

English 373: Writing in the Professions
Section 101
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. It is in this sense that I ask you to take careful note of the following, that in these open sessions, you aren't by any means on display, despite the fact that we have outside guests, sympathizers and others. 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")

Instructor: Dr. Moira Amado Miller
Office Phone: 460-7936
Class Meets: M/W/F 11:15 – 12:05; HUMB 210

Office: HUMB 272
English Office (message): 460-6146
E-mail: amadomiller@usouthal.edu

Office Hours:

T/R 9:00-11:00. Please feel free to drop by my office during these hours. However, if it's very important that you see me, or if you need extra time, it is best that you schedule an appointment, in case of conflicts. If these times do not suit your schedule, it is also possible to make appointments with me outside of these set times. I will also keep at least a couple of office hours during the weekends or evenings for those of you whose work schedules make it impossible to meet during regularly scheduled hours. We'll decide on these hours together.

Required Text:

The Call to Write, Brief Edition. John Trimbur
The Non-Designer's Design Book, Robin Williams

**** Our books are full of examples, and we'll be using them LOTS; please be sure to bring both of these books to class every class meeting.****

Strongly Recommended:

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

A grammar handbook of your choice

A two-pocket file folder (I'll want your work turned in in these folders)

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. We'll be thinking a lot about reading and writing as both receptive and productive acts. We'll also be thinking about your writing as persuasive acts and as acts intended to produce action. This is to suggest that all the writing you'll do in your job and in preparation for your job are *rhetorical* acts.

We obviously cannot approach this course in terms of *coverage*, attempting to cover all the professions and all the writing done in the professions! So, we'll approach it pragmatically: that is, we will concern with the particular, with location, and with consequence. You'll also be focusing on your own particular interests in this project-based class. That is, you'll have the opportunity to structure assignments based on writing in your own profession, a profession you are training for, or a profession the content of which you

are interested in for various reasons (maybe you're in 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'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 Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning 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.

In this course, we'll be studying examples of professional writing along with creating our own. We'll study models of professional documents already out there in public space and we'll also analyze the writing that students do for this class. We'll be using our own writing and designing as examples of what it means to write in the professions. Writing is, in fact, most often a collaborative activity. So, not only will you be practicing writing in teams, but you'll need to become comfortable with taking a "disinterested" stance in relation to your own writing: that is, you'll want to 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.

Attendance and Participation Policy:

A big part of being a professional in the workplace is learning how to write for the specific "discourse communities" to which you belong and to be able to astutely and productively review, analyze, and revise the writing of others. So now is the time to throw off any remaining anxieties and take some risks in sharing your written work. Consider it a compliment when folks critically analyze your work and make suggestions about it – these are compliments. 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.

Thus participation also means coming to class WITH YOUR BOOKS IN TOW AND HAVING COMPLETED ALL THE ASSIGNED READING FROM THE SYLLABUS FOR THAT DAY. It is absolutely essential that you come to each class meeting prepared. As an added incentive, you will be graded for participation on a scale of 1-10, and 10 points of your final grade will be attributable to participation.

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 (see *Academic Bulletin*). Please understand that 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 transaction.

In this particular class, my attendance policy is as follows: You are granted three excused absences. That means that you do not owe me *any explanation* whatsoever for these absences nor will they count against your grade. However, beyond the three absences and those covered by permission from the Office of Academic Affairs, there is no such thing as an excused absence and that includes absences for illness of you or a loved one, job interviews, sporting events, etc. If for any reason you miss four or more class meetings (that's more than a week's worth of classes), your final grade will suffer. Absences beyond three will lower your letter grade by ½ letter grade per absence. More than nine absences means automatic failure of the course. There are no exceptions to these rules. Even students who excel in all other areas are

subject to this policy. The moral of this story, of course, is to use your three absences wisely because you may need them in the event of an emergency.

I understand that there are sometimes extenuating circumstances which prevent people from attending class, such as serious illness. Please contact the Office of Academic Affairs and talk to me if you will be absent from class for an extended period of time. You must let me know *in writing* during the first two weeks of the course if you will be missing class in deference to religious obligations.

If you do 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.

Late Work:

I do not accept late work. You may make an argument to me, in writing, about dire extenuating circumstances that might cause an assignment to be late, but remember that a written argument is a persuasive document the writing of which will take you away from other necessary work. Also, you are always welcome to turn in assignments *before* an anticipated absence. Be sure to make backup files of all your computer work for this class. I can empathize with technological difficulties, but I cannot normally accept these problems as legitimate reasons for missing or late work. In the case that I do accept a late assignment, I reserve the right to lower your paper grade one full letter grade for each day that a paper is late.

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. Because this is a university as opposed to a trade-school course, you'll also study the theory behind the discussions you enter and the choices you make in your writing. You'll be completing projects that you want to build, solving problems that you want to solve. You will be responsible for determining the details of what you'll write about: the exact focus of your projects, the argument you'd like to make, the audience that you feel will benefit most from your discoveries. Start thinking, from day-one, about the sort of project/s you want to complete.

[You will always be welcome to structure an assignment for this class that could also be taken as credit for another class. BUT, you *must* propose this idea to me formally (either in a written proposal or in a formal meeting), and you must also get approval from the other invested instructor before going ahead with such a plan.]

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

Reading Responses: Exactly what they sound like. This is a standard-issue assignment; I hope you've had the opportunity to become familiar with the reading response. In this class, such a response should be about how the readings relate to or influence the thinking your doing about your project/s or a related problem in the workplace. Please prepare three 1-page (no more than 3 pages) "reading responses" over the course of the semester. Although I leave it to you to decide which readings you'd like to respond to, please note that at least two responses must be turned in to me before the end of

Week Five (9/26), and that the third must be turned in before the end of Week Ten (10/31).

Minor or Exploratory projects:	Two shorter projects falling under one of the categories we've covered in either Trimbur or Williams (letters, interview protocol, briefing, profile, evaluation of internet site, brochure, letterhead and business card, poster, etc.) Due Dates: 9/15, 10/13, 10/27.
Major or Final Project:	A synthesis of what you've learned and what you hoped to accomplish. This final project will count for much of your grade, and should be a substantive, presentable project. This project might be a multifaceted marketing-type campaign, or it might be a full research project represented by a Researched Essay, a Position Paper, a Proposal, a Documented White Paper, an Artist's or Employment Portfolio. Due: 12/1.
Presentations:	<i>One 5-10 minute presentation</i> of work-in-progress. These presentations will be done with a partner or group working on similar documents. <i>One full presentation</i> of your final project. This presentation should include a short discussion of the theory used to inform your work. May include handouts. This presentation can also take the form of teaching a class or conducting a workshop.

As I've mentioned previously, information from and work for other classes can be used to inform these assignments and vice versa. 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 your evaluation is very simple. There are three basic contractual requirements that you agree to meet if you want to pass this course: you cannot miss more than a week's worth of classes (that's three classes in our case). You must turn in all formal assignments on time. You are required to meet with me at the end of the term for a final conference and to pick up any final papers and your grade.

"Stages" work (responses, explorations, attendance) will be graded holistically and will receive written responses from me along with a score of 1, 2, or 3, corresponding to a 6-point scale (6 and 5 are above average; 4 and 3 are average or acceptable; 2 and 1 are below average or unacceptable). Credit for participation is also a holistic measure. The final Project however, will be graded with a conventional A-F letter grade. I will issue you an advisory grade at midterm if you so desire; 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%
Reading Responses	10% (3 x 3 points each, 1 extra point for overall quality)
Exploratory (or minor) projects	30%
Major Project	50%

Listserv:

Our class will have its own online discussion list. I see this forum as a way of continuing our class discussions. Although I'll "moderate" this list, think of it as your own space as students—an extension of the classroom. You should think of it as a place where you can begin and continue discussion about issues of interest to class readings, writing, and discussions. Sometimes, I think, students find a listserv helpful in this way, although I'd like to hear your thoughts about it. Listserv participation will count toward your overall class participation points.

South Alabama is quite clear about their commitment to the importance of technology in the university classroom. It is, in fact, a university requirement that you check your university-assigned email address frequently. In any case, I'll also occasionally use our "list" to post messages of class-wide interest (and you can do the same), contribute to discussions, and, of course, answer any questions specifically directed to me. Because this space is an extension of the classroom, and each of us is an equal member in this electronic space, please remember that rules of respectful interaction apply here as they do in the physical classroom.

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. Ask your peers for feedback, and if you like, I will be happy to read over first, second, third...drafts with you until you find your feet.

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 focus or subject of their projects at the last moment.*

"Workshopping" can be an effective process only in an environment of trust and mutual respect, and again, I encourage you to share your ideas and your writing with each other. However, it might be important to remind you that the content and style of draft work and the finished draft are the intellectual property of the writer. Also, students should not discuss classmates' writing outside of class without the writer's written permission.

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.

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. As such, it is to your distinct advantage to fully comprehend this and other documents and to understand them as contracts. To this end, if something seems fuzzy or disturbing or confusing to you, please ask me to clarify. Chances are someone else (including me) will benefit from your having asked the question as well. There is no way for me to know if you have concerns unless you tell me.

Having said this, please also note that our day-to-day schedule is subject to alteration depending upon where our focus lays or strays. However, this schedule should accomplish at least three things as it is: 1) it should help keep us focused on course goals and aware of our joint responsibilities and expectations, 2) it should minimize confusion about what’s “due” and what’s coming up, and 3) it provides us with an outline on which to make meaningful changes. As we work together, I am responsible for giving you adequate notice of the changes we decided upon, and you are responsible for making changes to your personal syllabus when/if they are announced in class.

I am excited and confident about this course and I hope that we will, together, learn much. If, at any point, you have questions, concerns, comments, or suggestions about any aspect of the course design, your participation in the class, assigned readings – whatever – please don’t hesitate to share them with me.