Effective Business Writing

Course
MBA 621
Fall 2016
Constant Hall 1052
Sa 9a-1p
mba621odu.wordpress.com

Instructor
Dr. Daniel P. Richards
Department of English
Batten Arts and Letters 5032
MW 6-7p + F 10-11a (Skype)
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Course Description
Any individual who has spent any amount of time in a business setting knows how important written communication is to the functioning of a successful organization. More the just the oil that keeps the engine running smoothly, effective business writing helps create, maintain, and sustain positive workplace cultures in areas of public relations, interoffice communication, and employee morale—to name just a few. On an individual level, being an effective writer in the workplace allows you to advance in your career in more dynamic and beneficial ways.

The difficult part of this conversation is the fact that many of us have strong feelings of stress, anxiety, and insecurity when it comes to writing. The reasons for these feelings are varied and to put it bluntly unimportant. What is important at this stage in your life and career is that you start taking personal responsibility for your writing by reading, studying, and practicing the art. People are not born good writers; good writers work hard and diligently at their art and treat it like any other. This short class represents a step in that direction.

This course is designed to provide students not only with an understanding of communication, specifically written, in business and management settings but also with an open space to cultivate the finer skills associated with becoming an effective business writer. These objectives will be accomplished through (i) exploring rhetorical theory that helps situate our written work and (ii) producing and revising documents that fall within common business writing genres.
Course Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will be able to:
• Analyze written communication through the lens of rhetorical theory;
• Think critically about rhetoric and audience awareness;
• Prepare clear messages using logical arguments and effective organization;
• Apply principles of design, style, and tone to workplace writing documents.

Textbook

Email Policy
Given the nature of the course, professional email correspondence is of utmost importance. All emails sent to the instructor must have the following characteristics: pertinent title, appropriate greeting, clear sentences, concise paragraphs, and a signature indicating your full name. I reserve the right to not respond to any email that does not fulfill the above characteristics or that asks questions about the timeliness of grading or information presented clearly presented in the syllabus (you may ask for further clarification). Students should check their email a few times a week if not every day.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism
Plagiarism will result in the failure of the assignment and possibly the failure of the course. Students cannot use work completed for credit in previous courses to count towards this course nor can they lift ideas or content from any source without proper APA citation.

Accommodations
In accordance with university policy, a student who wishes to receive some instructional accommodation, because of a documented sensory and/or learning disability, should contact the instructor to discuss this accommodation. The instructor must be notified in the first two weeks of the course of any students requiring accommodations. If you have questions about assistance, please contact the Office of Educational Accessibility at 757-683-4655 or visit odu.edu/educationalaccessibility.
Weighting Scale and Late Policy

Please note that this course is a pass/fail course. Simplified letter grades will still be used for individual assignments: A (95%) Excellent; B (85%) Good; C (75%) Satisfactory; D (65%) Unsatisfactory; F (0%) Incomplete. Students with final grades at 75% or above will receive a P and for students below, an F. Late assignments will receive a penalty of a full letter grade per day, including weekends (i.e., an A grade would after two late days would be reduced to a C).

Assignments

All assignments must be complete by due date indicated. Extensions will be negotiated on a situational basis. All assignments must be submitted in order to pass the class.

10% Class Participation  |  Due: Weekly
Each student is expected to come to class having done the required readings and ready to engage in thoughtful, energetic discussion and activities.

20% Assignment One: Planning Business Messages  |  Due: September 16
Students will submit a detailed outline of how they will approach a writing-based work situation (a business message) of their choice.

20% Assignment Two: Writing Business Messages  |  Due: September 24
Students will submit a completed draft of their business message that includes all the required elements and that follows appropriate document design principles.

20% Assignment Three: Completing Business Messages  |  Due: October 8
Students will submit a polished copy of their completed business message that is free of grammatical errors and that exemplifies a refined business writing style.

20% Assignment Four: Employment Package  |  Due: October 18
Students will submit a job ad, job ad analysis, tailored cover letter, revised résumé, and reflection directed at a feasibly-obtained job of their choosing.

10% Writing Inventory and Reflection  |  Due: October 18
Students will use the writing inventory composed during the first week of the semester and submit a reflection on how their perceptions, actions, and attitudes have changed.
Course Schedule
All assignments will be submitted to Blackboard by 11:59p on the dates indicated. Readings must be completed prior to class meeting.

Meeting One
September 10
Topic: Planning Business Messages
Readings: Bovée & Thill Ch. 1, 3; Winerip; Killen
Due: Assignment One (September 16)

Meeting Two
September 17
Topic: Writing Business Messages
Readings: Bovée & Thill Ch. 4, Appendix A
Due: Assignment Two (September 24)

Meeting Three
October 1
Topic: Completing Business Messages
Readings: Bovée & Thill Ch. 5; Beason; Wiens; Boland & Queen
Due: Assignment Three (October 8)

Meeting Four
October 15
Topic: Résumé Writing
Readings: Bovée & Thill Ch. 13; Bohns
Due: Assignment Four (October 18)
Due: Writing Inventory and Reflection (October 18)

Withdrawal
A syllabus constitutes a contract between the student and the course instructor. Participation in this course indicates your acceptance of its content, requirements, and policies. If you believe that the nature of this course does not meet your interests, needs, or expectations (amount of work involved, class meetings, assignment deadlines, course policies, etc.), you should drop the class by the drop/add deadline, indicated in the ODU Schedule of Classes.