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# WRITING FOR INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT (95-717)

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY, HEINZ COLLEGE
6 UNITS SPRING 2023, MINI 3
IN PERSON EXPECTED, HBH 1004
SECTION A3 – Monday/Wednesdays 2:00p - 3:20pm

Professor: Dr. Rebekah Fitzsimmons, Assistant Teaching Professor

Office Location: HBH 2101F

Office Hours: Tuesday 10:30am-12:00pm or by appointment

Email: Fitzsimmons@cmu.edu (USE EMAIL AS PRIMARY CONTACT, not Canvas messages)

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Communication in written form is an essential element of management. Writing for business-focused, industry-specific contexts differs from academic writing. Accordingly, this course focuses on teaching transferable, career-enhancing writing skills: developing essential and persuasive content, applying logic, organizing information, targeting diverse audiences with varying levels of expertise and roles, addressing feasibility, ensuring clarity, controlling tone, maintaining format norms, and designing documents for readability and accessibility. The course challenges students to meet readers' needs by conveying critical thinking via anticipating the perspectives of stakeholders in professional situations. Coursework emphasizes precise, concise phrasing in actionable communications. Digital tips and strategies for collaborative writing will be discussed. Writing resources and sample documents will be provided.

Note: This course assumes proficiency in English grammar. Numerous resources for improving written English skills are provided via Canvas.

## **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Differentiate the format and style of professional writing from personal and academic writing
- Determine the purpose and scope of the message
- Distinguish between essential and non-essential information
- Target writing to particular readers, rather than preparing generic material
- Demonstrate writing as a tool to build and maintain professional relationships
- Communicate complex, data-heavy topics accurately using specific, plain language
- Maintain a logical structure through calculated organizational methods
- Format headings, lists, data, citations and visuals with a focus on precision and consistency
- Create efficiently phrased, actionable communications for use in a workplace
- Edit documents thoroughly prior to distribution

## **REGISTRATION**

Once a section is full, enrollment is dependent on: (1) the number of registered students who drop the section, and (2) the waitlist order. Students who miss the first class meeting can be automatically dropped from the course. After the initial session, registration is closed.

#### **LEARNING RESOURCES**

## **Required Texts**

- Management Communications:
   <a href="https://www.oercommons.org/courses/management-communication/view">https://www.oercommons.org/courses/management-communication/view</a>
- Materials provided via Canvas handouts, excerpts, and links to video/audio content

## **Required Technology**

- Canvas- this course will utilize this central Learning Management System (LMS) where students will be expected to access materials and upload assignments.
- Laptop/tablet in class –class sessions will frequently consist of in-class workshops, small group work, scaffolding assignments, and revision work. Students should plan to bring the device of their choice to class to complete this in-class work.

## **SYLLABUS MODIFICATIONS**

This syllabus – especially the homework and assignment schedule – may be modified as the semester progresses in order to meet the course outcomes and best address the needs of members of the class. Pay close attention to course announcements posted on Canvas and made in class for any of these changes which may alter our modality or course delivery options.

**In the case of inclement weather,** the University will post announcements about school closures, delayed openings or early closings - we will adjust our course modality based on CMU's determinations.

## **TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

Each section of this course will have a TA. Contact information and office hours will be posted on Canvas, under the "Pages" tab in the first week of the mini. The TA can answer questions, respond to issues, direct you to resources, and work through assignments with you.

## **COMMUNICATION POLICIES**

- **Email** is my preferred mode of communication and the fastest way to get in touch with me. The Canvas messaging system is not as reliable and should be avoided.
- Please include your name and section number and CC the TA for your course section in all emails
- Please allow a minimum of 24 hours for me to respond to all emails
- Students are expected to check their CMU emails and Canvas regularly
- I can not discuss grades via email; please come to office hours with questions pertaining to grades.
- If we talk about something before class starts or in the hallway (an extension, a revision, another project you'd like feedback on), please plan to send me a follow up email confirming the details.

## **OFFICE HOURS POLICIES**

Every week, I set aside office hours or a reserved block of time to meet with students. This is the ideal time for students to get one-on-one feedback, ask questions, or discuss concerns. You are welcome to drop in to my office during office hours or, if you have a specific topic you want to discuss (or a tight schedule), feel free to email to make a specific appointment. I am happy to meet in person or via Zoom. If you are unable to attend my scheduled office hours due to a conflict, we can set up an appointment at another time. If an emergency arises so you cannot make a scheduled appointment, please contact me by email as soon as possible.

#### ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

In keeping with CMU and Heinz's expectations and policies, you are expected to attend all scheduled classes. The expectation from Heinz is that you will **attend every class in-person** in our designated classroom.

However, a commitment to accessibility, especially in our current COVID-19 era, presents challenges to maintaining any graded attendance policy that is equitable and based in care and safety. As your professor, I recognize and acknowledge that we can not make assumptions about others' experiences and as a result, we ought to offer compassion, patience, and grace to one another as best we can. Therefore, there are options available to help students who may need occasional asynchronous attendance options.

For the purposes of this policy, "attendance" is defined as arriving physically in our classroom during our regularly scheduled class period. "Participation" covers a broad range of interactive opportunities, both synchronous and asynchronous, that demonstrate engagement with the course content. These participation opportunities include:

- Speaking during class discussions (asking questions, responding to discussion questions)
- Collaborating with classmates and posting required in-class discussions, small group work, and homework to Canvas
- Providing peer review feedback to classmates
- Attending office hours (in-person or virtually) with questions, concerns, etc.
- Offering constructive feedback to classmates, adding to ongoing discussions, or practicing additional skills via asynchronous discussion boards on Canvas.

This course focuses on professional development skills; as such, professional conduct will be expected of all participants. Students should expect to behave during class as they would in a staff or client meeting. Students should make a good faith effort to attend class prepared, to interact with peers and the professor on a regular basis, and demonstrate respect for all class participants through verbal and non-verbal modes. Students who engage in abusive or harmful speech will be immediately excused from class.

Assessment for participation will be a holistic measure of a student's work on a daily basis and is based on more than mere presence in the classroom. Active participation includes engaging in active listening, offering constructive, skills-based feedback, and adding to class conversation on a daily basis. Students should plan to raise their hands often and come to class prepared to engage in hands-on activities, workshops, and discussions. Students should refrain from doing other coursework, sleeping, conducting personal business, or other forms of "multitasking" while in class; students observed frequently engaging in this kind of multitasking may have their participation grades lowered.

Students who miss a significant number of classes (which means both failing to attend the in-person class sessions AND failing to participate in the asynchronous makeup course options) may be issued a lower or failing grade.

Students who have religious observations, medical/personal emergencies, or other major difficulties that will result in multiple missed synchronous classes are encouraged to contact the professor/TA as soon as possible.

If you are absent from class, materials will be posted on Canvas, but you should also plan to reach out to a classmate to find out what you missed. Assignments are due on their due dates regardless of absences, unless a student is specifically issued an extension.

For this course, I will be recording class sessions and making them available to you for your personal, educational use. Recordings of class sessions are covered under the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** and must *not* be shared with anyone outside your course-section. The purpose of these recordings is so students in this course (and only students in this course) can watch or re-watch past class sessions. Feel free to use the recordings if you would like to review something we discussed in class or if you are temporarily unable to attend class.

## **LATE ARRIVAL POLICY**

Obviously, the occasional emergency can disrupt even the most organized person's schedule; however, habitual lateness is considered unprofessional and inconsiderate. Students who arrive **habitually** late to class (more than five minutes late) during the semester may have their grades lowered. If circumstances will hinder your ability to arrive on time regularly, please speak with the professor to discuss arrangements.

## **DRAFTS AND PROJECT STAGES**

Drafts and project stages are a vital part of the writing process and therefore a required part of the course. Writing is a process that necessarily takes time; the project stages of this course are designed to help students focus on improving both their own personal process as well as final deliverables. As a result, all project stages must be submitted in a timely fashion; the professor reserves the right to refuse to accept a final deliverable without the accompanying required project stages. Project stages can not be completed and submitted for credit after the project is submitted (i.e. you can not submit your Proposal Draft after you have submitted the Proposal).

## LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSING WORK

**Late Assignment Penalties:** Ideally, you will avoid turning in late work. Please plan to make use of the extension policy to avoid these types of issues. In addition to the extension policy, this course has a late work policy where assignments may be turned in late for up to 24 hours with a 20% deduction.

After 24 hours, students will need to schedule an office hours appointment to discuss any extended due dates.

**Missing Work:** Due to the participatory nature of this course, it is important for work to be completed in a timely manner. In-class discussions and activities are a vital part of your success in improving your professional communication skills. I am dedicated to working with students to ensure they have equitable access to the materials and flexibility to complete the work of the course across a broad range of experiences.

However, work that is missing or is significantly incomplete may not be eligible to receive points towards the course. Outside of the course policies and accommodations, students are expected to put forth a good faith effort to complete the work of the course. Asynchronous or makeup work should be completed within a week of the missed class, unless alternative new due dates have been arranged with the professor.

#### **EXTENSION POLICY**

Each student has **a single extension** which they may use on any individual project or project stage. To request an extension, students should:

- 1. Email the professor and TA **no later than 24 hours prior** to the deadline indicating your desire to use your extension.
- 2. Provide a new, reasonable date and time for the assignment to be due. If the assignment is a draft or project stage of a larger project, this date needs to come before the larger project is due. For larger projects, this new date should be **within a week\*** of the original due date.
  - a. This new date/time will be considered the new deadline for the assignment
  - b. A note will be added to Canvas with this new due date for mutual reference
  - c. The student will submit the assignment as instructed on the assignment sheet
  - d. The student should notify the professor and TA an email indicating you have submitted your assignment and it is ready for grading.

## **ACADEMIC CONDUCT**

Plagiarism is a serious offense that will result in the student failing the course. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the associate dean's office for the student's program of study and the Carnegie Mellon University Division of Student Affairs. If an academic integrity violation is suspected, the student will be contacted to meet with the instructor to determine if a violation has occurred based on Carnegie Mellon University's Policy on Academic Integrity.

Note that plagiarism includes:

- Presenting another writer's work (including computer/Al writers) as your own; this includes written text but also data visualizations, charts/graphs, graphics and research.
- Cutting and pasting content verbatim without using quotation marks to indicate a direct quote; this includes published work but also work produced collaboratively with classmates
- Inserting a direct quote or paraphrasing content without citing the source in-text using
  footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations with a corresponding Works Cited, References, or
  Notes page in a manner consistent with an APA, MLA, or Chicago style guide;
- Providing incomplete or incorrect information about the source cited;
- Over-relying on templates or other writers' phrasing.

Also, submitting work written for another course is not acceptable. Consequently, a failing grade may be issued for that assignment. Additional penalties may be imposed.

In addition to maintaining academic integrity, this course aims to maintain an open, ethical, respectful, collaborative atmosphere. This class, therefore, will not tolerate any discrimination on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, martial status, disability, or status as a veteran. Alternative, even conflicting viewpoints, are welcome in class discussion (including those that take place online). However, statements that are racist, sexist, homophobic, classist, or otherwise discriminatory to others, either inside or outside the class, will not be tolerated.

<sup>\*</sup>For end of semester projects, the professor may require a shorter extension window due to grading deadlines

## A Note about Predictive AI like ChatGPT

Within this class, there are situations and contexts where the use of AI programs such as ChatGPT, Bard, DALL-E and others will be expected. Together we will experiment with these emerging technologies to explore how they can be used and better understand their benefits and limitations. Learning how to use AI is an emerging skill and we will work through the implications of these evolving systems together.

Outside of these specific guided activities, you will not be permitted to use AI tools for any reason.

However, it is important to be aware of the limitations of these programs.

Similarly, using generative AI tools does not absolve you from your existing responsibilities as a student to follow the academic integrity guidelines of the university and of this class.

In this class, you may use Generative AI programs for the following:

- Brainstorm new ideas
- Develop example outlines or approaches to your work ("writer's block breaker")
- Work through in-class scenarios when directed

You may not use generative AI programs to:

- Proofread, polish, or otherwise edit the content of the material you plan to submit
- Complete a task you have been assigned to do in order to build communication skills (i.e. "please rewrite this document but change the audience from a co-worker to my boss.")
- Generate answers to discussion questions, reflection quizzes or other homework assignments
- Generate content that you cut and paste into an assignment with a written component without quotations and a citation
- Generate content that is not adequately paraphrased without a citation
- Research topics, or generate different ways to talk about a problem or generate bibliographies for topics that you have not researched yourself
- Generate other content (images, video, others) unless expressly permitted and following provided guidance
- Otherwise use or present generative AI content that you pass off as your own work

Finally, it is important that you recognize that large language models frequently provide users with incorrect information, create professional-looking citations that are not real, generate contradictory statements, incorporate copyrighted material without appropriate attribution, and can sometimes integrate biased concepts. You are ultimately responsible for the content that you submit; work that is inaccurate, biased, unethical, offensive, plagiarized, or incorrect will be penalized. Turning in any assignment with generative AI content outside of the allowable uses identified in the previous section may constitute an academic integrity violation.

If you have any questions about acceptable use, it is highly encouraged to ask before you use it on any assignment that you will turn in for a grade for this course.

## **RESOURCES**

**Student Health and Safety:** During your time at Carnegie Mellon, do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

If you are worried about affording food or feeling insecure about food, there are resources on campus who can help. Email the CMU Food Pantry Coordinator to schedule an appointment: cmu-pantry@andrew.cmu.edu, 412-268-8704 (SLICE office)

**Commitment to Accessibility** As an instructor, I am committed to making the course material accessible to as many students in as many ways as possible. Please feel free to approach me to discuss ways in which I can accommodate your unique needs in accessing the materials.

In order to best meet this goal, I will also rely on guidance from the Office of Disability Resources at Carnegie Mellon University, which has a continued mission to provide physical and programmatic campus access to all events and information within the Carnegie Mellon community. They work to ensure that qualified individuals receive reasonable accommodations as guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Students who would like to receive accommodations can begin the process through Disability Resources secure online portal or email access@andrew.cmu.edu to begin the interactive accommodation process. Students with disabilities are encouraged to self-identify with the Office of Disability Resources and request needed accommodations. Any questions about the process can be directed to Catherine Getchell, 412-268-6121, getchell@cmu.edu. http://www.cmu.edu/education-office/disability-resources/.

Students with childcare responsibilities should never feel they need to be absent from class due to childcare disruptions. You may bring your child to class or make use of the asynchronous options without advance permission.

**Student Academic Success Center (SASC):** SASC supports student success by providing academic coaching, subject-specific tutoring, effective communication strategies, accommodations for students with disabilities, and language support for multi-lingual learners. They have a wealth of resources and individual appointments available. <a href="https://www.cmu.edu/student-success/">https://www.cmu.edu/student-success/</a>

**Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion** Diversity and inclusion have a singular place among the values of Carnegie Mellon University. The Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion actively cultivates a strong, diverse and inclusive community capable of living out these values and advancing research, creativity, learning and development that changes the world. <a href="https://www.cmu.edu/student-diversity/">https://www.cmu.edu/student-diversity/</a>

Heinz College Diversity, Inclusion, Climate and Equity (DICE) Heinz College strives to foster an open, equitable and inclusive environment where people of all identities and experiences are welcome; all are encouraged to participate in the energetic exchange of ideas; there is a shared focus on ensuring the success of our students, faculty, and staff; and where, as a community, we unlock innovations that will improve the human condition.

The Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy represents over 50 nations and over 40 U.S. states, which increases our ability to foster a community with greater variation in perspectives and approaches to our work.

By design, Heinz College is an empathetic and open environment that inspires continuous learning, conversation, and intelligent action that will impact society for the better. Diversity, inclusion, and equity are not radical concepts—rather, the ongoing pursuit of these ideals, and a campus climate of belonging in which every person in our community can thrive, are fundamental to our mission. For more information or to get involved with DICE initiatives at Heinz, Email our office at heinzdiceoffice@andrew.cmu.edu

## **ASSESSMENT**

## **Assignment Instructions**

Detailed instructions for all assignments are posted to Canvas. Each student is responsible for reading the assignment sheet and grade rubric before submitting the assignment. These instructions will also include assessment criteria and grade rubrics for each assignment.

Students are responsible for submitting their assignments on time and to the correct (digital) location as directed on the assignment sheet.

**Table 1. Heinz College Grading Scale** 

	conege Grading Scale				
			Percentage	Course Point	Graduation
Grade	Interpretation	Points	Equivalent	Equivalent	Credit
A+	Exceptional	4.33	100-97%	970-1000	Yes
Α	Excellent	4.00	96-94	969-940	Yes
A-	Very Good	3.67	93-90	939-900	Yes
B+	Good	3.33	89-87	899-870	Yes
В	Acceptable	3.00	86-84	869-840	Yes
B-	Fair	2.67	83-80	839-800	Yes
C+	Poor	2.33	79-77	799-770	Yes
С	Very Poor	2.00	76-74	769-740	Yes
C-	Minimal Passing	1.67	73-70	739-700	Yes
R	Failing	0	69% or below	699 or below	No
I	Incomplete	0			No

Source: <u>Heinz College Student Handbook</u>

## **COURSE GRADING**

Additional details about assignments will be provided via Canvas, including detailed instructions and grading rubrics. Assignments each receive a certain number of points, adding up to 1000 points total for the semester. Grades are not curved or weighted beyond these points.

As a note, semester grades are not rounded; in other words, a student who earns 889 points throughout the semester would earn an 88.9% or a B+.

## **ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN**

Formal Writing Assignments	=	60% of final grade
<b>Professional Email</b>		100 points
Project Scope		200 points
Internal Report		100 points
Proposal		200 points

Peer Review and Reflections	= 20% of f	inal grade
Peer Review of Professi	onal Email 40	

Reflection on Professional Email 20
Peer Review of Project Scope 40
Reflection on Project Scope 20
Reflection on Internal Report 20
Peer Review on Proposal 40
Reflection on Proposal 20

In-class Work and Participation = 20% of final grade

In-class workshop deliverables = 100 points In class discussion = 100 points

## **SCHEDULE**

Date	Class Pre Work	Class Topic and In-Class Workshops	Assignments due by 11:59pm to Canvas unless otherwise specified
Day 1: Monday, January 15	Read Course Syllabus	NO CLASS - Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday	
Day 2: Wednesday, January 17	Management Communication (MC): Chapter 1: Why? Canvas: Welcome to Heinz Corp!	Class Topic: Welcome to class, expectations, goal setting In Class Workshops: Setting goals	
Day 3: Monday, January 22	(MC): Chapter 3: Plan Canvas: Tips for Writing Business Emails; CMU Email Handouts	Class Topic: Audience Analysis Professional Writing expectations, Professional Emails In Class Workshops: Request a Meeting: Emailing different audiences	
Day 4: Wednesday, January 24	(MC): Chapter 7: Format, Chapter 9: Manage Bring draft of professional email to class	Class Topic: Writing for Busy Readers, Visual Design Features for Screen Reading In Class Workshops: Peer Review of Professional Email draft Responding to Bad Emails	Peer Review of Email  Professional Email due Thursday 11:59pm
Day 5: Monday, January 29	(MC): Chapter 4: Organize Canvas: TBA	Class Topic: Writing to Solve Problems, Creating a Project Scope Statement In Class Workshops: Scoping Out a Project	Professional Email Reflection activity
Day 6: Wednesday, January 31	(MC): Chapter 2: Write Canvas: "Editing and Proofreading Made Simple" LinkedInLearning video	Class Topic: Writing Actionable Communications, Avoiding Common Writing Mistakes In Class Workshops: Giving Feedback on Reports	
<b>Day 7:</b> Monday, February 5	(MC):Chapter 5. Build Canvas: How to Write a Business Report, Summarizing handout Bring draft of Project Scope to class	Class Topic: Writing Clear Reports, Building Strong Paragraphs, Summarizing Information Efficiently  In Class Workshops: Peer Review of Project Scope	
<b>Day 8:</b> Wednesday, February 7	(MC): Chapter 8: Revise Canvas: Concision Strategies, Checklist for Creating Accessible Documents	Class Topic: Creating Usable Documents, Revising for Clarity and Concision  In Class Workshops: Reformat this report real quick?	Project Scope

Day 9: Monday, February 12	Canvas: "The State of Crisis Communications," TBA	Class Topic: Crisis Communications and Delivering Bad News, Ethics in Writing  In Class Workshops: Crisis Communication	Project Scope Reflection Activity
Day 10: Wednesday, February 14	Canvas: Business Communication for Success Chapter 17: Negative News and Crisis Communication	Class Topic: Sensitive Information, Performance Reviews In Class Workshops: Delivering Bad News	Internal Report
Day 11: Monday, February 19	(MC): Chapter 10: Persuade Canvas: "Preparing Proposals"	Class Topic: Proposals, Researching and Evaluating Content, Using Citations to Persuade In Class Workshops: TBA	Report Reflection Activity
Day 12: Wednesday, February 21	(MC): Chapter 6: Research Canvas: "Writing Technical Proposals"	Class Topic: Incorporating Storytelling into Proposals, Persuasive Rhetoric, Avoiding Logical Fallacies  In Class Workshops: TBA	
Day 13: Monday, February 26	(MC): Chapter 11: Show Canvas: TBA Bring draft of Proposals to class for peer review	Class Topic: Telling stories with data, incorporating visuals into writing  In Class Workshops: Peer Review of Proposals	
Day 14: Wednesday, February 28	Canvas: Final Polish and Proofreading Checklist	Class Topic: Improving your writing process, major course takeaways  In Class Workshops: Communicating with non-experts	Proposal  Proposal/Course Reflection due Thursday by 11:59pm
All missing and makeup work must be completed no later than 11:59pm March 1 in order to receive credit.			

#### ASYNCHRONOUS COURSE MAKEUP POLICY

Our course this semester has an in-person meeting expectation – please plan to attend all of the scheduled classes in person. However, if you are ill or experiencing an emergency, the course does have an asynchronous makeup option. If you are sick, especially with symptoms of COVID-19, **please do not come to class.** 

You must complete each of the following items for a missed class in order to receive full credit for asynchronous attendance and participation credit for a missed class. Due to the nature of a mini course, this asynchronous participation is expected to be completed **within 48 hours of the missed class**, unless another deadline has been arranged with the professor.

If you are experiencing severe illness or other personal emergencies, please be in touch with the professor and TA as soon as possible. Your health and safety are our top priority; we can make accommodations to help you keep up with the coursework once you are healthy.

## To Complete a Missed Class Asynchronously:

- 1. Notify the professor and your TA that you will be missing class as soon as possible.
- 2. Watch the Zoom recording of class when it is posted on Canvas (usually a few hours after class)
- 3. Use the "Asynchronous Discussion Board" on our Canvas site to post responses to the in-class discussion (aim to respond to 2-3 discussion questions,) as you would have if you were in class.
  - a. In general, the discussion questions are also available on the lecture slides for the class period, though the in-person discussion sometimes jumps to other topics or addresses only a few of those questions, depending on time constraints.
- 4. Use the Canvas Discussion Boards to complete the in-class activities that your classmates completed during class time (as applicable).
- 5. Notify your course TA when you have completed all of these makeup items in order to receive attendance and participation credit for the missed class.