

English 420: Business Writing

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Overview

English 420 teaches students the rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for producing effective business letters, memos, reports, and collaborative projects in professional contexts. The curriculum is informed by current research in rhetoric and professional writing and is guided by the needs and practices of business, industry, and society at large, as well as by the expectations of Purdue students and programs. All sections of English 420 are offered in networked computer classrooms or exclusively online to ensure that students taking the course are prepared for the writing environment of the 21st-century workplace. The course teaches the rhetorical principles that help students shape their business writing ethically, for multiple audiences, in a variety of professional situations.

Required Texts

Kolin, P. C. (2014). *Successful writing at work* (Concise 4th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning. ISBN-13: 9781285052564

Course Goals

Writing in Context

Analyze professional cultures, social contexts, and audiences to determine how they shape the various purposes and forms of workplace writing, such as persuasion, organizational communication, and public discourse, with an emphasis on

- writing for a range of defined audiences and stakeholders
- negotiating the ethical dimensions of workplace communication

Project Management

Understand, develop and deploy various strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents both individually and collaboratively, including

- selecting and using appropriate technologies that effectively and ethically address professional situations and audiences
- building professional *ethos* through documentation and accountability

Document Design

Make rhetorical design decisions about workplace documents, including

- understanding and adapting to genre conventions and audience expectations
- understanding and implementing design principles of format and layout
- interpreting and arguing with design
- drafting, researching, testing, and revising visual designs and information architecture

Teamwork

Learn and apply strategies for successful teamwork and collaboration, such as

- working online with colleagues
- determining roles and responsibilities
- managing team conflicts constructively
- responding constructively to peers' work
- soliciting and using peer feedback effectively
- achieving team goals

Research

Understand and use various research methods to produce professional documents, including

- analyzing professional contexts
- locating, evaluating, and using print and online information selectively for particular audiences and purposes
- triangulating sources of evidence
- selecting appropriate primary research methods, such as interviews, observations, focus groups, and surveys to collect data
- working ethically with research participants

Technology

Use and evaluate the writing technologies frequently used in the workplace, such as emailing, instant messaging, image editing, video editing, presentation design and delivery, HTML editing, Web browsing, content management, and desktop publishing technologies.

Accessibility

If you have a disability that requires accommodations, please see me privately within the first week of class to make arrangements. If a student has a disability and chooses to work with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), I will receive written notification early in the semester. The student should also contact me about any recommended academic adjustments. For more information, see the site, www.purdue.edu/odos/drc/welcome.php. Beyond official accommodations, I assume that everyone learns differently, and I encourage you to discuss your learning needs with me as early as possible so that we can work together to meet them.

Grading

Unit 1: Employment Project (individual)	25%
Unit 2: White Paper (individual)	30%
Unit 3: Marketing Project (collaborative)	30%
Participation, Reading Responses, Short Writing, Peer Review, etc.	15%
Total	100%

The three major projects in the course will be comprised of several components, each of which will be worth a percentage of your final grade. For the collaborative project, students will complete the required Collaborative Evaluation Form.

All major assignments will be graded on the standard plus-minus letter-grade scale: A=100-94, A-=93-90, B+=89-87, B=86-84, B-=83-80, C+=79-77, C=76-74, C-=73-70, D+=69-67, D=66-64, D-=63-60, F=59 or below.

Students **must** participate in all of the major projects and complete a majority of the shorter writing assignments in order to pass this class. Students with questions about final grades should review university policies regarding grade appeals, which are outlined by the Dean of Students here: <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/gradeappeal.pdf>. The University regulations are here: http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu_conduct/stu_regulations.html.

Class Participation, Reading Responses, Peer Reviews

This portion of your grade will be based on:

- How well you comport yourself professionally with classmates and the instructor.
- The degree to which you prepare for and contribute to class discussion and activities.
- The degree to which you proactively seek feedback and ask questions when appropriate.
- The degree to which your peer reviews and responses offer insightful feedback and suggestions on your classmates' drafts.
- The degree to which your reading responses and comment posts demonstrate learning of the course content and contribute to the learning of others in the course.

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, Windows 8
- Microsoft Office for the PC or Mac (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) or Apple counterparts (Pages, Keynote, Numbers)
- Web Browser (e.g., Firefox, Safari, Chrome, or Internet Explorer)
- Email (e.g., Purdue myMail, 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 Blackboard 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:

- Post a message about yourself and your interests
- 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.

- Sign up for Dropbox and accept the invitation to the course's shared folder.
- 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.
- Back up all assignments via your home directory, disks, cloud, or USB drives.

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.

Collaborative Work

Teamwork is a required component of the course. You and your project team members are responsible for updating one another and me about assignment development and progress. In addition, you also are responsible for negotiating together all aspects of your work, including planning, drafting, revising, file managing, and scheduling of assignments. When a collaborative project is assigned, you will receive explicit guidelines for successful collaboration. Individual group members will complete Collaborative Evaluation Forms.

Attendance

Attendance is required at all scheduled electronic and face-to-face (F2F) meetings. Since you will be working in project teams much of the semester, you also will be required to attend any scheduled out-of-class meetings with your team to complete course assignments. Four absences may result in your final grade being lowered by as much as a letter grade. More than four absences can result in a failing grade for the course. 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. Being excessively or regularly late for class or team meetings, both electronic and F2F, can also be counted as an absence. Being unprepared for class or excessively off task during class can be counted as an absence, as well.

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/academicintegritybrochure.php>.

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.

In Case of a 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. You can acquire updated information from the course website, by emailing me, or by contacting me through the English Department at 765-494-3740.

Late Work

The majority of missed class assignments cannot be made up. If a serious and unavoidable problem arises, however, you should contact me in writing prior to the deadline to determine whether or not an extension for the work will or will not be granted. If an extension is granted, it may result in a reduced grade.

Writing Lab

The Purdue Writing Lab offers one-to-one assistance with all document types at any stage of development. To make an appointment, visit the Writing Lab in person or call (765) 494-3723. For more information, visit <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/writinglab/>.

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.