

WRIT 340: Advanced Writing and Communication for Engineers

FALL 2017

Section 66800 (MWF 9:00-9:50) (LVL 3B)

Section 66818 (MW 2:00-3:20) (GFS 217)

Section 66824 (MW 3:30-4:50) (SOS B47)

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Engineering Writing Program website: <http://viterbi.usc.edu/ewp>

Illumin website: <http://illuminate.usc.edu/>

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

340 Advanced Writing (3-4, FaSpSm): Instruction in writing for various audiences on topics related to a student's professional or disciplinary interests, with some emphasis on issues of broad public concern.
Prerequisite: WRIT 130 or WRIT 140. *Required.*

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In five years, students will exhibit:

- A variety of professional and academic engineering communication skills.
- Proficiency in writing for academic, public, and professional audiences.
- Flexibility in communicating for a variety of purposes.
- The ability to prepare effective written documentation both individually and collaboratively.
- The skills required to create and deliver effective oral presentations.
- An awareness of the ways engineering affects broader society.
- An understanding of ethics within engineering practice.
- The ability to engage in rigorous critical analysis.
- The ability to give and receive critical feedback.

COURSE OUTCOMES

At the end of WRIT 340 students should be able to:

- Write for academic, public, and professional audiences.
- Demonstrate research and documentation abilities at the upper-division level.
- Identify and analyze pressing ethical issues within an engineering discipline.
- Compose a professional proposal for a real-world constituent that reflects the importance of engineering solutions in society.
- Revise and edit to advanced academic and professional standards.
- Prepare and give professional oral presentations for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Utilize visual aids in both written and oral communications.
- Articulate the impact engineering has on everyday life.
- Work collaboratively to research, write, and present information and ideas.
- Write accurate, precise technical prose.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Most of the exercises that we will do will be based on *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Joseph Williams and Gregory Colomb. The materials based on this text will be provided to you in class. However, this is a very handy book for those interested in delving further into the subject matter. It is available on Amazon.

You will do a lot of additional reading and research in this course. Most of it will be in service of your own projects, and therefore it will be chosen on an individual basis. As with all writing courses, a dictionary and a thesaurus are likely to be of use. If you are shaky on any of the details of grammar or usage, a grammar and usage manual will be of great use to you. **The expectation in 340, however, is that students have moved beyond the need for instruction in the mechanics of writing.**

ASSIGNMENTS:

As much as possible, while still meeting the university's criteria for academic writing, the assignments in this class are designed to mirror the kinds of communication tasks you can expect to find in the workplace.

While the course is weighted toward writing, you will also give oral presentations. These will increase in length, in sophistication, and in point value as the semester progresses.

There are two significant components to the course: 1) individual assignments, largely tailored to a student's specific interests and 2) a group project.

INDIVIDUAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (about 750 points)

You have two main individual writing assignments here in WRIT 340. You will draft and re-draft them throughout the semester, ending with a polished portfolio that showcases your best writing. You will also have a few individual in-class writing assignments that cannot be made-up.

Illumin (300 points)

You will respond to a Call for Papers from *Illumin*, an on-line magazine published by the USC School of Engineering. Your audience is the actual *Illumin* audience – real people interested in science and engineering who might not be professional scientists or engineers. The *Illumin* assignment consists of three components:

1. *Annotated Bibliography* (20 points)

As part of your preparation for writing your article, you will submit an annotated bibliography identifying potential sources.

Due: 9/6 Beginning of class (one paper copy)

2. *Magazine Article* (180 points)

You will attempt to educate non-engineers on some aspect of engineering practice relevant to people in their everyday lives.

Polished draft due: 9/11 for in-class peer review (bring two paper copies)

Final draft due: 9/15 via BLACKBOARD before 5pm

3. *Illumin Oral Presentation* (100 points)

You will give an oral presentation based upon your *Illumin* article.

Dates: in-class 9/18 and 9/20

Ethics Paper (200 points)

You will examine the role of engineering in a relevant ethical context. Your audience will be your professional peers in your own engineering discipline.

You will write a paper that examines the role of engineering in a relevant ethical context. Depending on your approach, this might be an article, a personal statement, a memo, or a position paper.

Polished draft due: 10/23 in-class peer review (bring two paper copies)

Final draft due: 10/27 at 5pm via BLACKBOARD

Portfolio (250 points)

The portfolio is a university-wide 340 component and will consist of two *substantially rewritten* course assignments: *Ethics and Illumin*. Details will be discussed in class.

Due date: **11/29 in class (must submit two hard copies of each revised paper) (last day of class – no late submissions accepted)**

In-Class Assignments (will vary)

From time to time, we'll be writing in-class and submitting our in-class writing for assessment.

These in-class assignments are listed in the calendar and a few might be added as we go along the semester. I will give you ample notice of changes or additions to the course calendar. There are no makeup opportunities for this in-class work.

COLLABORATIVE WORK (350 points)

The collaborative writing portion of WRIT 340 may be fulfilled as follows:

- business plan based upon an engineering innovation
- NAE Grand Challenges Literature Review and Recommendations report.

You will work in teams of three - five of your own choosing.

The projects require a series of deliverables according to the following schedule:

- Group Status Memorandum (**50 points**): **due 11/10 prior to 5pm via Blackboard (one per group)**
- Oral presentation (**100 points**): **in class on 11/27**
- Final written report (**200 points**): **due 12/4 prior to 5pm via Blackboard (one per group)**

PROFESSIONALISM **This is an interactive-style class.** Things don't go well if people are routinely absent or late. Therefore, you are expected to attend class, to arrive on time, and to stay until the end of the class session. We need everyone to participate and attend consistently so that we can get the most out of time together!

Many of our class sessions will involve you working, independently or in teams, on communication activities. These might be oral or written. Written exercises might include drafting documents, such as a letter or a memo. They might include giving colleagues feedback on their work or revising your own. You might be required to submit such documents for my review and/or grading or you might not. In all instances, you must put forth effort and focus and you must fully engage the activities.

A particularly important contribution you'll make to the class is critiquing other students' work in our polished draft peer review workshops. Our in-class peer review workshops are crucially important, and 1) *you must attend them*, 2) *you must arrive with a full written draft*, and 3) *you must give full and useful feedback to your classmates*.

If you do miss a class, **you** are responsible for any missed information and **you** must arrange for on-time delivery of anything due in class. **You will not be permitted to make up any work done in a missed class without a doctor's note stating explicitly that your condition made it impossible for you to attend class on the given date and time.**

Questions I do not expect to hear from you: Did we do anything important yesterday? What did we do yesterday? Did I miss anything? Can I come to your office so you can catch me up on what I missed? Will you send me an email and let me know what you did in the class I missed?

Assume that we did do something important and that you did miss it. Contact one of your colleagues to fill you in on what you missed. Better yet, let one of your colleagues know in advance that you'll be missing class and he or she can take notes and collect any handouts for you.

You are expected to be an active contributor to the class, not a passive listener. Active contribution includes volunteering answers to questions; asking questions; requesting clarification; challenging me or other students in productive ways; contributing useful and relevant comments; and engaging fully in any workshop-type activities. Just showing up for class and sitting there silently does not constitute active contribution.

Other professionalism requirements:

Taking relationships very seriously. You will interact with lots of people this semester – with your classmates, with your group, with your client, with librarians, and potentially with others in both the USC community and the community at large. You will be expected to do everything you can to facilitate smooth interpersonal relations.

Attending and being prepared for meetings. I may *require* you to meet with me individually this semester. More likely, I will *invite* you to meet with me individually according to your own needs. *You* will be responsible for guiding the discussion. Have questions prepared regarding not only the specific piece of writing we're working on in class at the time but also your writing more generally. It would be wise to bring your last graded assignment as well as the assignment you are currently working on.

Do not expect to sit there silently while I read your work and “pre-grade” it or “tell you what you have to fix” to get an A. The grading process and the conferencing process are fully independent of one another. **Anyway, any list of “what to fix” I could possibly give you would not be exhaustive, and it would be unfair to you for me to pretend otherwise.**

Please do not limit our meetings to the ones I require. You will have a better experience in WRIT 340 if you make use of office hours or appointments and meet with me regularly. If my office hours don't fit your schedule, we'll work something out. I want you to get as much out of this class as possible.

When you have an appointment with me, you are expected to attend that appointment. If you must cancel, it must be for a good reason and you must give reasonable notice (guideline: 24 hours).

Similarly, you must follow through on all appointments you have with others – meetings with your group, meetings with your group's contacts, meetings with resource people helping you with your project, etc. Failure to show up for scheduled appointments and failure to follow through on other scheduled/promised activities is particularly egregious and will result in loss of points.

Understanding the instructor's role. **I am not your editor or proofreader. Please do not send me drafts, outlines, or portions of your assignments and ask for feedback, revisions, “edits,” or corrections via email or otherwise. However, if you would like to visit me during office hours and ask specific questions regarding your writing, please feel free. During office hours, I am also happy to review up to one page of your writing and answer your questions about it.** Most students find that attending office hours can greatly enhance the learning process in WRIT 340, and I would love to meet with you in person and answer any and all of your questions during office hours.

Avoiding rude behaviors. The following behaviors are significant violations of the professionalism requirement: leaving cell phones on in class or during conferences; texting during class; leaving your area messy at the end of class; whispering with those around you; and sleeping or reading or doing other homework during class.

Taking care with email. Your email represents you as much as any other written or oral communication does. Take care to make it professional. That means applying all of the rules of good writing that we're discussing in class to your email. This includes, but is not limited to, using good grammar, spelling, and punctuation; employing a direct and concise writing style; and organizing the document to further its purpose. It also means employing a respectful and professional tone.

All of the above are basic expectations for this class. If you adhere to these standards, you will be eligible to earn all available points for this class. Failure to adhere to professionalism standards will result in a loss of points and a revision of your grade downward of at least 1/3 of a letter grade. Thus, a B could be lowered to a B- or lower if a student exhibits poor professionalism, fails to participate in class discussions and engages in behavior as set forth above.

GRADING:

Grading of written work:

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. We will go over the requirements for good writing in class throughout the semester, and you can refer to the rubric common to all 340 classes at USC and the rubrics attached to this syllabus. All assignments will be graded according to these rubrics and assigned point values according to the following ranges:

- 90-100% (A)
(Your supervisor would be very impressed and remember your work.)
- 80- 89.99% (B)
(Your supervisor would be satisfied with the job, but not impressed.)
- 70- 79.99% (C)
(Your supervisor would be disappointed and ask you to revise or rewrite sections before allowing the document to be distributed.)
- 60- 69.99% (D)
(Your supervisor would be troubled by the poor quality of the work and would advise you that your position might be in jeopardy.)
- 0- 59.99% (F)
(Your supervisor would begin looking for your replacement because the work wasn't submitted or did not meet even minimum specifications.)

Pluses and minuses equal the top and bottom 2.0 points of each grade category (i.e., 88.0 to 89.999 = B+ and 80 to 81.999% = B-).

Grading of oral presentations:

We will go over the criteria for good presentation in class. Generally, you'll be graded on these components: content (your ideas and information); organization (how well you've put the content together into a logical and understandable form); support (how well you supported your position); and delivery (how well you've used yourself – your voice, your body, etc. – as a tool). The rubric for oral presentations is attached to this syllabus.

Critical information: 1) **This course is not curved.** 2) **You are not graded on your effort. You are graded solely on product** – the end result, the document or presentation that the reader has in front of her or him.

Turning things in on time

Assignments turned in prior to the due date and time are eligible to receive the full number of points available for that assignment. Assignments turned in within the next 24-hour period will be eligible to receive 90% of the number of points available for that assignment; within the next 24-hour period, 80%; and so on. For example, if an assignment is due at 11:00 on Blackboard, and it is submitted at 11:00:01, it will be considered late and subject to the penalty. Please plan accordingly and do not wait until the last minute.

Anything more than five (5) days late will be eligible to earn 50% of the available points, no matter how late it is, if the work is adequately completed. **Do not**, under any circumstances, **fail to turn in an assignment**. Even if you have earned enough points with the other assignments to technically put you into passing territory, **you will automatically fail the class if an assignment is not turned in or if an oral presentation is not given**. (This does not apply to in-class writing assignments for which there are no make-ups.)

Critical information: It is very rare that a student is able to increase the quality of a paper enough with extra time to compensate for the late penalties. Bottom line: It's smarter to work and meet the deadline than to turn in a late paper, even if the late paper is better than the on-time version would have been.

More critical information: All submissions must be submitted in the format denoted on the related Assignment. **E-mailed submissions will not be accepted.**

*****Failure to turn in polished drafts on time and/or failure to participate in the peer reviews of drafts will result in an automatic 10% grade penalty on the final assignment related to the missing or late draft.*****

PLAGIARISM:

The School of Engineering adheres to the University's policies and procedures governing academic integrity. These standards will be enforced in this class on all assignments.

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. (*University sanctions range from a grade of F in the course to suspension from the university.*) Most simply, plagiarism can be characterized as 'academic theft.'

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.’
- ‘Note: Culpability is not diminished when plagiarism occurs in drafts which [sic] are not the final version. Also, if any material is prepared or submitted by another person on the student’s behalf, the student is expected to proofread the results and is responsible for all particulars of the final draft.’
- ‘Acquisition of term papers or other assignments from any source and the subsequent presentation of those materials as the student’s own work, or providing term papers or assignments that another student submits as their own work.’

Because of the serious penalties for plagiarism, you should insure that any writing you submit represents your own assertions and abilities and incorporates other texts in an open and honest manner . . . In academic assignments, writing is assumed to be the original words and thoughts of the student unless [the reader is] told otherwise (i.e.: material from other sources is clearly and properly cited).

From *Trojan Integrity: Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism*
(USC Office for Student Conduct, rev. Fall 2000, pp. 2-3)

In WRIT 340, 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 should you draw the line? According to the Writing Program,

“The Writing Program encourages collaboration with your instructor, with Writing Center Consultants, and with your classmates; 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 more than the first page of your paper.”

From *Writing 140 Course Book*, p. 6

Bottom line regarding plagiarism: If someone else’s *idea* or *information* or *language* appears in your writing – *anywhere* – and you haven’t indicated that you got that idea or information or language from someone else, **you will get a zero on the assignment; you will fail the class; and you will get reported to the university honors committee for further discipline. If you have ANY questions as to what constitutes plagiarism at USC, please review the University guidelines in your Student Conduct Code here: <https://policy.usc.edu/files/2016/10/SCampus-2016-2017.pdf>.**

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST:

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based upon a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. You can obtain a letter of verification for approved accommodations from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible.

DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Caveat

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus and the calendar that follow. Ample warning will be given.

**COURSE OVERVIEW (subject to change)
FALL 2017**

WRIT 340: Advanced Writing and Communication for Engineers

	Class Activities	Tasks, Readings, Due Dates
Week 1 8/21 8/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intro to course, syllabus, expectations, assignments ○ Diagnostic ○ Diagnostics returned and discussed in light of rubric ○ 4C WRITING FOCUS: Correct 	COMPLETE in-class diagnostic on 8/21 READ: Harvard Business Review article on Blackboard under “Week One” Reading
Week 2 8/28 8/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Illumin Article Analyses and Topic Discussion ○ Illumin Topic Selection and Research 	DUE 8/28: READ at least three Illumin articles and bring them (hard copy or on your laptop) to discuss.
Week 3 9/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4C WRITING FOCUS: Clarity ○ 4C WRITING FOCUS: Concision 	DUE 9/6 Illumin Annotated Bibliography (hard copy beginning of class)
Week 4 9/11 9/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Illumin Peer Reviews ○ Oral Presentation Tips (Content and Delivery) 	DUE 9/11 Illumin Draft for Peer Review (two hard copies due beginning of class) DUE 9/15: 5pm VIA BLACKBOARD ILLUMIN FINAL PAPER
Week 5 9/18 9/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Illumin Oral Presentations 	Individual Illumin Oral Presentations (will be recorded)
Week 6 9/25 9/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teambuilding in the Workplace 	IN-CLASS WRITING: 9/27 (25 points) (bring laptops) (no makeups)
Week 7 10/2 10/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ethics Assignment Intro ○ Analysis of Frameworks ○ Hypotheticals 	READ: Ethics Folder on BB
Week 8 10/9 10/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ethics Topic Selection; Ethics Paper Workshop ○ 4C WRITING FOCUS – Cohesion ○ Sign up for Conferences 	
Week 9 10/16 10/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One-on-one conferences – pitch your ethics topic to me 	In lieu of classes this week, you will attend a one-on-one conference with me.
Week 10 10/23 10/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ethics Peer Review ○ Intro to Group Project 	DUE 10/23: Ethics Draft for Peer Review DUE 10/27: 5pm VIA BLACKBOARD ETHICS FINAL PAPER
Week 11 10/30 11/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Group selection ○ Group topic selection 	

Week 12 11/6 11/8	○ Group Meetings in Class	DUE: 11/10 – Group Status Memo due prior to 5pm via Blackboard
Week 13 11/13 11/15	○ One-on-one Group practices with Prof. Choi: groups will rehearse their presentations and present written progress of reports	In lieu of classes this week, your group will meet with me in the classroom and provide me with your draft report and present a run-through of your oral presentation.
Week 14 11/20	○ Portfolio Workshop	BRING LAPTOPS - students will revise their Illumin articles and Ethics papers
Week 15 11/27 11/29	○ Group Oral Presentations on 11/27 ○ Portfolios Due 11/29	DUE 11/27: all group oral presentations DUE 11/29: in class <u>PORTFOLIOS (two hard copies) (no late submissions accepted)</u> DUE 12/4: <u>GROUP REPORTS VIA BLACKBOARD BY 5pm (no late submissions accepted)</u>

GRADING RUBRIC FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

(This rubric, in addition to that set forth here: <http://ewp.usc.edu/courses/340-rubric.htm>, will be used for all written work in this class.)

	Exceptional	Above Expectations	At Expectations	Developing
CONTENT (30%) clear purpose and thesis, addresses issue, appropriate to audience	Purpose is extremely clear, content is highly relevant. Content is cohesive and effective in addressing the assignment.	Purpose generally clear. Content is generally relevant, supports thesis with minor deviations.	Purpose is recognizable, but should be clearer. Content is often but not consistently relevant.	Content is not relevant, or not consistently developed. Lacks sufficient detail to be convincing.
SUPPORT, PERSUASION (20%) Examples & evidence support persuasion; audience will readily "buy" your ideas.	Consistently well-developed and analyzed. Solid and specific supporting evidence, examples. Your audiences will be convinced, great job in terms of persuasion.	Supportive evidence, examples are generally specific, sufficient. Need to make a few more logical connections and provide more support for positions.	Supports bottom line/thesis to a limited extent. Need to think through evidence/examples again and tie them to your analysis.	Arguments are erroneous, or not relevant. Audience is wondering what the point is.
ORGANIZATION, BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (20%) Present main point/purpose, clear open, body and close, logical and cohesive flow	Audience gets purpose/idea right away. Organization supports overall effectiveness of the content. Highly cohesive and strong flow.	Audience will most likely get the idea. Might need to be more clear / direct. Organization is good, some reordering of content needed.	Organization not always effective and hinders the presentation of the purpose of the assignment.	Audience is confused. Purpose/thesis lacks focus and/or clarity.
MECHANICS (20%)	Excellent in grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure; no errors. Word choice, language and tone are excellent, vivid, precise.	Very good—with few lapses in grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure. The few errors do not impede readability. Word choice, language and tone are used appropriately.	Satisfactory but occasionally uneven grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure; Errors impede readability. Need to work on tone & style.	Poor grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure; vague word choice, errors seriously impede readability.
FORMAT/LAYOUT (10%)	Excellent formatting choices; design supports content.	Consistent in format with a few deviations that hinder clarity somewhat.	Formatting not always consistent and inhibits readability	Formatting is ill-considered and does not fit audience or the assignment.

WRIT 340 Grading Rubric for Oral Presentations

Criteria	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Score
Introduction (10%)	No intro	Intro is underdeveloped and irrelevant	Makes audience curious about topic	Gets audience's attention immediately	Intro is new, original and intelligent – audience appropriate	
Supporting Material (30%)	No supporting material	Generalized or inappropriate with no relevance to topic	Lacks originality or adequate development	Logical and relevant. Support includes examples.	All support is backed by strong evidence – displaying superior control of the presentation	
Transitions (5%)	No transitions	Incoherent transitions	Divides topic into to subtopics but moves among them randomly	Topics and subtopics in logical order	Smooth and natural transitions between topics	
Conclusion/Rec (5%)	No conclusion	Abrupt ending without clear connection to subject.	Acceptable but needs additional development.	Satisfying review of highlights and/or rec	Outstanding topic review and or/rec. Strong sense of closure.	
Effective Language and Vocal Delivery (40% points for group; 50% points for individual presentation)	Inconsistent and/or unintelligible	Muddled meanings, ineffective articulation	Generally clear but some articulation issues	Clear word choice and expressions. No grammatical errors.	Clear, distinctive, maintains audience attention. Seemingly spontaneous and natural	
Overall Group Delivery (applies only to group presentation) (10%)		Most members did not present well.	Some members presented well.	Almost all members presented well.	All members presented well.	

- * Very Poor: When the subject does not use any of the necessary criteria
- * Poor: The subject makes an effort but fails
- * Acceptable: When the subject meets the basic requirement
- * Good: When the subject is well-prepared and hence would do very well in a prepared presentation
- * Excellent: When the subject is a natural communicator and can talk about the topic with ease.