Plain English
Technical/Professional Communication 315

Course: 18472
Term: Fall 2014 | First 8 weeks | Aug 23, 2014 - Oct 15, 2014
Meetings: fully online

Course Description

This course emphasizes the use of clear, concise English in professional writing. The course covers grammar, style, and common business documents.

> *"A plain English document uses words economically and at a level the audience can understand. Its sentence structure is tight. Its tone is welcoming and direct. Its design is visually appealing. A plain English document is easy to read and looks like it's meant to be read." – A Plain English Handbook*

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify sentence structures.
- Evaluate writing for conciseness and correctness.
- Compose memos in plain English.
- Revise writing samples.
- Apply principles of technical editing.

Prerequisite

None.

Advisory

Eligible for ENGRD 310 or ENGRD 312 and ENGWR 300; OR ESLR 340 and ESLW 340.

Instructor

Helping you to achieve your Student Learning Outcomes: **Shannon Mendez**

- Email: mendezs@arc.losrios.edu (preferred method of contact)
- Voicemail: 916-286-3691 x 12557
- Office Hours: by appointment

Course Philosophy

This class is a community of writers, and I view myself as a "writer's helper." My vision is that it will be an encouraging environment that provides everyone with the opportunity to learn, share, practice, and achieve the Student Learning Outcomes. Online students can tend to feel isolated, so I design my courses to prevent that from happening. Let's work together to make this semester great for everyone!

Course Materials

You will need the following skills and materials for this course.

Recommended Skills

- Basic computer skills (word processing, e-mail, file management).
- Basic Internet skills (use of browser, searches, uploading/downloading files).
- Familiarity with discussion boards.
- Ability to resolve technical issues.
- An open mind and patience for learning new tools.

Technical Requirements

- Frequent access to a computer with a high-speed Internet connection and web browser.

Learning Management System (LMS)

- You will use Desire2Learn (D2L) for the LMS. Go to http://d2l.losrios.edu .
- If the site is down for a prolonged period, go to http://shannonmendez.com/emergency-plan/

Word Processing Program

- Word processing program and the ability to create .pdf files.
- If you do not have a program, you can use free Google Docs or purchase MS Office with a student discount at http://www.foundationccc.org/CollegeBuys/ .
- You may also use the Computer Science Lab on campus.

Other Apps

- I may embed other apps into our LMS–such as Diigo lists, Padlet walls, Google Docs, and so forth. I only choose free apps and tools that are easy to use, but do remember to keep an open mind and patience.

Course Organization

Each "work week" begins on Monday and ends on Friday. Be sure to check the weekly outline each Monday morning, so you can plan for your activities during the week. I often make the information available during the weekend for students who like to get ahead.

You will have some activities due on Wednesdays and some on Fridays.

Time Expectations

You should plan for 9 hours of coursework each week. (The formula for most college courses is 2 hours of outside assignments per lecture hour). Outside assignments for this course typically include research, reading, and writing. Lecture hours typically include lectures, discussions, and exercises (individual and collaborative).

Coursework

The course is organized into weekly modules. Each module contains resources and activities about one or more topics.

Resources

Resources for learning may include textbook chapters, online sources, non-fiction books, and lectures. They provide the comprehensive information and details that you need to learn about the topic.

You should study the resources by Wednesday of each week.

Activities

Activities include practice and assessments.

You will complete practice activities to help you work toward achieving the Student Learning Outcomes. Practice may include discussions, collaborative projects, and other exercises.

Assessments allow you to demonstrate that you have met the Student Learning Outcomes. Assessments may include quizzes, editing projects, and writing projects.

Some activities will be due Wednesday while some will be due Friday.

Course Ground Rules

Following the ground rules will ensure that the course runs smoothly and is fair for all students.

Participation

Regular attendance and class participation is vital to achieving the Student Learning Outcomes and earning college credit.

Participation in online courses involves regularly participating in discussions, contributing to collaborative activities, and maintaining professional conduct.

Your Participation is graded.

Drop Policy

If you do not login or participate in discussions for more than two weeks, you may be dropped from the course. If you choose to drop yourself, be sure to officially drop through the Admissions Department and be mindful of the drop deadlines.

Late Work

You must submit all assignments by the due date to receive full credit*. Assignment submissions receive a 10-point penalty each day they are late. Note that some assignments are only 10 points, so you will not be able to make those up. Also, you may not be able to make up some activities because they required your collaboration with a group.

Keep the confirmation email from our LMS when you submit a paper; you may need to provide proof of submission.

* In a business setting, you might be able to miss a deadline if you work out an arrangement with your manager or client ahead of time. Therefore, let me know in advance if you will be missing classes due to medical procedures, jury duty, military service, or college activities.

Netiquette

More information about netiquette is provided in our Getting Started module. The following list highlights some key points:

- Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life.
- Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
- Be forgiving of other people's mistakes.

If your communication or behavior is intended for ill will or distracts anyone from learning or teaching, you may lose Participation points and be referred to the college Student Discipline Officer for disciplinary action.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is representing another's work as your own. Any time you cut and paste, you must cite the source. Any time you communicate an idea that was not yours, you must cite the source. Nobody should write a paper for you, and nobody should "fix" your paper. You can receive suggestions and instruction, but you must always have control of your paper--you make the edits yourself.

I use TurnItIn.com for plagiarism detection. I also compare essays to student emails and classwork (every piece of writing exhibits a certain skill level and tone). If an essay contains plagiarism issues, the essay grade may be lowered or receive a zero depending on the severity. If you demonstrate a pattern of plagiarism (submitting more than one essay with plagiarism issues), then you will be referred to the college Student Discipline Officer for disciplinary action.

For more information about college policies, visit the Guide to Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Accommodations

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. Also contact the Disabled Students' Programs and Services at (916) 484-8545 to discuss your needs and obtain documentation. I am committed to helping all students achieve their educational goals.

Communication Policy

Email is the best way to contact me. I typically respond to email within 24 hours, possibly longer on weekends. If you don't hear back from me within 24 hours during the weekdays, assume I did not receive your email and resend it.

When you send an email, identify yourself with your name and the course you are in. Also be sure to use complete sentences and proper grammar. Remember that your audience is an English instructor who appreciates these things.

Assignments and Grading

You will complete some assignments as practice and some as assessments.

With practice activities, you will earn points for your effort as you work on acquiring new skills. These activities are credit/no credit.

Assessment activities allow you to demonstrate your learned skills. Assessments are quizzes, editing projects, and writing projects. Grading rubrics will be provided for editing and writing projects.

You will earn points for the following categories of assignments.

Item	Description	Points
Participation	Contribution and professional conduct: participating in discussions, completing your equal share of collaborative activities, and no disruptive behavior. Grading is as follows: • 25 points: No issues with any of the areas. • 0-12 points: Issues with one or more areas.	25
Practice	Group work, drafts, and other activities.	70
Assessments	Quizzes and editing projects.	130
Final	Writing Project	75
	Total:	300

Your final course grade is based on the following points:

Points	Final Grade
270-300	A
240-269	B

Points	Final Grade
210-239	C
180-209	D
0-179	F

I grade all activities within a week after you submit them. If you do not receive a grade after one week, contact me to make sure I received your submission.

I do not offer extra credit or give Incompletes as grades.

Schedule

So that you can plan ahead, the following table provides the weekly topics and graded activities. Details will be provided in the weekly outlines within our course website.

	Resources	Activities
Week 1		
Start date: Aug 25	· Getting Started. · Plain English Overview.	
		· Initial Self Assessment. 10 pts. · Getting Started Quiz. 10 pts.
Week 2		
Start date: Sept 1 (holiday Monday)	· Parts of speech, sentence structure, types of clauses, types of phrases, compound and complex sentences. Punctuation: comma, semi colon, colon, dash.	
		· Practice. 10 pts. · Quiz. 10 pts. · Memo #1. 20 pts.
Week 3		
Start date: Sept 8	· Wordiness and weak verbs.	
		· Practice. 10 pts. · Quiz. 10 pts.
Week 4		
Start date: Sept 15	· Passive voice. Tone control in writing.	
		· Practice. 10 pts. · Quiz. 10 pts. · Memo #2. 20 pts.
Week 5		
Start date: Sept 22	· Sentence parallelism and mix construction.	
		· Practice. 10 pts.

		・Quiz. 10 pts.
Week 6		
Start date: Sept 29	・Common writing problems, dangling, misplaced, and squinting modifiers.	
		・Practice. 10 pts. ・Quiz. 10 pts. ・Memo #3. 20 pts.
Week 7		
Start date: Oct 6	・Mismanaged numbers and references (subject/verb agreement, subject/pronoun agreement, unknown pronoun antecedents).	
		・Practice. 10 pts. ・Quiz. 10 pts.
Week 8		
Start date: Oct 13	・Editing techniques: finding main ideas; signaling transitions; chunking information with headings and lists for easy scanning and reading.	
		・Final. 75 pts.