Carnegie Mellon University

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BUSINESS WRITING 94-701

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on cultivating effective writing techniques for professionals. Assignments include crafting persuasive employment correspondence, responding to emails with professional etiquette, and developing impactful business proposals, memos, and performance evaluations. Since writing is a cumulative skill, interactive workshops provide an opportunity for participants to share insights and collectively refine their work. This collaborative environment not only enhances the quality of the assignments, but also fosters a dynamic exchange of global perspectives, enabling participants to develop a well-rounded understanding of diverse business contexts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES (using Bloom's revised taxonomy of learning)

Students will be able to…

Remember:	Identify appropriate business formats.
Understand:	Demonstrate an understanding of the audience, the purpose, and the message.
Apply:	Develop a unified structure, logical connections, and transitional devices.
Analyze:	Compare and contrast writing samples (self, peers, and generative AI).
Evaluate:	Complete evaluations using a rubric.
Create:	Produce documents using professional language, defined voice, and appropriate style.

IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONALISM

As students embark on an exciting semester of professional growth at Heinz College, the importance of professionalism must be addressed. In the world of academia, as in the professional world, adhering to deadlines and maintaining high standards are indispensable qualities. **Below are a few key reasons why professionalism matter in this course:**

1. **Accountability:** Meeting deadlines establishes accountability for your academic performance. It reflects your dedication to the subject matter and showcases your ability to manage your time effectively.
2. **Quality of Work:** Adhering to deadlines is conducive to producing high-quality assignments. Rushed or late submissions often result in subpar work.
3. **Respect for Others:** Submitting work on time demonstrates respect for your peers who rely on shared contributions for in-class workshops and activities. The act of sharing facilitates efficient and effective completion of tasks for everyone involved.
4. **Preparation for the Real World:** Cultivating the habit of being punctual for class and submitting work before deadlines sets the foundation for expectations you'll face in your future career. In a professional context, tardiness for meetings or late submissions of work can result in missed opportunities, dissatisfied clients, or even termination of your job.

This semester is an opportunity to develop and practice the essential skills of professionalism that will serve you well throughout your academic journey and professional career. Remember that by consistently meeting deadlines and maintaining high standards, you are setting yourself up for a future filled with success and opportunities.

NO TEXT REQUIRED

ACCOMMODATIONS

If you provide evidence of learning for a specific topic and demonstrate an advanced level of proficiency (see rubric), a more challenging assignment will be provided. Additionally, if you need further assistance to complete assignments, TA office hours should be attended on a weekly basis.

OPTIONS FOR DIFFERENTIATION

Throughout the semester, you are provided options to complete a few assignments that correlate with your field of study or personal interests.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

NASPA Competency 5: To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce.

5.1 Learning Outcome: Prepare professional/effective documents appropriate to the objective and context.
5.3 Learning Outcome: Prepare communications suitable for diverse audiences.

GENERATIVE AI
https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/technology/aitools/academic integrity/index.html

Certain assignments in this course will permit and encourage the use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT). When AI use is permissible, it will be clearly stated in the assignment. Otherwise, generative AI usage is not allowed. For assignments where generative AI tools are allowed, their use must be appropriately acknowledged and cited. For instance, if you generated an entire document through ChatGPT and edited it for accuracy, your submitted work would need to include a note (e.g., I generated this work through Chat GPT and edited the content for accuracy). Paraphrasing or quoting smaller samples of AI generated content must also be appropriately acknowledged and cited.

It is your responsibility to assess the validity and applicability of any AI output. If inaccurate on invalid information is found in the work, you may not earn credit. Deviations from the guidelines listed above will be considered violations of CMU's academic integrity policy. Please ask if you have questions regarding what is permissible for a particular assignment.

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CLASSROOM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

If you plagiarize, you are in violation of academic integrity. Violations of this nature are subject to the following disciplinary actions: (1) an automatic failing grade is assigned for the work, and (2) the incident is reported to program administrators. After a thorough review of the incident, administrators determine the outcome (e.g., failing the assignment (only), failing the course, expelled from school). As a reminder, generative AI is considered "assistance" as noted in the CMU policy. **"Collaboration or assistance on academic work is not permitted unless explicitly authorized by the course instructor(s)."**

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION POLICY

With interactive in-class workshops, attendance and participation are a requisite part of the learning process. If you're close to a higher grade at the end of the semester and you've had excellent attendance and participation with no late or missing assignments, the professor may use discretion with grading. The TA records attendance

at the beginning of every session. If you're present and on time, it will be noted. Arriving late to class is not acceptable; it is a disruption to the learning environment, especially after groups engage in writing workshop activities. You should not email the professor or the TA to provide an excuse for missing class or arriving late.

EXEMPTION POLICY

Your advisor will discuss options for coursework and recommend a writing class that is appropriate for you (e.g., Business Writing, Writing for Information Systems, Writing for Public Policy, Writing for Creative Industries); however, you are welcome to complete the exemption exam. Information about the exam is posted on the Heinz website.

GRADING POLICIES

Assignments receive extensive comments and a rubric score (see example rubric included in this syllabus). If you receive a score that needs further review, you have until the next class to schedule an appointment to discuss it. After this deadline, the score will not be changed.

Late Work (graded assignments)

All assignments, regardless of your class time, are due by 8:00 a.m. on a specified date. At the deadline, the Canvas folder for that specific assignment locks and papers are automatically downloaded for review. If you missed the deadline, a "0" is recorded in the gradebook until the work can be reviewed. Please add your missing assignment to the "late work" folder. This folder remains open until the deadline for the final. Your work will be reviewed at the end of the semester and grading starts at 80% of the total points. Please do not email to ask for an extension and/or request that no penalty be assigned. This is not fair to other students. Moreover, do not email an assignment; work can only be submitted through Canvas since it is run through a plagiarism detector. As a reminder, missing class does not warrant additional time to complete an assignment.

Drafts & Nongraded Assignments

Some assignments (e.g., drafts) receive feedback instead of a grade. Since this work is required for in-class workshops, failure to submit a draft by the 8:00 a.m. deadline receives an automatic deduction (-15 points). You did not complete the work; therefore, you cannot fully participate with workshop activities (e.g., giving and receiving feedback). When a nongraded weekly assignment (e.g., LinkedIn profile) is not submitted, the same deduction applies. You cannot receive feedback for an assignment that you did not submit. Failure to complete work in a timely manner (graded or not) demonstrates your lack of effort and participation.

Aligned with the Heinz Grading Scale

Grade	%	Interpretation
A+	98 - 100	Exceptional
A	93 - 97	Excellent
A-	90 - 92	Very Good
B+	88 - 89	Good
B	83 - 87	Acceptable
B-	80 - 82	Fair
C+	78 - 79	Poor
C	73 - 77	Very Poor
C-	70 - 72	Minimal Passing
R	69 - below	Failing
I	NA	Incomplete

WRITING RUBRIC

DESCRIPTIONS	Exceptional A+ Range Professional; ready to distribute.	Skilled A/A- Range Professional; minor revisions are recommended prior to distribution.	Proficient B Range Semi-professional; revisions are required prior to distribution.	Developing C Unprofessional; major revisions are required prior to distribution.	Inadequate R Unsuitable for distribution.
Conventions: The document uses standard English conventions (usage and mechanics).	The document demonstrates advanced use of standard English conventions.	The document demonstrates effective use of standard English conventions.	The document generally demonstrates standard English conventions.	The document minimally demonstrates standard English conventions.	The document contains too many errors in standard English conventions.
Focus: The document focuses on a topic to inform a reader with ideas, concepts, and information.	The document clearly focuses on a compelling topic that informs the reader with ideas, concepts, and information.	The document focuses on an interesting topic that informs the reader with ideas, concepts, and information.	The document focuses on a general topic to inform a reader with ideas, concepts, and information.	The document has an unclear topic with limited ideas, concepts, and information.	The document has an unidentifiable topic with minimal ideas, concepts, and information.
Development: The document presents relevant facts, concrete details, and examples.	The document provides compelling facts, concrete details, and examples that fully develop and explain the topic.	The document provides effective facts, details, and examples that sufficiently develop and explain the topic.	The document provides general facts, details, and examples that develop and explain the topic.	The document provides limited facts, details, and examples that attempt to develop and explain the topic.	The document contains few facts and examples related to the topic.
Audience: The document anticipates the audience's knowledge of the topic.	The document clearly anticipates the audience's knowledge of the topic; it also addresses specific concerns/need, too.	The document anticipates the audience's knowledge of the topic; it addresses specific needs of the audience.	The document considers the audience's knowledge of the topic.	The document illustrates an inconsistent awareness of the audience's knowledge of the topic.	The document lacks an awareness of the audience's knowledge of the topic.
Cohesion: The document uses appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, creates cohesion, and clarifies the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.	The document strategically uses words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections; it explains the relationships between the ideas and concepts.	The document skillfully uses words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections; it connects the relationships between the ideas and concepts.	The document uses appropriate words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections.	The document contains limited words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections.	The document lacks an awareness of how to link the major sections.
Language and Style: The document presents a formal, objective tone and uses precise language with topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the issue.	The document clearly presents a formal, objective tone and uses sophisticated language with topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the issue.	The document presents a formal, objective tone and uses precise language with topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the issue.	The document presents an appropriate tone and uses relevant language with topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the issue.	The document presents an inconsistent tone with limited awareness of topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the issue.	The document lacks a consistent tone and awareness of topic-specific vocabulary.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays (8:30 – 9:30 and 12:30 – 1:30) and by appointment on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

PARTICIPATION POLICY

Due to in-class writing assignments, a charged laptop is required for all sessions. Computer usage is expected; however, checking email and/or working on another assignment is not acceptable.

WAITLIST POLICY

Business Writing is only offered in the fall semester. Since you are placed in this writing course by your academic advisor, you'll need permission to switch sections (i.e., mini 1 to mini 2 or vice versa). This course usually does not have a waitlist since enough sections are offered to meet the needs of first-year students.

WELLNESS STATEMENT (adapted from the CMU counseling services website)

Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings of anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is available to help you: **call 412-268-2922** or visit their website at **http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/.**

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal or in danger of self-harm, call someone immediately, day or night:

CaPS: 412-268-2922

Re:solve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226

If the situation is life threatening, call CMU Police at **412-268-2323** or **911**.

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

Resume	**RUBRIC ELEMENT: CONVENTIONS OF ENGLISH (part 1)** The document uses standard English conventions (usage and mechanics).
Cover Letter	**RUBRIC ELEMENT: CONVENTIONS OF ENGLISH (part 2)** The document uses standard English conventions (usage and mechanics).
LinkedIn Profile	**RUBRIC ELEMENT: FOCUS** The document focuses on a topic to inform a reader with ideas, concepts, and information.
Performance Evaluation	**RUBRIC ELEMENT: DEVELOPMENT** The document presents relevant facts, concrete details, and examples.
Business Proposal (1)	**RUBRIC ELEMENT: AUDIENCE** The document anticipates the audience's knowledge of the topic.
Business Proposal (2)	**RUBRIC ELEMENT: COHESION** The document uses appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, creates cohesion, and clarifies the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
Email Etiquette	**RUBRIC ELEMENT: LANGUAGE AND STYLE** The document presents a formal, objective tone and uses precise language with topic-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the issue.

Business Writing
Learning Objectives Reflection

Name _____ **Date** _____

Mini Semester (circle):   1   2   **Class Time (circle):**   9:30   11:00   2:00

Student Responses:

1. What do you feel are your writing strengths (reference the rubric)?

2. What writing areas do you feel need to be improved (reference the rubric)?

3. What grade best described your level of writing (at the **beginning** of the course)?

    Circle one: A+   A   A-   B+   B   B-   C+   C   C-

4. What grade currently describes your level of writing (at the **end** of the course)?

    Circle one: A+   A   A-   B+   B   B-   C+   C   C-

5. Understanding the limitations of a seven-week course, if you can change anything to improve the content or the delivery, what would you suggest?