in this syllabus (attendance, civility, etc.), but it is treated here as a distinct grade item.

Participation – (100 points)

Participation in this course will be measured in two specific ways: 1) contributions to online discussion boards related to course reading and 2) submission of any deliverables from in-class activities. In class activities could include short written responses, participation in a digital survey or activity, or something you develop with your classmates. To that end, not all class activities will necessarily count for credit in this category. I will notify you any time your work for this class is being counted as participation.

In summary, final grades will be calculated as follows:

Assignment	Points
<i>Unit 1 Deliverables</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Unit 2 Deliverables</i>	<i>250</i>
<i>Unit 3 Deliverables</i>	<i>350</i>
<i>Professional Ethos</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Participation</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>1000</i>

Letter Grade	Point range
A	1000–930
A–	929–900
B+	899–870
B	869–830
B–	829–800
C+	799–770
C	769–730
C–	729–700
D	699–600
F	599–0

Please note that although attendance is not a factor in the 1000 points possible, absences in excess of four (4) will result in a reduction of your final point total.

There is no planned extra credit in this class; however, circumstances may arise that warrant creating an extra credit opportunity. No extra credit opportunity will be made unless it is made available to every member of class.

If you ever have questions or concerns about your grade, please do not hesitate to contact me. While I will strive to have your current grade accurately reflected on Blackboard, there might be times when the grade that is visible to you might not be completely current or might otherwise not reflect your actual grade in the course.

Official Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Just as regular on-time attendance is a standard expectation of most jobs, Purdue University expects that students attend all regularly scheduled class meetings. Writing is a practice that requires physical and mental presence, particularly when class meetings are organized around group or collaborative plans.

You are permitted four (4) absences over the course of the semester, regardless of documentation or excuse (absences due to official university sponsored activities and religious holidays are the only exceptions). In other words, there is no distinction between an excused or unexcused absence. If you are absent, you are still responsible for any content covered in class or assignments turned in. Each absence over four will result in a 50-point deduction to your final grade. For example missing class 5 times would result in a 50-point deduction, missing 6 times would result in a 100 point deduction, and so on. Please note that in-class activities cannot be made up outside of class.

Arriving to class late or leaving early often have the same effect as class absence. They can also be distracting to members of the class. For these reason, arriving to class more than ten (10) minutes late or leaving more than five (5) minutes early will be considered a tardy attendance and every two (2) accumulated tardy attendances will be counted as an absence.

On workshop days, it's important that you come to class with the assigned work to discuss and with sufficient copies of the work for other students in your group. If you are not prepared on workshop days, you may be counted absent or your professional ethos score may be impacted.

Late Work and Extensions

I do not accept late work, except as required by university policy. Although late work is not accepted, due date extensions can be offered if you have a circumstance that warrants one. As soon as you think you might need an extension, please contact me by email and we can discuss your situation and whether an extension might be appropriate. Extensions are available only before assignments are due. If you know you will be absent when an assignment is due, please note that I am happy to accept work early.

Email Etiquette

Communicating via Purdue email accounts will be the primary means of communicating outside of class meetings and Blackboard. I will respond to all emails within 48 hours (usually less). As this is a course in business writing, I expect that you will compose emails with professional etiquette in mind. This includes:

- a meaningful subject line
- a greeting
- concise and direct text
- closing with your name

Email replies can be less formal. Use your best judgment and when in doubt, stay on the professional side. Please be sure to check your Purdue email account regularly as this is how important class announcements will be shared.

Academic Honesty

The following statement about honesty and the use of sources is from the Department of English:

When writers use material from other sources, they must acknowledge this source. Not doing so is called plagiarism, which means using without credit the ideas or expressions of another. You are therefore cautioned (1) against using, word for word, without acknowledgment, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc., from the printed or manuscript material of others; (2) against using with only slight changes the materials of another; and (3) against using the general plan, the main headings, or a rewritten form of someone else's material. These cautions apply to the work of other students as well as to the published work of professional writers.

If you are in doubt about whether something might count as plagiarism, please ask me, since the consequences for plagiarism are severe. The university policies about plagiarism include penalties ranging from failure of an assignment to expulsion from the university. In this class, anyone who plagiarizes could fail the course and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. The Department of English considers the previous explanation to be official notification of the nature and seriousness of plagiarism.

Purdue University students have also adopted an Honor Code which states:

“As a Boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - we are Purdue.”

In this spirit, I trust that we will all work to advance a culture of academic integrity in order to promote personal and institutional reputation.

Civility and Respect

Often reasonable people have different views, beliefs, and opinions. It may be that during our discussions, those differences will become apparent. Despite any such differences, I expect that our class will maintain a professional ethos at all times. Please keep in mind the following College of Liberal Arts Statement on Classroom Civility.

Purdue University is committed to fostering diversity and inclusion and welcomes individuals of all ages, religions, sex, sexual orientations, races, nationalities, languages, military experience, disabilities, family statuses, gender identities and expressions, political views, and socioeconomic statuses. Please respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by everyone in this course. Behaviors that threaten, harass, discriminate or that are disrespectful of others will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behaviors will be addressed with disciplinary action, which may include being referred to the Office of the Dean of Students.

The Purdue Nondiscrimination Policy includes the following statement:

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or status as a veteran.

Serious breaches of either policy may result in additional disciplinary action.

As a matter of personal recognition and respect I will address you with the name and pronouns you identify. If you go by a name other than the one on the class roster please let me and the class know so that we can acknowledge you correctly.

Accommodation of Disabilities

Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247.

CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services)

Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (765)494-6995 and <http://www.purdue.edu/caps/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

What to do in an Emergency

For any emergency, call 911. Whether you call from a campus phone or your cell phone, your 911 call goes directly to campus police when you are on campus.

Indoor Fire Alarm: Immediately evacuate the building. Do not use the elevator. Move away from the building until emergency response personnel tell you it is safe to return.

All Hazards Outdoor Emergency Warning Siren: If you are outdoors, seek shelter in a building. If you are indoors, remain indoors, away from windows and doors.