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Dear Professor,

This letter details my expectations and objectives for becoming a proficient technical writer during the upcoming semester in English 398. My fundamental goals for this course are to refine my strengths in professional verbal communication and to improve upon my professional writing shortcomings, so I may develop effective written communication skills. More specifically, I would like to focus on efficiently communicating technical aspects of software engineering, such as engineering limitations and programing mechanics, to inexperienced readers and listeners. I expect that my verbal communication skills will be challenged in the form of a presentation in front of a diverse audience sometime throughout the semester, but also in daily classroom exercises. In industry, professional communication will become an essential part of my daily life as I interact with people who have different expertise. It is essential that I imbue myself with an academic sense of professionalism which I aim to comprehend by the end of this course.

As a third year computer science major, I often hear (and believe) that my choice of academic study has the most unsociable members, but I view myself as an exception. I favor direct communication over indirect communication, which mirrors my excitement for the course’s verbal components and the lack thereof for the course’s written components.

The written components of any English or SAGES course that I have taken at CWRU have always proved to be the most difficult assignments to complete with confidence. This thought introduces an additional goal I have for this class; I’d like to increase my confidence in my writing. This goal has been persistent across every English class I have ever taken, but I’ve noticed little improvement. What can I do to make myself a more confident writer?

The most important action you can take as the instructor of this course is to be positive, supportive and encouraging of the work I submit while providing a truthful and fair evaluation of its quality. My idea of the perfect learning environment starts with an instructor who is engaging with the material and his/her students. I will give my best possible effort in this course regardless, but I hope you notice that I will go above and beyond your expectations if you continue to show that you care about my classmates’ and my own performance.

My work experience from this previous summer illuminates an additional expectation I have of you and this course, concerning non-work related verbal communication. I often find myself engaging in conversation that might be found unacceptable in the workplace. For example, this summer, I held an internship position in Westlake, Ohio for the software development company, Pointe Blank Solutions. I would often find myself chatting with my coworkers over any sort of ridiculous topic. Unfortunately, chatting proved distracting because it would temporarily disrupt my performance as an employee. Even though my conversation with coworkers would often distract me, my overall performance was noticeably improved. I often found this conversation period, or “tea time’ as we called it, a refreshing period in my work day, but I am hoping English 398 can provide insight into the pros and cons of this daily office routine. I would like for myself and classmates to discuss when non-work related conversation is acceptable and if this answer holds truth to my classmates who belong to a wide spectrum of industries.

From my peers, I would hope that they will test my confidence in my academics with constructive criticism. Monitoring each other’s success and taking notice of when we fail by providing constructive criticism should be a critical part of our classroom. Writings like this memo or any other significant work needs to be screened in front of peers or superiors before being sent out, which is why I plan to continue scheduling regular visits to the writing resource center.  My final products will be a testament and tracker of my success in this class and of my skills at professional communication.

English 398 has the potential to be one of the most important classes I take at this university. I am looking forward to being your student this semester and learning about professional communication from your lectures. We will see if I achieve my goals for this course.

Sincerely,

Jacob Alexander Alspaw