ENGLISH 304: BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WRITING
Spring 2013

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W02:	TR at 10:00 AM, G18 Colson	**W03:**	TR at 11:30 PM, G18 Colson

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS:

- o Kolin, Philip C. *Successful Writing at Work.* 10th edition **only.** Cengage Learning, 2010.
- o A Dropbox account that will enable you to share documents for peer and teacher review. Access Dropbox at https://www.dropbox.com/home.
- o For the English 304 collaborative research project, a Google account enabling use of Google Docs.

GEC REQUIREMENT:

English 304 fulfills GEC Objective 1, *Communication*: Communicate effectively in English. As a "W" course, it also gives you credit for the third-tier university writing requirement.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:

Labor-intensive and detail-oriented, English 304 is designed to help you become competent and effective professional writers and communicators before you enter the workplace. We maintain a fast-paced schedule and demand a high level of commitment to class, so much so that one portion of your semester assessment is called the "Blood, Sweat and Tears" grade (see below). Due to the importance of collaboration in most professional settings, we engage in multiple forms of group work, from peer review and in-class work groups to a final collaborative project.

To help you attain professional writing proficiency as you go out into the working world, we focus primarily on analyzing and developing successful strategies for workplace communication. A fundamental assumption of this course is that writing happens in response to a given situation and with a clear communicative purpose. By discussing successful communication strategies and practicing them in a variety of common business forms—letters, memos, e-mails, long reports—we learn to analyze different writing contexts, meet the needs of various readers, develop superior content, and organize and present material logically and practically.

Throughout the course, we envision ourselves as members of a professional organization—English 304 Media Services, perhaps—in which students are apprentice employees and the professor is the trainer/supervisor. We learn and practice professional writing in this context.

Course goals for English 304 include:

1. Learn the nature, role and conventions of professional writing in the workplace. In particular, become familiar with the idea that most workplace writing is persuasive and evidence-based; therefore become skilled in persuasive professional writing.

2. Understand and apply rhetorical principles of professional communication; that is, be able to articulate rhetorical analyses thoroughly and specifically as a pre-planning method. Understand not only the goals and values an audience brings to a particular communicative experience, but also how the writer or communicator can use appropriate expression, arguments, and professional style in workplace communications to meet the needs of the audience in different contexts and attain his/her own communication goals.

3. Learn the formats, strategies, and basic approaches of professional writing, that is, how to structure, style, and correctly format e-mails, web pages, letters, memos, informational documents, and professional reports. Compose and design these documents to meet the needs of a diverse audience and accomplish persuasive goals

4. Know and apply composition methods and design strategies for different media including print and electronic forms. Synthesize this knowledge in order to create effective electronic and presentation formats.

5. Work collaboratively as team members on professional writing projects. To facilitate this, acquire skills with Dropbox and Google Docs, aka Drive, so you become competent in these professional file-sharing and storing apps.

6. Conduct research and analyze data that can be used to support arguments. Apply research and professional writing techniques to professional situations to develop effective oral and written professional reports.

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS:

The most successful professional writers view writing as a process, not a product, a process that includes, ideally, planning, drafting, revising and re-drafting. Recognizing this, I am asking you to focus on two major processes in English 304: the individual production of a professional writer's portfolio and the production, with one or two other students, of a Proposal and Presentation Project (the P3). In completing these assignments, you will be able to earn up to 600 points for the semester, of which 300 (50%) will come from your individual portfolio, 180 (30%) from your Proposal and Presentation Project, and 120 (20%) from your "Blood, Sweat and Tears" grade (see below).

A. **Required review of class policies in English 304 Student Handbook and indication of willingness to comply with them:** As in many workplaces, you will be given an "employee handbook" detailing the policies of the class and the responsibilities you will have as a trainee in English 304 Media Services. In order to maintain good standing in the class, you must indicate in your introductory e-mail your familiarity with these policies and your willingness to comply with them.

B. **Individual portfolio projects:** (50% of semester grade/300 pts. possible): Over the course of the semester you will be compiling your short professional documents in English 304 into a writer's portfolio that demonstrates your understanding and successful attainment of goals 1 through 5, above. To complete your professional writing portfolio, you must complete the required portfolio project assignments, below; assignment hand-outs will be forthcoming.

   1. **An introductory e-mail to me.** During our first week of class together, you will write an e-mail to me--your new supervisor in English 304 Inc.--to help me get to know you. Your message should tell me about your background and your intentions regarding English 304. It should also indicate whether or not you are willing to comply with the policies and procedures of the class, as outlined in the online Handbook.

   2. **The employment writing project.** (2 short application documents; 1 memo to me; 1 emailed job application). You will locate three job prospects within your field using resources introduced in class. You will then respond to the job ad with a cover letter and résumé that show your qualifications for the position and argue that you would make a good employee. Along the way, we will learn letter writing, memo writing, and basics of document lay-out and design. To develop effective arguments and incorporate keywords, you will include a rhetorical analysis memo to me (a PACSO analysis), explaining why/how you shaped the application letter and résumé the way you did. You will send separately, via email to me, an electronic plain-text version of your job application.

3. **The correspondence project** (2 short workplace documents; 1 memo to me). You will demonstrate your understanding of basic business formats (memos, letters) and routine business messages, as well as your ability to communicate professionally with different audiences in different contexts, by role-playing two different professional writing situations. For these professional documents you will include a memo showing your rhetorical pre-planning, that is, the PACSO analysis.

4. **A midterm progress report,** formatted as a memo, detailing your perception of your own evolution as a professional writer at the mid-semester point and functioning as the preface for your midterm portfolio.

5. **The website analysis project** (1 initial memo brainstorming information architecture for a hypothetical website; 1 e-mail to a business owner (actually submitted to me in hard-copy form); 1 rhetorical analysis PACSO memo for the email to the businessperson). Based on conversations about what qualities make for rhetorically successful content and presentation in professional websites, as well as your careful brainstorming of information architecture for a professional website, you will analyze an existing website for a Morgantown business, then compose an e-mail to the owner with suggestions for improvement of the site. Your information architecture design, your e-mail to the owner, and a rhetorical analysis for the e-mail will be submitted to me hard-copy as part of the WAP.

Evaluation of individual portfolio projects: Because this is a **portfolio-based** course and you are creating a collection of professional documents to demonstrate your success in it, you will not earn individual letter grades on any of these assignments. Instead, I will return each project to you with evaluative comments that should give you a sense of how you have performed on the assignment. You can revise and re-submit any of these projects as often as you want during the semester, and I will evaluate and return each revision to you with ideas for improvement.

At the end of the semester, as you put together your portfolio for final submission, you will review your individual portfolio work and assess your professional writing performance as a whole. Portfolio construction and review enables you to prepare for workplace writing by doing the following: (1) giving you an opportunity to show you have mastered the techniques of evidence-based argumentation that are the foundation of the course and are crucial for persuasive workplace writing; (2) familiarizing you with workplace evaluation procedures, as you collect evidence of your accomplishments and show how that evidence demonstrates that you have met or exceeded established performance goals.

C. The Proposal and Presentation Project (30% of semester grade/180 points possible): In addition to producing your professional writing portfolio, you will also engage with at least one other student (**no more than two others**) in a three-stage presentation project that will introduce you to basic principles of professional research and oral presentation, as well as give you experience in teamwork. Unlike the documents for the individual portfolio, the work you do for the Proposal and Presentation Project (P3) may not be revised. The project will include:

1. Brainstorm topic, do field research, and upload rhetorical analysis memo to instructor on Google Docs. As you begin this project you will complete, with your partner, a rhetorical analysis of your communication situation for the proposal and the professional presentation, which you will then upload to Google Docs and make available to me, Juckett. I will respond to your planning memo with suggestions and concerns. A (revised, ideally) print-up of this memo must be added to your final version of the P3.

2. Create a formal professional proposal report (after "front matter," 5-6 pages of report text, then a bibliography as "back matter"). After learning the conventions of proposal-writing in the workplace, you will complete a formal proposal report based on hands-on research and organized around an explicit professional purpose. (Since you are working with a partner or partners, and

since you will become familiar with Google Docs by completing Step 1, above, I strongly recommend you prepare the text of your report collaboratively using Google Docs.) You will be writing a proposal to help a local non-profit chosen by majority vote of the class; within this broad topic area, you will be able to specify a specific project you propose to undertake to aid the non-profit in its mission.

3. Create and give a professional presentation. Together with your partner[s], you will design and give a persuasive oral presentation of your proposal project, supplemented by Power Point slides. The presentation must be targeted the non-profit on whose behalf you are writing (see #2, above), whom your fellow students and instructor will represent as we listen to it. Visually and verbally, you will persuade your audience that your proposed project is the best, most helpful one. Your oral/Power Point presentation will be evaluated both for the effectiveness of your slides' content and design and for the effectiveness of your oral presentation. After you give your presentation, you will submit to me the final copy of your written proposal, along with a print-up of your emailed rhetorical analysis, with any updates or corrections you deem necessary to that e-mail, and a print version of your Power Point slides. All these—plus your peers' assessment of your oral presentation and your own assessment of your and your team members' work as collaborators—will contribute to your grade.

D. "Blood, Sweat and Tears" Assessment (gives credit for attendance, work ethic, conference work, and electronic job application) (20% of semester grade/120 points possible): This grade is based on:

1. Conference participation and peer editing (One assessment each for each conference group member's responses at three different outside-class conference sessions.) **To participate efficiently in conferences, we will utilize Dropbox.** Dropbox is an online file-storing application which functions like an online USB drive that enables file-sharing. It will allow for relatively easy sharing of rough drafts. It will also enable your peer-editing responses of fellow group members' rough drafts.

To participate in outside-class conferences, follow the steps on the conference assignment prompt distributed prior to the first conference. This will detail (a) how to upload your rough drafts to the Dropbox folder for your conference group and me to review; (b) how to respond to your conference group members' rough drafts; (c) how to share your edits with your fellow-writers and with me.

To each conference you must bring a hard-copy print-up of your edits of your conference group partners' rough drafts. Your set of hard-copy edits will be submitted to me at the end of each conference and will provide a basis for your conference group evaluation, depending on how thoroughly, substantially and helpfully you responded to your peers' work.

A separate line item of the Blood, Sweat and Tears assessment will be a conference assessment by your fellow-conference group members. This will be completed at the end of each conference. Failure to complete your peer assessment will compromise your own grade.

2. Other writing. There will be four in-class writing exercises that will count toward your "blood, sweat and tears" grades. These are designed primarily to ensure your interaction with the assigned readings in our text. Your peer assessments of the P3 oral presentations will count as a fifth exercise. These five in-class writing tasks will be evaluated and will contribute to your "Blood, Sweat, and Tears" grade.

3. Your attendance and quantified commitment to the class. Attendance will be taken each day, and the timeliness of your arrival will be noted. At the end of the semester, your attendance and commitment will be assigned points according to the following criteria: attendance: number of absences; work completed on-time or even before due-date; revisions: how effortfully portfolio

documents were revised. **Please refer** to Table 1, Criteria Determining Blood Sweat and Tears Grade, for more information.

Table 1. Criteria Determining Blood, Sweat and Tears Grade:

	Superior ~ A (99. 95, 90)	Strong ~ B (89, 85, 80)	Satisfactory (79, 75, 70)	Poor (69, 65, 60)	Missing/failing (<60)
COMMITMENT AND PROFESSIONALISM GRADE:					
Attendance	(-0 absences, excused or not)	(-1 absence, excused or not)	(-2 absences, excused or not)	(-3 absences, excused or not)	(-4 absences, excused or not)
Conference peer evaluation (Depend-able member, helpful editor?)	Assessed + by peers	Assessed √+ by peers	Assessed √ by peers	Assessed √- by peers	Assessed - by peers
Professionalism (Respectful attention, timely arrivals, good manners?)					
Conf. work EDP [thorough, timely, helpful]					
Conf. work CP [thorough, timely, helpful]					
Conf. work WAP [thorough, timely, helpful]					
Four in-class exercises and P3 peer evaluations					
Timeliness of work submitted	One ass'nm't before due date at least 1x	All work on time	Late once	Late more than once	Some work not submitted till final portfolio or at all
Energy spent revising 304 documents before final portfolio	Early revision (before midterm) and strenuous thereafter	Lots of revision (revised all work at midterm and/or end of semester)	(Revised some work at mid-term and end of semester)	(Revised some work for final)	(Didn't revise anything)
Any penalty for excessive absences	-0: satisfactory attendance	-0: satisfactory attendance	-0: satisfactory attendance	-0: poor but acceptable attendance	-60 points for 4 absences and each absence thereafter
TOTAL COMMIT-MENT GRADE	108 - 120	96 - 107	84 - 95	72 - 83	0 - 71

In the table above, you can see how seriously you must take the attendance policy in this class—after all, if you're absent more than three times, one grade level (60 points) will be subtracted from your final semester total, and it just gets worse after that!—and how conscientiously you must produce your conference responses. As well, you can see that the energy you invest in the class will pay off at the end of the semester. This "Blood, Sweat and Tears" grade has the potential to determine your semester grade, so you need to take it seriously!

A note on midterm and final portfolio submissions: About half of your individual portfolio work will be completed before the mid-semester, and just before the mid-semester point I will ask you to submit *all* your work thus far, along with a progress report written to me, for a provisional midterm grade. At the end of the semester you will work more intensively on revising your documents and preparing your portfolio (see schedule); you will then produce your final document revisions and submit your portfolio to me for a final and definitive evaluation. Your portfolio will be evaluated and returned during finals week.

CLASS POLICIES AND ADVICE FOR SUCCESS:

For more specific information on many of the policy topics below, please consult the English 304 Student Handbook, which is uploaded to my website and can be consulted there.

Academic Integrity: Being a person of integrity in the workplace is crucial. So is your integrity in completing your professional writing assignments in this class. When it amounts to an attempt to deceive, academic dishonesty (taking someone else's published or unpublished words or ideas and calling them your own) has dire consequences, in this class, in the English department, and in the University as a whole. To learn the ins and outs of the English 304 academic integrity policy, please consult Policy A-1 in the online English 304 Student Handbook.

Advice for Success: I have created a list of success strategies that, if followed, will improve your chances of success in English 304. To find out about them, please consult Policy A-2 in the online 304 Student Handbook.

Attendance: As noted above, regular class attendance is absolutely required in this class. ***Accumulating more than THREE absences, excused or unexcused, will lower your semester grade, one grade level for every absence greater than three.*** Certainly university-related or authorized absences explained to me in advance will be respected—for example, you have to make a poster presentation at an academic conference on a day that conflicts with our class. However, if you are an athlete playing your sport this semester (e.g. a basketball player), or someone else with a serious competing time commitment or project, you are strongly advised to re-schedule English 304 for the upcoming semester. To learn the ins and outs of the English 304 attendance policy, please consult Policy/Procedure A-3 and A-4 in the online English 304 Handbook.

Conferences: Significant learning in this class will occur in outside-class conference groups with two or three of your fellow students. You will meet with these students to critique and offer suggestions about their professional writing, which you will have previewed and responded to using Dropbox. To learn the ins and outs of conference groups in English 304, please consult Policy C-1 in the online handbook.

Emergencies or health crises: If you encounter an emergency situation or serious health problem in the course of the semester—and I sincerely hope you don't—you or your family should immediately contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611). The Dean of Student Life will then communicate with me concerning your problem and authorize me to make any necessary arrangements for you to complete this course. *Note:* please reserve the Dean's services for serious circumstances or emergencies; they will not help you with minor problems or everyday excuses.

Evaluation: English 304 grading criteria have been developed based on how successful a particular document or professional portfolio would be in a real-life workplace. Other evaluation criteria will also affect the final grade you earn in English 304. To learn the ins and outs of the English 304 grading criteria and evaluation policy, please consult Policy E-2 in the online English 304 Student Handbook.

Falling behind or having problems? *Speak with me!* While all the policies listed here are hard-and-fast, I definitely believe in the possibility of redemption. So if you made early mistakes and would like to turn them around, I will be happy to work with you in a way that's fair to other students as well as to you.

Incompletes: *Request an incomplete only in the case of an end-of-the-semester catastrophe.* WVU policy does not allow professors to give incompletes to students unless those students have satisfactorily completed almost all the work of the course and are prevented from finishing the course by some kind of personal catastrophe (for example, hospitalization, death of a parent). Only under these circumstances, verified by the Dean of Student Life, will I grant you an "I."

Individual portfolios rules: *Timely submission and end-of-semester pick-up are required.* Midterm portfolios must be submitted on the day stipulated in the calendar, as must final portfolios, which will not be graded if submitted after Tuesday of finals week. As well, students are required to pick up final evaluated portfolios before leaving campus at the end of this semester. Every effort will be made by the instructor to accommodate your end-of-semester schedule so you can pick your portfolio up at a time

convenient to you. Failure to pick up your portfolio will cause up to 30 points to be subtracted from your end-of-semester total.

Late work: All projects are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus. If you cannot be in class, your project is due in my mailbox during class time. In English 304, turning in your work late will hurt your "Blood, Sweat and Tears" grade (see above). Still, submitting your work late is better than not submitting it at all, so please know that "better late than never" is true in this class *with the exception of your submission of the midterm and final portfolios,* which will not be accepted for assessment if they are submitted after the deadline given. For more information, please see the online English 304 Student Handbook, Policy E-2.

Professionalism: In the workplace, employees who are respectful, attentive, and have a robust work ethic tend to be most successful. With this in mind, failure to show due respect to me and your fellow students may result in a deduction on your "Commitment to Class" grade. Consistent failure of professionalism of any kind—regular lateness; repeated departures from class for unknown reasons, with disruptive returns; holding side conversations, working on your computer during class discussions or lectures; working on non-class projects in class—will be noted in your attendance record, and *you will then be liable for point deductions in this category of your "Blood, Sweat and Tears" grade without your being explicitly "called out" in class*. Please comply with the following:

- *When you come to class, plan to arrive on time and stay the whole time.* If you arrive late more than a couple of times, your "Professionalism" grade in the "Blood, Sweat, and Tears" assessment will be lowered. Do not schedule medical, dental or psychological appointments during class time. Do not schedule advisor meetings during class time. Do not walk out of class abruptly, then return. If you know there is a rare situation that will force you to arrive late or leave early, let me know, preferably in advance, and sit near the door so your entrance or exit causes minimal disruption.
- *During class time, avoid holding side conversations.* Quietly checking a point with a classmate is rarely a problem, but sustained conversations with another student or students during class lectures or discussions are rude and unacceptable.
- *During class time, do not text, check your email or explore internet sites on your computer, or work on non-class projects.* You are in class to learn and to fulfill your role as a professional writing trainee. Checking your Facebook page or reading ESPN online is rude and unprofessional.

For more on the "Professionalism" policy in English 304, please consult policy P-1 in the English 304 handbook.

Social justice: *Let's maintain high standards of respect in the classroom.* West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I share that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin**;** neither should we. Any suggestions on how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated.

Submission of assigned work: *All work is due in hard copy form unless otherwise stipulated* (for example, the introductory memo should be made accessible through a shared Dropbox folder, as should the conference drafts of the individual portfolio assignments)**.** An electronic version of an assignment may be submitted to me as an e-mail attachment to establish timely submission, <u>but it will not be evaluated</u>. Thus in order to get credit for your work, you will have to submit it to me in hard-copy form.

Texts: *You are required to bring your text to class every day.* Not only will we be using it for models of letter and memo formats, bibliographies, and proposals, but you will need the text to complete some of the in-class exercises that will be assigned.

ENGLISH 304 STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET & SYLLABUS CONTRACT

Name_____ **Student ID**_____

Local address_____

Email address_____ **Local phone**_____

Major_____ **Year in college**_____

Previous college-level English courses taken _____

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304 Course Contract

I have read and understood the English 304 tip sheet; the outline of student-teacher expectations; the extended online syllabus and the handbook of policies and procedures for 304. I agree to adhere to all these policies and expectations.

Signed:

_____   _____
   Your name   Date

Attendance information (instructor use only):