

# English W231: Professional Writing Skills

Fall 2016 • Course #3643 • WH 119 • Tu/Th 8:00 a.m. – 8:50 a.m.

## Instructor Information

**Rachel McCabe**

Office: Cedar Hall Lounge

Email: racmccab@uemail.iu.edu

Regular office hours: Wednesdays 12-3pm

## Required Texts

John M. Lannon, *Technical Communication*, 13th Edition. (TC on our assignment schedule)

Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *Rules for Writers*. 7th Ed. Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2011. Print.

## Prerequisite

You **must** have already successfully completed Indiana University's First-year Composition Requirement in order to be enrolled in this course.

## Course Objectives

**Welcome to W231!** In this course, we will gain experience in the planning, drafting, and revising of common forms of professional writing. To meet this goal, we will learn the formats and conventions of genres that circulate within most organized communication environments: email, memos, letters, proposals, analytical reports, and so on. In addition, and more ambitiously, we will work to develop our awareness of such genres as *rhetorical*—as documents that aim to *persuade* specific readers toward certain beliefs or actions. Overall, our work this semester will better prepare you for success in any language-intensive profession (and that's most of them!) by helping you to:

- Improve your processes for planning and completing document projects.
- Develop your understanding of your own writing process.
- Enhance your ability to read rhetorically, with a focus on readers and their expectations.
- Develop your collaborative abilities ("teamwork").
- Expand your understanding of professional writing as one important kind of literacy.

## Course Requirements

You will complete the following major assignments this semester, each aiming to familiarize you with a different aspect of professional writing. You will work with me to develop your final project for the course: a group-authored formal report based on a specific problem that you identify and propose at the beginning of the semester. **You must complete and hand in all assignments (other than quizzes/homework) in order to receive a passing grade for the course.**

Assignment	Points
Correspondences (four total, 10 points each)	40
Project proposal (group authored)	60
Job application packet	60
Document design analysis (group authored)	60
Group member progress report	30
Final report (group authored)	120
Short assignments (assigned as needed)	80 points (approx.)
<b>Total</b>	<b>450 points</b>

When handing in your assignments, please include your final copy, along with any drafts and comments from peer review, in a manila envelope (**not** a folder) labeled with your name and the assignment title. Assignments turned in without these supporting materials will be handed back to you and considered late. Note: This does not apply to the four letters you will write, which should be handed in as described on their respective assignment sheets.

## Grades

Grades are a measure of how successfully you have completed the assignment, not a measure of your worth or potential as a student. They are also not a reward for effort. At their best, grades are one important piece of how you learn both what you're doing well and what you can improve. If you have any questions about your grades after having carefully considered my comments on your work, please ask me.

Grade	%	What it Means
A	100 A+ 93-99 A 90-92 A-	<b>Excellent work.</b> Addresses all the requirements of the assignment in a concise and persuasive way. Manifests consistent attention to format, tone, genre conventions, and the rhetorical situation of the writing task.
B	87-89 B+ 83-86 B 80-82 B-	<b>Very good work.</b> Clearly addresses all of the requirements of the assignment. Writing is persuasive, informed, and attuned to the rhetorical situation of the writing task. Almost entirely free of errors in format or mechanics.
C	77-79 C+ 73-76 C 70-72 C-	<b>Adequate work.</b> Addresses all of the requirements of the assignment. Writing is correct overall with occasional lapses in format and mechanics. Demonstrates awareness of the rhetorical situation of the task, but clearly less than A or B work.
D	67-69 D+ 63-66 D 60-62 D-	<b>Less than adequate work.</b> Barely meets the most basic requirements of the assignment. Frequent lapses in format, genre conventions, tone, and mechanics indicate a clear lack of attention to the rhetorical situation of the writing task.
F	Everything else	<b>Failing work.</b> Fails to meet the most basic requirements of the assignment. Fails to attend to the rhetorical situation of the writing task. Fails to demonstrate proper attention to format, correctness, and mechanics.

## Course Policies

**Attendance.** You are permitted two absences, no questions asked, without detriment to your grade; subsequent absences, however, can (and likely will) each lower your overall course grade by a third of a letter.

If you are absent on a peer review day or do not have a completed draft for review, your final assignment grade will be lowered by one letter. If you must be absent on a peer review day, you must make arrangements with me in advance to complete your peer review requirement outside of class.

Attendance means both physical and mental presence in class—if your cell phone is out, you are not mentally present.

Tardiness will be penalized at my discretion; frequent tardiness or lateness that causes you to miss a large portion of a class meeting will count against your total absences.

That said, should you be faced with an emergency that affects your attendance in class, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students for more information about University-excused absences. The Dean's office is IMU M088, (218) 855-8187, [iubdos@indiana.edu](mailto:iubdos@indiana.edu) or <https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/dean-students/index.shtml>.

**Quizzes.** We will occasionally have unannounced, short quizzes on our readings and discussions. These cannot be made up unless you have made arrangements with me prior to your absence.

**Late work.** All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date listed. Work handed in late is uncharitable toward those who complete their work on time; consequently, I look upon late work with about as much tolerance as do the respective professional communities you will soon join. Assignments handed in at any time after the beginning of class on the date due will be penalized by 10% for each calendar day late, including weekends. Plan now for computers (and certainly printers) to be uncooperative.

**Professionalism.** View your work as an opportunity to develop good professional habits. This means timely completion and careful revision and proofreading. Grammar, spelling, and formatting errors may seem like minor issues, but they have major workplace consequences. I will be treating you as professionals, and I expect professional work and classroom participation. Behavior that would not be tolerated in the workplace will not be tolerated in class.

**Canvas.** Be sure to check Canvas regularly this semester for updates, announcements, and course materials. However, this syllabus and schedule should be with you at all times as it serves as the foundation on which all the Canvas materials are constructed.

**Plagiarism.** I expect you to know what constitutes plagiarism, in its forms both as outright theft and as failure to give proper credit due to inadequate or inaccurate source citation. (Consult the Indiana University "Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct" at <http://www.iu.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/>). If it is discovered that you have intentionally represented the work of another as your own, you will fail the assignment in question, and you may also fail the course in its entirety. In any instance of plagiarism, a letter concerning your academic dishonesty will be filed with the Office of Student Ethics. Once submitted, this letter becomes a permanent part of your IU student file. Moreover, if you fail the course for plagiarism, this F for

academic dishonesty is permanent and irremovable from your transcript. *Please see me if you have any questions whatsoever about source documentation or about plagiarism in general. I'm happy to help.*

## Student Support Services

**Office Hours.** I hold three hours of open office hours each week, which is the number of hours for which I am compensated by the University. I schedule these in one block one day a week. I am also willing to add or adjust these times in a given week; however, I expect your understanding if my schedule or personal commitments prevent this at times. If that should happen, I will encourage you to seek assistance from WTS (see below) or your peers. Should you need these alternate or additional hours, please email me at least 24 hours in advance. When coming to an office conference, please be prepared to guide the discussion by directing me to specific issues you'd like to address. These meetings will conclude either after 20 minutes or when you have a framework for composing or revising, whichever happens first.

**Writing Tutorial Services (WTS).** I encourage you to visit Writing Tutorial Services for feedback on your work at any stage of the writing process. Their incredibly valuable services are free to all IU students. WTS is not a proofreading service. Rather, tutors do something much more valuable: they assist you in developing your ideas and skills in written communication. You can call WTS at 855-6738 for hour-long appointments in the Wells Library, and you can check their website ([www.indiana.edu/~wts](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts)) for hours at other WTS centers.

**Student Disability Services.** I am aware that being an undergraduate offers a combination of time, interpersonal, academic, and intellectual challenges. Should you find that balancing or meeting these challenges please consult the Office of Disability Services for Students in the Herman B. Wells Library, Suite W 302, (812) 855-7578. If you arrived to campus knowing that you require assistance or appropriate academic accommodations for a university-documented disability, please speak with me after class, during office hours, or by appointment and provide the accommodations report from ODS. Once I have this report, you and I can work together to develop strategies to better ensure your success in the class.

**Mental and Physical Health Services:** Should you be experiencing physical health issues, please contact the IU Health Center at (812) 855-4011 or [www.healthcenter.indiana.edu](http://www.healthcenter.indiana.edu) at the earliest opportunity. (Please note that they cannot provide an excused absence form, which must be obtained via the Office of the Dean of Students.) If you are experiencing issues that could be better addressed by a mental health professional, the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) office offers two free sessions for all registered IU Students. Contact them at (812) 855-5711 or <http://healthcenter.indiana.edu/counseling/index.shtml> at your earliest opportunity.

**Veterans' Support Services:** I recognize the complexities of being a student veteran. If you are a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves, or a spouse or dependent, stay in contact with me if an aspect of your present or prior service makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of the course. I realize that you have no control over training and drill schedules, calls to active duty, GI Bill disbursements, and other aspects of service. If you make me aware of a complication, I will do everything I can to assist you or put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. Campus resources for veterans, service members, and families are located in the Veteran Student Services Center in the IMU, room M084. The VSS can be reached at (812) 856-1985, [vetserv@indiana.edu](mailto:vetserv@indiana.edu) or <https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/veterans-support-services/>.

**Campus Safety:** As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Title IX and our own Sexual Misconduct policy prohibit sexual

misconduct. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help. I encourage you to visit <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/> to learn more. If you are seeking help and would like to speak to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with a Mental Health Counselor on campus (contact information available at <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/employee/confidential.html>). It is also important that you know that federal regulations and University policy require me to promptly convey any information about potential sexual misconduct known to me to our Deputy Title IX Coordinator or IU's Title IX Coordinator. In that event, they will work with a small number of others on campus to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available to the student who may have been harmed. Protecting a student's privacy is of utmost concern, and all involved will only share information with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist.

## Contacting Me

The best way to communicate with me is during my office hours. If your query concerns content you missed when you were absent from class, you should review the course materials and contact another student in the course first. Reserve email for questions that can be given fairly brief (and therefore prompt) answers. I cannot respond to drafts of your writing through email; this is the purpose of office conferences. I respond to emails within 24 hours during weekdays, so do not be concerned if you don't hear back immediately, and be aware that even brief questions shouldn't wait until immediately before deadlines, as I may not respond in time.

## Three Tips for a Successful Semester

The two greatest determinants of your success this semester will be (1) how responsibly you keep up with readings and assignments; and (2) how fully you contribute as a knowledgeable, cooperative group member. Beyond that (and tip 3) is to be sure to email or see me with any questions you might have. That's what I'm here for, and I'm happy to help.

Now, let's get to work! I look forward to a rigorous and rewarding semester together.

--Rachel

# W231 SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

#	DATE	ACTIVITY	DUE
<b>Unit 1</b> <b>Key Concepts and Workplace Correspondence</b>			
1	T 8-23	Welcome to W231! Introduction to course and class policies.	
2	R 8-25	What is professional writing?	TC 1; TC 6.
3	T 8-30	Email as model of Professional Writing Distinguishing “essential information” Consent to course policies Assign Good and Bad News Letter	TC 2, TC 3, TC 15 (334-343, email) <b>Consent to course policies form (one signed copy).</b>
4	R 9-1	Letter format.	TC 16. <b>Email due before this class period.</b>
5	T 9-6	Memo Format. Managing tone. Assign Staff-Wide Email.	TC 14 <b>Good and bad news correspondence due.</b>
6	R 9-8	Tone.	TC 11
<b>Unit 2</b> <b>Proposals</b>			
7	T 9-13	Assign proposal and proposal groups Managing meetings and working in teams	TC 23; TC 5. <b>Memo revision assignment due.</b>
8	R 9-15	Proposal problem statements	TC 23 continued.
9	T 9-20	Proposal superstructure and persuasive goals	<b>Bring your group’s proposal problem statement.</b>
10	R 9-22	Proposal group problem statement conferences	
11	T 9-27	Proposal draft workshop	<b>Proposal—draft (2 complete and typed copies).</b>
<b>Unit 3</b> <b>Job Application Documents</b>			

12	R 9-29	Hand in proposals and conclude proposal discussion Assign group member progress report Begin job application packet unit	<b>Proposal—final due. (w/peer review draft, as per syllabus).</b>
13	T 10-4	Assign job application packet The rhetorical situation of the professional application	<b>TC 17</b>
14	R 10-6	Resumes continued.	<b>TC 17 continued. CLASS MEETING CANCELLED</b>
15	T 10-11	Resumes and levels of reading Cover letters: content, tone, formatting	<b>TC 17 continued. Review TC 11, pp. 232-43</b>
16	R 10-13	Resume and cover letter draft workshop	<b>Resume and cover letter—draft (3 complete and typed copies).</b>
<b>Unit 4 Document Design and Visual Communication</b>			
17	T 10-18	Introduction to document design “The first two things” of design Assign report design analysis	<b>Job application packet—final due.</b>
18	R 10-20	Document design continued	<b>TC 13.</b>
19	T 10-25	Typography and page layout Small group document analyses	<b>TC 13 continued. Bring one copy of any document you feel is “effectively” designed.</b>
20	R 10-27	Using visuals to persuade Aesthetic and informational visuals	<b>TC 12. Group member progress report due by today.</b>
<b>Unit 5 Recommendation Report</b>			
21	T 11-1	Assign final report	<b>TC 22. Group report design analysis—final due.</b>
22	R 11-3	The report as a professional genre The roles of research in the recommendation report	<b>TC 22 continued</b>

23	T 11-8	Report supplements I— front matter: title page, table of contents, executive summary/abstract	TC 22 continued; TC 9, pp. 173-86 (especially pp. 185-86 on “executive abstract”).
24	R 11-10	<b>ALTERNATE CLASS PLAN TBA</b>	
25	T 11-15	Report supplements II— end matter: references cited list, appendices	TC 22 continued.
26	R 11-17	Placing visuals in the report Small-group discussion of report visuals	<b>Review TC 12. Bring at least one visual your group plans to include in your recommendation report.</b>
	T 11-22+R 11-24	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	<i>Let's all be thankful for Thanksgiving Break</i>
27	T 11-29	Style, correctness, and tone	TC 10; TC 11, pp. 209-31. Review TC 11, pp. 232-43 on tone on your own.
28	R 12-1	Final report draft review session 1	<b>Final report—draft of body only (3 typed copies).</b>
29	T 12-6	Final report draft review session 2	<b>Final report—revised draft of body and front and end matter (3 typed copies).</b>
30	R 12-8	Last day wrap-up: professional writing as essential human discourse, rhetoric as inestimable human skill Course evaluations	<b>Note: You MUST complete a course evaluation.</b>
***	F 12-9	<b>Be sure I have received your final report, self evaluation, and group member evaluations in my mailbox by 4:00 PM.</b>	