

## ENGL 306 Professional Writing Summer 2008 Class Syllabus

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<b>Office Hours:</b> 10:15 to 11:00 a.m Monday-Thursday or by appointment.	
<b>Section:</b> ENGL-306-01	<b>Time:</b> 8:00-10:15 a.m.
<b>Classroom:</b> RU 032	<b>Days:</b> Monday-Thursday

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### Course Synopsis

This course introduces you to writing for your career. Assignments will include instructions, proposals, résumé, letters, memorandums, formal and informal reports, and computer graphics.

This course focuses on creating documents commonly used in your field. The objective is to help you understand and develop professional communication skills. Activities include identifying and evaluating audience and organizational context, applying information design concepts, creating and using situational formats, and incorporating effective graphics. In addition, the course addresses process and collaboration aspects as you prepare information content through typical development and production stages—planning, drafting, revision, and editing. This course will also foster awareness and understanding of ethical responsibilities.

### Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Develop the most common types of documents produced in professional settings.
- Revise their work to achieve an effective style for writing in their career.
- Construct graphics that clearly communicate information visually.
- Interview professionals to gather information for reports.
- Collaborate with peers to produce documents.
- Offer substantial constructive feedback on drafts of documents.
- Use visual design principles to enhance the communication of complex information.

### Requirements

#### Prerequisites

Completion of English general education requirements, junior or senior standing, or permission of the instructor.

#### Textbooks

Oliu, Walter E., Charles T. Brusaw, and Gerald J. Alred. *Writing that Works: Communicating Effectively on the Job*. 9th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

Munger, Roger. *Document-Based Cases for Technical Communication*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

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## Assignments

All class activities and writing assignments are intended to meet course goals and objectives. Assignments and schedules are subject to change. Any such changes will be announced in class and posted online.

### Class Assignments

Class assignments will include a variety of tasks involving computer graphics, definitions and descriptions, memorandums, business letters, e-mails, proposals, and reports. Specifics for each assignment will be discussed in class. In some cases, you may be given time in class to complete these in class. If not, class assignments are due at the beginning of the next class period.

The purpose is to both practice skills covered in lecture and textbook readings. Class assignments will also be the focus of in-class discussion and workshops. Class assignments may be peer reviewed for feedback and recommendations. You are expected to complete assigned tasks prior to class and participate in class on the date the assignment is due. You must attend the full class period to receive credit for a class assignment.

Class discussion assignments will be submitted as printed copies to the instructor during regular class period. The class assignment must include your full name and date. Class assignments will not be accepted if submitted late. Do not submit class discussion assignments via e-mail or campus mail.

Unless otherwise stated, class assignments will be graded as pass/fail. You must attend class to complete and submit respective class assignments. Late submissions will not be accepted.

If a class assignment is rejected, you need to contact and discuss the reason(s) with the instructor. You will then have until the next class period to make any necessary revisions and resubmit the class assignment. Otherwise, you will not receive any credit for the class assignment.

### Project Assignments

Project assignments include both individual project and collaborative projects. The project assignments will be completed over the course of several class sessions. Specific sessions may include group workshops or review sessions for preliminary drafts.

Individual assignments will be graded as such. Collaborative project assignments will be graded as a team effort.

Unless otherwise specified, you will submit project assignments via e-mail as electronic file attachments. File-naming conventions and formats will be specified for each project assignment. All project assignments submitted as electronic files must conform to specified file-naming conventions and format specification to receive credit.

### Portfolio

You are expected to maintain a professional portfolio of all assignments written for this course, including revisions and final copies. Your portfolio must include a table of contents and a one-page introduction summarizing and explaining the content. In addition to the final project and relevant notes, you will provide a summary of the project objectives, processes used to plan and create the document, and a one-paragraph statement of lessons learned. You will submit your portfolio at the conclusion of the course. This portfolio (minus revision copies) may be used for the purpose of submitting writing samples to your prospective employer.

Your portfolio should be submitted as a printed document. The pages of your portfolio must be bound or stapled. Loose pages will not be accepted.

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## Submitting Assignments

The appearance of business documents is important. Use a word-processing application to prepare draft and final class and project assignments. If your work is sloppy or illegible, or if the printer didn't work correctly, it will impact your grade. You should carefully edit and proofread drafts and final versions to eliminate technical and typographical errors prior to submitting your work for peer review, evaluation, or grading.

All assignments submitted must be formatted appropriately to the contextual situation. Before you hand in your papers, you are expected to ensure your paper conforms to the standards described in class. All papers should be typed on 8.5 x 11 white paper and be 11 or 12-point type (font). Margins should be 1.0 or 1.25 inches left and right. Top and bottom margins will differ depending on the document, but your proposal and reports should have a 1-inch top and bottom margin.

All project assignments submitted as electronic files must conform to specified file-naming and format conventions to receive credit. Printed copies of outlines, drafts, and final assignments may also be required for review and comments and must be submitted in class. Handwritten or poorly formatted printed versions (single spaced text, fonts too small or too large for reading, unidentified work, etc.) are not acceptable.

## Team Projects

Much of the course work is collaborative, and several projects will be developed by assigned teams. Most situations in business, industry, and government require coordinating individual efforts with internal and external groups. In the best situation, collaborative writing can be an exercise in productive team work resulting in a successful project. Without following some basic guidelines, though, team projects can also be a frustrating writing experience. Learning how to cooperate and work effectively with other people to accomplish objectives is a vital skill. The following are some useful recommendations for collaborative writing assignments:

1. Determine a role for each team member and assign tasks leading to project completion.
2. Establish a working communication system. For example, you may use e-mail to share files and set specific meeting times for online discussions using the Chat function.
3. Clarify guidelines for working together.
4. Encourage participation from every team member by describing each person's responsibilities.
5. If handled correctly, conflict within groups often stimulates new ideas. Keep it professional, though, and respect each other's viewpoints.

Several project assignments in this course require you to participate and contribute in a team situation. As such, your team will submit a single assignment. The grade for these collaborative project assignments is based not only on the quality of the work submitted, but may also include assessments of each individual member and their respective contributions.

You are expected to participate in online forum discussions and to meet with and discuss project assignments with your assigned team members. If it is determined that any student is not contributing to efforts on a collaborative project, I will request a meeting to discuss the matter with all respective team members. If the situation is not resolved before the assignment is due, the student(s) may receive a failing grade for the project.

## Exams

There will be graded tests on assigned readings and other topics discussed in class as well as on specific language use skills. The exams must be taken on the scheduled dates. Exams may not be taken late without prior approval. There will be a final examination during the last week of the semester.

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## Grading

This is a writing intensive course. To meet college-level standards, I expect your writing to conform to appropriate academic and professional formats. I also expect you to pay close attention to spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence construction, and paragraph coherence.

Although an evaluation of any writing involves a measure of subjective judgment, there are certain standards for competent academic and professional documents. Many quality aspects of writing, such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence construction, and paragraph coherence, are relatively simple to identify and assess. An essential characteristic of quality in academic writing, however, is that ideas are clear and coherent, logically developed, and supported by details or evidence. The difference between basic competency and excellence in academic writing is not only a matter of creating understandable and accurate content, but also the choices made in researching, developing, structuring, organizing, maintaining, and effectively presenting information.

Editing and critique of project assignments is critical for developing effective communication skills. I will provide clear, informed, and detailed commentary for defined elements of each writing assignment. However, do not expect me to mark every writing error or to comment on every problem in your completed projects. Learning to identify and correct work independently is part of the learning process and essential to future success. In addition to project-specific grading criteria, I will base my evaluation and assessment of your work on clarity, accuracy, comprehensiveness, accessibility, conciseness, professional appearance, and technical correctness.

The grade you will receive will not only be determined by individual reading, critical thinking, and writing skills, but also by the overall effort you put into the course. Participating in any college-level class requires a significant commitment. To do well in this course will require you to devote considerable time to studying the material covered as well as for completing assignments.

- Read the assigned text before class. Most reading assignments require at least two hours and sometimes even more. You should not only read the text, but also annotate or take extensive notes.
- Study the project assignment sheets. Each project assignment includes a detailed explanation of the objectives and expectations as well as a grading checklist showing how I will evaluate completed assignments.
- Meet with other members of the class to complete the essay draft workshops. You can conduct these meetings electronically, but be sure to do it frequently and follow up with any team responsibilities.
- Plan and revise your writing. Although we will discuss techniques to make the writing and revision processes more efficient, it still takes time and effort.
- Review comments for completed assignments. Read my comments carefully. If you do not understand something, be sure to ask me to explain it. Use the checklists and notes to improve future writing projects.

## Participation

Your participation will be assessed on several factors, including daily attendance, online activity, and in-class discussions. Attendance and online activity will be determined by objective measurements. Assessment of in-class participation will be evaluated daily based on individual behavior. Points will be awarded to students who come to class prepared, are attentive during lectures, and actively contribute to discussions and other activities. Students who are unprepared for class, inattentive during lectures, or not actively engaged in class discussions will not receive points toward their class participation grade.

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## Course Grade

Your final grade will be determined by assessments of projects submitted in class and test scores based on knowledge of assigned readings, comprehension of topics covered in class, and demonstration of specific language use skills. A detailed description of specific grading criteria used for evaluation will be provided for each written essay assigned in class. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Project Assignments	35%
Class Assignments	20%
Exams	20%
Participation	10%
Portfolio	5%
Final Exam	10%

## Course Policies

### Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes. You can miss two classes for any reason without explanation. If you miss three or more classes, you will receive no higher than a "C" grade for the semester regardless of the quality of your work. If you miss four or more classes, you will fail the course.

Excused absences will only be granted due to extreme circumstances and are subject to approval of the instructor. At the instructor's discretion, a special project may be assigned to excuse an absence due to legitimate reasons. Please note that if you have two absences and then must miss class for a legitimate reason like illness, you still fall under the attendance policy described above.

Students unprepared for class or excessively tardy will be counted absent for the day. You are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to each class and to come prepared to discuss the material in class. You are to bring a printed copy of any class assignments, outlines, or project drafts for review in class or as required with assigned team members outside of class. Any student who has not completed the assigned reading prior to class or who does not complete designated assignments will be counted absent for the respective period.

If a project assignment is due on a day you are absent, the instructor must receive it by the start of class on the due date or it will not be graded. It is your responsibility to make up any work you miss when you are absent.

### Peer Reviews

Drafts of assignments may be peer reviewed at various times. Peer reviews provide valuable insights, feedback, and revision suggestions.

### Late Assignments

Assignments are due on the specified date. Late assignments will not be accepted or graded. With advance notification and prior approval, exceptions may be allowed for extreme situations. Any such late work submitted must be accompanied by a written explanation. The nature of your situation and the quality of the work will be considered in grading the respective assignment.

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## **Plagiarism**

Written assignments which are taken either verbatim or paraphrased from an unacknowledged source, published sources or a paper previously written by the student for another course or by another student will receive a failing grade for that assignment. A student who submits work taken either verbatim or paraphrased from an unacknowledged source, published sources, or a paper previously written by the student for another course or by another student may be given a failing grade for the course.

## **Personal Electronic Device Use**

Using personal electronic devices during class such as mobile phones (including sending or reading text messages), MP3 players, or laptop computers interferes with your participation and makes it hard for you to do well in this course. It may also disturb other students in class. Acceptable use of personal electronic devices includes conducting research for written essays, preparing drafts or reviews, and other specific tasks as may be assigned. Unacceptable use includes checking e-mail, sending or reading text messages, Internet browsing, playing games, watching videos, listening to music files, etc. (Exceptions include the use of any device as accommodation for a documented disability.)

Please turn off such devices before you enter the classroom and do not use them during class unless instructed. Failure to use such devices constructively may result in my asking you to leave class. In this case, you'll receive an absence for that class period.

## **Online Discussion Forum**

Questions and comments regarding material from the readings in the textbooks, specific project assignments, and grading criteria should be posted online in Discussions. Other students may also respond with additional questions, thoughts, or even suggestions by posting replies in the online forum. These threaded discussions allow everyone enrolled in the course to read all questions and comments, as well as instructor responses.

Specific subject-related forums are available for threaded discussions. The online forum is also useful for posting comments and questions regarding course activities, policies, and procedures, as well as anything related to the field of technical communications.

## **Radford University Honor Code**

By accepting admission to Radford University, each student makes a commitment to understand, support, and abide by the University Honor Code without compromise or exception. This class will be conducted in strict observance of the Honor Code, which reads as follows:

*I do hereby resolve to uphold the Honor Code of Radford University by refraining from lying, from the stealing or unauthorized possession of property and from violating the Standards of Student Academic Integrity.*

## **Students with Disabilities**

If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with the Disability Resource Office (DRO). The DRO is located in Room 32, Tyler Hall, telephone 831-6350. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper DRO forms and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

## **Contacting the Instructor**

Please feel free to contact me with any concerns or issues at any time. I prefer that you meet with me personally, either before or after class or during my office hours. I am also available for personal conferences at other times by appointment. You may also reach me by telephone at my office or home.

If your e-mail question or comment is also relevant for others enrolled in the course, you may be directed to post it in the appropriate topic in Discussion. Except for extreme circumstances, e-mail should only be used for submitting project assignments as electronic files or when requested by me. If so, you must use the Radford University server e-mail account. My e-mail address is dacunning@radford.edu.

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Schedule</b>	<b>Textbook Reading Assignments</b>
5/12 Mon	Introduction In-Class Assignment: Chapter 1, Exercise 1 (p. 22)	
5/13 Tue	Class Assignment: Audience Analysis Last day to Add/Drop for UG students	Chapter 1: Assessing Audience and Purpose Chapter 2: Organizing Your Information
5/14 Wed	Class Assignment: Chapter 2, Exercises 1 and 2 (58-59) Class Assignment: Chapter 3, Exercise 7 (91) Reading Exam 1: Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4	Chapter 3: Writing the Draft Chapter 4: Revising the Draft
5/15 Thu	Class Assignment: Case 3 / Tasks 1, 2, and 3	Chapter 8: Understanding the Principles of Business Communications Chapter 9: Writing Business Correspondence
5/19 Mon	Project Assignment 1: Internal Memorandum Class Assignment: Chapter 8, Exercise 1 (308) Reading Exam 2: Chapters 5, 8, and 9	Chapter 5: Collaborative Writing
5/20 Tue	Virtual Class	
5/21 Wed	Virtual Class	
5/22 Thu	Class Assignment: Resume Evaluations Class Assignment: Chapter 9, Exercise 3 (339)	Chapter 16: Finding the Right Job
5/26 Mon	Memorial Day Holiday - No Class	
5/27 Tue	Project Assignment 2: Résumé Class Assignment: Application Letter Evaluations	Chapter 6: Researching Your Subject

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Schedule</b>	<b>Textbook Reading Assignments</b>
5/28 Wed	Class Assignment: Case 1 / Tasks 1 and 2 Reading Exam 3: Chapters 6, 7, and 16	Chapter 7: Designing Effective Documents and Visuals
5/29 Thu	Project Assignment 3: Cover Letter Class Assignment: Case 6 / Tasks 1 and 2	Chapter 12: Writing Instructions
6/2 Mon	Class Assignment: Case 6 / Tasks 3 and 4 Reading Exam 4: Chapter 12	
6/3 Tue	Class Assignment: Case 5 / Tasks 1 and 2	Chapter 10: Writing Informal Reports
6/4 Wed	Project Assignment 4: Informal Report–Progress Class Assignment: Case 5 / Tasks 3 and 4 Reading Exam 5: Chapters 10 and 11	Chapter 11: Writing Formal Reports
6/5 Thu	Class Assignment: Chapter 11, Exercises 2, 3, and 5 (403-404)	
6/9 Mon	Project Assignment 5: Instructions Class Assignment: Case 4 / Tasks 1 and 2	Chapter 13: Writing Proposals
6/10 Tue	Class Assignment: Case 4 / Tasks 3 and 4 Reading Exam 6: Chapters 13 and 14 Last day to withdraw with grade of "W"	Chapter 14: Giving Presentations and Conducting Meetings
6/11 Wed	Project Assignment 6: Formal Report–Recommendation Class Assignment: Chapter 14, Exercises 1, 2, 3, and 4 (510-511)	
6/12 Thu	Portfolio Due	
6/13 Fri	Final Exam 8-10 a.m.	

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### Student Agreement

Please read all sections of this syllabus and sign your name below. Your signature here indicates:

- That you have carefully read the syllabus for ENGL-306 and the Radford University Honor Code (reprinted below).

*I do hereby resolve to uphold the Honor Code of Radford University by refraining from lying, from the stealing or unauthorized possession of property and from violating the Standards of Student Academic Integrity.*

- That you understand and agree to abide by the policies contained in the syllabus.
- That the work you submit in this class will be the result of your own efforts and writing.
- That you understand any student in this class who engages in academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs and may fail the course.

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Student Name (Print)

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Class Section

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Signature

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Date

Return a printed and signed copy of this page to the course instructor by the next class period.