

WRITING 1031G – Distance Studies

Global Positioning: Introduction to Rhetoric and Professional Communication

Winter 2020

Section 650

Instructor: Brock Eayrs

Email: beayrs@uwo.ca Office: University College Rm. 2430

Hours: in-office Tuesdays 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; on Sakai or Western mail anytime (response within 36 hours)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course introduces students to the rhetorical principles and practices of writing and oral communication in professional contexts. Particular attention is paid to understanding audience, context, and purpose; the grammar of Standard Written English; modes of persuasion; and the negotiation of cultural difference.

Students learn strategies for idea generation, composing a first draft, approaching revision, peer review, and effective editing and proofreading techniques.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have demonstrated the ability to

- identify and define rhetorical contexts for professional communication;
- understand the relationship between context, purpose and audience and how that relationship should shape a message;
- use that understanding to develop persuasive messages;
- generate ideas for a variety of communicative purposes, such as communicating a negative message with positive emphasis;
- understand the basic principles of writing formal reports and apply them;
- understand the basic principles of cross-cultural communication and their significance;
- understand the basic principles of document design and apply them;
- understand the basic principles of designing individual and group oral presentations

- write cohesive and coherent prose using the grammar and conventions of Standard Written English;
- identify and correct errors in composition, grammar, and mechanics; and
- incorporate feedback into revisions.

TEXTBOOKS

MacRae, Paul. *Business and Professional Writing: A Basic Guide*. Second Canadian Edition. Peterborough: Broadview, 2019.

Messenger, de Bruyn et al. *The Canadian Writer's Handbook. Second Essentials Edition*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2017.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Diagnostic Paper (audience analysis [up to 500 words])	Ungraded
Assignment 1: Negative Message (up to 1000 words)	10%
Assignment 2: Persuasive Message with Visual (up to 1200 words.)	25%
Assignment 3: *Formal Report (up to 1250 words, excluding front and back matter)	30%
Sentence Grammar/Structure Quizzes (3 x 5%)	15%
Final Exam (written during Exam Period)	20%

*See also 'Attendance/Participation' below.

Exam

The exam will test the skills that you have developed over the course of the semester in terms of your writing ability (purpose, coherence, cohesion, style, and grammar) and your understanding of the fundamental elements of writing for professional communication as discussed in class and in course readings.

Assignment Format

Assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and will be submitted online (see 'Submitting Assignments' below). All assignments must have your name, course name, section number and instructor's name on the first page.

When using sources in a paper, you will be expected to follow MLA, CMS, or APA standards for documentation (as detailed in Messenger et al. Chapter 37).

Submitting Assignments

Assignments are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Late papers will be penalized at 2.5% 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 the section 'Medical Accommodation Policy' below). Our online class 'week' runs from Monday to Friday, so assignments for a particular week are due by Friday (mid)night, Eastern Standard Time **unless otherwise stated**.

Important: you are responsible for keeping an electronic copy of all assignments you submit.

Procedure for Assignment Submission:

Under policies adopted by Writing Studies, final drafts of all assignments in first-year and 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 of Assignments 1 to 3. 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 Sakai.

****Note: Pdf or other 'read only' formats, and compressed/ziped 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)

We do not meet formally as a 'class' in a Distance Studies 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 Sakai 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.**

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 that 'attendance' as defined in this section is **mandatory** in this course. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements in **any week where there is Discussion will result in your final grade in this course being reduced by 2.5%**.

***Note** further that Assignment #3 (formal report) in this course includes an initial (very brief!!) 'Proposal' stage – details will be available in the Assignment 3 prompt on the 'Assignment Instructions' page. Failure to submit a proposal as instructed there and/or to participate in the required Discussion associated with it during Week 11 *will* result in your earned grade on Assignment 3 being reduced by 10%.

Medical Accommodation Policy

Western has a comprehensive policy covering requests for accommodation by students who are not registered with Student Accessibility Services. All students should review this policy here, under the heading 'Accommodation for Illness – Undergraduate Students', noting the procedures, restrictions, and notice requirements:

http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12

In Writing courses, students covered by this policy who are seeking academic consideration must proceed as follows.

Writing Studies' Basic Policy: students seeking academic consideration **on medical or any other grounds** for any missed tests/exams, class attendance/participation components, or late or missed assignments must either initiate a Self-Reported Absence (**for a grade component worth up to 30% of their final grade, but excluding final exams scheduled during the exam period**) or apply in person to the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate office of their home Faculty and provide a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) or other supporting documentation as required in accordance with official Western policy (linked above).

Students seeking academic consideration **must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by either:

- i. A Self-Reported Absence, or

- ii. Academic consideration supported by the Academic Counselling Office.

Exception: in Writing Studies courses, a student seeking academic accommodation **on non-medical grounds** for any missed in-class tests/exams, class attendance/participation components, or late or missed assignments **worth less than 10% of a final grade** *may* first consult directly with her or his instructor, who will – in his or her discretion – elect either to make a decision on the request directly or instruct the student to follow the procedures set out in **Writing Studies’ Basic Policy**.

Please note that individual instructors will **not under any circumstances** accept or read medical documentation directly offered by a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds or for related reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an ‘Attendance’ policy in the course). **All medical documentation must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate office of a student’s home Faculty.

Students who are or who feel they should be covered under Student Accessibility Services should review Western policy here:

http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryId=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_10

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, Aegrotat Standing

Please refer to the “Information for All Students in a Writing Course” for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that I do not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean’s office of your home faculty.

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, at the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.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 (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above). Plagiarized work will receive an ‘F’ (ranging from 0 to 49) and may result in failure in the course as a whole.

“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 between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

Prerequisites

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:
“Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

Schedule

Remember: A ‘Week’ in Distance Studies courses begins on Monday and ends on Friday.

Unit/Week 1 (Jan. 6 – 10)

- *Introduction to the course: Writing and rhetoric in professional contexts*

In general, the aim of this Unit is to provide you with an overview of the course, to elucidate some of the assumptions on which the course is predicated, and to introduce you to an historical context within which you can think about the processes and products of rhetoric (persuasive communication) and ‘writing.’

Read: MacRae ‘Introduction to Business and Professional Writing’

This Week’s 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 2 (Jan. 13 – 17)

- *Rhetoric: Audience, purpose*
- *Grammar basics: Word classes, clause patterns*

Objectives:

- To understand the importance of ‘audience’ as a primary *rhetorical consideration in professional writing*;
- To learn how analyze potential audiences for a message;
- To understand the concept of ‘multiple audiences’ (primary and secondary)
- To understand how that analysis can help us *shape, structure, and organize* a message in order to maximize its potential effectiveness;
- To define the concept of ‘Goodwill’ (including ‘You-attitude,’ ‘Positive Emphasis,’ bias-free language, and tone) and explore the relationship of these concepts to effective writing
- To understand basic word classes (‘parts of speech’) and clause patterns

Read: MacRae ‘Introduction’; Chapters 1 and 2; Chapter 3, p. 61-73

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 3e-g, 6 (all), 7a, 8a-d, 10-13 (all)

Read: the ‘Globe’ case (see ‘Assignment Instructions’ page)

This Week’s Discussion Topic: *Are there qualities in Lyn Smith’s letter that might (wrongly) tempt you to be dismissive and/or condescending in your reply? What other qualities or features might you notice that would help you avoid falling into that trap?*

Begin Work on Diagnostic Paper (see ‘Assignment Instructions’ page)

Unit/Week 3 (Jan. 20 – 24)

- *Introduction to the Grammar and Conventions of ‘Standard Written English’*
- *Writing Clearly and Paragraphing: Basic Principles*
- *Copy-editing*

Objectives:

- To encourage you to develop a critical self-awareness of your writing practice
- To understand the distinction between grammatical ‘conventions’ and ‘rules’
- To understand the notion of ‘Standard Written English’
- To articulate some basic revision principles answering the question “How can I ensure that my document as a whole will clearly communicate my intended message?”

Read: MacRae Chapters 2, 4

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 1a-g, 2

No Discussion Required this week: Complete Online Quiz #1 and submit Diagnostic Paper

Diagnostic Paper due Friday by 11:55 p.m. (ungraded)

Write Online Quiz 1 (5%)

Unit/Week 4 (Jan. 27 – 31)

- *Rhetoric: Writing Informative, Positive, and Negative Messages*
- *Writing: Verbs (voice), Commas*

Objectives:

Through the discussions and readings for Units 4 and 5 you should be familiar with the following topics:

- The basic rhetorical principles underlying the drafting of informative, positive, and negative messages
- The formatting of letter, memorandum, and email messages
- The basic principles applicable to trying to take an essentially ‘negative’ message and give it a ‘positive’ spin
- An analysis of a case: ‘Statstar’
- The concept of ‘voice’
- Uses of the comma
- Use of the colon and semicolon and other punctuation marks

Read: MacRae Chapters 7, 8; Chapter 3, p. 81 – 84

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 8, 15

Read: ‘Statstar’ case (on ‘Lecture Notes’ page)

This Week’s Discussion Topic: apply the principles articulated in the Week/Unit 3 Lecture notes to the following example. Post a revised version and explain why you made the changes you did.

“In spite of the fact that the educational environment is a very significant facet to each and every one of our children, some groups do not support reasonable and fair tax assessments that are required for providing an educational experience at a high level of quality.”

Begin Work on Assignment 1 (see ‘Assignment Instructions’ page)

Unit/Week 5 (Feb. 3 – 7)

- *Rhetoric: Writing Informative, Positive, and Negative Messages (continued)*
- *Writing: Colons and Semicolons; Other punctuation*

Objectives:

As for Unit 4

Read: MacRae Chapters 7, 8 and 9; Chapter 3, p. 84-90

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 16-25, 32m-n

Read: ‘Statstar’ case (on ‘Lecture Notes’ page)

This Week’s Discussion Topic: *As discussed in the Unit 4 lecture, assume that in the ‘Globe’ scenario you are instructed to write a purely ‘negative’ message to Lyn Smith, turning down all her requests. What kind of intangible but positive ‘alternative’ (‘reader benefit’), that might override her obvious anticipated negative response to the main message, can you come up with? Your answer will be contingent in large part on your analysis of her as your ‘primary’ audience.*

Work on Assignment 1

Unit/Week 6 (Feb. 10 – 14)

- *Rhetoric: Visual rhetoric – The Importance of Design*
- *Writing: Sentence boundary errors – fragments and run-ons*

Objectives:

Through this Unit’s readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:

- The importance of ‘design’
- The concept of ‘white space’
- Robin Williams’ ‘four basic principles of design’
- The concept of ‘quadrant design’
- The ways in which ‘visuals’ can be used to good rhetorical effect
- When and why to use ‘visuals’
- Some criteria for effective visuals
- Some criteria for effective website design
- The concept of ‘sentence boundary error’: sentence fragments and run-on sentences

Read: MacRae Chapters 5, 6 and 14

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 5a-c

No Discussion Required this week: Assignment 1 Due

Assignment 1 due Friday by 5 p.m. (10%)

Begin Thinking About Assignment 2 (see ‘Assignment Instructions’ page)

(Reading Week Break: February 15 – 23)

Unit/Week 7 (February 24 – 28)

- *Rhetoric: Writing Persuasive Messages (Part 1)*
- *Writing: effective sentences – the concept of agreement*

Objectives:

Through this Unit’s readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:

- The primary and secondary purposes of persuasive messages
- Choosing a persuasive strategy: direct or indirect?
- Analyzing another persuasive rhetorical situation: ‘TeknoSport’
- Sentence Grammar: the concept of agreement

Read: MacRae Chapter 9

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 7c, 9

Read: ‘TeknoSport’ case (on ‘Lecture Notes’ page)

No Discussion Required this week: do Online Quiz 2

Write Online Quiz 2 (5%)

Begin Work on Assignment 2

Unit/Week 8 (March 2 – 6)

- *Rhetoric: Writing Persuasive Messages (Part 2)*
- *Writing: effective sentences – modifiers and mixed constructions*

Objectives:

Through this Unit’s discussion and readings you should be familiar with the following topics:

- What we mean by ‘rhetorical argument’
- The classical model of rhetorical argument
- Problems with the classical model

- The Toulmin model of rhetorical argument
- The distinction between the formal validity of an argument and its persuasiveness in a more general sense
- The importance of assumptions shared by the sender and receiver of a (persuasive) message
- Sentence grammar: modifiers (placement; errors) and mixed constructions

Read: MacRae Chapter 9

Read: Messenger et al. Chapter 5d-f

Read: ‘TeknoSport’ case (on ‘Lecture Notes’ page)

This Week’s Discussion Topic: *Your aim in TeknoSport would be to construct an argument (a case) in which you use reasons and data to support a Claim. Your Claim is that the STP should be retained, in at least more or less its present form. Your Warrant for this Claim will involve some assumptions (‘common ground’) that you need to define, and that you can reasonably expect Karvinen to share with you. What might these Warrants look like?*

Work on Assignment 2

Begin thinking about Assignment 3 Proposal and report – see Assignment 3 prompt on ‘Assignment Instructions’ page

Unit/Week 9 (March 9 – 13)

- *Rhetoric: Overview of Issues arising from Cross-Cultural Communication*
- *Rhetoric: Writing Proposals and Reports – introduction to Assignment 4 (see ‘Assignment Instructions’ page)*
- *Writing: effective sentences – the concepts of variety and emphasis (including parallelism); diction*

Objectives:

Through this Unit’s readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:

- The concept of ‘cultural difference’ and its significance for communication
- The importance of recognizing cultural variations
- Cultural context as part of the rhetorical context of any message
- Mapping ‘difference’ in cultural context: six key categories
- Defining ‘cultures’ as high- or low-context
- The importance of a clear sense of ‘purpose’ in Assignment #4

- The roles of variety, emphasis, parallelism and diction in writing effective sentences

Read: MacRae Chapters 17, 18, 20

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 4, 5h, 14

No Discussion Required this week: do Online Quiz 3, submit Assignment 2, and ensure you are ready to submit (email) your Assignment 3 Proposal by 11:55 p.m. on Friday Week 10

Write Online Quiz 3 (5%)

Assignment 2 due Friday by 11:55 p.m. (25%)

Unit/Week 10 (March 16 – 20)

- *Rhetoric: Writing Proposals and Reports*
- *Writing: evaluating and incorporating sources; documentation*

Objectives:

Through this Unit's discussion and readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:

- General rhetorical considerations for writing formal reports
- The difference between causation and correlation
- Patterns of organization common in formal reports
- Stylistic expectations in formal reports
- The individual components of a formal report
- The evaluation and use of sources

Read: MacRae Chapters 17, 18, 20

Read: Messenger et al. Chapters 33 – 37 (review all; consult as required)

No Discussion required this week. Submit (email) your 'Proposal' for Assignment 3 by 11:55 p.m. on Friday.

Submit Assignment 3 'Proposal' (email) by 11:55 p.m. on Friday

Begin Work on Assignment 3

Unit/Week 11 (March 23 – 27)

- *Rhetoric: Writing Proposals and Reports – some notes on writing executive summaries*

➤ *Rhetoric: an overview of the basic principles of individual and group oral presentations*

Objectives:

Through this Unit's readings, you should be familiar with the following topics:

- Executive summaries: the main principles and problems
- The basic principles underlying successful and persuasive individual oral presentations

Read: MacRae pages 321 – 322 and chapters 15 and 16

Work on Assignment 3

Unit/Week 12 (March 30 – April 3)

Final Comments and Exam Review

Assignment 3 is due Friday April 3rd (last day of classes) by 11:55 p.m. (30%). This is a deadline.

Exam (2 hours) during Exam Period; date/time t.b.a.