WRIT-340: Advanced Writing for Business

Syllabus

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This course prepares students for academic success and for international work opportunities, placing emphasis on writing in global business contexts. The prerequisite is WRIT 140 or its equivalent.

The Advanced Writing for Business course is designed not only to help you write effectively in a business environment, but also to improve your general ability to research and analyze complex ideas, to appreciate and develop the skill of effective argumentation, and to write clear, grammatical, well-structured communications. With some emphasis on ethics and issues of public concern, coursework is designed to increase your capacity to analyze audiences and tailor content and style to produce writing that communicate with confidence.

Building on the skills you gained in WRIT 140, this class explores specific business writing techniques and strategies through in-class lectures and exercises, individual writing assignments, tutorial sessions, and teamwork. The topics covered range from word-, sentence-, and paragraph-level issues of correctness, conciseness, coherence, and clarity to more global considerations of argumentation and organization, including a major unit on critical thinking.

Throughout the semester, emphasis is placed on developing systematic ways of identifying relevant from non-essential information and then effectively and appropriately communicating what is relevant to a wide variety of audiences. You will learn to regard effective business writing in terms of a series of strategic choices, including choosing from among a repertoire of tones and styles appropriate in different situations and with different audiences. You will also improve your editing and critiquing skills, so that you can distinguish effective from ineffective writing and help not just yourself but others as well to become better writers in a business context.

The course content of Advanced Writing for Business is practical today and long into the future. You will begin using or improving many writing skills *immediately*—not just following graduation or in a future career position. Bear in mind, however, that while an instructor can teach you a lot of what you need to know to be a successful writer, no one can make you learn, practice, modify, polish, or strengthen your skills. That part of the course is up to you.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
This course focuses on improving your understanding of the basic principles of good writing and how you may use these principles to write effectively in a wide variety of business-related contexts. In WRIT 340 you will be introduced to the conventions of Plain English as a business English lingua franca, concepts of intercultural business communication competence, varying conventions of organizing messages across

cultures, and the influence of business structure and corporate culture on intercultural business communication in both traditional and new media.

Specifically, the learning objectives for this course are:

1. **Recognize and implement** the qualities associated with effective business writing, particularly the hallmarks of 'Plain English' and its "4Cs": conciseness, coherence, clarity, and correctness *by planning, outlining and revising a variety of business documents.*
2. **Identify and evaluate** diverse communication goals of different audiences (especially, international audiences) and make effective choices about the tone, style, and form the communication should take *by recognizing and discussing how to tailor communication to specific audiences.*
3. **Select and strategically utilize** traditional and new communication media *by learning about the applications and preferred usages of those media.*
4. **Plan, create, and complete** a variety of business documents—including, for example, memos, letters, emails, blog posts, proposals, and reports—using appropriate headings, layout, and typography *by applying rules of document purpose and design.*
5. **Conduct** research using a broad range of sources *by applying secondary and primary methods of research such as utilizing databases, open sources, practicing key word searches, and conducting interviews.*
6. **Synthesize** and **evaluate** the quality of collected information *by critically analyzing the value, credibility, and applicability of sources.*
7. **Support** written claims with logical and persuasive reasoning, and **critique** the reasoning in the writing of others *by applying critical thinking guidelines of Western traditions of thought.*
8. **Understand** the importance of business ethics and its implications for business and business communication *by discussing moral decision-making and approaches to ethics, such as utilitarianism, and how they translate into business contexts.*
9. **Collaborate** productively with others *by completing writing and editing tasks*.
10. **Express** your ideas and conduct yourself in a professional manner *by creating written communication that considers all objectives above*.

Alignment with USC and Marshall's Learning Goals
This course is designed to meet USC's requirement for Advanced Writing as well as selected Marshall Learning Goals. Please see Appendix.

TECHNOLOGY
We will use the Blackboard course management system for posting assignments, grades, threaded discussions. All materials posted on Blackboard are exclusively for your use only and you are prohibited from distributing them to anyone else.

TEXTS
Required: Marsen, S. (2013) *Professional Writing,* 3rd edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Make sure you bring your book to class for each session. We will be doing activities in it.

Other material will be distributed through Blackboard and as handouts in class. It is advisable to bring a folder to class to keep your handouts.

MATERIAL
Bring a notebook and pens as well as, optionally, a laptop or tablet to class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING
Your final grade in this course will be based on the following:

Assignments	Percent
(Assignment information and formatting requirements will be distributed separately)	
Journalistic article	20
Analytical report	30
(The analytical report is divided into a proposal, worth 10%, and the final report worth 20%)	
In-class test	15
Team project	15
Portfolio A reworking and polishing of assignments 1 and 2	20

Total :   100%

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY
Submit assignments by 5pm on the due date <u>electronically via Blackboard/TurnItIn and by bringing a hard copy to class</u>. *Any assignment turned in late, without prior permission, will receive a grade deduction (for example, if your work merits a B+ grade, you will be given a C+ grade). An assignment that is two weeks late will not be graded.* If you require an extension, please request it before the deadline.

EVALUATION OF YOUR WORK
You may regard each of your submissions as an **"exam"** in which you apply what you've learned according to the assignment. I will do my best to make my expectations for the various assignments clear and to evaluate them as fairly and objectively as I can. If, however, you feel that an error has occurred in the grading of any assignment, you may*, within one week of the date the assignment is returned to you*, write me a memo in which you request that I re-evaluate the assignment. Attach the original assignment to the memo, and explain fully and carefully why you think the assignment should be re-graded. Be aware that the re-evaluation process can result in three types of grade adjustments: positive, none, or negative.

Your grade **reflects your performance,** professional writing and contributions to the learning environment. It is not based on percentages, nor on the Marshall target GPA. The grade may not represent all of your efforts in the class, but rather, it is determined by the USC rubric for evaluating work in Advanced Writing and is assessed in comparison to your peers' writing. As a rule, more effort generally results in better writing and more successful collaborations.

<u>Retention of Graded Papers</u> – Returned paperwork, unclaimed by a student, will be discarded four weeks after grades are available on your official USC transcript/grade report.

ONE-ON-ONE WRITING CONFERENCES
We will meet, one-on-one during the semester by appointment. These sessions will offer you an opportunity to discuss specific difficulties you may have in the writing process; they are not intended to be discussions about your grades. Be certain to bring along your last graded assignment so we have something to work with.

PROFESSIONALISM: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
Attendance and punctuality. You are expected to attend <u>all</u> scheduled class sessions, to arrive on time and participate actively. **If you are unable to attend class, I expect you to e-mail me <u>in advance</u> to let me know about the situation—just as you would inform your employer if you were unable to come to work. If you miss more than 6 sessions you risk failing the course.**

Add/drop process. Note that failing to attend the first two class meetings puts you at risk of being dropped from the course.

Participation and classroom demeanor. You are expected to be an *active contributor* to the class, not a passive listener. Volunteer answers to the questions I ask; ask questions yourself; request clarification if something isn't clear; challenge me if you disagree with something I've presented; contribute useful and relevant comments. Your active participation can help determine whether our class atmosphere will be dull and pedantic or energetic and engaging.

While you are in class you are expected to conduct yourself professionally. This includes being focused exclusively on WRIT 340, not on extraneous matters, such as reading the newspaper, eating lunch, or checking your e-devices. It also includes treating everyone else in the class with the same respect and consideration you want to receive from them.

Preparation. You are expected to come to class fully prepared, with all required written assignments and reading completed. *This includes being fully prepared even if you were unable to attend a previous class meeting.*

MARSHALL WRITING CONSULTANT AND THE USC WRITING CENTER
You may schedule 30-minute appointments with writing consultants trained to assist you in planning, organizing, correcting, and revising your assignments. The USC Writing Center provides two options for meeting with writing consultants. Stewart Grace, an Advanced Writing for Business Consultant, is available to assist you. E-mail Stewart at sgrace@usc.edu; stewgrace@gmail.com and schedule appointments with him at: stewartgrace.simplybook.me. You may also schedule an appointment with the USC Writing Center (WC) located on the second floor of Taper Hall (Room 216). Both writing consultation options are excellent resources for students who want to improve their writing. Some WC consultants have special skills in working with students for whom English is a second language.

In addition to one-on-one consultations, both Stewart and the WC will offer a series of Writing Modules designed to help non-native speakers develop the skills they need to succeed in WRIT 340. The WC offers daily workshops on troublesome language and grammar issues, open to all students, plus a computer program, "Focus on Grammar," for self-study. The USC Writing Center Web site is located at: http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/. You may also find two other online resources helpful. These meta Web sites are: http://webster.commnet.edu/writing/writing.htm and http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_edit.html

It will usually be up to you to take advantage of the resources that Marshall and the Writing Center offer. On occasion, however, I will require visits to Stewart or the Writing Center—sometimes on a regular basis—if I believe the need is present.

SOME OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another individual . . . [It] is considered a grave violation of academic integrity and the sanctions against it are correspondingly severe (sanctions recommended by the university range from a grade of F in the course to suspension from the university. Most simply, plagiarism can be characterized as 'academic theft.'

As defined in the University Student Conduct Code (published in the current *SCampus*), plagiarism includes:

- 'The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near verbatim form;

- 'The submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style;
- 'Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers.'

The Student Conduct Code applies these standards to any written work submitted by a student, whether a draft or a final version.

Because of the serious penalties for plagiarism, you should insure that any writing you submit represents your own assertions and abilities and incorporates other texts in an open and honest manner . . . In academic assignments, writing is assumed to be the original words and thoughts of the student unless [the reader is] told otherwise (i.e.: material from other sources is clearly and properly cited).

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From *Trojan Integrity: Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism*
(USC Office for Student Conduct, rev. Fall 2000, pp. 2-3)

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Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A. http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/ Failure to adhere to the academic conduct standards set forth by these guidelines and our programs will not be tolerated by the USC Marshall community and can lead to dismissal.

Assistance with Papers

In this course we encourage peer review, since it's almost always helpful to have "another set of eyes" take a look at your paper and offer comments and suggestions. But where exactly is the boundary between helpful advice and illegitimate collaboration? Where should you draw the line?

The following guidelines from the Writing Program answer this question explicitly:

The Writing Program encourages collaboration with your instructor, with Writing Center consultants, and with your classmates (not roommates or friends outside of class); such interactions constitute one of the most important and effective means by which writing is taught. In undertaking collaborative interactions, however, remember that you are finally responsible for guaranteeing that the resulting text represents your abilities and authority and not those of the persons assisting you, however well-meaning they may be. A simple guideline may help: *Never allow someone else to construct a section of your text longer than one or two sentences that you would not be able to produce on your own, and never allow anyone to copy-edit your paper.*

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity

In case of emergency in which travel to campus is difficult, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. Instructors are asked to be prepared to assign students a "Plan B" project or assignment that can be completed at a distance. For additional information about maintaining your classes in an emergency please access: http://cst.usc.edu/services/emergencyprep.html

Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. You can obtain a letter of verification for approved accommodations from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-077.

Class Schedule

Below is a **flexible** overview of the course.

WEEK	DAILY ACTIVITIES	TASKS, READINGS, AND DUE DATES
Week 1	Introduction to the course; the writing process	Syllabus; Chapter 1
Week 2	Audience analysis; planning a project	Chapter 1
Week 3	Understanding style and genre: writing for the public and writing for specialist audiences	Chapter 2
Week 4	Understanding style and genre: writing for the public and writing for specialist audiences - continued	Selections from Chapter 2 and 5
Week 5	Persuasive writing in business: Proposals	Selections from Chapters 3 and 7 **Assignment one due Friday September 26**
Week 6	Teamwork and project management	Chapter 9
Week 7	Researching for business	Chapter 4
Week 8	Reports	Chapter 7 **Assignment Two (proposal) due Monday October 13**
Week 9	Focus on sentence structure and language	Selections from Chapters 2 and 10
Week 10	Conferences to discuss proposals	
Week 11	Teamwork	Chapter 9 **Team project due Friday October 31**
Week 12	Critical thinking for management	Chapter 8 **Test on Friday November 7**
Week 13	Revising and Editing	Chapter 10 **Assignment Two (report due)**
Week 14	Revising and catching up	Appendix
Week 15	Revising and catching up	To be decided **Portfolio due Friday December 5**

APPENDIX
Alignment of Course Learning Objectives with Marshall's Six Undergraduate Program Learning Goals

Goal	Marshall Program Learning Goal Description Covered in this Course (Goals 3, 5, 6 and relevant selected sub-goals)	Emphasis/ Relation to Course Objectives	Relevant Course Topics
3	Our graduates will demonstrate critical thinking skills *so as to become future-oriented decision makers, problem solvers and innovators.* Specifically, students will: 3.1 Students will understand the concepts of critical thinking, entrepreneurial thinking and creative thinking as drivers of innovative ideas (not explicit for this course). 3.2 Critically analyze concepts, theories and processes by stating them in their own words, understanding key components, identifying assumptions, indicating how they are similar to and different from others and translating them to the real world. 3.3 Be effective at gathering, storing, and using qualitative and quantitative data and at using analytical tools and frameworks to understand and solve business problems. 3.4 Demonstrate the ability to anticipate, identify and solve business problems. They will be able to identify and assess central problems, identify and evaluate potential solutions, and translate a chosen solution to an implementation plan that considers future contingencies.	**High (Course learning objectives 1-10)**	All course assignments require critical thinking skills (students will utilize the USC-CT approach as a framework for critical analysis)
5	Our graduates will demonstrate ethical reasoning skills, understand social, civic, and professional responsibilities *and aspire to add value to society.* Specifically, students will: 5.1 Understand professional codes of conduct. 5.2 Recognize ethical challenges in business situations and assess appropriate courses of action.	**Moderate (Course learning objectives 7, 8)**	Assignment Two; Team project
6	Our graduates will be effective communicators *to facilitate information flow in organizational, social, and intercultural contexts.* Specifically, students will: 6.1 Identify and assess diverse personal and organizational communication goals and audience information needs. 6.2 Understand individual and group communications patterns and dynamics in organizations and other professional contexts. 6.3 Demonstrate an ability to gather and disseminate information and communicate it clearly, logically, and persuasively in professional contexts.	**High (Course learning objectives 1-10)**	All assignments require audience and purpose analysis, and tailoring communication messages accordingly.

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	Marshall Undergraduate Program Goals <u>not Explicitly</u> Covered by this Course (Goals 1, 2, 4)
1	Our graduates will understand types of markets and key business areas and their interaction *to effectively manage different types of enterprises.* Specifically, students will: 1.1 Demonstrate foundational knowledge of core business disciplines, including business analytics and business economics. 1.2 Understand the interrelationships between functional areas of business so as to develop a general perspective on business management. 1.3 Apply theories, models, and frameworks to analyze relevant markets (e.g. product, capital, commodity, factor and labor markets). 1.4 Show the ability to utilize technologies (e.g., spreadsheets, databases, software) relevant to contemporary business practices.
2	Our graduates will develop a global business perspective. They will understand how local, regional, and international markets, and economic, social and cultural issues impact business decisions *so as to anticipate new opportunities in any marketplace.* Specifically, students will: 2.1 Understand how local, regional and global markets interact and are impacted by economic, social and cultural factors. 2.2 Understand that stakeholders, stakeholder interests, business environments (legal, regulatory, competitor) and business practices vary across regions of the world.
4	Our graduates will develop people and leadership skills to promote their effectiveness as *business managers and leaders.* Specifically, students will: 4.1 Recognize, understand, and analyze the motivations and behaviors of stakeholders inside and outside organizations (e.g., teams, departments, consumers, investors, auditors). 4.2 Recognize, understand and analyze the roles, responsibilities and behaviors of effective managers and leaders in diverse business contexts e.g., marketing, finance, accounting. 4.3 Understand factors that contribute to effective teamwork.