

ENC 5236: Advanced Business Writing for Accountants

Fall 2014

Course Information

<u>Instructor:</u>	Joe Weakland
<u>Section Number:</u>	ENC 5236-2D81
<u>Classroom:</u>	Gerson Hall (GER) Room 0229
<u>Meeting Times:</u>	Monday and Wednesday 4:05pm to 6:00pm
<u>Email:</u>	jweakland@ufl.edu
<u>Office Location:</u>	Turlington 4309
<u>Office Hours:</u>	Tuesday 3:00 to 4:00pm

Course Description

In this course we will focus on the kinds of documents found in the working lives of accountants: emails, memos, letters, proposals, and reports. Even apparently simple writing tasks reflect your professional ability, and becoming a competent and savvy technical writer is important for furthering your career. In addition to learning how to write effectively within a variety of business genres, you will also develop an awareness of how to write best for a particular audience. You will practice this “audience-centered” writing in peer writing workshops, peer review sessions, and collaborative group work.

You will also learn to examine writing rhetorically in order to compose texts that respond appropriately and ethically to complex professional situations. Throughout the semester, we will discuss methods of revising prose for clarity, beginning with an examination of what it means to write in “plain” English, as the SEC, AICPA, and other bodies increasingly emphasize.

Required Texts

Alred, Gerald J., Charles T. Brusaw, and Walter E. Oliu. *The Business Writer's Companion*. 6th edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.

Securities and Exchange Commission. *A Plain English Handbook: How to Create Clear SEC Disclosure Documents*. Available at <http://www.sec.gov/pdf/handbook.pdf>.

Additional readings will be provided through Sakai and Course Reserves. You are responsible for retrieving, printing, and bringing them to class. These include:

Markel, “An Ethical Imperative for Technical Communicators.” *Professional Communication*.

McBride, “Toward a Sense of Ethics for Technical Communication.” *Orange: A Student Journal of Technical Communication*.

McIsaac & Sepe, “Improving the Writing of Accounting Students: A Cooperative Venture.” *Journal of Accounting Education*.

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). *A Plain English Handbook*.

Shipley, David, and Will Schwalbe. *Send: Why People Email so Badly and How to Do It Better*.

Stout & Wise, “Ethics, Gen Y Style.” *California CPA*.

William Zinsser, “Business Writing: Writing in Your Job.” *On Writing Well*.

Course Assignments

Letters

These letters will address different audiences, contexts, and situations, and in composing them you will demonstrate revised and professionally-polished plain English. You will be given a prompt for each letter assignment. (2 total; 200 points)

E-mails and Memos

Like the letters, you will be given a prompt for each email and memo. A detailed prompt will specify the required length of each document. (3 total; 300 points)

Website Critique

You will complete an informal, internal report analyzing an accounting related website of your choice as if you are a member of that company/group. (100 points)

Group Report / Proposal

You will work in a group to write a formal report. Your group may select among a feasibility/recommendation report, investigative report with recommendations, or a sales proposal. You will compose this document for multiple professional audiences and it needs to be context specific. (150 points)

Group Presentation

Your group will give a 15 minute presentation. You will take on the role of a team of accountants working for a corporation. Your team will deliver an informational or persuasive report related to a specific issue in accounting. Your goal will be to either inform your audience on an important but little-understood topic, or identify a problem in company policy and propose a solution. (100 points)

Participation

Participation includes your in-class contributions during discussions, satisfactory completion of in-class assignments and activities, and appropriate conduct throughout the semester. It is likewise important that you contribute thoughtfully and critically to our discussions of the assigned readings. Be sure your attitude creates a respectful and collaborative classroom atmosphere. (150 points)

TOTAL: 1000 points

Grading Scale

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

Course Policies

Attendance

This is a participation-oriented, skills-based writing course, which means that you will build your skills incrementally and systematically in each class throughout the semester. Much of the learning that takes place is spontaneous and difficult to reproduce outside of class.

Consequently, if you miss more than two classes during the semester, your grade will drop considerably. Each absence beyond two will lower your overall course letter-grade by 5 points. If you miss more than four classes, you will fail the course. Exempt from this policy are only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, for which you must provide appropriate documentation in advance of the absence. Absences for illness or family emergencies will count toward your two allowed absences. I advise that you save your absences for when you are truly ill.

If you are absent, it is still your responsibility to make yourself aware of all class discussions and activities as well as any new developments, such as assignments and due dates. You are still responsible for turning assignments in on time. However, you will not be able to make up any in-class assignments. I will not approach you regarding absences and missing or late assignments, nor will I inform you of what you miss during class. Please establish contact with a classmate in order to update yourself on the course happenings in the event that you miss class. If you anticipate having a prolonged absence for any reason, please speak with me in advance to make appropriate arrangements.

Late Arrival: Our class is discussion-based, and as such late arrival is both rude and disruptive. If you are not in the room when the class starts, you are late. If you are late twice, you will be penalized one absence.

Participation

Participation is a necessary component of your time in this class, and as such will factor into your grade. You are expected to arrive to class prepared, with homework done, articles/books read, and paper and writing utensils at hand. You will work individually, in small groups and in class-wide discussions. I will expect each of you to participate actively each day.

Class Discussion: You are expected to add constructively to the conversation we have each day. You will treat the instructor and your fellow classmates with respect at all times, especially when you disagree with them. Anyone who breaks that rule will be asked to leave the classroom.

Paper Submissions

In order to receive credit for an assignment, you must follow all rules set out for paper submission. All assignments should be done on a computer and have a professional appearance. (No stains, wrinkles, etc.) Any multi-page assignment turned in via hard copy that is not stapled together will lose one letter grade. Please include your last name in the document title for electronic submissions.

Papers due via hard copy will be turned in at the start of the class period on the due date. Papers due electronically should be turned in via Sakai by the time that class begins on the due date. No late assignments will be accepted, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

Failure of technology (hard drive crashes, printer out of ink, etc.) is not an excuse. If Sakai is not functioning properly when you attempt to submit a paper, you must immediately email me and apprise me of the situation and bring a hard copy to class, which you may submit for no penalty.

Email Correspondence

This is an English class, so I expect your emails to me to be professional and follow rules of grammar and etiquette. Please include proper salutations and a signature that includes your name.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

- a.) Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
- b.) Submitting a document or assignment that in completely or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 15 Aug. 2007

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code.

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came, including the date cited.

University Statements

Statement of student disability services: The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Statement on harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

Statement on academic honesty: All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Course Schedule

Week 1

8/25: Course Introduction

8/27: Accountants as writers; Zinsser; *BWC* 2-38

Week 2

9/1: NO CLASS

9/3: Professional emails; *BWC* 44-49, 274-275; Send 17-34

Week 3

9/8: Audience centered writing; Send 56-89

9/10: Send 99-116, 225-230

Email 1 due on Friday, September 12, 2014, at 5:00pm

Week 4

9/15: Plain English - basics; *PEH* ch. 1, 3

9/17: *PEH* ch. 4, 6

Week 5

9/22: Plain English - design and organization; *PEH* ch. 5, 7; *BWC* 211-213

9/24: Memos and audience; *BWC* 190-198, 209-211

Week 6

9/29: Selecting a medium, repurposing, & voice; *BWC* 55-58, 53-55

10/1: *BWC* 119-121, 301, 352-354

Email 2 due on Friday, October 3, 2014, at 5:00pm

Week 7

10/6: McIsaac & Sepe

10/8: **Memo draft due**; workshop

Memo due on Friday, October 10, 2014, at 5:00pm

Week 8

10/13: Letters; *BWC* 203-208, 213-215

10/15: *BWC* 199-200, 185-188

Week 9

10/20: Intro to ethics; Stout & Weiss

10/22: *BWC* 276-277, 277-279, 272-274, 280-282

Week 10

10/27: Ethical scenarios; Markel

10/29: McBride

Week 11

11/3 Style & usage; *BWC* 324-325, 296-297

11/5: **Letter 1 draft due**; workshop

Letter 1 due on Friday, November 7, 2014, at 5:00pm

Week 12

11/10: Word choice, sentences, & ethics; *BWC* 300, 299, 292-293, 297-299, 291

11/12 Logic, evidence, & organization; *BWC* 286-288, 288-290

Week 13

11/17: Informal reports and web design

BWC 118-119, 58-64

11/19: Rhetoric and the web

Week 14

11/24: Evaluating web communication; *BWC* 167-182

11/26: NO CLASS

Week 15

12/1: **Group report outline due**

12/3 Group web project

Formal reports, proposals, and presentations

BWC 259-268, 251-252

Website Informal Report due on Friday, December 5, 2014, at 5:00pm

Week 16

12/8: Group project preparations; NO CLASS

12/10: **Group Presentations**

Group Report due on Friday, December 12, 2014, at 5:00pm