

# ENG 430 Writing in the Professions

Spring 2008; Credit 3; CID 1804

Location: EV 360  
Time: T/Th 11:00-12:20  
Instructor: Dr. Carroll Ferguson Nardone  
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Hours: T/Th 12:30-2:00; MWF by appointment

## Course Description

This course, according to the catalog description, offers additional training in technical writing, including instruction in the preparation and editing of specialized documents in various subject areas, such as Computer Science, Conservation, Marketing, etc. Prerequisite: ENG 330. As much as possible, assignments will be geared to individual student interests and majors; however, time will be spent discussing professional writing and writers, in general and working in more general situations.

Drawing on rhetorical theory as its foundation, this course helps students understand the unique features of writing in professional settings and teaches them to analyze situations in order to create effective communication. Students will be expected to work on individual and team projects in class and through Blackboard, and are encouraged to design writing projects reflective of their own disciplines' practices or their own professional goals. A large component of this course is teamwork, although most grades are individually earned.

## Course Objectives

- Analyze rhetorical components of writing situations.
- Demonstrate fluency in adapting formal, informal, and electronic formats to communicate effectively to a range of different audiences.
- Research and create informal and formal documents suitable for the workplace.
- Create and/or use visuals to convey information effectively.
- Balance visual and verbal elements of communication in documents.
- Edit documents for accuracy and precision.

## Required Textbooks and Technology

- *Writing a Professional Life: Stories of Technical Communicators On and Off the Job.* by Gerald Savage and Dale Sullivan. Allyn and Bacon. ISBN#0-205-32106-2
- *Handbook of Technical Writing, 8<sup>th</sup> ed.* Gerald Alred, Charles Brusaw, and Walter Oliu. Bedford/St. Martin's. ISBN# 0-312-4613-0
- Flash drive (labeled with your name, course, & contact information) to transport and backup course assignments.
- **Internet service and access to Blackboard.** You will access some course materials, additional readings, and post assignments and discussions through **Blackboard**, so you will need *readily available* internet access, preferably high-speed access.

## Class Policies

### *Attendance*

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. If you miss class for whatever reason, you do not get the benefit of the day's discussion and activities. If you arrive after attendance has been taken, it is your responsibility to tell the instructor after class is over so that you can be counted tardy rather than absent (3 tardies equal 1 absence). The instructor will keep the official record of attendance and students are responsible for making sure their attendance is properly recorded.

Attendance in the classroom assumes students will be prepared and will actively participate in the day's activities. Ten points of your final grade comes from your attendance. Earning attendance points is vital to your final grade in this class, so make sure that you attend class regularly. Many research studies have shown a direct link between class attendance and higher grades. Attendance points will be earned according to the following list:

0-1 absences =	10 points	5 absences =	7 points
2-3 absences =	9 points	6 absences =	6 points
4 absences =	8points	7 or more =	0 points

Note that you can miss up to 3 classes and still earn the equivalent of an "A" in attendance; however, if you miss more than 3 weeks equivalence of classes, you will earn no attendance points.

**Attendance is mandatory for successful completion of this course.** Even a moderate number of absences may seriously jeopardize your ability to learn the material and pass the course. Since much of our work will build on material previously completed and will include team and group interaction, you should make every effort to attend class and be on time. If you are absent during a scheduled team project, you forfeit the right

to work as part of the team and you will receive a “0” for that particular assignment. Students must be in the classroom for the entire time in order to receive full credit for attendance.

Please do not schedule doctor or dental appointments, meetings with other instructors, advisers, etc. during class time. I will have the same respect for your time and will make sure that I am in class as scheduled, barring any unforeseen emergencies. As it is we only have a few hours each week together and every class session will be important to your development as a professional writer.

If you are unable to attend a class, you must make sure you are prepared for the session when you return. Much of what you need to know to be prepared will be on the calendar, but unanticipated events can occur during classes that may change the calendar. Contact a classmate to see what unanticipated assignments, discussions, etc., you might have missed; this will help ensure that you are not surprised when the class is doing something for which you aren’t prepared.

#### *Individual and group responsibility*

During the semester you will be working in teams whose responsibility will be to read and provide constructive criticism on each member’s written work and at times create a document as a team. Because your input is essential to the success of the entire team, your attendance is essential. Failure to work as part of the collaborative team will mean you do not have the proper background to do the assignment and no grade will be recorded.

If you are to bring a draft of an assignment, make sure you are clear about its purpose and have that draft with you. Do not come to class without the needed materials, including your book, your drafts, and supplementary materials you might be using for your project. We will workshop assignments in class and you must have the proper materials in order to be able to participate and get the full benefit of the class interaction.

#### *Assignments*

Because writing is a process and involves various stages, students are expected to work through projects in a step-by-step fashion and **turn in all of these steps** when the assignments are due. If any step in the process of a particular assignment is missing or completed unsatisfactorily, the final paper will not be accepted.

Plagiarism in any of its forms will not be tolerated and will result in **automatic failure of the course** and university disciplinary action. You should be especially careful when using the Web for your research. Technology allows for easy “borrowing” of ideas and information. However, all intellectual property must be respected. You will be expected to follow proper citation format. We will discuss proper citation format in

class and discuss alternate ways (based on disciplines) of citing material. Feel free to ask questions so that we can discuss this fully and so that you will have no doubt about expectations. We will use Turnitin.com in this class and students will be expected to upload their assignments and furnish the instructor with a proper receipt.

### *Cell phones and MP3 players*

These wonderful advances in technology have also helped advance bad manners. Please turn off any of these devices when you arrive in class and put them away. If a student uses a cell phone during class, even to text a message, he/she will be **asked to leave the classroom** for the day.

### *Computer Use*

Using the computer during class for other than class assignments will not be tolerated. If you access Facebook, My Space, or any other site not affiliated with our coursework during class, you will be **asked to leave the classroom**, since it will be obvious that you do not care to attend to the class activities.

DO NOT check e-mail, surf, or engage in any activity with the computers while the instructor is lecturing or while you are working on an assignment. DO NOT use the computer for any activity other than that assigned while students are working independently. If you need to access the Internet or your email for the assignment, be sure you receive permission before accessing the sites.

The penalties for using the computer for other than course work during class are:

- ✦ an absence being registered for that day
- ✦ a zero being entered for the current assignment

DO NOT send items to the printer while the instructor is talking or once class has begun. All work must be printed before class begins.

### *Late work*

No late work will be accepted for any reason. If you are absent, it is still your responsibility to turn in assignments and be prepared for the next class session. If you are going to miss class you must still turn in your assignment on time. Being absent or late does not change the due date/time for any assignment. Failure to follow this standard policy will result in a zero for that assignment.

### *Exams*

We do not have traditional exams in this class. Your final deliverable serves as the equivalent of an exam.

## Grades

Your final grade will be earned according to the following table:

<b><u>Assignment</u></b>	<b><u>Deliverable</u></b>	<b><u>Points</u></b>
<b>Defining the field</b>	Writer's analysis and presentation	10
<b>Understanding Audience</b>	Team case studies	15
<b>Project</b>	Client Project	45
	Proposal	10
	Progress report and draft	15
	Final deliverable	20
<b>Reading and discussions</b>	Blogs	20
<b>Participation</b>	Attendance and activity	10
		<hr/>
	<i>Total Points for the Semester</i>	<b>100</b>

The grading scale is based on a ten-point system:

A=90-100;

B=80-89;

C=70-79;

D=60-69;

F=59 or below.

### Overview of course tasks

For each deliverable you will be required to complete several tasks. Each assignment, and grading criteria for each assignment, is fully explained in the assignments section of Blackboard. A full project description, specifications, and grading criteria are included with each major assignment. Assignment sheets for blogging, conducting peer reviews, and other supportive resource sheets also reside on Blackboard. In order for you to receive full credit for the assignments, you must complete all preparatory work. A successful student will:

- **Read**
  - Reading assignments are not optional. You will be expected to keep up with the reading and to use the information to work through the course.
  - Take full advantage of the resources available online.

- **Blog** as directed by the guidelines and according to the class calendar. Blogs serve an instructive purpose and show that you are engaging with the course material. Actively participating in the blogging activity is your opportunity for expanding class discussion and getting assistance with ideas that need more clarification. Your blog posts, along with those of your classmates and instructor, will form a large part of your learning and are not considered an optional component of the course.
- **Draft assignments** as directed. Drafting is an important component of working through written coursework. Writing is a process. Students who actively use the process are more successful than those who skip this step or haphazardly use the process.
- **Workshop drafts** with others in the class. Students are all responsible for bringing drafts and responding to drafts of other students. When you respond to the draft of other students, remember to give constructive feedback and to be the kind of reviewer you'd like to have for your own writing. You will have explicit instructions on how to workshop each others' drafts.
- **Revise final documents** after you receive peer feedback. The document you turn in for evaluation to your instructor should reflect a revision of your original draft, not just a fix of the copyediting issues. Thoughtful consideration of peer feedback is expected.
- **Write a completion report** for each assignment. These reports will allow you to give important feedback to your instructor before your document is graded. Your instructor will use this feedback to determine how well you understood course material and how she can assist you in further developing your skills as a writer. Use this component of the course to reflect upon your own learning and to assess your own skills and areas for improvement.
- **Upload your final documents** by the appropriate deadline. The Blackboard system will only accept documents up until the assigned time. No late work will be accepted, no matter the reason. Documents can always be submitted early, if the need arises.

### **Academic Honesty**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a

student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

### **American with Disabilities Act**

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

### **Religious Holidays**

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

## Course Calendar

### Tentative Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Notes:

1. The following schedule may be revised or replaced as the semester progresses. Watch Blackboard for updates.
2. You are responsible for completing and submitting assignments on time. By necessity some assignments are made in class based on student activities.

Note: **WPL** stands for *Writing a Professional Life*; **HTW** stands for *Handbook of Technical Writing*

Week #	Dates	Class Preparation Completed <i>before class</i>	In-class Activities*
1	Jan 17		Course Overview and Guidelines  <b>Post</b> Professional Intro in Discussion Thread
2	Jan 22-24	<b>Read</b> WPL: Preface and Part I, pp. xxv-59.  <b>Post</b> Blog 1 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  Diagnostic writing and test  Defining the field and prepping assignment #1; bring idea for observation site on Thursday
3	Jan 29-31	<b>Post</b> Blog 2 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.  <b>Read</b> WPL, Part II, pp. 61-130  <b>Read</b> HTW, "Five Steps..." p. xv-xxii.  HTW p. 273-274, "Interviewing for Information."	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  Interviewing Techniques  Conduct interview and observation between 1/29 and 2/4.
4	Feb 5-7	<b>Post</b> Blog 3 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.  <b>Read</b> WPL, Part III, pp. 133-178.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m. Bring draft of observation and interview to class on 2/5



			<b>Assignment #1-due 2/7;</b> in-class presentations and written paper
5	Feb 12-14	<b>Post</b> Blog 4 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m. (blogs should be reflective of the last assignment and any new ideas or questions that have come up in class)  <b>Read</b> Handout on teams	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  Effective Teaming  The Case of the Black Floor
6	Feb 18-19	<b>Post</b> Blog 5 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  The Case of the Black Floor
7	Feb 26-28	<b>Post</b> Blog 6 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  The Case of the Black Floor finale
8	Mar 4-6	<b>Post</b> Blog 7 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  Discuss client projects  Gantt Chart (project management)
9	Mar 18-20	<b>Post</b> Blog 8 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  <b>Proposal draft due 3/18; peer review</b> <b>Final copy due 3/20</b>
10	Mar 25-27	<b>Post</b> Blog 9 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  Proposal returned, client projects finalized

11	Apr 1-3	<b>Post</b> Blog 10 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  Client projects
12	Apr 8-10	<b>Post</b> Blog 11 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  Client projects
13	Apr 15-18	<b>Post</b> Blog 12 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  <b>Progress report and draft of final project due 4/18</b>
14	Apr 22-24	<b>Post</b> Blog 13 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  Revise project
15	Apr 29-May 1	<b>Post</b> Blog 14 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  Revise project
16	May 6-8	<b>Post</b> Blog 15 by Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.	<b>Read &amp; Respond to Blogs</b> by Thursday, 9:00 a.m.  <b>Final project due 5/8</b>
Final	May 15	11:00-1:00	Projects returned. Class completion.

\*Some activities will be carried over for out of class completion.