

Instructor information

Name: Dr. Heidi Wright
Contact Info: hwright2@andrew.cmu.edu
Office location: Posner 272

Office hours: After each class, and by appt on Zoom. Please email me to set up a time. I am available evenings between 8 and 10 pm EST.

Course Description

- ***Who is the course for?*** 76-270 *Writing for the Professions* is designed for all undergraduate majors other than English (English majors should take 76-271 *Introduction to Professional and Technical Writing*).
- ***What will I do and learn in this course?*** Workplace communicators use words and images to connect people with information and to structure experiences for audiences to take action. To be effective, they must learn to design communications across genres and media, and with a keen sense of audience, purpose, contexts, and constraints. In this course, you will sharpen your abilities to communicate information effectively, ethically, and responsibly to people with different needs. Our assignments and conversations will take us through a wide range of design processes, genres and rhetorical situations (oral and written) that you can expect to encounter in the workplace. A high-level goal for the course is to combine theory, methods, and known best practices for putting our readers at the center of our writing with a strong emphasis on building a communication design toolkit for reaching non-expert audiences and navigating novel situations. By the end of the course, through writing, feedback, analysis, reflection, and revision, you will leave with a set of polished examples of your ability to communicate nimbly across genres.

Learning Objectives

- Learn and apply methods of textual and rhetorical analysis to identify both linguistic and multimodal patterns in professional and technical communication genres; describe the impact of patterns on readers.
- Understand genres as recurring rhetorical situations and audience experiences, shaped by discourse communities and historical/cultural contexts which may or may not privilege particular experiences.

- Develop and apply an understanding of how a document's organization, labels, formatting, and overall visual-verbal design strategies contribute to its effectiveness by reducing "noise" for readers.
- Develop and apply visual-verbal communication design strategies for making complex information and arguments accessible to non-expert audiences in both oral and written communication contexts.
- Develop a polished and professional prose style that varies appropriately according to audience, purpose, and context.
- Draw on and apply user experience design (UX Design) research on how people read and use documents to promote access and include diverse audiences.
- Use best practices for planning and writing collaboratively with others.
- Practice being a more reflective communicator, aware of and able to articulate your own unconscious biases within the communication design process and able to explain your own composing decisions.

Required Materials and Learning Resources

- No books to purchase. All readings will be distributed via course site.

Assessments

The final course grade will be calculated using the following categories:

Short Assignments (Includes homework, low-stakes activities, process documentation, etc.)	25%
<u>Production Docs:</u>	
Proj 1 Job Application	20%
Proj 2 Instructional Guide / Tech Instructions	20%
Proj 3 Formal Change Proposal	20%
Proj 4 Oral Presentation / Tech Talk	15%
TOTAL	100%
A > 89.5% B 89.49-80% C 79.4-70% D 69.4-60% R < 59.4	

Description of Major Projects (a.k.a. Production Documents)

Project 1: Job Application Package

Communicating Professional Expertise to Employers

Design and write a set of documents (résumé + cover letter) based on research-tested principles that narrate your professional skills for a real-world audience of busy but invested readers. As a final step, write a reflection memo that shows that you have enacted choices and made conscious and strategic decisions about your document design, your writing, and the organization of your content.

Project 2: Technical Instructions

Helping Novice Users Navigate “How To” Documents

In groups of 3 or 4, design, write, user test, and revise a set of “how to” procedural documents that help a real-world user accomplish a task successfully.. As a final step, write a reflection memo that shows that you have enacted choices and made conscious and strategic decisions about your document design, your writing, and the organization of your content.

Project 3: Proposal

Persuading Decision Makers to Fund or Support an Initiative

In pairs, identify a real-world problem or project that needs decision-makers’ support. Map stakeholder concerns and design and produce a proposal that both accounts for stakeholders and details why your idea is worth the decision maker’s time or funds. As a final step, write a reflection memo that shows that you have enacted choices and made conscious and strategic decisions about your document design, your writing, and the organization of your content.

Project 4: Three-Minute Tech Talk (3MTT)

Giving Informative Technical Talks to Public Audiences

In no more than three (3) minutes and with visual aids that adhere to principles of effective slide design, engage and inform a non-expert audience on the information in your change proposal. As a final step, write a reflection memo that shows that you have enacted choices and made conscious and strategic decisions about your document design, your writing, and the organization of your content.

Short Assignments: Grading Rubric (for 5-point assignments)

Short Assignments will be assigned a point value equal to their difficulty, length and the time it takes to complete them.

Grading Policies

Inclusive Language

In this class, we take a reader-oriented, people-first view of language and standards, and I encourage you to make decisions about your written language choices according to how your reader may respond. This view means that we use language to connect with a community of readers and that we do not use language that might exclude or alienate anybody in that community. When we communicate, we do not want to create an “othering” effect with our language. One more recent example for writing inclusively is to use non-binary gendered pronouns. The emerging convention for using gendered pronouns is that we should consider writing in a rhetorically inclusive style.

The National Council of Teachers in English (NCTE) gives us some examples on their website [for gender neutral language: http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/genderfairuseoflang](http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/genderfairuseoflang). Whenever possible, we aim to use our language to build connection with our audience. Using inclusive language can help us make that connection.

Note: Language conventions are tricky and situated. In other words, reason about them. Ask people how they want to be referenced in your writing. Don't apply language formulas.

Acting with Academic Integrity:

In both your academic and professional careers, you are expected to give appropriate credit to your sources. Any submission that includes non-documented material may receive zero points, result in an "R" for the course, and be reported to Student Affairs. If you want to understand how to relate the concept of integrity to our community standards and how to understand university procedures for maintaining our community's standards, please visit <http://www.cmu.edu/academic-integrity>. If you have questions about proper documentation practices, I am happy to meet with you.

Inclusion and Diversity:

Every individual must be treated with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status, or genetic information. Each of these diverse identities, along with many others not mentioned here, shape the perspectives our students, faculty, and staff bring to our campus. We, at CMU, will work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion not only because diversity fuels excellence and innovation, but because we want to pursue justice. We acknowledge our imperfections while we also fully commit to the work,

inside and outside of our classrooms, of building and sustaining a campus community that increasingly embraces these core values. Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment.

Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional. They contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:

Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion: csdi@andrew.cmu.edu, (412) 268-2150

Report-It online anonymous reporting platform: reportit.net username: *tartans*
password: *plaid*

All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any following actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate to be more equitable and just.

Religious Observance:

If you have a conflict between a religious holiday and a graded assignment, please contact me in advance so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Styles of Learning and Disability:

If you have special learning needs that require special accommodations, please contact Catherine Getchell at the Equal Opportunity Services on campus (access@andrew.cmu.edu). We can arrange to accommodate your learning style based on EOS recommendations. Please notify me at the semester's beginning of your learning needs--do not wait until the semester becomes overwhelming to acknowledge the problem. Accommodations are not retroactive. As your teacher, my goal is to work with you to help you to become your own advocate for your learning.

Resources:

- **Student Success Tutoring Online:** You can receive one-on-one tutoring, watch useful workshops and find study partners for any academic for any class at the Student Academic Success Center. The SASC is a free service located in Posner Hall **and** online this semester. You can schedule a tutoring appointment directly on the website.
 - In-person, 1 hour,
 - Zoom meeting (synchronous) 1 hour,
 - Video feedback (asynchronous) 20-30 minutes
 - Sunday-Friday 10am-8pm, In-person consultations in Posner 287
 - Make an appointment <https://www.cmu.edu/student-success/programs/communication-support/make-an-appointment.html>

Food Insecurity

If you are worried about affording food, there are resources on campus that can help. Email the CMU Food Pantry Coordinator to schedule an appointment: Pantry Coordinator cmu-pantry@andrew.cmu.edu 412-268-8704 (SLICE office)

Other Resources You May Need

- Librarian for 270: Ashley Werlinich at awerlini@andrew.cmu.edu
- Canvas Help: canvas-help@andrew.cmu.edu
- Other Tech Help: Cyert tech help ([412-268-4357](tel:412-268-4357)) and it-help@cmu.edu Cyert Hall 119
- Hunt Library VPN info (<https://webdev.library.cmu.edu/using/offcampus>) (use full VPN)
- Free MS Office online <https://www.cmu.edu/computing/software/all/msoffice/index.html>
- Virtual Andrew- - takes you to a university desktop for MS Office
<https://www.cmu.edu/computing/services/endpoint/software/managed-desktops/how-to/virtual-andrew.html>
- Where to find a printer (CMU google map at bottom of page)
https://www.cmu.edu/computing/news/2021/google-map.html?utm_source=map&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=faculty-fall21

Guidelines for Self-Care: First Things First

This semester should be challenging, engaging, and fruitful. Make choices so that you can act with resilience as you face the unfolding demands and expectations of college life. Being resilient means that you can bounce back from setbacks and disappointments and that you can take on somewhat intimidating tasks. **Resilient people make sure that they get sleep, eat a variety of foods, stay connected with friends, and get some physical exercise.**

These kinds of simple commitments should be your “first things” that you prioritize. You’ll work better, with strategic direction—rather than simply work longer but with foggy thinking.

However, don’t be embarrassed if you’re having trouble keeping “first things first.” Ask for help. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus, and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Remember the message you heard during orientation week: It is a sign of strength to ask for help.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, I strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help. You can feel free to talk to me at any time, and I’ll do my best to get you the support you need.

Important Class Policies:

A. Turning in assignments:

Put your name that is listed in Canvas and your section letter on all assignments (even those in Canvas). Points will be deducted if there is no name on a paper.

1. Be sure you know how CMU's time zone and your home time zone correlate. Contact canvas-help@andrew.cmu.edu if your due dates and times seem wrong.

2. I need assignments typed, double-spaced, 1- inch margins (2.54 cm), 12 point Arial font. If they do not look like this, I will not read them. I write on drafts with a stylus or pencil. I need space to write. Don't worry about the Discussion Board; that can be single-spaced.

3. **Include your first and last name, Andrew ID, assignment name, and draft number** in your file names when you submit assignments electronically. Otherwise, files may get lost or overwritten when I download the zip file for the class.

EX: VSmith_smithv2_CGA_draftfinal.docx

4a. Submit .docx files. **Do NOT submit PAGES files.** I cannot read them on my PC or tablet.

4b. For major writing assignments and parts of them, I would also like paper copies as I can read and comment on them much faster than electronic files. If you are not sure if I want a paper copy, please ask.

5. Assignments must be turned in before class (during class is late) and/ or brought to class.

6. Homework-

a. Anything assigned as homework is due at the beginning of class. We will go over it or peer review it in class, so it needs to be finished.

b. For all homework assignments, I will deduct 30% of the score for anything turned in up to one hour late (60 minutes), After that, I will not grade it unless you have a written extension from me. I will, however, give you comments to keep you moving forward.

c. Major assignments. Final Drafts *of the first 3 major projects only* have a 6-hour free late (grace) period around them. This does not include your spoken presentation. Then the percentage off points begin: 6+ hours late is -30%, and after 7 hours, I will not grade it unless you have a written extension from me.

d. Extensions. If you have crazy amount of work (and you will), and you need an extension on homework, I offer **2** 24-hour extensions total. For extensions on a homework assignment, contact me at least 3 hours before class (preferably sooner) so I can set up in-class groups and activities properly. An extension will not be granted in class or after an assignment is due.

e. If you are having Canvas issues, email the assignment before the due date. If your server/

internet/ router is out, please let me know as soon as possible.

7. I send homework reminders and handouts by CMU email and/or post them in Canvas. Check your university email and Canvas at least twice a day. Be sure announcements and notifications are turned on.

8. If you go into Canvas, and you cannot find something, EMAIL ME immediately. Professors must hit a “publish this” button at least twice for things to be visible to students. There have also been some problems with comments and scores not saving properly. So, if you don’t see an assignment or reading that I have asked you to complete, or comments that I have told you are there, email me ASAP so I can check on things.

B. Classroom Behavior

Please address me as Dr. or Prof. Wright. Heidi or Mrs. Wright are NOT acceptable.

1. I love questions. So PLEASE ASK QUESTIONS, it helps me give a better class and it helps your classmates to learn. Also, we are all behind masks and things are not easy to understand. If you need more information, ask in class or over email. I am happy to re-explain things.

2. Please speak during class. Sitting quietly without participating is not acceptable.

3. I need for us to be a team. I expect that you will discuss and sometimes disagree with each other and me politely. Talking is good; it helps us to think things through.

4. No surfing, email, or social media in class unless I ask you to email me something.

5. Please feel free to take pictures of the board with your electronic devices. I may ask you to email them to me to share with classmates who are absent. I may also ask you to share your notes. Thank you in advance.

6. However, you may not further copy, distribute, publish or otherwise use the zoom recording or other course materials without my written consent. Do not post recordings or other class materials to the free web.

7. Please take notes. Pictures of the board are not sufficient. I choose example papers based on both their good and poor qualities. I will explain them. All the answers are not in Canvas.

C. Attendance and Lateness

1. Missing class is not a good idea. You are expected to attend in person (or on Zoom as the university requires). **You are allowed 4 absences for any reason.** However, if you skip class, please email me before class so that I can set up peer review partners for you so that you do not lose points. You are expected to turn in homework for the days you miss on time, and you expected to get the materials you missed from class from your peers. You will lose in-class points for the day if you miss class. If you have a continuing issue that causes you to miss

class, please email me.

2. If you are more than 5 minutes late, you will be marked late. Three (3) lates will equal one absence. Fifteen (15) minutes late to class or more is marked absent.
3. If you are having trouble in this class or another class (or something really terrible happens), PLEASE email me or set up a Zoom meeting as soon as you can! I want to help you, but I can't help you if you don't ask.
4. There are no *excused* absences. If you miss more than 4 classes for any reason, 2 points will be deducted from your final grade for *each* absence. This could eventually lower your final course grade.

D. Grading and Comments

1. I expect homework to be done well. Not doing homework or doing it very poorly affects your grade negatively, and it means you can't participate in class, which will also affect your grade. Further information about grading of homework can be found in Canvas Announcements.
2. I do not give extra credit or drop the lowest score. There are buffer points/ assignments included to help raise your homework grade, but they do not guarantee you an A.
3. There will be 2 drafts of the major projects: first and final. I do not allow rewrites after the final draft. I expect you to use comments from me and your peers to revise your work for content, organization, and grammar as necessary. Failure to revise will result in a lower score.
4. You do not need a perfect paper to get an A, but you do need a complete, clear, well-organized paper with citations done well (if required). I expect directions to be followed. First drafts of projects will receive a grade for completeness & correctness (i.e., following directions), but revisions always need to be made.
5. Changing the topic of your paper after the first draft has been submitted without my permission will result in a grade of F. I do not accept final drafts of papers without first drafts that I have reviewed.
- 6a. I am not your copy editor. I will not fix every error. Rather, I will mark some grammar errors and indicate patterns, and indicate content and organization problems. It is your job to correct/revise your work, and to contact me if you have questions. Please use spelling and grammar check software in MS Word, Google docs, or Grammarly (free version). Be aware however, that the suggestions these programs make are not always correct or appropriate for this course. For example, the use of the passive voice is fine in this class.
- 6b. The use of ChatGPT and similar AI programs is not a great idea in this class because they what they generate will not match the directions/ required content for our assignments. They

also do not offer peer-reviewed sources, and the paraphrases they generate are actually plagiarism. Directions for assignments in this course are very specific, and the grading rubric matches the directions exactly, so generic work done by a bot will not likely receive a passing grade. We will, however, learn to use programs like Turnitin to check our writing and use of outside sources for plagiarism and use of AI bots.

7. Peer review: You will be graded on how well you give comments to others on their work and on how well you revise your own work. Do not give yes and no answers for peer review. Be specific. Explain why something is good or how it could be better. Be polite. Give both positive and “constructive” comments.

8. Don't borrow papers from friends, turn in papers from other classes, or take them off the web. I have been teaching writing for 30 years, and I can spot these things easily. You will get an F or a 0. If you are having trouble finding/ adding information from outside sources into your paper, please ask. I know that it is not always easy, and I am happy to help.

[Course Schedule begins on next page]

Sample Course Schedule

Date	Theme/Topic	Assignments Due
Week 1	Week 1: Introduction to Professional Writing and Rhetorical Analysis	Project 1: Pre-first draft of resume due
Week 2	Week 2: Writing and Designing Usable and Scannable Documents	
Week 3	Week 2-3: Writing Compelling Arguments in Cover Letters, Personal Statements.	Project 1 FIRST DRAFT DUE
Week 4	Week 4: Presenting Complex Information to Non-Experts	
Week 5	Week 5: Creating Engaging and Memorable Technical Documents	Project 1 FINAL DRAFT DUE Project 1 Reflection Memo DUE
Week 6	Week 6: Best Practices for Creating “How to” Procedures that Engage and Instruct Users	
Week 7	Week 7: Pitching Ideas for User-Centered Technical Communication Projects	Project 2 FIRST DRAFT DUE
Week 8	Spring Break	
Week 9	Week 9: Persuading Audiences to Support Projects and Engage with Information	
Week 10	Week 10: Communicating Novelty, Expertise, and Credibility in Proposals	Project 2 Final Draft Due Project 2 Reflection Memo Due
Week 11	Week 11: Team Project Working Groups and Intro to User Testing Methods	
Week 12	Week 12: Drawing Insights from User Testing	Project 3 First Draft due
Week 13	Week 13:	Project 3 Final Draft Due Project 3 Reflection Memo Due
Week 14	Week 14: Creating Engaging and Memorable Technical Presentations	
Week 15	Week 15: Presentations that Engage and Inform	Project 4 Final Draft Due- in class presentation Project 4 Reflection Memo Due