

RHET 3316 XX Writing for the Workplace

XX X:XX p.m. – X:XX p.m. | XX XXX

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Required Textbooks

- Technical Communication, 6th ed. by Rebecca Burnett (2005)
- The Business Writer's Handbook, 7th ed., by Alfred, Brusaw, and Oliu (2003)

Additional Supplies

- Floppy Disks or USB Flash Drive
- Binder or folder for handouts
- Paper and writing utensils

Catalog Description

Study and practice of workplace communication required of professionals who write as part of their jobs. Emphasis on developing a sense of audience and purpose, writing in teams, and learning problem solving strategies. Intensive practice writing workplace documents such as memos, letters, e-mail, résumés, and reports. Three credit hours.

Goals of the Course

This is an introductory course in the study and practice of workplace communication required of professionals who write as part of their jobs. The course uses a workshop approach that incorporates class discussion, individual and collaborative activities, projects, and the use of classroom technology to create effective documents. Specific course objectives include the following:

- Analyze and address the audiences, purposes, and situations of workplace documents
- Plan and write communications that solve technical problems or help readers make decisions about technical problems and solutions
- Use computer technology to research, plan, draft, and design workplace documents
- Read and critique the workplace documents of writing professionals and students in the course
- Read and critique your own workplace documents
- Develop an effective style for workplace documents, including correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Adapt document design to specific audiences, purposes, and contexts
- Learn how to present information orally
- Work collaboratively

How the Class Works

We will study professional communication throughout the course—this means you will be expected to read the assigned materials. I will lecture on what you have already read, then we'll discuss. Periodically I will give writing assignments, quizzes, tests, individual and group presentations.

This is a business writing class. We will be writing letters, memos, instructions, and reports, but not necessarily academic essays. This is a workshop, not just lecture. There will be group work and collaboration, because it is important that you learn to work well with others.

I encourage you to use this class to help you with other classes you are taking or have taken. Bring in samples of your writing (when appropriate) to share. Class participation is most important—please share what you are learning and take an active role in the class.

Attendance and Participation

Part of being a professional is showing up for work. With that in mind, I expect you to participate in every class. I will take attendance every day. If you cannot make it to class please email or call me prior to class, just like you would a supervisor. You must also arrive on time. Late arrival may be counted as an absence, and you might not be able to make up missed in-class work.

Should you miss too many class days, or consistently arrive late, I may ask you to drop the course. Otherwise, missing more than three classes will result in points being subtracted from your final grade.

In order for a workshop class to work, everyone must participate fully in class discussions, especially when in small groups. Please remember to be positive and constructive when commenting on each other's ideas.

Inclement Weather

UALR will be closed if either the Little Rock School District or the Pulaski County Special School District closes. If it is late in the evening (and public schools are already out) then I ask you to use your best judgment. Always check your email: I'll probably post a message through the listserv (see below) if I ever decide to close class.

Annoyance Policy

I don't want any unnecessary classroom disruptions. If you have a device that makes noise, make sure you set it to silent before it rings. If such a device manages to ring during class, I'll probably ask you to leave. Excessive classroom disruptions will cause me to consider withdrawing you from the course.

Computers / Information Technology Fluency

While I don't expect you to be a computer expert in order to be in my class, I do assume that you are familiar with the basic functionality of a computer (word processing, typing, etc.). Occasionally I will show you how to work more efficiently with the computer, and

am always available for one-on-one computer help. I reserve the right, however, to not use precious class time for computer consultation. Regardless of your computer talents, the work you submit should look and be as professional as you can make it.

All assignments must be word-processed and printed. You must save all drafts or iterations of your assignments to document your progress. You may be required to turn in drafts to one or more assignments.

Class Listserv

I ask each of you to subscribe to the class listserv: rhet3316XX@ualr.edu. The listserv is a great way to ask questions, get feedback, make comments, share interesting information, etc. Remember that everyone in class will get the email, so be prudent and only send emails pertaining directly to the course.

To subscribe, send a message to listserv@ualr.edu with a blank subject line, and this in the body (substitute “your name” with your actual name, please):

subscribe rhet3316XX your name

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of UALR to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law and state law. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation, for example in arrangements for seating, examinations, note-taking should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. It is also the policy and practice of UALR to make web-based information accessible to students with disabilities. If you, as a student with a disability, have difficulty accessing any part of the online course materials for this class, please notify the instructor immediately. The chair of the department (Dr. George Jensen) offering this course is also available to assist with accommodations. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services, telephone 501-569-3143 (v/tty), and on the Web at <http://www.ualr.edu/dssdept/>.

University Writing Center

The University Writing Center (UWC), located in SUB-116, is an invaluable tool available free to help you with any aspect of your writing, the writing process, or your writing assignments. Feel free to use it as much or as often as you'd like.

Office Hours

You are always welcome to meet with me privately, but my office hours are by appointment only. I work on campus, so I'm here every day 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Feel free to give me a call or send me an email to see if I'm free.

Academic Integrity

I expect that all work to be original, whether produced by an individual or group. There are appropriate ways to cite information derived from other writers, and we will go over those in class. You may be asked to turn in notes and drafts with finished assignments. Please ask if you have any questions, or consult your *UALR Student Handbook* for further information.

Grading

In order to earn a passing grade in Writing for the Workplace, you must attend, participate, and successfully complete all assignments. Your final grade for the course will be derived from the point total of all evaluated assignments.

The grading scale is based on 100%. A grade of “A” is 90% - 100%, “B” is 80% - 89%, “C” is 70% - 79%, “D” is 60% - 69%, and “F” is anything below 60%.

Late Work

Work must be turned in on its assigned due date. I will not accept late work unless you’ve made prior arrangements with me. In order to do this, you must first contact me before the assignment is due by means of a formal memo (an email) that explains the reason for the delay. Second, you must propose in the memo a reasonable deadline (no more than one week, please) which you will then keep. The memo stands as a contract between you and me. Failure to keep this new deadline breaks the contract, and I won’t accept your work. You may use this option only once during the semester.

In-class work (quizzes, completed drafts for peer response, oral presentations) is excluded from this option. If you are not in class, you can not make up an in-class assignment.

Incompletes

I will only give an incomplete (a grade of “I”) if you have passed the first half of the course and are unable to complete the course because of a documented illness or family crisis that I believe genuinely prevents you from finishing the course. You’ll have 90 days from the end of the semester to complete your work and submit it to me. Grades of “I” automatically change to “F” if you fail to submit your incomplete work to me in time.

Brief Overview of Assignments

In addition to readings, quizzes, and in-class work, you'll complete the following major assignments. I'll hand out more specific information in class at the appropriate time.

Style Exercise

At a very basic level, tone can be considered as the result of performing an audience analysis for a given purpose. For example, a note to a friend might have a different tone than a note to a professor. Media and mode of communication also have an impact on tone. A text message will naturally be more brief and have shorter sentences or phrases than an email. For this exercise you will write different texts to different audiences.

Field Interview

For this project will produce a proposal memo, a report in memo format, an oral report, and a thank-you letter. You will arrange to interview a workplace professional at a site where you envision yourself working in the future—preferably off campus. After submitting a proposal memo to me and getting approval, you'll conduct an interview with that individual and present your findings in two ways: an oral report to the class and a written memo report to me. You'll then send a thank-you letter to your interview subject (that I will have already approved).

Group Instruction Project

I will put you into groups of four and together you will produce a proposal memo, progress reports, an oral presentation, and a formal report. You will create a set of instructions and appropriate visuals for a reasonably complicated process. Be sure to keep track of the sources you consult/cite so that you can include them on a "References" page at the back of your report.

Information Design Exercise

You will evaluate several designs and pick one to redesign:

- Choose appropriate visuals
- Draw a new page grid or web template
- Incorporate text and visuals with headings and white space
- Share new designs in class

Application Portfolio

You will choose a job that you are qualified for (i.e. entry-level) and produce a letter of application, a resume, a list of three references, and three samples of your professional writing from this class or other classes. The writing samples should be revised and edited (it is a good idea to use assignments already completed and evaluated earlier in this class). Your portfolio should be appropriate to the job you are applying for.

Meeting Minutes Assignment

This assignment on writing meeting minutes is intended for an introductory-level technical communication class, such as Technical Writing or Writing for the Workplace. It reinforces and builds on the following concepts have been taught:

- summarizing a paragraph
- paraphrasing an essay
- conducting a meeting
- taking meeting notes
- writing meeting minutes

Summarizing and paraphrasing are key competencies in technical communication. The ability to plan, conduct, and/or notate a meeting is an essential skill for any working professional. Meeting minutes as documents build on those competencies and skills in order to provide an adequate record of group action within an organization.

The assignment could be administered in a number of ways depending on time and classroom resources. In its most basic form the student is given a written transcript of a meeting and asked to write meeting minutes of what occurred.

In a classroom that is equipped to show videos, the instructor could show a video of an actual meeting while each student takes notes to later write meeting minutes. If computers are available, students could write those minutes during class time—consolidating but not eliminating the note-taking step.

This could also be a collaborative group assignment where the class is put into groups and given an agenda of problems to discuss and take action on. Each group would have one ‘meeting’ per member so that everyone would have a chance to take notes and write minutes. In this case the peer evaluation process becomes more valuable and meaningful because each member of the group was at the meeting and knows what was said.

Deadlines for the assignment vary depending on how it is administered but nonetheless should be quick—definitely not more than a week. In the business world the turnaround time for meeting minutes must be short because in many cases the minutes must be approved before decisions recorded in the minutes can be acted upon.

No written material would be given out explaining the assignment except for the evaluation sheet. However, this assignment could be preceded or accompanied by a reminder sheet on how to write effective meeting minutes.

A copy of the evaluation sheet used to grade this assignment is included.

Submitted by Aaron Baker (adbaker@ualr.edu).

Meeting Minutes Assignment

Evaluation Sheet

_____ / 40 points

Organization (15 points)

- Follows the agenda of the meeting, is logical and easy to read
- Includes the name of the body (organization, committee, etc.), beginning and ending times, date, and place of meeting
- Includes the names of the members who attended (and perhaps who didn't attend)
- Includes your name as the person taking the minutes

Content Accuracy (15 points)*

- Minutes accurately reflect what actually took place during the meeting

Editing (10 points)

- Grammar and punctuation are accurate
- Names are spelled correctly

*In the case of a group project, peer evaluations are consulted for Content Accuracy.

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Student Name	Tuesday 23-Aug	Thursday 25-Aug	Tuesday 30-Aug	Thursday 1-Sep	Tuesday 6-Sep	Thursday 8-Sep	Tuesday 13-Sep
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	e	x	x	a
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
[REDACTED]	a	a	x	x	x	a	x
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	e	x	x
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	e	x	x
[REDACTED]	x	x	e	e	x	a	x
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	e	x	a
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	x		x
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	e	x	x
[REDACTED]	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Legend

- x = present for class
- a = absent, no excuse
- e = absent, emailed excuse
- c = absent, called-in excuse
- l = late to class