

Course Description

ENG 272w is a writing intensive introduction to typical business communication tasks, styles, and genres. Assignments include correspondence, proposals, reports, documentation, and job application materials. Emphasis will be placed upon the use of rhetorical analysis, software applications, collaboration, and usability testing to complete business communication tasks. Students are required to write at least 20 pages of material and revise ten of those pages based upon feedback from the instructor.

You will be assigned a variety of tasks of increasing complexity, responsibility, and ambiguity. These tasks are designed to help you develop competence in business communication tasks that are often encountered by college interns and new college graduates. The assignments, activities, and lectures are designed to help you develop the following business communication competencies¹:

Professional | Clear | Concise | Evidence-Driven | Persuasive

Course Learning Objectives (in development, to be considered for adoption by the program)

Students completing the course will demonstrate their ability to

1. Communicate professionally by exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in personal behavior and in typical workplace situations.
2. Communicate clearly by making written, oral, and visual messages easy to follow, understand, and act upon.
3. Communicate concisely by delivering comprehensive messages in the most efficient way possible.
4. Communicate evidence by selecting, presenting, and interpreting relevant and credible data.
5. Communicate persuasively by using critical thinking skills and composing arguments that influence beliefs or actions to advance instrumental business goals.
6. Use information technology to collaborate, manage information, and compose effective workplace messages.

Course Organization

Module 1: Communicating Professionally (Weeks 1, 2, 3)

Module 2: Communicating Clearly (Weeks 4, 5, 6)

Module 3: Communicating Concisely (Weeks 7, 8, 9)

Module 4: Communicating Evidence (Weeks 10, 11, 12)

Module 5: Communicating Persuasively (Week 13, 14, 15)

Module 6: Conclusion (Week 16)

¹ Lucas, K. and Rawlins, J. D. (2015). The Competency Pivot: Introducing a Revised Approach to the Business Communication Curriculum. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly* 78(2): 167-193. doi:10.1177/2329490615576071

Assessment Plan²

Course-Level Learning Objectives	Cognitive Function	Assessment Techniques
1. Communicate professionally by exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in personal behavior and in typical business documents.	Understanding Applying Analyzing	- Discussions about the components of “professional” communication. - Planning grids (audience analysis worksheets) - Reading quiz - Rubrics for “professional” communication.
2. Communicate clearly by making written, oral, and visual messages easy to follow, understand, and act upon.	Applying Analyzing Creating	- Discussions about the components of “clear” communication. - Peer reviews of works in progress - Observations and feedback during document design workshops - Reading quiz - Rubric for “clear” communication
3. Communicate concisely by delivering comprehensive messages in the most efficient way possible.	Applying Analyzing Creating	- Discussions about the components of “concise” communication. - Peer reviews of works in progress - Observations and feedback during document design workshops - Reading quiz - Rubrics for “concise” communication
4. Communicate evidence by selecting, presenting, and interpreting relevant and credible data.	Analyzing Evaluating Creating	- Discussions about the components of “evidence-driven” communication. - Observations and feedback of research planning and data analysis workshops - Peer reviews of works in progress - Rubrics for “evidence-driven” communication - Reading quizzes
5. Communicate persuasively by using critical thinking skills and composing arguments that influence beliefs or actions to advance instrumental business goals.	Analyzing Evaluating Creating	- Discussions about the components of “persuasive” communication. - Guided analysis of samples of persuasive texts - Peer reviews of works in progress - Rubrics for “persuasive” communication - Reading quizzes
6. Use information technology responsibly to collaborate, manage information, and compose documents for typical workplace situations.	Understanding Applying	- Discussions - In-class workshops - Team contracts and peer evaluations for collaborative projects

² Assessment plan template provided by Michael Manderfeld, Instructional Designer at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Course Map

Course & Module Objectives	Learning Activities	Assessment
1. Communicating Professionally Exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner - Navigate through the course. Locate course announcements, files, and discussion threads in the CMS. - Define business communication and its role in the workplace. - Define instrumental and relational goals. - Analyze the rhetorical situation for given situations. - Define the competency of “professional” as using care, courtesy, and conventions. - Care: Attending to details and presenting oneself without mistakes, sloppiness, or other detractors. - Courtesy: Adhering to standards of etiquette, behaving civilly, and demonstrating tact and emotional control. - Conventions: Conforming to professional expectations in regards to format, style, etc. - Compose messages carefully to have a positive effect on personal and instrumental goals. - Identify and elements of business etiquette and employ those behaviors in written messages and interpersonal interactions. - Identify strategies for productive collaborative writing, including individual team roles that help and hinder collaboration. - Produce routine business documents that follow formatting, organization, and content conventions. - Employ the components of care, courtesy, and conventions to create a professional document.	Instructional Materials Podcasts/Lectures - Greetings from Dr. Veltsos - Using D2L in this course (1a) - What is business communication? (1b, 1c) - Introduce theme for the course. For example: - Managing personal finances - Generic bus comm skills: Introduce the m-Provise simulation - Care - Five Steps to Successful Writing: Preparation, Research, Organization, Writing, Revising (1e.i, 1g); Purpose, Audience, Context, Scope, Medium - Courtesy - Etiquette, Interpersonal relationships, Tone and Style (1e.ii, 1f) - Collaborative writing, Team roles (1h) - Convention - Expectations of readers, choosing the right medium, using the right format (1e.iii, 1g) Examples: Business correspondence and other public messages that fail to use care, courtesy, and conventions. (1e) - Excerpt from <i>A Confederacy of Dunces</i> by John Kennedy Toole, correspondence by Ignatius Riley on behalf of Levy Pants Discussions/Workshops: - Introduce yourself (2 minute video) - Describe some of your experience with business communication (positive & negative, creating or receiving) (1a, 1b) - Introduce yourself in three rhetorical situations (1c) - Team roles	- Guided discussions about the components of “professional” communication. - Planning grids (audience analysis worksheets) - D2L & Syllabus content quiz - Reading quiz - Rubrics for “professional” communication.

	Assignment: Apply for an internship at m-Provise Correspondence: inquiry, complaint, adjustments, refusals	
Course & Module Objectives	Learning Activities	Assessment
2. Communicating Clearly Making messages easy to follow, understand, and act upon. - Define the competency of “clear” as central purpose, organizational pattern, clear language, and visual design. - Central purpose: A single main idea to the message. (aka thesis statement) - Organizational pattern: arrangement of ideas, information, and data in ways that the receiver can understand. - Clear language: Writing or speaking plainly and with the optimal level of detail, without ambiguity and with limited jargon - Visual design: Design elements that help readers scan documents, locate important information, and follow instructions or processes - Summarize complex messages into a succinct statement of central purpose. - Identify common problems that prevent clear language and strategies for solving them. - Identify and use organizational patterns that are appropriate for the purpose and context of typical business documents. - Use best practices of information design to create documents that help readers find and understand important information. - Evaluate accuracy and ethics of visuals that demonstrate concepts, data, items, or procedures	Instructional Materials: Podcasts: - Central Purpose: Identifying and stating the main idea, Avoiding muddled messages, Unity and coherence, Choosing the right words part 1, Avoiding offense with accidental -isms - Organizational Patterns - Selecting the right pattern for your content and purpose, Using outlines - Clear Language - Visual Design - Typography, Robin Williams/Gestalt principles of design, Kumpf’s metadiscourse, Basic color theory/Cortes “Color in Motion” Examples: Defining terms - Townhouse vs. Condominium - Term vs. Whole Life insurance - Mutual funds Organizing routine reports - Direct pattern for good/neutral news - Indirect pattern for bad news Visual Design Honda Quick Reference Guide Textbooks Discussions/Writing Workshops: - Central Purpose - Organization - Clear Language - Explaining retirement investment options (individual vs. employer accounts, pre-tax vs. post-tax options, effect of starting early vs. starting later) - Visual Design - Styles and other formatting features in Microsoft Word - Slide masters and other formatting features in Microsoft PowerPoint	- Discussions about the components of “clear” communication. - Peer reviews of works in progress - Observations and feedback during document design workshops - Reading quiz - Rubric for “clear” communication

	Assignments: Routine reports Product information sheets Instructions Policies and procedures Tables and Charts (e.g. personal budget) Understanding employee benefits Understanding credit scores	
Course & Module Objectives	Learning Activities	Assessment
3. Communicating Concisely Delivering comprehensive messages in the most efficient way possible. a. Define the competency of “concise” as information selection and fine-scale editing i. Information selection: choosing the information to include and exclude to convey the essential information that receivers need to know to act, understand, or decide without overwhelming them with extraneous details ii. Fine-scale editing: Reducing wordiness and choosing the best words to convey the ideas or information b. Identify appropriate content and level of detail for audiences, purposes, and situations of various business documents. c. Identify common problems that prevent conciseness and strategies for solving them.	Learning Materials Podcasts/Lectures: 1. Choosing the right information 2. Choosing the right words part 2 a. Sentence variety, Word choice, Jargon, Acronyms Examples Discussions/Workshops 1. Assignments Pecha Kucha presentations (3b, 3c) Routine reports - Personal finance: Creating a budget, paying back student loans, negotiating salary - m-Provise: Quarterly sales report	- Discussions about the components of “concise” communication. - Peer reviews of works in progress - Observations and feedback during document design workshops - Reading quiz - Rubric for “concise” communication
Course & Module Objectives	Learning Activities	Assessment
4. Communicating Evidence Selecting, presenting, and interpreting relevant and credible data. a. Define the competency of “communicating evidence” as using better evidence, using evidence better, and citing sources. i. Using better evidence: Locating and evaluating credible data and information ii. Using evidence better: Selecting relevant data and information, interpreting it clearly and accurately, and presenting it in a manner that is useful for the receiver	Learning Materials Podcasts/Lectures: 1. Secondary research methods 2. Primary research methods 3. Documenting sources in research report Examples Discussions/Workshops 1. Revisiting your budget: post-graduation	- Discussions about the components of “evidence-driven” communication. - Observations and feedback of research planning and data analysis workshops - Peer reviews of works in progress

iii. Citing sources: Identifying sources for ideas, images, and data within the text and in a list of references. b. Use systematic strategies for collecting and analyzing data to answer questions and solve workplace problems. i. Secondary research and information (e.g. websites, social media, journals and databases, public information). ii. Primary research (e.g. interviews, surveys, observations, usability tests, experiments, and document analysis). c. Interpret data and information to help receivers take action, make decisions, or understand ideas. d. Document all sources of data, ideas, graphics, etc. correctly and completely using a style guide.	Assignments Investigative Reports ● Use secondary research to answer a question or solve a problem. (4b, 4d) ○ Renting vs. buying a home ○ Understanding retirement funds (see “Clearly” for another place to include this topic) ● Use primary research to answer a question or solve a problem. (4c, 4d) ○ Strategies for saving money	● Rubrics for “evidence-driven” communication ● Reading quizzes
Course & Module Objectives	Learning Activities	Assessment
5. Communicating Persuasively Combining competencies to compose messages that influence beliefs or actions to advance instrumental goals. a. Define the competency of “persuasive” as making points, connecting evidence, and being ethical. i. Making points: Taking a position on a topic ii. Connecting evidence: Using evidence to support a position (or refute the arguments of others) and connect to the central purpose iii. Being ethical: Presenting information honestly b. Construct persuasive arguments by making points, supporting them with evidence, and avoiding logical fallacies. c. Recognize and respond to ethical dilemmas that may occur in typical business communication situations.	Learning Materials Podcasts/Lectures: 1. Examples Discussions/Workshops 1. Ethical Issues in Professional Communication Assignments Proposals ● Personal finance: (4b) ● m-Provise: (4b, 4c) Recommendation Reports ● Personal finance: (4b, 4d) ● m-Provise: (4c, 4d)	● Discussions about the components of “persuasive” communication. ● Guided analysis of samples of persuasive texts ● Peer reviews of works in progress ● Rubric for “persuasive” communication ● Reading quizzes
Course Objectives & Module Objectives	Learning Activity	Assessment
6. Conclusion a. Define the five business communication competencies: professional, clear, concise, evidence-driven, persuasive. b. Reflect on personal strengths and areas for improvement for each business communication competency.	Learning Materials Podcasts/Lectures: 1. Some final thoughts about business communication Examples Self-reflection rubric and sample paper Discussions/Workshops None	Self-reflection rubric

	Assignments	
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	Self-reflection of business communication competency. Describe and defend their developing communication skills; identify areas for continued improvement.	
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