English 2960: Professional and Business Writing
Common Syllabus

UT students take Professional and Buisiness Writing as a first taste of writing on the job. Recognizing that new media, new technology and new genres of writing have influenced workplace writing, a group of instructors designed this new common syllabus in summer 2009 to meet the skill needs of a new century. New opportunities for students to participate in community engagement can also transform this course.

To ensure that all students share a uniform experience, all instructors of ENGL 2950 should use the material that follows as the foundation for a customized syllabus.

Course Description and Overview

Course Description:

Catalog Description: Instruction and practice in multiple forms of professional and business writing within an organizational context. Emphasis on the analytical report based on research. Prerequisite: ENGL 1100 or 1110 English core course

The Four Focus Areas

The core of this course consists of the following four skill areas.

- *Research Skills* (using primary and library research to discover and employ information)
- *Correspondence Skills* (learning the generic conventions of each)
- *Promotional Writing Skills* (may or may not use primary research; to disseminate information; to inform and persuade public audiences that organizations communicate with)
- *Visual Communication Skills* (may appear as separate assignments or as components of other assignments)

Course Learning Objectives

Note: The Higher Learning Commission of Ohio now requires that all course syllabi include a list of course learning objectives. These course learning objectives must be included as written on your syllabus.

First, students in Composition II courses will be expected to continually build upon and strengthen the learning outcomes from Composition I (ENGL 1110); the following are the learning outcomes for Composition I:

- Establish a purpose and create a thesis in their own writing and be able to identify purpose and thesis in the writing of others;
- Demonstrate the knowledge of how genres influence reading and writing by producing writing in multiple genres and by incorporating various tools of arrangement, including the successful use of organizational patterns, transitional and topic sentences, and audience awareness;

- Develop arguments and perspectives through the successful incorporation of research, examples, details, rhetorical appeals, and counter-arguments;
- Demonstrate effective revision skills (global revision, editing, and proofreading) that leads to clear, concise and error-free prose*;*
- Develop critical reading skills, including the ability to locate rhetorical features in a text, identify the audience for a given text, and identify strengths and weaknesses in an author's arguments and reasoning;
- Locate credible scholarly sources, evaluate the reliability of those sources, and effectively use those sources within a text, including the ability to cite sources in-text and develop a works cited page*;*
- Use electronic environments for the drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and submitting of texts*;* and
- Demonstrate the ability to critique their own and peers' writing by understanding the collaborative and social aspects of the writing process.

In addition, students who successfully complete ENGL 2960 will also be able to:

1. Construct workplace documents that demonstrate understanding of management communication contexts, genres, and contemporary business topics*;*
2. Analyze and use quantitative data in professional documents*;*
3. Recognize, explain, and use the formal elements of specific genres of organizational communication: white papers, recommendation and analytical reports, proposals, memorandums, web pages, wikis, blogs, business letters, and promotional documents;
4. Explain the ethical, international, social, and professional constraints of audience, style, and content for writing situations a.) among managers or co-workers and colleagues of an organization, and b.) between organizations, or between an organization and the public*;*
5. Demonstrate effective use of secondary research resources (such as electronic databases) as well as primary data gathering strategies;
6. Critically analyze data from both secondary and primary research; clearly, concisely, logically, and ethically incorporate research into assigned writing while correctly attributing the source with proper citation using a specified documenation style (such as APA, IEEE, or MLA)*;*
7. Practice the unique qualities of professional rhetoric and writing style, using concise, clear, accurate, honest, economical and unambiguous prose and using direct order organization, readability, coherence and transitional devices*;*
8. Identify different format features in print, multimedia, and HTML documents, and develop document design skills*;*
9. Revise and effectively edit all assignments, including informal media (such as email messages to the instructor)*;*
10. Demonstrate professional work habits by effectively collaborating with other students, instructors, and, if applicable, Service Learning contact representatives.

Course Requirements:

Students will produce a minimum of 7,000 words in final draft form over the course of the semester. This will mean roughly 20-24 finished pages. At least one paper will be a documented essay using either MLA or A format and incorporating a number of sources with a sustained discussion that results in a paper of at least 8 pages.

Required Course Assignments and Assessment

The following ***core assignments*** are provided so instructors understand the amount of coursework to assign; each core should be incorporated into all 2960 courses. Because one of the goals of the course is to simulate workplace experiences (resulting in some assignments being produced in different media environments), specific page-counts or word-counts are less important than writing to meet the expectations of a management audience. The main goal is to create a ***common experience*** across sections and to answer the question "What should every student who has taken English 2960 be expected to know how to do?"

Note: Modules describing typical assignments and how they meet learning objectives are available on the course site. You can use these as guidelines for planning individual assignments. Additionally, you may refer to the *Common Syllabus Components Chart* to clarify how each assignment outlined below fits one of the four course focus areas previously outlined in this common syllabus.

The following core assignments should be assigned in all 2950 courses:

Writing Assignments:

- Correspondence documents such as emails, memos, letters, internal blogs.
- A promotional document, such as a sell sheet or brochure, PP briefing, press release, company wiki or webpage (can be written for business, non-profit, or community-based situations).
- An Analytical Recommendation Report, White Paper, or Business Proposal based on extensive primary and secondary research.
- A Final e-Portfolio to be uploaded into the University of Toledo Institutional Matrix.

The following elements should be incorporated into the assignments above:

- An **Abstract** that effectively summarizes a longer professional document.
- **Collaboration:** At least one of the above documents should be a collaborative effort between two or more students.
- **Graphics**: At least one document incorporating graphical representations of data.
- **Visual Rhetoric:** Use of visual design strategies, such as bullets, sub-headings, white space, etc…

- **Technology and Multi-media**: Assignments should incorporate some innovative technologies, such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, webcasts, presentation software, or webpages.

Course Policies

The following list contains suggested policies that should be incorporated into a course syllabus distributed to students.

1. **Computer Access and Proficiency**

Most sections of this course will be assigned to computer equipped classrooms. In addition, the university makes access to computers for student use at numerous locations on campus.

As instructors, you should assume that all students at the beginning of the course have a basic knowledge of writing on computers, including knowledge of how to create, save and store files in a format assigned by the instructor. Students should also know how to submit files to drop boxes, edit and view documents sent as email attachments, and access university sponsored software.

Please refer to the Sample Student Syllabi for an example of a computer proficiency statement.

2. **Peer Reviews**

Collaboration in the workplace is a common activity. Therefore, this course should stress the need for students to develop peer evaluation skills. In addition to offering students a collaborative experience, peer review develops a student's own sense of the standards for good writing, as well as aids other students in their revision. The Composition Program strongly recommends that instructors incorporate peer review activities as part of each assignment. See the Faculty Handbook for examples of peer review activities.

3. **Service Learning, Community Engagement & Experiential Learning**

A number of opportunities exist for classes to partner with UT campus programs engaged in the university's sustainability initiatives as well as institutions in the surrounding community for service and experiential learning projects. Students in classes engaged in these projects would write, as class assignments, research, instructional/informative, and new media documents that met needs of partner offices or agencies. While optional, these collaborations would allow students to experience the reality of writing in an institutional environment, receive feedback from readers outside the classroom, and make a material impact on campus and the city of Toledo.

Please refer to the Service Learning section of the Professional and Technical Writing Faculty Handbook for further information regarding service learning and community engagement. Also, see the Sample Student Syllabi for an example of a service learning/community engagement statement.

4. **Grading and Course Evaluation Criteria**

Final grades earned for this course will range from "A" (highest) to "F" (lowest) in accordance with the university's normal 12 point grade reporting system. Plusses and minuses are included with grades B through D. Entry in to some majors and professional programs may require a minimum passing grade of C.

All instructors must include a statement regarding how final course grades will be assessed on either the course syllabus or as a separate policy handout.

Please refer to the Sample Student Syllabi and/or Sample Grading Criteria handouts for sample grading criteria.

5. **Plagiarism**

Article VIII-A under the Conduct and Discipline System (Section 5) of the Student Handbook outlines the University's Policy regarding Academic Honesty for Undergraduate Students:

> Academic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating and plagiarism is a violation of acceptable standards of behavior and a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Cases of alleged academic dishonesty shall be resolved at the departmental, college, or graduate level in accordance with procedures printed in the University catalogue or printed in departmental, college, or graduate school publications. The accused student has the right to request that the case be reviewed by the Student Grievance Council (See Student Handbook Academic Grievances Section). College of Law cases are dealt with under the College of Law Honor Code. (34).

The University of Toledo Student Code of Conduct provides students with a minimal definition of plagiarism:

> Plagiarism - A student shall not represent the work of another as his or her own, or use a passage or idea from the written work of another without proper quotation marks, citation, or other explanatory insert. (22)

Instructors should, therefore, include a plagiarism statement in which they clearly define plagiarism on their syllabus.

Please see sample plagiarism statements on the Sample Student Syllabi.

6. **Collegiate Standards for Human Research Subjects**

Student projects which involve study of individual human beings through direct observation, survey or other data gathering techniques must abide by the national standards for Human Subject Research. If the finished work is posted, published or otherwise reported outside the specific classroom environment, research projects may need to be approved by the university IRB (Internal Review Board).

Instructors are cautioned to discuss Human Research Subject guidelines with their class members, make sure to obtain written permissions of subjects who participate in surveys or

studies, and, in general, encourage students to respect the privacy rights of human beings being observed in college research projects.

For more information, see the University of Toledo Department for Human Research Protection website:

http://www.utoledo.edu/research/RC/HumanSubs/index.html

7. **Course Accessibility**

Federal requires that all syllabi include a statement of accessibility. ***See the Sample Student Syllabi for accessibility statement models.***

8. **Department Policy on Distance Learning Courses**

Please refer to the English Department's policy letter to students for any DL version of English 2950 or 296