

ENGL 420: Business Writing

Project II-White Paper



Project Goals

In today's business landscape, professionals are faced with overwhelming amounts of data on a variety of topics. Executives often ask for evidence in terms of data in order to educate themselves on a topic, understand an emerging problem, or learn more about the state of a particular condition or trend. One of the ways that professionals might be asked to share researched information with various audiences is through a white paper or background.

A white paper is an informative research report that provides background information related to a focused topic. These documents were first widely used in governmental and diplomatic contexts to inform stakeholders about issues where their input was needed.

The goal of a white paper is not necessarily to compel action or present a conclusion; instead, it is meant to provide contextual information necessary for an audience to make an informed decision.

While the white paper's primary purpose is to inform, there will always be elements of persuasion because of the writer's informational choices and organization. The white paper establishes the groundwork and puts the audience in the right frame of mind to then be presented with recommendations for further action.

Your task

Your assignment is to research some aspect of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in a corporate or business environment and then go on a fact-finding mission to establish the context for that issue. You will present your findings in a white paper, using both textual and visual mediums to communicate your research. Some possibilities include research on DEI practices in a particular company or business, in the not-for-profit sector, in government, in education, or in an entire industry. You could also look at one particular position in one of these contexts—such as a corporate diversity officer—and investigate the roles, responsibilities, and impact of that position. You could also look at specific programs such as diversity training initiatives or employee recruitment and retention programs. A final research approach could be how companies and businesses foster diversity in the communities where they are located, or how they partner with those communities to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion.

As part of this project, you will engage in intensive research. Your sources must be credible, current, and peer-reviewed (or produced by expert-vetted organizations). This means they would be available in the library via databases, google scholar, or credible and unbiased professional organizations. We'll talk more about credibility and research over the course of the project.

You are also responsible for gathering data related to the aspect of diversity, equity, and inclusion you are writing about in order to analyze and present it. This could be a small data set that is freely

available, data that is found in already published materials, or data that you gather yourself via interviews, observations, or mining data from online sources. Because of time constraints, data gathered via surveys is probably not possible for this assignment. The goal here is to learn to research and convey data-rich information effectively in order to support your larger points.

Your white paper will present this data analysis using words and visuals. For this assignment, you cannot simply reproduce tables, graphs, or charts that you find in your sources. You need to create three of your own. All visuals should be appropriately labeled (“Figure 1, 2, etc.” for graphs, “Table 1, 2, etc.” for tables).

Why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)?

I’m asking you to research and write about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion because they are the eminent driving force for change right now in the workplace and in the world. As we can see from corporate responses to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, just to name a few, and the subsequent Black Lives Matter protests, companies and businesses recognize the value of culturally diverse workplaces and culturally competent employees. They’re also being tasked to communicate those commitments in written statements and other public media. As you research your topic, I encourage you to keep an open mind and to push yourself to research an area that might stretch you intellectually. DEI is a massive area of scholarship so you will definitely need to hone your topic to one aspect of DEI (you should not consider your topic to be DEI *in general*).

Deliverables

1. A topic **proposal** for your white paper that includes:
 - an overview of what you are researching
 - who you think the audience for your white paper should be (hint: the final white paper’s audience shouldn’t be your instructor)
 - a step-by-step plan for how you will proceed with the project
 - key sources of data you will consult
 - an attached annotated bibliography of at least 3 sources

This proposal should be formatted as a memo addressed to your instructor. (50 points)
2. An more **comprehensive annotated bibliography** including 5-8 sources (25 points).
3. A thoroughly researched and carefully designed **white paper** that succinctly and ethically provides your audience with information about the aspect of DEI under investigation and includes at least three visual representations of data. (150 points)
4. A **process memo** that evaluates the work that you did for the project. (25 points)

Due Dates	Deliverables
Sunday, October 4th	Proposal
Sunday, October 18th	Annotated Bibliography & White Paper Draft for Peer Response
Sunday, October 25th	White Paper & Process Memo

Collaborative Research Spaces

As a class, your topics of study will likely be diverse, but it is also likely that you will share interests with your classmates. To support your individual work for this project we will organize collaborative research spaces to make it easier to share resources.

Although project deliverables are submitted individually, collaborative research consortiums give you an opportunity to work with your classmates in preparation for group projects in unit three. Use the consortia as a way to identify classmates with similar interests or compatible workstyles for future group formation.

Successful projects will include at least the following:

- Professional ethos in tone and attitude related to all elements of this assignment
- Completion of all deliverables on time
- Effective engagement in peer response sessions for the deliverables
- Awareness of the rhetorical situation of the backgrounder (audience, purpose, exigence, context)
- Thorough research, including multiple, well documented, credible source materials (minimum of 5-7 sources)
- Good use of design principles using InDesign, Publisher, Word, or an equivalent publishing software
- Evidence of reflective practice in your deliverables, which might include a one-page reflective memo detailing your writing, research, and design choices

See Project 2 Rubrics for details on assignment evaluation

