

WRD 202: Business Writing

Spring Quarter 2022

Course Information

Professor: Andrew Roback
Instruction method: Asynchronous
Office hours: [Discord](#), Friday 6:00-8:00pm CST or by appointment, via Google Meet
Email: aroback@depaul.edu (I typically respond within 24 hours)

Welcome

Though many people wring their hands and lament the “decline in writing writing skills” amongst young people, the problem is often simply a mismatch between the types of writing skills that you need to be successful in your job and the types of writing that you have attempted so far in your education and life. This doesn’t mean that you’re a bad writer; it means that you need to become acquainted with the conventions that we associate with writing professionally, as every generation before you has done.

Business writing is not a skill that you are either born with or don’t have; just like all academic disciplines, writing is a skill that you cultivate through reading, discussion, and practice. With that in mind, we’ll be discussing concepts and working on writing projects this quarter that will help you to practice and reflect on writing skills that employers value.

WRD Learning Outcomes for this course

- Design and organize information, evidence, and data according to purpose and audience needs.
- Compose sentence-level styles that adapt to a range of business genres and contexts.
- Construct writing and other materials in a range of professional writing genres and technological environments.
- Produce writing that reflects an inclusive understanding of diverse audiences and ethical professional writing practices.

Required materials and technology

- Required readings:
 - Canavor, N. (2019). *Business Writing Today: A Practical Guide*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
 - All other reading materials provided by instructor on D2L
- Gmail account and access to Google Drive (sign in using your DePaul email/password)
- Speakers or headphones to listen to A/V content
- Ability to record audio (any device with a microphone will work, including your phone, laptop, or tablet)
- Google Chrome or Firefox browser
- Ability to access YouTube (make your own VPN accommodations if necessary)

Notes on participation in course

This is an online course that has weekly requirements. While you should feel free to read ahead or plan for future periods of increased workload in your life, this isn't a self-paced course. As such, we'll review readings and assignments on a weekly basis, and work will be made available to you according to that schedule (see course schedule at the end of this document for more information). This pacing allows for students to meaningfully interact with me and with each other.

The discussion board is where you'll have the most interaction with other students in this term. It's essentially a collaborative activity, since your discussion group members rely on your posts and replies to do their work. Failing to post to the discussion board diminishes everyone's experience in the course, and accumulating too many zeros in this category will significantly drop your final grade in the course.

A note on readings and assignments

This course will make use of real-life examples and scenarios. Some of these examples discuss disturbing content such as accidental injuries and deaths. If you feel that you are unable to engage with this content and complete the course requirements, speak with me at the beginning of the course.

In the event that you need an extension on an assignment

I understand that tragedies and emergencies happen during the course of an academic term, and I will do my best to be flexible should such a situation arise. Please note, however, that I can only provide extended deadlines to students who contact me before the due date of an assignment (if at all possible given the circumstances). In the event that you miss multiple assignments and contact me several days (or weeks) later, I'll allow you to make up one assignment only (and only if I haven't already scored and/or posted solutions/feedback for that assignment).

I have this policy because some assignments involve feedback or solution guides that, when I post them to D2L, would create a situation where students entering a late submission would have already seen information that defeats the purpose of the exercise. Please know that once I post a solution guide or give feedback to students (and you have a zero on the gradebook), you won't be able to submit that work for credit.

For assignments that involve other students' work in the course (the Discussion Board), I won't allow any extensions since your participation is directly tied to the deliverables other students produce; missing those will result in an automatic zero without exception.

Lastly, I trust that as DePaul students, no one would fabricate a tragedy or illness to receive an extension, especially given the fact that I'm relatively flexible when given advanced notice. Therefore, I won't ask you for documentation of any death, illness, or serious emergency in your life. You're all on the honor system.

Assignments and Evaluation

All assignments have an associated day of the week on which they're due (see weekly due date schedule below).

Unless otherwise specified in the instructions, you should submit all files in this course as a PDF through D2L. In the event that I ask you to share a Google Drive file, please make sure your sharing settings allow me to view *and* edit the file.

Practice Exercises and Discussion Board (PE & DB), 20%

*Initial posts (including associated practice exercise) will be due on **Thursdays**. Replies and critiques will be due on **Saturdays**.*

Each week I'll post discussion questions and/or a practice assignment that you will discuss. The goal is to have a structured, productive critique of approaches to professional writing tasks in

advance of your writing project submission for that week. The assignments will be relatively short and should be used as a vehicle for self-reflection and workshopping material relevant to the topic and readings for that week.

I'll evaluate you in this category based on your effort on the assignments and your engagement with your classmates and the course material. Discussions should directly reference pertinent points from the readings for that week. Ideally you'll interact substantially with at least two of your classmates each week.

See the below table for a rubric outlining your grade for each week. *Please note that for every day your initial post/practice exercise is late, I will take one point off your rubric grade.* If you continually post after the deadline, it will significantly harm your grade in this category.

I'll post a recap and supercut of interesting interactions following the close of the discussion board each week. Note: we will not have a discussion board for week five of the course.

Grade	Description
5	Excellent work on practice exercise and response to questions, with explicit ties to readings and other course materials. Completed thoughtful, engaging replies and a robust exchange with peers.
4	Good work on practice exercise and response to questions and some mention of concepts covered in readings. Completed adequate number of replies that referenced specific points from a peer's post/reply.
3	Good attempt at practice exercise and response to questions with passing mention of concepts covered in readings. Completed adequate number of replies, but replies were more superficial ("nice post") than engaging and/or insufficient in quantity.
2	Work on practice exercise is rushed or incomplete. Response to discussion questions does not sufficiently engage with course material. Replies are more superficial ("nice post") than engaging and/or insufficient in quantity. To improve grade, spend more time on practice exercise and make sure to specifically reference

	course readings and engage with pertinent concepts when replying to peers.
1	Work on practice exercise is incomplete or unsatisfactory. Response to questions is vague, with little or no reference made to course material. Insufficient interaction with other students in your discussion group.
0	No attempt at submitting practice exercise or discussion board post for the week.

Writing projects (WP), 75%

*Final drafts of writing projects are due on **Sundays**.*

You'll complete four writing projects in the course that I will evaluate to ensure you have a strong comprehension of business writing practices and techniques. Special emphasis will be placed on information structure, rhetorical appeals, document design, and appropriate style (based on consideration of audience).

WP 1: Instructional memo (15%)

I'll provide content from a contractor access memo that I workshopped with employees of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Cook County. The memo needs stylistic changes related to grammar/syntax as well as better structuring to assist readers in quickly retrieving information relevant to their individual concerns. You'll include a 100 word summary of changes with your submission.

WP 2: Client complaint emails (15%)

I'll present you with emails from clients who have a product complaint. You'll be responsible for writing a reply within the constraints that I set down in the scenario introduction. In addition to the emails, you'll include a 100 word reply to a question that flips the scenarios and asks you to consider how you would prioritize the information in your replies differently. A third email will ask you to write a concise complaint for a product or service you define.

WP 3: Resume and cover letter (15%)

You'll find a posting for a position in the field you wish to work in, either a career position or a summer internship, and write a resume and cover letter to apply for that position.

WP 4: Multimedia writing and packaging information (25%)

You'll write a blog post and write/record a short audio companion piece for a scenario in public policy where you'll need to communicate with both internal employees and public stakeholders. This activity will ask you to apply principles from all the previous course materials and discussions, and serves as a *de facto* final exam.

I'll evaluate your writing project work using the criteria in the below table:

	Undergraduate Handbook Language	Probable Workplace Response to Submitted Work
A	The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course or assignment in an EXCELLENT manner.	Such work could be distributed immediately with no further revision and positive outcomes could be fully expected.
B	The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course or assignment in a VERY GOOD manner.	Your boss would be satisfied with such work, but it would not earn you recognition for precision and accuracy, and you might be asked for minor revisions prior to distribution.
C	The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course or assignment in a SATISFACTORY manner.	Your boss might be dissatisfied with such work and ask you to revise it. This would not bode well for you as an employee.
D	The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a POOR manner. (A grade of D will not fulfill the requirements in a major field of concentration.)	You have submitted a document that may have a redeeming facet or two, but largely does not achieve usability and/or persuasiveness. It may be unclear, difficult to read, filled with unprofessional errors, and/or incomplete; it may disregard guidelines for the assignment or audience. Shows awareness of assignment purpose, but does not achieve it successfully.
F	The instructor judged the student NOT to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course.	You have submitted a document that does not meet and/or identify critical audience, genre, design, or purpose elements.

Quizzes (Q), 5%

*Single attempt, due on **Fridays**.*

I'll give you a series of short-format questions (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, etc.) that will test your comprehension of the readings and other course material each week. Note: we will not have a quiz for week five.

Grading Scale

Percent	Final Grade
100–93	A
92–90	A-
89–87	B+
86–83	B
82–80	B-
79–77	C+
76–73	C
72–70	C-
69–67	D+
66–60	D
<60	F

All grades on assignments are weighted to their corresponding values on the syllabus. To calculate your grade, take the combined percentage grades I give you on an assignment, multiply by the value on the syllabus, and add the resulting figures. That is your final grade in the course.

Course schedule

The weekly schedule for the course is below. Please note that you don't have every category of assignment due every week, so you should refer to the schedule to see what work is due each week. All work is due at 11:59 p.m. on the corresponding day.

Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Material for week posted to D2L by instructor			PE due in submission folder DB Post due	Quizzes due	PE replies and critiques due	WP submission due

Readings and assignment due dates subject to change. Check this document on D2L at the beginning of each week for updates (I'll also notify you via email if there are significant changes).

BWT = *Business Writing Today* (your textbook)

Wk.	Readings and materials	PE & DB	WP / Q
1	BWT ch. 2, 4–5 Style in Business and Technical Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PE 1: Style Practice DB 1: Reading and receiving criticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Q1: Syllabus
2	BWT ch. 6 and 8 Considering your audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PE 2: “How should I send that?” DB 2: Thinking about what your readers want/need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WP 1: Memo rewrite Q2: Audience and formal docs
3	BWT ch. 7 Rhetorical appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DB 3: Analyzing rhetoric in business communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WP 2: Complaints Q3: Rhetoric and writing for a purpose
4	BWT ch. 12 Documents of the job search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PE 3: Analyzing job descriptions DB 4: Matching skills to employer requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WP 3: Resume / Cover letter Q4: Structuring professional information
5 ↓	BWT ch. 10 and 11 Presenting technical content remotely (audio in D2L content)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WP 4: Multimedia / Packaging (due at end of final)

	folder) Remote presentations (.pdf in D2L content folder)		exam period, 6/10)
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Discovering Your Skills

Throughout your time at DePaul, you will have the opportunity to develop many transferable skills—skills that will move with you from school, to the workplace, to those contexts (in-person and online) where you will act as an engaged, informed citizen and ethical consumer. You can expect the skills you acquire in DePaul classes to pay dividends as subsequent classes; further, the skills you learn as a DePaul student are highly valued by employers and will set you apart in a continually changing job market.

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Universal Skills:

As a result of your university experience, you will regularly have the opportunity to develop the following skills regardless of your chosen major:

UNIVERSAL SKILLS	Plan/ organize/ prioritize	Flexibility/ Adaptability	Resourcefulness	Work ethic/ discipline/ motivation	Self-Awareness & Reflection
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Additional Skills:

As a result of taking this course, you will have the opportunity to develop your skills in each of the highlighted areas below:

ANALYTICAL SKILLS	Analytical Thinking/ Quantitative Assessment	Decision-making	Ethical reasoning and judgment	Navigate ambiguity	Problem solving/critical thinking
CREATIVITY & COMMUNICATION SKILLS	Creativity and innovation	Influence/ persuade	Interpersonal skills	Listening skills	
	Multicultural Competence	Professionalism	Verbal Communication	Written Communication	
LEADERSHIP & TEAMWORK SKILLS	Collaboration	Initiative	Leadership	Teamwork	
TECHNICAL & INFORMATION SKILLS	Research	Information Technology Application			

Why are these important?

As you prepare for life after DePaul, employers and graduate programs will be seeking specific skills that set you apart from others. By highlighting the skills above, we hope to enhance your awareness of the transferable skills you're building while pursuing your academic coursework in the Writing, Rhetoric, & Discourse major.