ENGLISH 394: BUSINESS WRITING
SPRING 2016

Section 1502: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30–4:45 p.m., 0221 Tawes Hall
Section 1506: Tuesday and Thursday, 5:00-6:15 p.m., 0234 Tawes Hall

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    Tips for effective email use:
    (1) Begin the subject line with ENGL 394/Section number.
    (2) Complete the subject line with a concise phrase describing your question or concern.
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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00–3:00 p.m.; Friday, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Course Description

"Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style."
                                          --Matthew Arnold

English 394, Business Writing, satisfies the Fundamental Studies professional writing requirement for undergraduates. The goal of this requirement is to strengthen writing skills and prepare students for the range of writing expected of them after graduation. In particular, English 394 is designed to help students master the skills of workplace writing, the kind of writing that gets students a job interview, leads to a change in program or policy, or secures funding for a project. Students must have completed English 101 (or equivalent) and earned a minimum of sixty credit hours before they may register for this course.

Business Writing will give you both a theoretical background in rhetoric and a practical understanding of the common genres that you will employ in professional settings. This course focuses on advanced composition—learning how to present specialized information in an accessible way to a variety of different audiences, but audiences who, no doubt, will expect clarity, accuracy, and professionalism from you. This course stresses the key skills that highlight a successful professional communicator. Specifically, we focus on the process of writing (including the planning, drafting, and revising stages) and look carefully at the work that goes into the final polished product. As collaboration is often a key part of the professional realm, you'll spend time this semester working with your classmates, which will include participating in brainstorming sessions, providing constructive criticism, and preparing for your final projects.

Assignments parallel the writing demands that you may face in a business environment where employees produce texts both individually and collaboratively, and where they must make the technologies they work with understandable to many types of readers. Our course work models itself on the ways that professionals draft, revise, rewrite, polish, and publish work. Core assignments include cover letters and resumes, business correspondence (emails, letters, and memoranda), a major course research project (for example, a promotional package, proposal, business plan, publicity campaign), collaborative projects (for example, a research report,

evaluative report, or policy analysis), and an oral presentation. Other assignments may include writing recommendation and feasibility reports, press releases, and brochures. In addition, you will complete three brief reflective essays. There is no final exam.

The instructor's role in the course is to function both as supervisor and instructor, giving assignments, evaluating papers, and guiding students to meet the assignments' goals.

The students' role is to function much like professional staff by responding to a supervisor's assignments. Participating in class work is much like participating in the work of an office. And such participation presumes that:

1. Students attend all class sessions (see attendance policy below), arriving on time.
2. Students arrive in class with the day's assignment, ready to work.

By the end of the course, you will be able to do the following:

- Analyze a variety of professional rhetorical situations and produce appropriate texts in response.
- Understand the stages required to produce competent, professional writing through planning, drafting, revising, and editing.
- Identify and implement the appropriate research methods for each writing task.
- Practice the ethical use of sources and the conventions of citation appropriate to each genre.
- Write for the intended readers of a text, and design or adapt texts to audiences who may differ in their familiarity with the subject matter.
- Demonstrate competence in Standard Written English, including grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, coherence, and document design (including the use of the visual) and be able to use this knowledge to revise texts.
- Produce cogent arguments that identify arguable issues, reflect the degree of available evidence, and take account of counter arguments.

Required Textbook *(Please bring to each class meeting, unless otherwise instructed.)*

Bovée, Courtland L., and John V. Thill. *Business Communication Essentials: A Skills-Based Approach*. 7th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2016. ISBN: 9780133896787.

Recommended Textbook

Williams, Joseph M., and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 12th ed. Boston: Pearson Longman, 2016. ISBN: 9780134080413.

Additional Course Materials

1) Sturdy pocket folder you don't mind giving up, thick enough to securely hold several papers. You'll give me this folder at the course's end, with all pre-writing assignments, outlines, drafts, and graded papers inside. If you wish, you may retrieve your folder from me after a full semester has lapsed.

2) Notebook paper for in-class writing assignments, which I may collect from time to time.

3) A stapler.

Helpful Websites

UMD resources:
• University libraries: http://www.lib.umd.edu/
• Writing Center: http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter
• Learning Assistance Services: http://www.counseling.umd.edu/LAS/

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/

Merriam-Webster online dictionary: http://www.merriam-webster.com/

Social Justice Statement
The University of Maryland is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our university does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Accessibility Statement
The University of Maryland is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the university's programs or services, contact the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) as soon as possible. To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with DSS. The DSS works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission. For further information about services for students with disabilities, please contact the DSS:

> Office of Disability Support Services
> 0106 Shoemaker Building
> 301-314-7682
> dissup@umd.edu
> http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/

I assume that all of us learn in different ways, and that the organization of any course will accommodate each student differently. For example, you may prefer to process information by speaking and listening, so that some of the written handouts I provide may be difficult to absorb. Please talk to me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them. If you do not have a documented disability, remember that other support services, including the Writing Center and Learning Assistance Services, are available to all students.

Class Practices and Expectations

Attendance and Lateness: To succeed in this course requires regular punctual attendance. Classroom discussions and in-class work account for a significant part of your grade, and class participation, once missed, cannot be restored.

Below are the policies on unexcused absences and excused absences as well as on tardiness. Please note that *missing more than four class sessions for any reason* may result in a zero for the professionalism/participation portion of your grade and may jeopardize your overall course grade. *If you are absent, you are responsible for contacting a classmate (not me) to find out what you missed.* Missing more than one week of classes will make catching up difficult, probably impossible.

Unexcused Absences. You may take up to two class sessions' worth of no-questions-asked absences for both the expected reasons (e.g., being the best man in your brother's wedding) and the unexpected (e.g., replacing a flat tire).

If you take a no-questions-asked absence, however, you are still responsible for whatever material was covered in class. If a major scheduled grading event (assignment due, in-class workshop/peer editing, presentation) is scheduled for that class period and you don't show up and don't have a university-sanctioned excuse (see below), then you will lose all the points for that exercise.

Excused Absences. The university excuses absences for your own illness or the illness of an immediate family member, for your participation in university activities at the request of university authorities, for religious observances, and for compelling circumstances beyond your control. Documentation is required for all excused absences. If you have an anticipated excused absence, you must let me know *in writing* as soon as possible, preferably one week in advance.

Students are expected to inform the instructor in advance of medically necessary absences, and present a self-signed note documenting the date of the missed class(es) and testifying to the need for the absence. This note must include an acknowledgment that (a) the information provided is true and correct, and (b) that the student understands that providing false information to university officials is a violation of Part 9(h) of the Code of Student Conduct. The university's policies on medical and other absences can be found at: http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540.

Prolonged absence or illness preventing attendance from class requires written documentation from the Health Center and/or health care provider verifying dates of treatment when student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Absence due to religious observance will not be penalized; however, it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor within the first three weeks of class regarding any religious observance absence(s) for the entire semester. The calendar of religious holidays can be found at: http://faculty.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html#religious.

Tardiness. In the professional world tardiness is not tolerated. However, since this campus is large, and another instructor may keep you late, if you do arrive late on occasion, do not disrupt the class, and let me know by the end of the schedule adjustment period if you anticipate ongoing conflicts. Remember that you are responsible to catch up on your own time, not the class's. Thus, *two late arrivals* (or unexplained early departures) will convert to one unexcused absence.

Class runs for the full seventy-five minutes each day. Please do not schedule other events for class time—for example, study groups, mock interviews, organization meetings, interviews with experts needed for the term project. Such activities fail to provide excused absences from class.

Professionalism: When evaluating your professionalism grade, I take into account the following questions:

- Did you actively engage in small-group discussion, or did you sit passively and let other group members do the work?
- Did you treat your classmates, guest instructors, office administrators, interview subjects, and me with respect, courtesy, and kindness as befitting professional colleagues?
- Did you come to class prepared to engage in meaningful discussion, with completed graded and non-graded assignments, including assigned readings?
- Were you often distracted by mobile devices, i.e., your phone or tablet? *Except during specific activities, I do not allow laptops in the classroom.*
- Did you consistently volunteer during large-group discussions?
- Were your comments relevant and insightful, or were they clear ploys to ensure participation points?
- Did you approach peer critiques with a genuine desire to assist, or did you rush through them and give minimal feedback?
- Were you punctual?

Late Paper Policy: Papers are to be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Assignments handed in after that time will be accepted, but the grade will be reduced by ten per cent for each day the assignment is late. Sometimes, for reasons out of our control (e.g., death in the family or serious illness), we simply cannot meet a deadline. Should such an unfortunate event occur, I will of course accept a late assignment without penalty. However, I do require a formal, written request for an assignment extension. Keep in mind, the formal request, should you need to write it, is part of the overall grade for the assignment. Therefore, if the written request is less professional than the actual assignment, your grade will be lowered.

I only accept hard copy. Please do not email me papers unless I specifically request you to. Because I evaluate both content and format, I want to ensure that the document you give me looks like the document you wanted to turn in. Sometimes software and hardware are incompatible, and what I download on my computer is not what you wanted me to see.

Unless otherwise noted, peer edits and rough drafts should accompany all papers. Please staple your papers before submitting them to me.

Conferences: Although I invite students to discuss their work with me outside class, I require

attendance at conferences that we schedule during or outside class time. Each student should expect to confer with me *at least twice* during this course. (Note: Failing to keep an appointment with me counts heavily against your professionalism when I tally the final course grade.)

***Emergency Protocol/Snow and Inclement Weather Policy*:** Should a class be canceled on the day an assignment is due, the assignment's due date will be shifted to the next time we meet. I'll make every effort to stay on schedule, and we will continue to interact with each other via email.

Academic Integrity: The student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge prohibit students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures.

Of course, borrowing information from published sources is appropriate, but you must identify all sources and document them sufficiently and appropriately for the field in which you are working. Cutting and pasting from sources without appropriate citation or attribution constitutes plagiarism.

Allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Student Honor Council: http://www.shc.umd.edu.

***Technology in the Classroom*:** Unless I specify otherwise, no laptops are allowed. All cell phones should be turned off during class. Any texting or Internet usage during class will negatively affect your participation grade. I give specific directions for assignments in class, so if you're busy interacting on social media, you will likely miss out on key instructions.

Course Evaluation: Toward the end of the semester, you will be asked to complete CourseEvalUM. Please take time to fill it out. In addition, PWP has its own paper evaluation, which will be administered during one of the final weeks of the semester.

Assignments and Course Requirements

All PWP classes require that students complete a minimum of six graded assignments comprising 25 pages of original writing. This amounts roughly to 6,250 words. Original writing refers to polished final drafts; they cannot be recycled from another class. Rewriting is frequently required; rough drafts, however, do not count as part of the 25 pages.

Following is the breakdown of assignments and their assigned point value. I will distribute assignment sheets during the semester that explain each project in detail.

Resume and Cover Letter	50 pts
Email Packet	100 pts
Topic Prospectus	50 pts
Recommendation Report	150 pts
Feasibility Report	150 pts
Proposal: Written and Oral	400 pts
Reflective Essays	45 pts
Professionalism	55 pts
(includes attendance, participation, in-class activities and writing)	
TOTAL	**1000 pts**

Basic explanations of the six major assignments:

1) *Referral email/cover letter/resume:* prepare documents for an actual job listing.
2) *Email packet:* respond to six prompts, changing the tone of your message accordingly.
3) *Topic prospectus:* 1-page report; work plan discussing problem, purpose, research, and timeline.
4) *Recommendation report:* 2-3 page report offering three recommendations to an organizational problem.
5) *Feasibility report:* 3-4 page report analyzing feasibility of recommendations.
6) *Proposal:* 14-20 page report detailing organizational problem, recommendations, and feasibility. Ancillary pages, primary research, and illustrations are included.

**The topic prospectus, recommendation report, feasibility report, and proposal are all written on one topic.

**For any assignment critiqued in class (email packet, recommendation report, feasibility report), the critique sheet will account for 10% of the total points earned.

**Final projects may be completed individually or in a group of no more than three people. Group projects will require an additional assignment to be completed by each individual member.

**Typically, I will post all assignment sheets and handouts on ELMS the day they are assigned in class.

Grading Scale
The undergraduate catalogue provides a complete definition of the university's
grading system:
http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1534

- A+, A, A- denotes excellent mastery of the subject and outstanding scholarship. In computations of cumulative or semester averages, a grade of A+ or A will be assigned a value of 4.0 quality points per credit hour. A grade of A- will be assigned 3.7 quality points per credit hour.

- B+, B, B- denotes a good mastery of the subject and good scholarship. A grade of B+ is assigned a value of 3.3 quality points per hour. A grade of B is assigned a value of 3.0 quality points per credit hour. A grade of B- is assigned a value of 2.7 quality points per hour.

- C+ C, C- denotes an acceptable mastery of the subject. A grade of C+ is assigned a value of 2.3 quality points per hour. A grade of C is assigned a value of 2.0 points per credit hour. A grade of C- is assigned a value of 1.7 quality points per credit hour.

- D+, D, D- denotes a borderline understanding of the subject. It denotes a marginal performance, and it does not represent satisfactory progress toward a degree. A grade of D+ is assigned 1.3 points per credit hour. A grade of D is assigned a value of 1.0 quality point per credit hour. A grade of D- is assigned 0.7 quality points per credit.

- F denotes a failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance. A mark of *F* is assigned a value of 0 quality points per credit hour.

- XF denotes failure due to academic dishonesty.

In this course, the grading scale works as follows:

980-1000 points	A+
930-970 points	A
900-920 points	A-
870-890 points	B+
830-860 points	B
800-820 points	B-
770-790 points	C+
730-760 points	C
700-720 points	C-
600-690 points	D
Below 600 points	F

In a business or office context, the grades would translate as follows:

- A = The supervisor congratulates the writer on exceptional work.
- B = The supervisor returns the document with guidance (usually vague and inadequate) on how to improve it: "Nice start. Fix it!"
- C = The supervisor asks another employee to fix the document.
- D = The supervisor calls the Human Resources Office to find out what kind of coaching or training might address the employee's weakness. Or the supervisor might suggest that the employee update his/her resume.
- F = The supervisor calls the Human Resources Office to find out what next steps are possible, including how to fire the employee.

Grading Evaluation
I grade papers based on five criteria:

1) *Assignment Fulfillment:* The paper must fulfill the specific assignment given. For example, if a student writes an informational report instead of an analytical report for Assignment #5, he or she hasn't followed directions and will be marked down accordingly. This is the most basic evaluative standard.

2) *Content:* You must have evidentiary support for each and every claim presented. In order to convince an audience to do or buy or change something, persuasive facts must be presented. Your content must also be relevant, clearly organized, specific, logical, and non-contradictory.

3) *Tone:* In business writing, tone is of utmost importance. Miscommunications involving tone can be drastic and cause substantial losses, both personally and economically. In order to convey the correct tone, *you must consider the audience at all times.*

4) *Language:* Business language is precise and to the point, and good writing, in general, is dynamic and clean. I expect students to transfer the writing techniques we discuss in class to each of their assignments. I do encourage students to visit the Writing Center (1205 Tawes) to seek assistance on clarity and style.

5) *Peer Critique:* Before most major assignments are due, we will conduct an in-class workshop. You will exchange papers and fill out a critique form. On the day the final paper is due, you must add the critique sheet written for you to your own assignment before handing it in. Peer critiques count for 10% of the assignment grade.

A final note: This is a writing intensive studio course, so come prepared to write a lot. The only way to get better at writing is to practice it, so that's what we're going to do: write, rewrite, receive critique, then rewrite again. The reason writing scares many students is because they see it as a black-or-white endeavor: they think they're either good at it or they're not. This thinking is flawed. Writing is a process: everybody with a rudimentary grasp of language can master its technical aspects. Understand that your first draft may be lousy. From there, understand that each successive draft will be better. So the amount of time you spend rewriting is directly proportionate to your overall success as a writer. By the end of the semester, you will hopefully have gained a significant amount of insight into the craft of writing, and will be prepared to confidently go into a job setting with the knowledge of what writing skills are expected of you.