

ENGL 202D

Business Communication

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Class: MWF 11:15 AM - 12:05 PM, 001 Sparks
Office Hours: 10-11 M, W, F; Th 9-10;
by appointment Th 10-1

Course Description

ENGL 202D serves students who are studying and preparing for professional careers in business administration. This advanced writing course helps them to manage business communication effectively by combining traditional writing projects with multimedia formats. In this way, the course remixes standard business writing with twenty-first century digital culture, emphasizing writing strategies and digital technologies that students will need in order to be successful on the job.

Students can expect to:

- Identify their readers and describe the characteristics of their readers in a way that forms a sound basis for deciding how to address them.
- Arrange material to raise and satisfy readers' expectations, using both conventional and rhetorical patterns of organization.
- Reveal the organization of their communications by using forecasting and transitional statements, headings, and effective page design.
- Observe appropriate generic conventions and formats for letters, resumes, memoranda, and a variety of informal and formal reports.
- Design and use tables, graphs, and business illustrations.
- Collaborate effectively with their peers in a community of writers who provide feedback on each other's work.
- Employ technology effectively.
- Communicate in an ethically responsible manner.

Required Text

The materials for this class are available at the Penn State University Bookstore.

Your textbook bundle should include the following items:

- *The BCOMM Guide to Business Writing*. Pearson custom book for our course.
- *The Non-Designer's Design Book* by Robin Williams. 3rd edition. Peachpit Press, 2008.

The textbook bundle also includes an access code for myBCOMM, an online tutorial. Make sure that you save the access code. All other materials will be available via ANGEL.

Course Policies

Attendance

You are expected to attend class every day and to have your work with you. Regular attendance is required, because course instruction depends on your active participation. Three absences will not affect your performance (unless you miss a rough draft session—a major problem); but try to limit it to that. Additionally, I grade attendance (unlike all other assignments in this class) on a curve, so it *might* be possible to miss more than three days (however, in every semester I’ve taught 202, there’s always been at least one person to get perfect attendance. You’ve been warned). Excused absences are appropriate, of course, but beyond that, let me repeat English department policy: A student whose absences are excessive “may run the risk of receiving a lower grade or a failing grade,” whether some of those absences are considered “excused” or not. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get assignments, complete any work, and submit any due papers.

If you are late (where late is defined as arriving to class after attendance has been taken), you will be marked “tardy” in my records. For grading purposes, a tardy counts as 1/2 of an absence. This is the result of the disruption caused to myself and your fellow students by a late (and inevitably loud) entry into class. If you have concerns with buses or walking a distance from your previous class (and, I totally understand that this is a problem), you should consider changing to a different section (and investing in a better campus map), because your inability to cross campus is still a disruption to class.

In all cases, students are required to submit documentation for an excused absence. If sick, a doctor’s note is required within two class periods for the absence to be excused. Family emergencies and religious functions require an email at least two class periods before the event (when possible; obviously emergencies are emergencies). University sponsored activities require official University documentation.

It is particularly important for you to attend—and be prepared to participate in—in-class workshops on drafts of your documents. The more you have written before peer-review sessions, the more you will benefit from them. Although your drafts need not be “polished,” in general they should be complete enough for you to receive substantial help from your peers.

Grading

In grading your assignments, a number of factors will weigh on my decision:

- **Promptness.** In this course, as in the working world, you must turn in your work on time. All projects are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated on the syllabus. Assignments turned in late will be penalized one letter grade for each day late unless you have made other arrangements with me in advance. **If you would like an extension, please inform me of this need 24 hours before the assignment is due.** I will be more than happy to accommodate you.
- **Appearance.** All work should be neatly prepared on a computer, using margins and spacing and design techniques that are conventional for the genre. Whether it is a résumé, memo, or report, your communication should exhibit complete and appropriate format. All writing for the course should be printed clearly, including draft work.
- **Grammar, Spelling, Proofreading.** At work, even a single error in spelling, grammar, or proofreading can jeopardize the effectiveness of some communications (depending on the rhetorical situation). Grading will reflect the great seriousness with which these matters are frequently viewed in the working world. If you would like special assistance with any of these skills, I can recommend sources for extra help.
- **Proper File Format.** All work in this class will be turned in using a drop box on ANGEL. Unless otherwise noted in class, your work will need to be in one of the following formats: .doc,

.docx, or .pdf. **Corrupted files will be considered late, so please make sure to check your submissions to the drop box.**

Your final grade will be determined by the following weights:

- Professional Biography 10%
- Letterhead 10%
- Proposal Memo 5%
- Pitch 10%
- Website, Branding Instructions, Logo Design 30%
- Social Media Reflection Memo 10%
- Social Media Project 20%
- Class Participation 10%

The grading scale, as defined by the College of Liberal Arts, determines final letter grades based on the following values for the final grade (as defined using the rubric above):

- A - $\geq 95\%$
- A- - $< 95\% \ \&\& \ \geq 90\%$
- B+ - $< 90\% \ \&\& \ \geq 88\%$
- B - $< 88\% \ \&\& \ \geq 83\%$
- B- - $< 83\% \ \&\& \ \geq 80\%$
- C+ - $< 80\% \ \&\& \ \geq 73\%$
- C - $< 73\% \ \&\& \ \geq 70\%$
- D - $< 70\% \ \&\& \ \geq 60\%$
- F - $< 60\%$

On this chart, “ \geq ” means “greater than or equal to” and “ $<$ ” means “less than”, so that an A-, for example, is any value greater than or equal to a 90 and less than a 95.

Additionally, I will mark your papers with letter grades when I grade. These letter grades translate to the follow values in my grading book:

- A - 100
- A- - 92
- B+ - 88
- B - 85
- B- - 81
- C+ - 77
- C - 72
- D - 65
- F - 20

With this information, you should be able to calculate your grade, as we go along, but if you have any questions about the grading of this class, please contact me in office hours.

202D Memo Format

We write a lot of memos in this class and it is important to have a standardized format for all communications. This is a standard practice within most organizations. For this class, all memos that do not conform to the following rules will not be graded:

- Except where otherwise noted, all memos **must** be set in 12pt., Times New Roman font.
- Document will begin with word “Memo” in 18pt., Times New Roman, bolded font at the top left of the document. This will be followed by a blank line.
- Next, there will be routing information. Routing information consists of four fields, displayed one field per line. This will be single spaced, followed by a blank line, and introduced by the name of each field followed by a colon (:) and then followed by the appropriate information. The fields are:
 - Date
 - Subject
 - To
 - From
- Memos for this class must be broken into sections. Sections will be indicated by bold font. Subsections, when used, will be in italic font. Skip a line after each section and subsection before beginning the contents of that section or subsection.
- The first section of the memo will be labelled “Overview.” This will be a short, 2-3 sentence paragraph explaining what the memo is. Why did you write it? What is it responding to? Do not treat this as an introduction to what you are talking about in the memo. This section is purely about the memo.
- Following the overview section (above), there will be a section called “Key Points.” This will consist of a bulleted list of **at most 3** bullet points. These bullet points will reveal the three key points covered in the memo.
- In each section, all content will be single-spaced. Each paragraph will be followed by a blank line. Paragraphs will not be indented.

Again, it is important to state: memos that do not conform to this standard will not be graded. If you do not know how to set up this memo format in MS Word, I will be happy to explain how either in class or in office hours.

Plagiarism (Academic Dishonesty)

Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20).

Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University’s Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

Note to Students with Disabilities

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University’s educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for modifications or reasonable accommodations in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services, ODS, located at 116 Boucke Building at 814-863-1807. For further information regarding ODS please visit their web site at <http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods>. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for modification or reasonable

accommodations. Since many students have disabilities not readily noticeable this announcement or statement encourages students to identify their needs early in the semester so timely adaptations can be made.

Assignment Descriptions

Social Media Usage Project

Semester-Length Individual Project

Online, social media is becoming an increasingly important component of any business's chance of succeeding in the age of online life. For this class, we will be exploring the relationship between online media and the creation of business's or a person's identity. You will be required to use two online writing technologies, Twitter and Blogs at PSU, to think through the various affordances for the creation of an online persona with these technologies. In addition to these two technologies, we will be exploring several others throughout the semester and you are free to use them for the completion of the Social Media Reflection Memo (below).

- **Twitter** – Online “microblogging” site. Allows users to post 140 status updates. You will post 10 “tweets” per week for this class.
- **Blogs @ PSU** – Penn State's blogging platform. You must post once per week.

All media posts (10 tweets, 1 blog) will be due by 5PM on Friday each week. You cannot make up missed entries (except in the case of excused absences).

If you do not have a blog or a Twitter account, you will need to create one. If you already have one, you can use that, so long as the content you post is class appropriate.

You will need to follow me (@andrewpilsch) on Twitter and email me your blog URL by the end of the first week of class.

You should plan to follow your classmates and me, as RT-ing your classmates and responding to their tweets will count toward your 10 tweets a week.

Professional Biography

Individual Project

Many business people are well-served by having a brief professional biography. For this assignment, you will be writing a 1 page biography that describes:

- your work experience
- your career goals
- your relevant skills
- your hobbies

This document could form the basis of a professional website or be incorporated into a profile for a service such as LinkedIn. In any case, your document needs to be more than just a collection of facts: it must capture a sense of purpose, direction, and an overwhelming sense of what makes you unique and interesting.

Letterhead

Individual Project

We will be writing a lot of memos in this course. For these memos, like any good company, we need an attractive, appealing, and professional letterhead. To introduce you to the basic principles of page layout and the fundamentals of creating professional documents in MS Word, you will design a letterhead for your 202D class. What will our logo look like? What colors will we use? What fonts?

After the letterheads are submitted, I will choose the four best letterheads and we will vote on them as a class. The winner of the contest will get 1 bonus point added on to their final grade.

Proposal Memo

Individual Project

Most projects include a formal proposal that captures exactly what you propose to deliver as well as important information regarding your goals, vision, and rationale for the choices made in the selection of proposed actions. In other words, a proposal is a persuasive document that includes a research component.

For this class, you will be writing a proposal for the creation of a new (fictional) company. This company can do anything (selling waffles, importing pearls, a new bar in State College, etc.) and can be as serious or as whimsical as you want. The purpose of this document is to show me that you have done some research into the market sector you would be entering and have thought through some of the basic ideas of what the company would need.

This individual assignment will form the basis of the group work to be completed in the remainder of the class. After you have turned in this proposal, you will form into groups of three and choose from your groups three proposals one new business idea to use for the remaining three assignments.

Your proposal will be a 1-2 page (single-spaced) document that will outline for me exactly what you are proposing, being as specific as possible about why this will be an exciting and fulfilling project for this class.

Pitch

Group Project

In business, you want feedback on your projects. The most common way of receiving feedback is through a short presentation—i.e., a pitch. A pitch is a dynamic, fluid presentation. Unlike formal “presentations,” pitches should be interesting as well as informative. Due to their informal nature, pitches are more interactive than other presentations. You may be interrupted in the middle of your talk. Plan Accordingly.

For this pitch, your goal is to share with the students and myself the ideas for a business suggested by the proposal your group has selected. Present a 7 minute pitch + 8 minute Q&A per team. Note that these times may overlap if you are interrupted for questions in the middle of your pitch.

In your presentation, you will provide information about your company, its goals and products, any thoughts you have on a corporate identity (bold!, classy!, etc.), and a basic outline of your company’s business model. You should also have specific questions for your audience.

You will present your pitch at a team meeting during one of our class sessions. After the meeting, upload your presentation to our ANGEL site.

Branding Instructions, Website

Group Project

Having created a business plan, we can now focus on creating some of the other elements necessary for 21st century business: a corporate brand and a website. For this assignment, you will be completing three steps. You will first design a logo for the company you described in the above business plan. Then, you will write instructions for future employees on how to deploy the logo and other brand elements you have devised (font face, colors, etc.) in any communications that represent your company (memos, brochures, signage, shirts, etc.). Finally, you will use the brand instructions you have written to create a basic and simple website for your new company.

This assignment will have the following elements:

- **Company Logo:** This image (.PNG, .JPG, or .BMP) may consist of type; a non-linguistic, visual element; or both in a combination. In any case, it must embody the spirit of your company and convey the sense you want customers to have of your business.
- **Branding Usage Instructions:** In most companies, a set of documents exists to explain the proper usage of a branding system to producers of company materials (see PSU's documentation in the links I've posted to ANGEL). For this assignment, you will need to produce a document explaining the various aspects of your branding system (font faces, color scheme, logo, wording) and how to use them in the production of other documents. This brief (5-6 single-spaced pages) document should be targeted towards employees within your company who must use it to maintain brand consistency in technical documents that represent your business.
- **Index Page:** A front page that introduces your company, provides some kind of background and directs your visitors to where they need to go to find more information
- **Content Pages(2):** In addition to the welcome page, you need to create two separate web pages that serve unique and distinct functions within your company's website. You could talk about the products your company sells, provide a way for customers to send feedback, or a list of upcoming events that relate to your company.

Social Media Reflection Memo

Individual Project

Having completed the Social Media Usage Project (above), as a conclusion to the class, you will author a 3-5 page evaluation report in the form of a memo analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of various social media for creating and disseminating your personal brand. Which technologies did you use? Which were most effective? What were the advantages and disadvantages of each technology?