Course Description

This course is designed for students at Hartwick who expect to write in their future employment. Successful employees know how to communicate clearly and effectively, changing writing style and content for varying audiences and purposes. This class will focus on the difficult task of meeting readers’ needs while simultaneously representing your best interests and those of your employer. To meet that end, the assignments will cover a variety of tasks produced under different circumstances, some done quickly during class and some polished and perfected over time. Students completing the semester’s work should see a visible improvement in their writing, especially in terms of clarity and precision.

Course Plan

This course is designed to help you write more effectively in work situations. Much of workplace writing is done quickly and without time for revision. As such we will take a participatory approach and most of the assignments would leave room for multiple iterations (revisions). Even when you turn in a final document and you have an idea for further improvement of the existing document, I will give you an opportunity to improve on it. But it would be based on a case by case basis. Most of our assignments would be scenario based, working with actual corporate situations. So our class lectures and discussions would center on issues in corporate culture, resource availability etc. I will expect you to have a reasonably good understanding of the context and audience with a plan outline for execution before starting with any writing process. This is because you write in an organization for possible further action and not for grades.

Course Policies

Business Writing is a workshop class that includes in-class writing, peer group work, and case study based projects. In-class work missed as a result of attitude or unexcused absence related problems may not be made up. If you must miss class, use the professional work model: e-mail your instructor with the date and reason for your absence before the class you miss and be sure that any homework is handed in electronically and on time. You can at most miss 5 class periods during the semester without failing the class. Be in class full time. Late entry would be counted as absence. Individual or small group conferences with the teacher will be scheduled each semester; a missed conference counts as an absence.

Course Objectives

1. The student should be able to write in any context.
2. Develop and understand various strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents that respond effectively and ethically to professional situations.
3. Learn and apply strategies for effective group collaboration.
4. Understand and use various research methods to produce professional documents.
5. Develop strategies for using and adapting various communication technologies for projects. 
6. Learn to argue with visual data, understanding and implementing principles of document design.

**Students with Disabilities**
Appropriate accommodations will be made for all students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please make an appointment with Patty Jacobsen, the Learning Support Specialist, in the Academic Center for Excellence located in Dewar 420, ext. 4435.

**Plagiarism and Cheating**
Infractions are very serious and subject to University policy on punishing academic dishonesty. I have very little tolerance for materials which are not your own or for which no sources have been cited. If you are using material or ideas from another source and have questions about how to properly use and document that material, or if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me. I may revise this syllabus at any time during the semester. All revisions will be reasonable and based on class needs.

**General Expectations**
You need to maintain a copy of all the assignments in an electronic portfolio. At the end of the semester, you will turn in this folder which consists of all the assignments, including drafts worked on during the semester. Nothing should be thrown away as informal writing. Students not in class when writing is assigned are still responsible for completion of the assignment when due. **Late work will not be accepted without penalty unless students make arrangements for an extension before the due date.**

**Assignment Expectations**
Work must be appropriate to audience, purpose, and context. I will be looking for insightful, in-depth analysis of complex ideas; main points supported with evidence; focus and organization with appropriate subheadings; sentence variety in length and form; precise vocabulary used accurately; elimination of wordiness; facility with sentence structure and language usage; appropriate visual cues (italics, bold, spacing, and arrangement); and few or no mechanical errors that detract from meaning.

**Technological Expectations**
Our class will meet in a computer lab, and you will be required to perform appropriate tasks for business environments. I will make every effort to help you. You must come to class ready to learn new computer skills, and you must have access to a computer which produces Microsoft Word documents and be able to send your work to me electronically. I am hoping the computer lab would have this. If you don't know how to do this, ask for help early in the process. **Please bring a zip/ floppy disk everyday in class.** We would be using a list serve (yahoo group) for class discussions. This won’t happen during class but I will expect you to post comments to certain issues that I post online. Your grade would also reflect your effort in this front. **I will post the syllabus and lecture notes on my website.**

**Syllabus**
This syllabus will be discussed during the first day of class. Students should talk with the instructor if they anticipate a need for alternative assignments or readings.

**Text**
I won’t recommend *any one* text book but use multiple resources along the way. **I will provide you with handouts throughout the semester.**
Course Outline
Our class discussions and assignments would center on various documents, principles and projects. As I mentioned before much of our in-class assignments would be actual case studies. Your job would be to improve on the existing writing based on how you understood the context.

Assignments: We will do a series of memos, reports and letters in class throughout the semester. These assignments would be due each week. You will have time to work throughout the week and during the weekends. Maintain 2 folders; one having major assignments and the other with in-class / homework assignments. You will continue to submit the major graded assignments when due. However, submit the folder with all in-class / homework assignments at the end of the course.

We will have four major assignments to do throughout the semester.

Class Schedule (Tentative schedule, deviations may be necessary)

Week 1:
Rhetoric of Professional Writing (Extensive Discussion)
A persuasive writing assignment (1 page) explaining why you are in this class and broadly what you expect to learn. (Not graded)
A two page white paper written by an employee addressed to the bulletin board explaining why and how the issues discussed in class are important towards organizational communication.

Week 2:
Rhetoric of Professional Writing (continued)
Rhetoric of the Memo and E-mail
Air Bag Case discussed.
Airbag case report iteration due (Week 3)

Week 3:
Ethics and Business Writing (Social and cultural issues)
Letters and Reports
Group Discussion and class project 1: Air Bag Case report iteration.
Employment documents

Week 4: (WORKSHOP WEEK)
Assignment 1: Employment Project discussed
Workplace letter emphasizing the importance of discussed issues in class during the week (Weekend schedule). The letter is addressed by an employee to his/her immediate superior emphasizing how ethical documentation can contribute towards better employee performance. Research and cite an example from the web (if possible).
In-class Report Writing Assignment
Resume Workshop

Week 5:
Air Bag Case Report due (Final draft)
Shaping text for readers
Shaping text: Style, audience and the arrangement of information.
Class Exercise: Write a brief recommendation report in an attempt to change any current practice of an organization.
Week 6:
Employment project due - Graded # 1
Mid-term exam
Analyzing workplace writing
Analysis of Professional Context - Discussion
*Design a short 2 page persuasive report which explains how these different techniques discussed in class can be used for another problem of your choice. Be specific.*

Week 7
Building arguments
Policy, manuals and handbooks
**Discussion - Ballot Redesign Project - Major Graded # 2**
Project due (group of 2/3) - Week 9

Week 8 (WORKSHOP WEEK)
Assignments yet to be decided

Week 9
**Ballot Redesign Project due – Graded # 2**
Managing projects
In class assignment
**Corporate Website simulation project - Major Graded - 3**
Project due - Week 11 (Group of 2/3)

Week 10
Articles on Promotional Materials discussed.
Arranging information
**Business Report Project discussed - Major Graded 4**
Project due Week 12. (Group of 2/3)

Week 11
**Corporate website simulation project due- Graded # 3**
Writing Reports
Proposals
*Group Assignment (yet to be decided)*
Preparing for the final exam - discussion

Week 12
**Business report project due - Graded # 4**
Overview of Usability Testing
In Class Assignment(yet to be decided)
Folder with all class assignments (except for major graded assignments due)
**Final Exam**
Grading
Major Class Projects (4) - 15 % each.
Reports / letter Assignments - 15%
Class Discussion - 5%
Mid-term Exam - 10%
Final Exam - 10%

Graded Assignment Descriptions

Air Bag Case: In the middle of your second week as an intern at Vanguard Motor Company, you get a note from your supervisor saying that she wants to speak to you about a new project. Your work, to date, has been interesting, if slightly mundane. You are mostly revising procedure manuals according to updated company standards and then checking these against existing state and federal regulatory standards. In the note, your supervisor mentions that it’s your “excellent writing skills” that are in demand for this new project.

Employment Search Project: Your assignment is to locate a job for which you are qualified and apply for it. You can use print or online materials to search for a position—but the World Wide Web is an excellent resource for job postings, at least in some fields.

Ballot Redesign Project: Take a look at the election ballot. This ballot was the one that State of Florida voters in Palm Beach County used to register their choices in the 2000 presidential election. (This is the ballot that caused all the ruckus. There were numerous reports of voter confusion about the ballot, as well as claims that people inadvertently voted for the wrong candidate. The problems could have had a major impact on the outcome of the election!) Your assignment is to redesign the ballot in order to reduce (if not eliminate) voter confusion.

Corporate Website Simulation Project: The Corporate Web project is a major client-based research simulation that takes writers through the process of conducting research for a company or organization and recommending (and, in some cases, actually implementing) changes based on that research.

Business Report Project: This project asks you to consider how a particular legal or political event -- a recent or expected event (occurring within the past 6 months) -- is likely to impact the business practices of your company or client. In other words, you are going to select a particular piece of legislation (the US Patriot Act); or a political event (e.g., the war in Iraq), or a regime change (the election of a new party or president in a particular country); or a court case (e.g., the Supreme Court decision in the University of Michigan affirmative action case). You will then analyze the event and conduct research (1) to determine how that event is likely to affect your client's business and (2) to recommend ways that the client can anticipate the effect of those changes. You will present your research as a business report.