



English 380
writing for a change:
for business, for life
Spring 2009
Fridays, 5:00-8:00pm

Business writing is about changing things to make them better. But change only happens in an environment of trust. So how do we get readers or listeners to trust our ideas about change?

Experience shows that we can build trust by grounding what we have to say in experiences we share with our readers or listeners. *Writing for a Change: For Business, For Life* will explore how our past experiences as readers, speakers, and writers intersect with a broad range of business principals and practices. We will approach writing broadly—and business writing specifically—from theoretical and practical points of view. By integrating practical activities with broader theoretical issues of what it means to write (and by extension read), we will work on developing strategies for composing a variety of documents that persuade, inform, and teach. The types of writing we will cover include: business presentations and proposals, promotional documents, informal reflections, research reports, and professional narratives.

Class sessions will be a combination of discussion and in-class workshops. No prior business experience is necessary.

Required materials

One course reader will be provided along with supplemental materials on a variety of theoretical and practices issues related to the creation and study of writing.

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Requirements

- Three major projects:
 - 1) a presentation (10%)
 - 2) a proposal (10%)
 - 3) a professional/business research project (10%)
- Several smaller projects: a letter of introduction (10%); a short academic essay (10%); a cover letter and resume (10%); magazine editing (10%).
- Submit portfolio, including all drafts and an introductory essay (10%).
- Reading and active participation (which includes attendance) (10%).
- *All* assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade
- Please bring your reader to every class.

Two major projects (the PowerPoint presentation and the research project) will be graded on a letter scale: A=4.0; A-=3.67; B+=3.33; B=3.0; B-=2.67; C+=2.33; C=2.0; C-=1.67; D+=1.33; D=1.0; D-=.67; F=0.0

Other responses and exercises will be graded on a point scale: 3 = excellent; 2 = good; 1 = satisfied minimum requirements; 0 = failed to address requirements or not turned in. (If you receive 2s and 3s on these assignments, you will receive full credit for this portion of the grade.)

Grading

Your grade will be based on an overall assessment of your work, considering your portfolio as well as your participation in the class.

To state the obvious, plagiarism is unacceptable and may result in failing the course.

Resource Room

We're fortunate to have a resource room available. I encourage you to take advantage of it and work with our excellent tutors.

Emerging Schedule (subject to change as the course progresses.)

1/23 writing processes I

In class:

Review course objectives.

Discuss process approaches to writing.

Explore uses of professional narratives.

Workshop: Consider our own writing processes and discuss strategies for getting started.

1/30 writing processes II

Before class:

Read selections from Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers*, vii-11, and Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary*, 11-37. Draft a 600-word **letter of introduction** that explains your writing goals for the course. In your letter, describe your past experiences with writing and the types of writing you hope to do in the future.

In class:

How can we craft powerful narratives? *Workshop:* Using vivid language.

2/6 writing processes III

Before class:

Read selections from Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwartz's *Writing True*, 85-105 and from Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's "*They Say, I Say*," 1-47.

Write a **600-word academic essay** that integrates three of the readings covered so far. Practice *some* of the strategies that Graff and Birkenstein recommend.

In class:

Discuss academic writing. Explore the techniques advocated by Graff and Birkenstein. *Workshop:* Responding to drafts.

2/13 work papers I

Before class:

Revise **letter of introduction**. Read "What is Professional Writing," vii-x, and Steven M. Ralston, William Kirkwood, and Patricia Burant's "Helping Interviewees Tell Their Stories," 73-81.

In class:

Talk about how we might draw on our letter of introduction to create an employment cover letter. *Workshop:* Create cover letters.

2/20 work papers II

Before class:

Prepare draft of **cover letter** (approximately 600 words) and (one-page) resume. Read selection entitled “Resumes.”

In class: Workshop job materials.

2/27 work papers III

Before class: Prepare revision of **cover letter** and **resume** due. Read selection on proposal and grant writing (reading to be provided).

In class:

Explore strategies for creating a winning proposal/grant.

3/6 proposals I

Before class:

Draft of 900-word **proposal** due. Read selection from Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Bait and Switch*, 1-39 along with selection from Yagelski’s *Literacy Matters* and Torre and Fine’s “Bar None: Extending Affirmative Action to Higher Education in Prison,” *Journal of Social Issues* 61.3 (2005): 569-94.

In class:

Workshop and share proposals.

3/13 proposals II

Before class:

Draft **background article** on incarceration and higher education. Read selection from Willford’s *Higher Education in Prison: A Contradiction of Terms?* Phoenix: American Council on Education and the Oryx P, 1994, and Joshua Page’s “Eliminating the Enemy,” *Punishment and Society* 6(4): 357-78.

In class:

Discuss final proposals and publication project.

3/20 presenting ourselves and our ideas I

Before class:

Read H. Bruce Franklin’s “Can the Penitentiary Teach the Academy How to Read?” *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 642-49; and Robert P. Walker’s “Changing Lives through Literature.” *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 678-83.

Draft non-proposal contribution for journal.

In class
PowerPoint Presentations

3/27 presenting ourselves and our ideas II

Before class:

Draft 10 PowerPoint Slides

Final Proposals Due

Final Business Research Project Inquiry Form Due

In class:

Business/Research Project (preparing for final project)

4/3 no class

4/10 no class

4/17 symposium presentations

Before and in class:

Final Presentations

4/24 magazine editing

5/1 research update + portfolios due

5/8 Writing for a Change Symposium

5/15 reflections