WRIT-340: Advanced Writing for Business

Syllabus

Professor: **Holly Bridges**
Classroom: JFF 312
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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 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 communicates with confidence.

Building on the skills you gained in lower-division writing classes, 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 broader considerations of argumentation and organization, including a unit on critical thinking.

Throughout the semester, emphasis is placed on developing systematic ways of distinguishing relevant from nonessential information and then effectively and appropriately communicating what is relevant to a 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 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** the 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 communications to specific audiences.*
3. **Select and strategically use** 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 using databases, open sources, practicing keyword 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 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 the 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 the 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: *The Business Writer's Companion,* 7th edition*,* by Gerald J. Alred, Charles T. Brusaw, Walter E. Oliu
Supplemental readings will be posted on Blackboard.

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

Assignments	Percent	Points
(Detailed assignment prompts will be posted on Blackboard)		
• **(1) Business Trend Assignment**	15%	150
• **(2) Ethics Assignment**	15%	150
• **(3) Critical Thinking Assignment**	15%	150

- **Portfolio (choose two of 1, 2, 3 above)**   20%   200
  A thorough reworking and polishing of individual assignments

- **Team Project**   20%   200

- **Quizzes**   5%   50

- **Professionalism and participation:** Attendance, punctuality, teamwork,   10%   100
  conferences, homework, improvement based on my feedback,
  and participation in class as well as meeting all deadlines
  contribute to your professionalism grade. Daily activities cannot be
  made up. Also, absences, tardiness, use of electronic
  devices, eating, and engaging in disruptive conversation in class
  will decrease your participation grade.

                                                                    Total   100% =   1000

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

You will submit four written reflective journals by Sunday nights as specified in the syllabus schedule. Enjoy the experience of writing well in your authentic voice. The journals don't need to be long. A paragraph or two, or longer if you feel like, will suffice. These will not be graded. I will read them and offer brief comments. But they're intended to get you translating your thoughts into writing. These journals are a chance for you to write about your personal experience and perceptions, answering questions such as, "What was the most important thing that happened to me in the last week or two? What was a new perception or experience or realization for me? What challenged or bored or upset me? What did I learn that I didn't know before?" Open your writing to your entire USC experience—intellectual, social, emotional, creative.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY

Assignments must be turned in on the due date/time electronically via Blackboard or via hard copy, depending on what the syllabus specifies. *Any assignment turned in late, even if by only a few minutes, will receive a grade deduction (for example, if your work merits a B+ grade, you will be given a C+ grade).* If your internet breaks down on the due date, you must deliver a hard copy at the beginning of class on that day. If you are unable to attend class on that day, make arrangements for the work to be delivered to the classroom or to my box *by the start of class*. Late or not, however, you must complete all required assignments to pass this course.

NOTE: An important part of this course is a series of writing workshops ("peer review"), in which students critique each other's drafts of major assignments. *You are expected to have **a polished** (not a rough) draft of the required assignment completed for every workshop. Failing to contribute your draft on time will cost you -15 points each time.* The peer review also includes a Q&A, where you may ask me specific questions about your paper; you may also ask me via email or visit me in my office. However, in accordance with the Writing Program's policies, I will not read your drafts.

DOCUMENT FORMAT

Business documents, memos, letters, and reports: See textbook for specific document's requirements. Type format: 12 point, Times New Roman font, single-spaced, one-inch margins, pages 2-x numbered. References/Works Cited page and in-text citations should adhere to MLA standards. I will further specify format requirements for each assignment.

Selected Electronic Resources:

You must have your UNIX, not your Marshall, password to access Blackboard.

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 reevaluate 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 reevaluation 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 or 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. Historically the average grade for students in the Marshall School's Writing 340 is 3.2.

Grading turnaround time: Please allow a minimum of ten working days for grading.

Retention of Graded Papers: All graded work that affected the course grade will be retained for one year after the end of the course if the graded work has not been returned to the student (i.e., if I returned a graded paper to you, it is your responsibility to file it, not mine).

ONE-ON-ONE WRITING CONFERENCES
We will meet one-on-one several times during the semester. Usually these meetings take place during my office hours or during designated class time. 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. Also pay close attention to any special requirements for each conference that I might mention in class. *Failure to attend a scheduled conference, or showing up late to one, counts the same as an absence or lateness in a regular class session (see below).*

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.** Absences will negatively impact your final grade (each missed session above two, excused or not, will cost you 5 points). If you are absent four or more times prior to November 10 (the last day to withdraw from a course with a grade of "W"), I may ask you to withdraw by that date.

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 dinner, 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.

Please note two important aspects of classroom management:

- TURN OFF CELL PHONES AND ALL OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES—unless I ask you to use them.
- Straighten up your area before you leave, so that the next class finds a clean and pleasant learning environment.

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.*

Other requirements:
- A laptop or desktop with high-speed internet access
- Standard word-processing software (Microsoft Word)
- Access to a laser printer or equivalent
- A working USC e-mail account *that you check daily*

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 (WC) is located on the second floor of Taper Hall (Room 216). Some WC tutors have special skills in working with students for whom English is a second language.

In addition to one-on-one consultations, 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   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 https://hbr.org/topic/business-writing

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 the Writing Center—sometimes on a regular basis—if I believe you need it.

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). Simply, plagiarism can be characterized as "academic theft." More simply, if **they** said it or wrote it first, it's **theirs**—even if you put the idea in your own words. If you're unsure, cite.

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.

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/ . The USC Marshall community will not tolerate failure to adhere to the academic conduct standards set forth by these guidelines and our programs.

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.*

Conduct

The university does not tolerate discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the *Department of Public Safety* http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community—such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member—can help initiate the report or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services* (RSVP) https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage https://sarc.usc.edu/reporting-options/ describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute **http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali**, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs (**www.usc.edu/disability**) provides certification

for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus unfeasible, USC Emergency Information (**http://emergency.usc.edu/**) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

COURSE OVERVIEW & DUE DATES
(_Subject to change_)
"Chap." refers to your textbook, "The Business Writer's Companion," 7th edition, by Alred et al.

WEEK	DAILY ACTIVITIES	TASKS, READINGS, AND DUE DATES
Week 1 8/21 8/23	Introduction to course. Writing diagnostic. Overview of expectations, what you'll write, when, and why.	Read syllabus. During class time write a memo per instructions. Homework: Evaluate crisis correspondence by reading "Executive Communication at USC after an exposé" on BB and answer questions. **DUE at class time:** Bring a printout of your evaluation of crisis communication at USC for discussion. You will turn these in. Practice writing a letter of recommendation. **DUE Sunday, 8/27, 10 p.m.: Reflective Journal 1 (submit to BB)**
Week 2 8/28 8/30	Discuss A1: Business Trends A1 discussion; questions about choosing your topic, outlining, drafting, writing, revising Routine correspondence: memos, emails, letters, etc. Format and readability in business writing (organization and drafting) Elements of memo writing Memo rewrite	**Before class time:** Read "Five Steps to Successful Writing, pp. xxv-xxxii. Pay special attention to "purpose," "assessing audience," and "determining scope." Guest speaker, USC Marshall librarian Kim Esser **Before class time:** Read Chap. 1, pp. 22-24. Research your topic Consult Chap. 4 **DUE FRIDAY, 9/1 BEFORE MIDNIGHT:** **Topic Choice for A1 (post on BB)**

Week 3 9/4 Labor Day University Holiday No class. 9/6	Audience analysis Audience-directed writing Characteristics of effective business writing, and qualities to common to all good writing; concept of the 4 Cs and 3 Ps	Homework: Read Chap. 1, pp. 3-4 Read supplemental "audience analysis" PDF on BB before class Read Chap. 10 before class Write A1 outline and rough draft as a basis for polished draft. Then write A1 polished draft for Monday's deadline.
Week 4 9/11 9/13	A1 peer review draft Documenting and evaluating your sources. How to spot fake news. Grammar and punctuation review **Quiz on your reading** Visual rhetoric and visual aids in documents. The exciting world of infographics.	**DUE 9/11 A1 polished draft, bring to class** Read Chap. 3, pp. 82-86, 92-104 before class Read Chap. 11 and Chap. 12 before class **In-class quiz** covers Chap. 11 and Chap. 12 Read Chap. 7 before class
Week 5 9/18 9/20	Business and Ethics What are business ethics? Solving an ethical dilemma in the workplace; watch and write about mini-case videos. Usage: Why grammar matters. **Quiz on your reading.** Discuss A2 (Business Ethics and CSR) Identifying issues, conclusions, reasons	**DUE 9/18 Final AI by class time, bring printout to class** Read "Appendix: Usage" in textbook for **in-class quiz** Read definition of CSR on BB Read about "Reconciliation and Redemption Brands" http://trendwatching.com/trends/reconciliation-brands/ **DUE Sunday, 9/24, 10 p.m.: Reflective Journal 2 (submit to BB)**

Week 6 9/25	How to avoid offending, confusing, and boring your reader. Tricks all good writers know. Achieving clarity.	
9/27	Collaborative writing exercise	Read Chap. 1, pp. 4-6, before class.
Week 7 10/2 **No class**	One-on-one conferences, ACC 228	**Mandatory meetings.** **Must bring A2 rough draft/outline with questions to conference.**
10/4 **No class**	One-on-one conferences, ACC 228	
Week 8 10/9	A2 Peer Review	**DUE 10/9 Polished Draft A2, bring to class and post on BB**
10/11	Grade your peers. Team project discussed and teams formed	**DUE 10/11 Final A2, bring printout to class.**
Week 9 10/16	Elements of formal reports and proposals	Read Chap. 6 before class. Look at examples on BB.
10/18	Discuss A3, Persuasive writing	Elements of a "position paper." How to motivate readers to care. **DUE Sunday, 10/22, 10 p.m.: Reflective Journal 3 (submit to BB)**
Week 10 10/23	Topic choices discussion Persuasive writing exercises	**DUE 10/23 by class time: A3 topic choice and outline/rough draft (post to BB)** Bring examples of persuasive writing to class. (online or printed out—an opinion article, ad, sales letter, flyer/brochure, recruitment letter, web site, etc.)
10/25	What are your biases? Take an online evaluation. Critical Thinking: Revision exercise—find those reasoning flaws	**DUE 10/25 by class time: Team project memo, print out and bring to class.** Read "Logical Fallacies" on BB before class
Week 11 10/30	A3 Peer Review and Q&A	**DUE 10/30 Polished Draft A3, bring to class**
11/1	Homeruns and belly flops: Learn from good and bad examples; review of style, grammar, usage; how to revise	**DUE 11/1 by class time: Final A3 (post to BB/TurnItIn)**

Week 12 11/6	TEAM WEEK Executive summaries and other elements of reports	Read VoiP formal report example on BB before class Team discusses report's focus, research, and timeline
11/8	Team collaboration	Team edits and expands report in class **DUE Sunday, 11/12, 10 p.m.: Reflective Journal 4 (submit to BB)**
Week 13 11/13	Team collaboration	Team finalizes report in class
11/15 **No class; one-on-one conferences**	Portfolio conferences (office hours and class time)	**Mandatory meetings.** **Must bring portfolio choices with questions to conference.**
Week 14 11/20 **No class; one-on-one conferences** 11/22 Thanksgiving recess. No class	Portfolio conferences (office hours and class hours)	**Mandatory meetings.** **Must bring portfolio choices with questions to conference.**
Week 15 11/27	Team project showcase and discussion	**DUE 11/27 by class time: Team Project Final, bring printout to class; do oral presentation**
11/29	Writing 340 revisited; evaluations	**DUE 11/29: Portfolio, bring to class. Bring laptops to class**

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 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
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)**	Discussion of business ethics, review of codes of conduct, and CSR, ethics mini-case exercises
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, tailoring communication messages accordingly, and applying appropriate grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, tone, and style.
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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.