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College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Department of Writing

**WRT 350-07: BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**  
**FALL 2018**

<b>Instructor</b> Andi Coulter	<b>Contact:</b> andicoulter@gmail.com
<b>Office</b> Mackinac B-4-217	<b>Class Schedule</b> Tu/R 1-2:15
<b>Office Hours</b> Tu 10a-12p, W 12p-2pm Or by appointment	<b>Class Location</b> T Henry Hall 114 (lab) R Lake Ontario Hall 178

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

WRT 350 introduces you to a variety of business writing theories and practices intended for training in communication skills for business and the professions. Assignments cover varieties of information management, including handling research, gathering data, writing reports, manuals, directions, and correspondence, and making oral presentations.

Business writing teaches students the rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for producing effective business rhetoric, design and collaborative projects in professional contexts. Students learn powerful and innovative techniques drawn from multiple sources, including media, quantitative and visual narratives. Each student receives critical feedback and individual support as well as workshop team input.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

After successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- apply rhetorical principles of business communication
- synthesize the influences of organization settings in the composition of business communications
- distinguish the generic requirements of selected business documents
- Recognize how ethical issues influence business communication
- Compose business communications appropriate for specific audiences, purposes, and contexts
- Design effective business documents
- Design and use tables, graphs, and technical illustrations.

- Collaborate effectively with their peers in a community of writers

**REQUIRED TEXTS** All textbooks are at the UB Library or can be found online

- Locker, K. & Kienzler, D. (2015). *Business and administrative communication* (11<sup>th</sup> Ed): ISBN-13: 978-0073403250

**RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED**

- Strunk, W., White, E.B. *Elements of Style* (grammar, economy of language)

**SWS COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

This course is designated SWS. Completion of WRT 150 with a grade of C or better (not C-) is a prerequisite. SWS credit will not be given to a student who completes this course before completing the prerequisite. SWS courses adhere to certain guidelines. Students turn in a total of at least 3000 words of writing. Part of that total may be essay exams, but a substantial amount of it is made up of essays, reports, or research papers. The instructor works with the students on revising drafts of papers, rather than simply grading the finished piece of writing. At least four hours of class time will be devoted to writing instruction. At least one third of the final grade in the course is based on the writing assignments. Students must complete the course with a grade of "C" or better in order to receive SWS credit.

**HOW THIS COURSE WORKS**

Writing is a process and the structure of this course reflects this. Your work in this course takes place on your own time and consists of reading, drafting, and revising. Each step builds on the last. Your success depends on your effort and engagement; how well you do is dependent on how well you are able to keep up with the schedule, follow instructions, manage your time, understand the readings, use the advice and examples provided to you, and respond with your own best quality work.

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies/>

***Plagiarism***

Plagiarism involves using another author's work without giving accurate and due credit to that author. You must thoroughly acquaint yourself with what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty by referring to your GVSU Student Code Booklet. Plagiarism is a serious legal and ethical breach, and it is treated as such by GVSU. According to section 223.02, I am required to turn in all cases of plagiarism to the Dean's Office. You will receive a zero for that particular assignment. If you have any questions about documentation, please see me before you turn in an assignment.

### ***Disabilities***

Any student who feels s/he may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me to discuss your specific needs. Please also contact Disability Support Services at (616)-331-2490 to coordinate reasonable accommodations. Furthermore, if you have a physical disability and think you will need assistance evacuating this classroom and/or building in emergency situation, please make me aware so I can develop a plan to assist you.

### ***Inclusion Statement***

Grand Valley does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a veteran. This class adheres to those guidelines. Alternative viewpoints are welcome in the classroom. However, statements that are deemed racist, sexist, homophobic, classist, or otherwise discriminatory toward others in the class will not be tolerated.

## **CLASSROOM POLICIES**

### ***Classroom Experience***

In order to create a positive environment for learning, students need to be present, prepared, and engaged, refraining from distractions, disruptions, and disrespectful behavior. Be mindful of others' rights to and vested interest in a valuable learning experience, as well as your own.

### ***Attendance***

Your job is to be a student. I expect you to treat it as a job; one that you treat with seriousness in performance and attendance. Because we spend class time processing and practicing assigned material and building toward formal papers, your presence is crucial for your success on assignments. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the class notes, as well as any information for the next class. However, if you miss more than three (3) classes, this can lower your grade. There is no distinction in this class between an excused or an unexcused absence, so try to keep your absences for emergencies. Please let me know ahead of time if you need to miss class and/or if there is something keeping you from class.

### ***Technology Policy***

Please do not use devices such as cellphones and laptops, except as I directly permit, and only then in ways immediately relevant to activity that the class is currently engaged in. Laptops, iPads, tablets, etc. are allowed in class, as some of your readings and assignments are online. These devices should only be used for coursework. Cell phones should be turned off and put away while in class. If there is an emergency, please notify me either at the beginning of class if possible.

### ***Late Papers***

Unless you make arrangements with me ahead of time, late papers will not be accepted. If, under extreme circumstances, you believe you will be unable to meet a due date, you must email me at least one day before assignment is due. In your email you should explain your situation and let me know the day you will turn in the assignment. Assignments turned in late without prior arrangement will be reduced one full letter grade per day. Assignments later than one week will not be accepted.

### ***Paper Rewrites***

No rewrites of regular assignments will be accepted. Revision is built into this course.

## **RESOURCES**

The Fred Meijer Center for Writing, with locations at the Allendale and Pew/Downtown Grand Rapids campuses, is a peer service available to assist you with writing for any of your classes. Writing consultants, who are fellow GVSU students, are trained to help you with all stages of your writing process, from brainstorming to organizing to editing your papers. Simply bring an idea, prompt, or draft of your paper along with the assignment sheet to any of the Center's locations. Also, through your Gmail account, you have access to online consultations through Google Docs. The Center's services are free and you can drop in and work with a consultant or make an appointment, either through our website or by calling the Center (331-2922). Peer support is available for research and speech/presentation through the Knowledge Market, where the Writing Center partners with the Speech Lab and the Peer Research Center. Additional information about the [Knowledge Market](#) and Writing Center services and locations can be found on our [website](#).

## **GRADING**

Grades reflect the quality and quantity of a student's work submitted throughout the term according to the grading standards approved by Harvard and listed below. Students may earn the following grades:

- A and A- grades represent work whose superior quality indicates a full mastery of the subject and, in the case of A, work of extraordinary distinction that communicates effectively with originality, elegance, and precision.
- B+, B, and B- grades represent work of good to very good quality throughout the term; however, it does not merit special distinction. A grade in the “B” range reflects a communication that is well written and well presented, without major flaws, that fulfills the requirements of the assignment, but has weaknesses, especially in the full development of ideas, purpose, or effect.

- C+, C, and C- grades designate an average command of the course material. While a “C” indicates competency in communication, it also indicates a need improvement in key areas for effective delivery such as organization, development, and clarity of expression.
- D+, D, and D- grades indicate work that shows a deficiency in knowledge of the material. These grades identify serious problems with structure, mechanics, and sentence level clarity.

**I will add a series of detailed rubrics for assignment for evaluating written and oral presentations.**

Final grades will be determined using the relative weights of assignments listed above, and according to the following percentage scale.

Grade	Percentage
A	93.0% -100.00%
A-	90.0% - 92.9%
B+	87.0% - 89.9%
B	83.0% - 86.9%
B-	80.0% - 82.9%
C+	77.0% - 79.9%
C	73.0% - 76.9%
C-	70.0% - 72.9%
D+	67.0% - 69.9%
D	60.0% - 66.9%
F	59.9 or below

## **COLLABORATIVE WORK**

As in many real-life workplaces, teamwork is a requirement of this course. You and your project team members are responsible for updating one another and me about assignment development and progress. In addition, you are also responsible for negotiating together all aspects of your work, including planning, drafting, revising, and presentation. You will receive explicit guidelines for successful collaboration, as well as completing individual Collaboration Forms. Strategies for successful teamwork and collaboration include:

- Working online and face-to-face with colleagues
- Determining roles and responsibilities for each team member
- Managing team conflicts constructively
- Responding constructively to peers’ work
- Soliciting and using peer feedback effectively

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

- This semester is broken up into three parts: Outside Evaluation, Personal Application and Inside Construction.
- During the semester, you will complete a series of short writing assignments, letters, memos, reports, and relevant reading assignments, the latter of which will build on your advancing expertise.
- In the second third of the semester, you will be building your own business in groups. I will provide a structured series of questions that will help you think critically about the drafting of your project, the necessary research and refinements to your methodology, and the varied aspects of tone, narrative, data, branding, marketing, and any additional formulations that are specific to your project and its target audience and goals. This process gives you a solid platform for the success of your final project.
- As a capstone to the final third of the semester, you will be assigned a group that will write a persuasive business proposal for venture capital firm. Some students may decide to create another type of proposal for grant support or policy reform effectively addressing a problem-solving situation that may be sustainable, scalable, and that requires “investment” (not necessarily financial) of the author’s audience.
- Akin to the TV Show *Shark Tank*, your group will also design and deliver a brief oral presentation (approximately 5 slides) to accompany your business venture or fundraising/organizing proposal.
- You will also be required to write thoughtful, detailed critiques of your classmates’ presentations.
- We will conduct several small team writing exercises. Everyone’s writing will be workshopped. Responding to your peers’ work will help you become a sharper critic of your own writing.

### *Assignment Weighted Breakdown*

Website Analysis	5%
Job Packet	15%
Memo	10%
Adjustment Letter	10%
Business Proposal	15%
Oral Presentation	15%
Final Business Plan (marketing, finance and proposal)	20%
In-class work and participation	10%

### *In-Class Writing and Participation*

Almost every day that we don’t have a draft workshop or a paper due, we will write. Writing in class will often

provide a basis for class discussion. Some writing in class will be used to get ideas going for an upcoming assignment, other writing will be used to evaluate for engagement with course material. Writing in class that does not display understanding of the assigned reading will not receive credit. If you are having trouble understanding the reading, please see me immediately.

Participation is demonstrated engagement with course material. Besides being thoughtful and thorough in your in-class writing, other ways to do well in participation include raising your hand to ask and answer questions; paying attention to what is going on in class and taking notes; sending emails to me outside of class time to clarify something you didn't understand; visiting my office hours with questions or problems; helping class discussion move forward by offering your point of view; interacting politely and productively with me and with fellow students during class discussion.

Ways to do poorly in participation include: contributing nothing to class discussions; looking at and/or using your phone when it doesn't relate to class; using class time to work on something other than our class (another course, email, Facebook); appearing to be disengaged; sleeping or appearing to sleep; regularly not appearing to be involved in class discussion. Our class is a team effort—please do your part.

Week	Date	Agenda	Due in Class
1 Writing Process	T 8/28	What is Business Writing?	---
	R 8/30 <i>F 8/31 Last Add/Drop</i>	Writing Myths in the Workplace, Communication	Ch 1 <i>Succeeding in Business Communication</i>
2	T 9/4	Labor Day Holiday	---
	R 9/6	Audience, Tone & Style	Ch 2 & Ch. 4 <i>In-class quiz</i>
3 Externally-facing Documents	T 9/11	Design, Intro to Website Analysis	Ch. 6
	R 9/13	Brand Coherence & Graphics	Readings on Blackboard;  Email 1-2 websites for Evaluation assignment
4	T 9/18	Website Evaluation Assignment, In-Class workshop	<b>Assignment 1: Draft hard copy due in-class.</b>
Selling Yourself: Job Packet	R 9/20	Intro in Job Packet	<b>Assignment 1: Final due 9am via email.</b>
5	T 9/25	Resumes	Ch. 12
	R 9/27	In-class resume workshop	Blackboard Readings  <b>Bring in 2 job postings</b>
6	T 10/2	Cover Letters,  In class workshop	<b>Resumes Due (upload to Google Drive prior to class)</b>  Ch. 13 & Blackboard Readings
	R 10/4	LinkedIn, SEO	<b>Cover Letters due (hard copy in class)</b>



7	T 10/9 <i>Midterm Grades posted</i>	Intro to emails, memos Assignment #3 Introduced	Ch 5 <i>In class quiz</i>
	R 10/11	Economy of Language in Business	Assignment 2: Final Job Packet Due W 10/10 @ 9pm via email
8	T 10/16	Technology in Business Writing., SEO/SEM Marketing	Assignment 3: Memo due in class, hard copy  Ch. 9, Blackboard readings on Slack
	R 10/18	Positive/ Negative Messaging  Intro into Adjustment Letter Assignment	Ch 10
9	T 10/23	Adjustment Letter Test	Assignment 4: Adjustment Letter (as in-class test)
	R 10/25	Power of Persuasion	Ch. 11
10 Selling the Company: Building a Business	T 10/30	Intro to Building a Business, Group Work, Cross-culture communication, groups formed	Ch. 7 & 8
	R 11/1	Business Proposals	Ch. 17 & Blackboard
11	T 11/6 <i>Election Day</i>	Shark Tank Assignment, Oral Presentations	Draft Business Proposals draft due (in-class)
	R 11/8	Business Proposal & Shark Tank Workshop	Ch. 19
12	T 11/13	Discussion of Final Assignment, Marketing component	Blackboard readings

	R 11/15	Shark Tank Presentations	
13	T 11/20	Marketing your business: Press Releases & social media	Blackboard Readings  Assignment #4: Final Group Business Proposal due 10pm email
	R 11/22	Thanksgiving Break	---
14	T 11/27	Final Project: Portfolio  Class Evaluations	
	R 11/29	Final Project	Press Release & Online Marketing due
15	T 12/4	Portfolio Examples	Draft of Final Project due
	R 12/6	Last Day of Class	Finance draft due

**December 12: Final Business Portfolio Uploaded to Google Docs by 8pm**