

English 373: Writing in the Professions
Section 101, Fall 2007
Policy Statement and Syllabus

Surely you must have realized, if only by the way I conduct them, that these sessions are not analogous to so-called scientific meetings. . . . You mustn't try to say elegant things, aimed at putting you in the limelight and increasing the esteem in which you are already held. You are here to be receptive to things you haven't as yet seen, and which are in principle unexpected. So, why not make the most of this opportunity by raising questions at the deepest level you can, even if that comes out in a way that is a bit hesitant, vague, even baroque.

—Jacques Lacan, *Seminars (III “The Symbolic Universe”)*

T/R – 12:30-1:45
HUMB 142

Instructor: Dr. Moira Amado Miller
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English Office: 460-6146 (message)
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Office Hours: T/R 1:45-2:30, or by appointment. Please let me know ahead of time when you'd like to see me in order to avoid unforeseen scheduling conflicts.

Required Text:

Cunningham, Donald H., Elizabeth O. Smith, and Thomas E. Pearsall. *How to Write for the World of Work*. 7th Ed. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005.

Strongly Recommended:

Strunk, William Jr. and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style* 3rd Ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1979.

Course Materials:

- Looseleaf paper or three-hole punched writing pad and a binder to fit.
- A dictionary and a thesaurus of your choice (every writer needs these; *begin to think of yourself as a writer!*).
- A 2-pocket folder or file folder.

Course Description and Goals:

Welcome to English 373. This is a course that focuses on the different ways, means, modes, and technologies involved in writing in the workplace. That means that you'll be thinking about reading and writing as both receptive and productive acts, and you'll also be thinking about your writing as persuasive acts—acts intended to produce action. Writing also *makes meaning*; we'll be talking about this throughout the semester.

We obviously cannot approach this course in terms of *coverage*; that is, we can't attempt to cover all the professions and all the writing done in all the professions. Instead, we'll approach it pragmatically. To approach a problem pragmatically is to concern ourselves with the particular, with location/venue, and with consequence. To achieve this sense of specifics, location, and outcome, this course is designed as a semester long “case study.”

We'll begin with a two-pronged approach: studying a real, multimodal, multidisciplinary, and multimedia workplace endeavor while studying various writing practices and genres in the workplace. We will then

take this background and begin drafting elements of an unsolicited proposal(s) suggesting that this business incorporate a writing initiative into its programming. In this way, our project-based curriculum will intersect with their multimodal project-based mission. Our approach will also to provide many opportunities to practice writing various types of documents for the various situations that arise in the course of doing real work (including preparing a résumé for a specific job). The entity we'll be targeting this year is **Project Dragonfly**.

Project Dragonfly works well for us on many levels. It is, first and foremost, an educational endeavor. It is funded by state, institutional, and grant money. It was a grassroots start-up stemming from academic/scholarly work translated into action in the community. It is directly related to science and the environment. It is international in scope. It provides an umbrella for several other science/environment/education initiatives: Dragonfly Workshops, Earth Expeditions, iDiscovery, and DragonflyTV. It is deeply reliant on a multimedia approach both for exposure and delivery of content. In addition, **Project Dragonfly** does not currently include a writing-to-learn component as a part of its hands-on experiential learning process. We will begin with the assumption that a writing initiative would enhance its hands-on learning, teacher training, and awareness raising goals (though we'll certainly have to do the research that it will take to *articulate* this assumption).

Project Dragonfly reaches millions of children, parents, and educators through print, web, and broadcast media. The project began with the launch of the NSF-funded *Dragonfly* magazine, the first national magazine to feature children's investigations (published by the National Science Teachers Association). On its Web site, **Project Dragonfly** is described this way: "Since its inception, **Project Dragonfly** has pioneered inquiry-driven reform to increase public engagement in science and global understanding."

Because of the various elements we'll require for a full proposal, each student (individually or in groups) will have the opportunity to structure assignments based on writing in your own profession, a profession you are training for, or a profession of interest for other reasons (maybe you're in education or nursing, say, but you are or will be responsible for management and motivation; in such a case you might like to think about the writing done in marketing and/or business management).

We will be "workshopping" all the writing we do for this class. Writing is, in fact, most often a collaborative activity. You be practicing writing in teams, so you'll need to become comfortable with taking a "disinterested" stance in relation to your own writing. Think about this writing as writing that is *drafted for revision*, writing that is always presented with an eye to improvement, writing that must be aware of and responsive to "corporate" intention, and writing that will always be subject to public scrutiny. "Workshopping" can be an effective process only in an environment of trust and mutual respect.

A big part of being a professional in the workplace is learning how to write for the specific "discourse communities" and to be able to astutely and productively review, analyze, and revise your writing and that of others. Now is the time to throw off any remaining anxieties and take some risks in sharing your work. Consider it a compliment when folks critically analyze your work and make suggestions about it—it means your writing has engaged them. Ask off-the-wall questions and try out new ideas. Your enthusiasm, by the way, should be surpassed only by demonstrations of actual familiarity with the assigned readings.

We'll all be working through the material together. The quote from J. Lacan at the beginning of this syllabus should guide the spirit of inquiry here, but I also ask you to come prepared to think, act, engage and discover every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon this semester. Hopefully, you'll be thinking about writing and the professions in ways that you haven't before, and this sort of expansive thinking is demanding. This is the nature of serious academic inquiry, and I hope you'll share with me my enthusiasm about this sort of scholarly activity.

Organization of the course:

One of the biggest reasons that participation in this course is a matter of commitment and quality of thought is that you will share joint responsibility with me for determining the type of assignments you will write. This should be a relief, not a burden; it's only a matter of thinking about the purpose of your university education a little differently than you may be used to. I believe you'll get more out of each assignment if you are wholly or partially responsible for determining what is most productive for you to write about and the most appropriate audience for your work.

This is a project-based course, which means the projects you take on related to starting a writing initiative for **ProjectDragonfly** will serve as your curricular requirements. You'll be completing projects that you want to build, solving problems that you want to solve as we come up with ideas and create proposals for **ProjectDragonfly**. Start thinking, from day-one, about the sort of project/s you want to complete as elements for the full proposal.

Because this is a university as opposed to a trade-school course, we'll also be studying the theory behind the discussions you enter and the choices you make in your writing.

Here are the general ideas for your formal written assignments and your in-class presentations:

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| In Class Writing: | Writing that should function as preparation for larger or more formal documents. In Class Writing may sometimes be completed outside of class time. |
| Minor or Exploratory projects: | Two shorter projects falling under one of the categories we've covered in our text or lecture (letters, interview protocol, briefing, profile, evaluation of an internet site, brochure, poster, etc.) |
| Résumé / C.V. | You will each draft a résumé as for presentation to ProjectDragonfly . |
| Major or Final Project: | A synthesis of what you've learned and what you hoped to accomplish. The final project will be a substantive, presentable project, and an integral piece of the full proposal package. This project might be a multifaceted marketing campaign, a research-type project represented by a Researched Essay, a Position Paper, a program Proposal, a Documented White Paper, a Curriculum, among other possibilities. |
| Presentations: | One 20-40 minute presentation of work-in-progress. These presentations will be done with a partner or group working on similar documents. Each student is responsible for presenting the elements of their own work, and the group is responsible for presenting the way the final projects work together. This presentation should include a short discussion of the theory used to inform your work. Presentations should always include a handout and can take the form of teaching a class or conducting a workshop. Expect some time for Q/A. |

Be creative. Be smart. Think large. Make Connections. Synthesize. And let me help you determine the best ways to get to a strong final project by way of the previous writing and inquiry you've done.

Grading Criteria: In this course, I will be practicing a combination of "contract" and "holistic" grading, along with a certain amount of traditional percentage grading. The "contract" part of the evaluation is your compliance with this syllabus. That is, you must attend class, read the material, contribute to class

discussion, and turn in all assignments in order to pass the class. Participation, in-class writing, and the presentations will be graded holistically. The four major/minor assignments will be given conventional A-F letter-grades.

If at any time during the semester you are concerned with the letter grade you are receiving in this course, consult with me and I'll provide you an advisory grade based on your performance to date. Here is the way I'll determine your final grade:

Attendance and Participation	10%
In-Class Writing	10%
Exploratory (or minor) projects	20% each
Résumé	10%
Major Project	30%

Attendance and Participation Policy:

You must come to class, you must participate in class discussion, and you must keep up with the readings. If you don't, you can't pass the course. Here's my policy: I'll take attendance every class period. You are granted two excused absences (one full week of class). That means that these absences will not count against your grade. However, beyond the two absences (and those covered by permission from the Office of Academic Affairs), your final grade will suffer. Absences beyond two will lower your letter grade by ½ letter grade per absence. More than six absences will mean automatic failure of the course (you simply cannot miss three full weeks of a writing course and still pass). There are no exceptions to this policy. Even students who excel in all other areas are subject to this policy.

If you're interested in the University's policy on attendance, please have a look in the *Academic Bulletin*. Note that the University's general attendance policy defines excessive absences as missing "two or more consecutive class meetings," and that the University does not recognize any absences as "excused" except for those that are a result of the student being removed from class for attending a university-authorized off-campus function. These "excusable" functions must be cleared by the sponsoring faculty member through the Office of Academic Affairs, and if the event causes you to be absent from this class, you will be expected to bring me copies of this documentation. According to University policy, you must let me know in writing during the first two weeks of the course if you will be missing class for a religious holiday. Please talk to me regarding such situations and contact the Office of Student Activities if you will be absent from class for an extended period of time.

If you come in late (especially consistently), you may be marked absent.

In the case of anticipated absences, the work due must be handed in before the missed class, not after. Late work, except in rare cases, will not be accepted. I reserve the right to lower your grade for that assignment one full letter grade for each day that the assignment is late.

If you miss a class you are expected to turn up prepared for the next class meeting. If this means visiting with me about what you missed, you'll need to make an appointment with me before the next class meeting; please don't expect me or anyone else to fill you in during class time. *I will not review a missed class meeting for you over email.*

Drafts and Workshopping:

We would all like to sit down at the computer and write the perfect document, but this simply does not happen. Writing is a process, and as such, in this course we will engage in all sorts of writing that validates the fact that "writerly" moments happen throughout the thinking and synthesizing continuum. Because revision is a critical component of the writing process, each time you turn in a final folder

containing an assignment, the folder should include all drafts and brainstorming work for that project. You may also rewrite any evaluated paper; there is, of course, no guarantee that you will receive a higher grade for any rewriting. Deadlines for revisions will be set on a case-by-case basis. Students will not be allowed to change the subject or focus of their projects at the last minute.

Manuscript Presentation:

The style or presentation of the work you turn in to me for evaluation should be appropriate to its task. This means several things. The actual *documentation style* for any text should coordinate with either 1) the audience for whom you prepare the work and/or 2) the field of academic study/profession for which the document is prepared.

While much that determines manuscript presentation depends upon the context for the work submitted, formal presentation of written work in the university setting is also governed by certain standards. In this class, all word-processed prose writing submitted for evaluation must have a professional appearance. Documents must be word-processed, on plain white paper, double spaced, in 12 point font, with a one-inch margin all around. *All* documents must always be both proofread and spell checked. Work not proofread and spell checked may be returned unevaluated.

Academic Misconduct / Plagiarism:

This is serious business. Issues of Academic Misconduct will be handled according to the University's policy as described in the *Bulletin and the Student Handbook*. Please read these sources for a full definition of plagiarism and the penalties for this offense. Academic misconduct includes submitting someone else's work as your own (that person is also subject to sanctions), failing to give appropriate credit to all sources used in your work, submitting a paper of your own for credit in more than one course without the prior consent of both instructors, and, in any way distributing drafts of a class member's work without the permission of the author. Academic misconduct will result in failing this course and possibly other sanctions.

Plagiarism is a complicated and nuanced idea; its definition is also often culturally-specific, and the expectations for compliance are often ambiguous especially in the corporate marketplace. However, and because we will specifically explore these issues in this class, it is crucial that you understand and respect the idea of "intellectual property." I will not tolerate any form of plagiarism in this class. The short version: I want to read and respond only your work. It's a waste of your time to turn in writing and ideas that belong to someone else, and it's a waste of my time to read and evaluate such work in your name. It's also illegal.

Please also be aware that, regardless of what you've heard in this vein, technology is not only making it simple to plagiarize (to the point of sometimes making it an incredibly tempting option), technology also makes it quite easy to trace *and substantiate* acts of plagiarism.

Students with Disabilities:

If you have or believe you have a disability, you may wish to self identify. You can do so by ascertaining the steps involved in this procedure and providing documentation to the Office of Special Student Services. Appropriate accommodations may then be provided for you. You should also call the OSSS if you have general questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The phone numbers for the Office of Special Student Services is 460-7212/7213. If you have a condition which may affect your ability to exit safely from the premises in an emergency or which may cause an emergency during class, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with me or the OSSS.

Disclaimer: You are responsible for abiding by the terms set forth in this Policy Statement and Syllabus any subsequent additions and amendments. If something seems fuzzy to you, please ask me to clarify.

University of South Alabama
Fall 2007, EH373 (101)

Skeleton Schedule

This is a skeleton schedule and meant for your general planning only. This schedule is a living document and is therefore subject to meaningful revision throughout the course of the semester. You will be given advanced notice when we determine meaningful changes and/or additions. *Please keep track of these changes directly on this document.*

Week One:

21 August 2007 First day of classes: Review of Syllabus,
23 August Introductions, Pre-view of textbook

Week Two:

28 August

30 August

Week Three: Monday, 05 September Labor Day Holiday

04 September

06 September

Week Four:

11 September **Writers' Workshop**

13 September **Résumé Due**

Week Five:

18 September

20 September

Week Six:

25 September

27 September In class review of: mature reasoning, paraphrasing, summarizing,
claims-reasons-evidence-refutations, causality, plagiarism and attribution,
incorporating research, sources, and MLA style

Week Seven:

02 October **Writer's Workshop**

04 October **1st Minor Project Due**

Week Eight:

09 October

11 October

Week Nine:

16 October

18 October

Week Ten:

23 October

25 October

Writer's Workshop

Week Eleven:

30 October

2nd Minor Project Due

01 November

Week Twelve:

06 November

08 November

Review: Audience Analysis—assumptions, principles, hierarchy of values, ends and means, interpretation, implications or consequences

Forms of Appeal—to reason, to character, to emotion; Style and style

Writer's Workshop

09 November, Friday, Last day to drop a course

Week Thirteen:

13 November

Presentations Begin

15 November

Presentations

Week Fourteen:

20 November

Presentations

Writer's Workshop

21-25 November (Wednesday-Sunday), Thanksgiving Holiday

Week Fifteen:

27 November

Presentations

29 November

Presentations

Week Sixteen:

04 December

LAST DAY OF CLASSES

Final Projects Due

06 December – 11 December – FINALS WEEK

Saturday 05 May – COMMENCEMENT