

ENGL 306 – Introduction to Professional Writing

Spring 2016 | M/W/F 9:30-10:20 am | HEAV 227

instructor info

Mary McCall
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NB: I check email until 11 PM

Office: Heav 307E
Office Hours: M & W 10:30-12:30 & by appt.
Course Website: Blackboard

course overview and goals

What is professional writing? Who is a professional writer? What kinds of tasks do professional writers do? What skills, knowledge, and experience are needed of them? What kinds of challenges do professional writers encounter and what tools and strategies are available to help them negotiate these situations? In this course, we will explore and seek to answer these questions (and others) as we analyze the rhetorical principles and theoretical concepts that mark the touchstones of professional writing. This course will also ask you to examine, reflect on, and engage in the work of professional writing in the following ways:

- Investigate five concepts connected to PW: rhetoric, genre, ethics, networks, and user-centered design
- Connect theoretical concepts in rhetoric and PW to practice by interviewing a professional in a field of interest to you
- Consider best practices for writing in the creation of documents that exhibit an understanding of their specific audience, purpose, and context
- Learn to analyze organizations and individuals within them to evaluate, understand, and shape communication practices
- Conduct, analyze, and report research mindfully and ethically
- Offer constructive feedback and incorporate instructor and peer comments into your own writing

texts

required:

- Spinuzzi, Clay. *Topsight: A Guide to Studying, Diagnosing, and Fixing Information Flow in Organizations*. 2013. ISBN: 1481960067
- Kleon, Austin. *Steal Like an Artist*. New York: Workman, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-7611-6925-3
- Additional readings as needed (which can be found on Blackboard)

Note: You will need Kleon's book by the second week of class and Spinuzzi's by the third week

technology requirements

In order to participate fully in the course, you should already be able to use the technology platform and applications listed below.

- Mac OS X or Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7
- Microsoft Office for the PC or Mac (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) or Apple counterparts (Pages, Keynote, Numbers)
- Web Browser (e.g., Firefox, Safari, or Internet Explorer 8)
- Email Program (e.g., Purdue Webmail, Thunderbird, Gmail, etc.)
- Adobe Acrobat and Reader (for PDF documents, collaborative review)

Technology Responsibilities

Familiarity with certain technologies is crucial for participation and success in the course. If you need any assistance now or at any point during the semester, please do not hesitate to ask.

During the semester, you'll need regular access to the Internet and email. Because the course home page is the main locus of the class community, you are responsible for reading and keeping current with all content posted there,

including what has been submitted by both the instructor and your fellow students. You'll be responsible for configuring your system to access course materials, to read course email and participate in online discussions, and to submit your work. Very early in the semester, you will be asked to demonstrate that you can meet these responsibilities:

- Read the course description and calendar, then ask questions when you are uncertain about requirements or activities.
- Set up your @purdue.edu email or an alternative that you can access regularly and reliably.
- Become proficient sending and receiving email attachments, resolving file compatibility issues, and following email decorum.
- Check the course calendar before each class meeting.
- Become proficient participating in the class Blackboard space.
- Become more proficient with unfamiliar computer technologies and applications, including web-editing software, document cycling systems, desktop publishing applications, and graphics programs.
- Maintain back-up copies of all assignments via your home directory, disks, USB drives, or CDs.

If at any time you have problems accessing the Internet from home, you'll need to find a public lab or connection point. Problems with computers will not be an excuse for falling behind or failing to complete required assignments. If your Internet service goes down, find another connection point. If your computer breaks, use another one. In other words, find a way to complete the assignments on time. Because computer problems are a fact of life, always work to complete your assignments early and make frequent backups to multiple media.

course projects and activities

Memos

You will write a memo on each of the course's major concepts that will synthesize your experiences with your understanding of and reactions to the course readings.

Interview Report and Infographic

You will interview a working professional and write up a report of your results and analysis and then remediate this information into an infographic.

Reflective Essay

At the end of the semester, you will reflect on how the course projects and readings have developed and expanded your understanding of professional writing and writers.

Discussion Starter

You will be asked to jump-start one class discussion using an artifact you bring to class that connects to the assigned reading and/or any questions you pose to your classmates.

Professional Ethos

For this class, *ethos* is defined as your persona, your reputation, and your attitude. This means that your *ethos* will be affected by 1) your behavior in class 2) your interactions with your classmates 3) your interactions with your instructor 4) your work and 5) your behavior outside of class. Developing a good *ethos* means coming to class prepared, being active and engaged in both small and large group discussions and activities, and being proactive about your writing development as well as seeking help from me for course assignments. More qualifications about a solid *ethos* are listed under the Professional Ethos rubric on Blackboard.

I also expect that all members of this class will conduct themselves with courtesy and professionalism at all times. Primarily this means extending respect to your classmates and me, as I plan to extend respect to you. Respect entails listening attentively to one another and allowing for divergent views during class discussions and other activities. I expect that no one will harass, belittle, or threaten other members of the class. Respect also involves avoiding behaviors that are disruptive to the class, including (but not limited to) talking or texting on cell phones, listening to iPods or similar devices, playing videogames or Facebooking on a laptop, or doing work for another class. ***If I observe any of these disrespectful behaviors, I will give you a warning at first. After a second offense, I will ask you to leave the room and you will be counted as absent. Additional offenses could result in your failing the course at my discretion.***

grades

The grades break down like this:

Memos	30%
Interview Report and Infographic	50%
Reflective Essay	5%
Discussion Starter	5%
Professional Ethos	10%
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Total	100%

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
94-100	90-93	87-89	84-86	80-83	77-79	74-76	70-73	67-69	64-66	60-63	0-59

Here's the meaning behind the numbers I put on your paper (you can use these statements as clues about how you might work toward a higher grade):

90-100 (A)—You did what the assignment asked at a high quality level, *and your work shows originality and creativity*. Work in this range shows all the qualities listed for a B; but it also demonstrates that you took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a unique verbal or visual style.

80-89 (B)—You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range needs little revision, is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style and visual design.

70-79 (C)—You did what the assignment asked of you and fulfilled the basic requirements of the assignment. Work in this range tends to need some revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style, verbal and visual, is straightforward but unremarkable.

60-69 (D)—You did what the assignment asked at a low level of quality. Work in this range tends to need significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Verbal and visual style is often non-existent or chaotic.

Below 60 (F)—Don't go here. I usually reserve the F for people who don't show up or don't do the work. If you give an assignment an honest try, I doubt you would receive an F. If you feel you put in your best effort and still received an F, you might consider dropping the class.

attendance

This class requires you to participate in discussions and hands-on writing activities. For the course to be a success, everyone's participation is necessary. For that reason, attendance is required. As a student and teacher, though, I know that life happens (you oversleep, need a day to go back home, or get sick), and thus **you will be allowed four (4) free absences**.

After four absences, your final grade will be dropped by 5% for each absence. After eight (8) absences, you will automatically fail the course, regardless of performance on assignments. Family emergencies and extended medical leave will be handled on an individual basis. For every medically necessary absence from class, you should make a reasonable effort to notify me in advance of the class. If you are absent more than two consecutive times for the same illness (which I consider extended medical leave), bring documentation signed by a health-care professional upon returning to class.

Excused absences may be granted for religious holidays or university-sponsored events, provided you make a written request to me no less than two weeks in advance and that you complete any required work before the due date. Extended medical leave can also be considered as an excused absence provided you have promptly notified me and have sent me the necessary documentation. You are also expected to keep up with class work in this case.

If you are consistently more than 10 minutes late to class, come unprepared (without required materials and/or not completing the reading assignment), display rude behavior and/or disrupt class and therefore are asked to leave, it will not only hurt your professional ethos grade, but it will also result in a loss of one of your four free days.

You are also responsible for keeping up with all the readings and for participating in class. If you miss class, keep in mind that you are responsible for making up the work.

late work

Work needs to be turned in by its deadline. For this reason, I do not accept late work. If a problem arises that you foresee preventing your ability to turn in your work on time, let me know as soon as possible so we can work something out. Project management is vital to ensure potential problems are resolved in a timely manner.

rewrites

Two memos receiving a B+ or below may be revised. All revisions are due two weeks after the last graded memo is returned to you. Due to time constraints, the interview report and infographic cannot be revised.

academic integrity

Purdue students and their instructors are expected to adhere to guidelines set forth by the Dean of Students in "Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students," which students are encouraged to read here: <http://www.purdue.edu/ODOS/osrr/integrity.htm>

The preamble of this guide states the following: "Purdue University values intellectual integrity and the highest standards of academic conduct. To be prepared to meet societal needs as leaders and role models, students must be educated in an ethical learning environment that promotes a high standard of honor in scholastic work. Academic dishonesty undermines institutional integrity and threatens the academic fabric of Purdue University. Dishonesty is not an acceptable avenue to success. It diminishes the quality of a Purdue education, which is valued because of Purdue's high academic standards."

Academic dishonesty is defined as follows: "Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [University Regulations, Part V, Section III, B, 2, a] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972]" If you have any questions about this policy, please ask.

grief absence policy for students

Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS).

GAPS Policy: Students will be excused for funeral leave and given the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for missed assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student's family.

[...]

A student should contact the ODOS to request that a notice of his or her leave be sent to instructors. The student will provide documentation of the death or funeral service attended to the ODOS. Given proper documentation, the instructor will excuse the student from class and provide the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for missed assignments or assessments. If the student is not satisfied with the implementation of this policy by a faculty member, he or she is encouraged to contact the Department Head and

if necessary, the ODOS, for further review of his or her case. In a case where grades are negatively affected, the student may follow the established grade appeals process.

Effective July 1, 2011

violent behavior policy

Purdue University is committed to providing a safe and secure campus environment for members of the university community. Purdue strives to create an educational environment for students and a work environment for employees that promote educational and career goals. Violent Behavior impedes such goals. Therefore, Violent Behavior is prohibited in or on any University Facility or while participating in any university activity.

disability

If you have any special needs for which you require accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in the Office of the Dean of Students to register your needs and the necessary adjustments. The DRC is located on the 8th floor of Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 830. Information is available at <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/drc/welcome.php>. You may also call the DRC at 765-494-1247 or email drc@purdue.edu. If you are eligible for academic accommodations because you have a documented disability, please schedule an appointment with me as soon as possible so we can discuss adaptations.

campus emergency

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. You can acquire updated information from the course website, by emailing me, or by contacting me through the English Department at 765-494-3740. **You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis.**

writing lab

While I am always happy to assist you with your writing projects, please note that you can also use the tutoring services available in the Writing Lab (Heavilon 226) throughout this semester. Tutorials last for 30 minutes and you can make an appointment by calling 765-494-3723 or by stopping by the front desk. In addition, you can always make follow-up appointments should you need extra help with a document.

Keep in mind that I do not offer extra credit for those who schedule appointments, but I will see that as a reflection of your commitment to this class (aka "brownie points"), which can go towards your Professional Ethos grade. Finally, I want to dispel the myth that only "bad" writers go to the Writing Lab. This is far from the truth. In fact, students who make appointments at the writing center reflect their dedication to their work and their writing. I often make appointments there myself to work on conference abstracts and article manuscripts. If you have any questions about scheduling a tutorial in the Writing Lab, please let me know.