

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY, HEINZ COLLEGE
WRITING FOR INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT (95 – 717), 6 UNITS

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I. 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. 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.

II. Text(s)

- *selected texts to be provided by the instructor*

III. Objectives

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

IV. 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.

V. Classroom Policies

Professional conduct is necessary. Demonstrate respect for everyone in the room through active listening, eye contact, and productive comments. As this is a writing course, rather than a course on public policy, avoid policy debates. Further, while class is in session, refrain from: accessing personal messages, sleeping or doing other coursework. Overall, students are expected to exhibit an interest in professional development beyond simply completing the assignments.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

This course consists of lectures, discussions, individual writing exercises and peer review. Attendance is required. A failing grade for the course will be issued for three or more unexcused absences (Excused absences require notifying the instructor in advance of a religious observance or a documented medical condition, or other extenuating circumstances). Students are responsible for obtaining course material distributed during their absence. In addition to attendance, participation credit includes: (1) being a constructive contributor to class discussions and (2) providing meaningful involvement in writing exercises and peer review. The participation grade may be lowered in instances of: inadequate class contributions, lateness, unexcused absences, sleeping or using mobile devices during class and/or failure to demonstrate knowledge of assigned readings and handouts.

WELLNESS

Carnegie Mellon University has a wide array of [resources and programs to support student wellness](#). Students are encouraged to access these resources, and to contact the instructor if a health or safety concern arises.

TEACHING ASSISTANT

The teaching assistant's contact information will be posted on Canvas. Feel free to proactively schedule sessions (at least 2 business days in advance) with the TA for feedback on your work. Think of the TA as a professional coach; the role is intended to provide guidance and offer resources for developing effective presentations – ultimately, you are responsible for the work you deliver in class.

VI. Written Assignments

Instructions for written assignments will be posted to Canvas. According the schedule (see attached) on the draft and the final due date for each assignment upload the document – before the time our class meeting begins – to the Assignments section of Canvas. Please use the file name configuration: lastname_firstname_section_assignment.doc.

PURPOSE OF DRAFTS

Drafts serve as preparation for individual meetings with instructor or the TA and for peer-review sessions for feedback prior to submitting the final, graded version. Further, drafts are useful for

time management. Drafts are graded upon completion. Grade deductions will occur if a draft is incomplete, or if there is a lack of participation during the guided editing sessions.

Drafts should be submitted as a stapled hard copy during class, on the corresponding due date(s), unless otherwise noted by the instructor.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

If a student submits a paper late, the student may be jeopardizing their ability to receive comments on the first and final draft.

While allotments can be made for extenuating circumstances, if the assignment is handed in late, half of a letter grade will be deducted from the overall score, for every day past the due date. For instance, if you submit an assignment two days late, then the highest grade you can receive is 90%.

POLICY ON EXTENSIONS

Late assignments earn a failing grade unless: (1) a religious observance or a documented medical condition prevents on-time submission; and, (2) the student consulted with the instructor in advance for approval of an alternate due date.

POLICY ON STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

The Carnegie Mellon University Office of Disability Resources reviews requests for “reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and auxiliary aids and services.”¹ Students can work with the instructor to arrange accommodations as needed on a case-by-case basis once accommodations are granted by the Office of Disability Resources.

GLOBAL COMMUNICATION CENTER (GCC)

The GCC provides communication consulting free-of-charge. Use this resource, located on campus in Hunt Library, to enhance your academic performance: <https://www.cmu.edu/gcc/>.

V. Evaluation

The Heinz College rubric is included in this syllabus. Assignment specific editing checklists will be provided during class.

Grade	Percentage	Interpretation	Points	Graduation Credit
A+	98 - 100	Exceptional	4.33	Yes
A	93 - 97	Excellent	4.00	Yes
A-	90 - 92	Very Good	3.67	Yes
B+	88 - 89	Good	3.33	Yes
B	83 - 87	Acceptable	3.00	Yes
B-	80 - 82	Fair	2.67	Yes
C+	78 - 79	Poor	2.33	Yes
C	73 - 77	Very Poor	2.00	Yes

¹ University, C. M. (n.d.). Retrieved June 27, 2017, from <https://www.cmu.edu/hr/eos/disability/students/policy-on-student-accommodations.html>

C-	70 - 72	Minimal Passing	1.67	Yes
R	69 - below	Failing	0	No
I	NA	Incomplete	0	No

***Grades will only be rounded up if at .75 or above.*

Components/Assignments

- Cover Letter (20%)
- Fact Sheet (20%)
- (Take Home) Memo Re-write (15%)
- Creative Proposal (35%)
- Class participation (10%)

VII. Academic Conduct

Assignments are submitted via Turnitin. This technology compares documents with content available on the internet and with files previously uploaded. The site generates a report indicating matching content. 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. Not that plagiarism includes:

- Presenting another writer's work as your own
- Cutting and pasting content verbatim without using quotation marks to indicate a direct quote
- Inserting a direct quote or paraphrasing without citing the source
- Providing incomplete or incorrect information about the source cited
- Over-relying on templates or another writers' phrasing

Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to change any provision of this course outline including but not limited to the right to change the time, order, and content of the course schedule.

Course Schedule

Week	Subject
Week 1	Writing for your target audience Best practices in business communications
Week 2	Summarizing Effectively, Writing Concisely, & Memo Structure
Week 3	Managing & Communicating Sensitive Information Evaluation of Crisis Management Briefs & Norms
Week 4	Essential versus non-essential information Constructing an Executive Summary
Week 5	Developing Ideas through SWOT Analysis

Week	Subject
	Citation Basics & Review
Week 6	Evaluating both content & style Evaluation of Sample Proposals
Week 7	Designing documents for distribution Telling a story with the data