

## **BUSINESS WRITING FOR LEADERS**

### **91-717**

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed for experienced writers who want to enhance their skills in written communication. Assignments will focus on how to connect with audiences, and how empathetic messaging, persuasive storytelling, active language, appropriate style and tone, and clarity of voice can be used to capture the attention of readers and encourage engagement. Whether currently in a leadership position or preparing for a future role, students will learn to make written communications personal, warm, and accessible, while also being professional, effective, and authoritative. Students will produce written artifacts and documents that demonstrate how writing is utilized to build and maintain professional relationships, establish trust, propose and describe ideas, and share information with a variety of stakeholders.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Writing is a skill that must be developed and practiced—it is a skill called for in virtually every job description, and yet it is a skill that many professionals spend little to no time nurturing. Professionals in all fields (especially those in leadership positions) must be able to communicate in writing effectively and confidently to obtain genuine understanding of their position and values, and to win support for their ideas.

In this class, we will:

- Learn to enjoy writing.
- See all written communication as a new opportunity to build relationships and trust.
- Work collaboratively through peer review to test our skills and learn from others.
- Produce written materials that give us confidence.
- Understand that all written communication has a voice, which can be used to our advantage.

## ACCOMMODATIONS AND ACCESS

If you need an accommodation to participate fully in the class, please alert me and the TA. If you have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at [access@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:access@andrew.cmu.edu).

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**This is synchronous a live, virtual course.** Students are expected to log in at class time and participate in peer review and collaborative activities. Students who miss more than one class meeting may have their grades lowered. Lecture material will be recorded and shared in advance to provide more flexibility for interaction and workshopping during class time.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Plagiarism is a big deal, and it's an offense with multiple negative consequences. Plagiarism is taken very seriously by Heinz College and CMU, and is subject to disciplinary action. An automatic failing grade is assigned for that assignment, and the incident is reported to program administrators and associate deans. All submitted work goes through a plagiarism detector, *Turnitin*.

For guidance, please contact the instructor, the TA, or the Global Communications Center at CMU.

## LATE WORK

If work is not submitted by the designated day/time, it is late. For late work, grading starts at 80% of the total possible score for the assignment.

## OFFICE HOURS

For this section, I conduct office hours by appointment to be as flexible as possible for all students. I am flexible most days to respond to questions via email or schedule a Zoom call, but please allow 12-24 hours for a response. Please copy the TA on any emails, and put the course number **91-717** at the beginning of your subject line.

## REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Canvas
- Zoom
- Google collaboration software, including Docs and Jamboard
- Adobe Acrobat or similar software that allows for reading and annotating PDFs

## OTHER TOOLS

Students may use writing tools such as Grammarly ([www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com)), but this is not required. Free and paid options are available.

## TEXT

There is no required text for this course. Any online articles, case studies, links, and other media will be provided via Canvas, if applicable.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

**Graduate school is hard.** Balancing the demands of life can be challenging for anyone, even if they are not pursuing an advanced degree. Please take care of yourself, and support your classmates. CMU provides many resources to promote student health and well-being and help you cope with stress—this is not limited only to school-related stressors. You are not alone in this, and—while you’ve likely heard it before—it remains true that asking for help when you need it is a sign of strength.

There are many helpful resources available on campus and asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences 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: call [412-268-2922](tel:412-268-2922) and 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.

- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS):** 412-268-2922, [cmu.edu/counseling](http://www.cmu.edu/counseling)
- **Re:solve Crisis Network:** 888-796-8226

## DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, CLIMATE, & EQUITY

This class is a supportive, sensitive, collaborative workshop environment where everyone is valued. All individuals are expected to do their part to create a learning experience that is welcoming, open, respectful, and positive. Comments or actions that are discriminatory, exclusionary, or hostile toward any person or group will not be tolerated —this includes language that is racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, classist, or violent/threatening.

For resources, including how to report an incident of bias or discrimination, visit the Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion – <https://www.cmu.edu/student-diversity/>

Dr. Dareen Basma, Associate Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, Climate, and Equity at Heinz College, is also an excellent resource: [dbasma@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:dbasma@andrew.cmu.edu).

## GRADING

<b>Minimum Score / 1000</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Heinz %</b>
980	A+	98 - 100
930	A	93 - 97
900	A-	90 - 92
880	B+	88 - 89
830	B	83 - 87
800	B-	80 - 82
780	C+	78 - 79
730	C	73 - 77
700	C-	70 - 72
0 - 699	R	69.9 - below
NA	I	NA

The rubric used in this class is aligned with the Heinz College grading scale. If you have an issue with a grade, contact the instructor immediately to discuss. Please note that I will not discuss grades over email.

**GRADING RUBRIC – MAJOR DELIVERABLES**

	<b>Excellent 40 points</b>	<b>Proficient 36 points</b>	<b>Competent 32 points</b>	<b>Adequate 28 points</b>	<b>Inadequate 24 points</b>
<b>FOCUS</b>	The document clearly stays focused on a topic, information points reader toward action or takeaway.	The document mostly stays focused on a topic, information points reader toward action or takeaway.	The document stays focused on a topic, but is not always focused toward a takeaway.	The document is lacking clear focus, but has ideas, concepts, and information.	The document has an unclear topic with minimal ideas, concepts, and information.
<b>RELEVANCE</b>	Compelling facts, details, and examples develop and explain the topic. Conclusion provides insight into implications, explains significance, and projects to the future.	Effective facts, details, and examples develop and explain the topic. Conclusion discusses implications and significance of the topic.	Relevant facts, details, and examples develop and explain the topic. Conclusion ties to and supports the information.	Facts, details, and examples partially develop and explain the topic. Conclusion merely restates the content.	The document contains limited facts and examples related to the topic. Conclusion is missing or unclear.
<b>AUDIENCE</b>	Consistently speaks to a well-analyzed audience, addresses the audience's knowledge level, concerns, and specific needs.	Directed at a target audience, anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, and specific needs.	Audience is mostly clear. Considers the audience's knowledge level and concerns about the topic.	Shows an inconsistent awareness of the audience's knowledge level and needs.	Lacks an awareness of the audience's knowledge level and needs.
<b>COHERENCE</b>	Strategically uses language, transitions, and layout to link sections and provide flow; explains relationships between the topic and examples/facts.	Skillfully uses language and transitions to link sections and provide flow; identifies relationships between the topic and examples/facts.	Uses language and transitions to link sections; connects the topic with examples/facts. Basic use of formatting.	Limited transitions to link sections; loosely connects the topic with examples/facts.	Minimal or awkward transitions between sections; does not connect the topic to examples/facts.
<b>INCLUSION</b>	Presents an engaging, human and objective tone and manages the complexity of the topic with inclusive language.	Presents an appropriate and objective tone and manages the complexity of the topic with inclusive language.	Presents an appropriate and objective tone and mostly manages complexity, but could be more inclusive.	Tone is professional but feels cold, and minimally manages complexity.	Inconsistent or informal tone, language is not inclusive.

**Total \_\_\_\_\_ / 200**

## **TOTAL GRADE**

### **Major deliverables (60%)**

200 points each, 600 points total

### **Professional emails (15%)**

50 points each, 150 points total

### **Peer review and workshop (15%)**

150 points

### **Attendance and participation (10%)**

100 points

**1000 total possible points**

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

### **Class meetings:**

Tuesdays, 6:00-8:50pm, EDT

<https://cmu.zoom.us/j/92265729877?pwd=N3dnSFkzZCtIS2FiMWhWRTBIZXIDZz09>

### **Class dates:**

5/14

5/21

5/28

6/4

6/11

6/18

### **Due dates:**

Major Deliverable 1: 5/31, 11:59pm EDT

Major Deliverable 2: 6/14, 11:59pm EDT

Major Deliverable 3: 6/21, 11:59pm EDT

**There is no final exam for this course.**