English 203: Introduction to Research for Professional Writers

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"For the study of writing technologies, we advocate a view of research as a set of critical and reflective practices (praxis) that are sensitive to the rhetorical situatedness of participants and technologies and that recognize themselves as a form of political and ethical action,"

–Opening Spaces (Sullivan and Porter)

Overview

This course is aims to unpack complex research questions: 1) what constitutes "research", 2) what does a researcher *look* like, 3) what ethical dimensions must we take into account when engaging with subjects, 3) how can we build better methods and, subsequently, methodologies?

These and other questions will foreground all discussions in this class. My goal is to get you to think of yourselves as more than just students–you are budding researchers of writing and as such, it is your responsibility to engage with your research critically and ethically.

Required Texts

- Spinuzzi, Clay. *Topsight: A Guide To Studying, Diagnosing, and Fixing Information Flow in Organizations*. 2013
- All other materials will be available on the course sight unless otherwise noted.

Course Goals

Research
Understand and use various research methods to produce professional documents, including

- analyzing professional and academic contexts
- locating, evaluating, and using print and online information selectively for particular audiences and purposes
- triangulating sources of evidence
- selecting appropriate primary research methods, such as interviews, observations, focus groups, and surveys to collect data
- working ethically with research participants

Writing in Context
Analyze professional cultures, social contexts, and audiences to determine how they shape the various purposes and forms of workplace writing, such as persuasion, organizational communication, and public discourse, with an emphasis on

- writing for a range of defined audiences and stakeholders
- negotiating the ethical dimensions of workplace communication

Project Management
Understand, develop and deploy various strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents both individually and collaboratively, including

- selecting and using appropriate technologies that effectively and ethically address professional situations and audiences
- building professional *ethos* through documentation and accountability

Document Design
Make rhetorical design decisions about workplace documents, including

- understanding and adapting to genre conventions and audience expectations
- understanding and implementing design principles of format and layout
- interpreting and arguing with design
- drafting, researching, testing, and revising visual designs and information architecture

Teamwork
Learn and apply strategies for successful teamwork and collaboration, such as

- working online with colleagues
- determining roles and responsibilities
- managing team conflicts constructively
- responding constructively to peers' work
- soliciting and using peer feedback effectively
- achieving team goals

Technology
Use and evaluate the writing technologies frequently used in the workplace, such as emailing, instant messaging, image editing, video editing, presentation design and delivery, HTML editing, Web browsing, content management, and desktop publishing technologies.

Grading

This course will be separated into five main components. Please note that **I do not accept any late work.**

1. **Semester-long work and expectations (40%)**
    a. *Journals:*
        In these regular submissions which will be due as a hard copy in class **and** as electronic submissions on Blackboard, you will write about what you have learned about research based on each new method/methodology/research issue that we practice or discuss in class. Please consult Blackboard for a detailed description of each journal and due dates. (20%)
    b. *Discussion Responses and Replies:*
        In these semi-weekly assignments, three or four students will post a response to the readings and the remaining students will reply to their responses. Both need to be posted by a certain time. Please consult Blackboard for a detailed description of these Responses and Replies and due dates. (10%)
    c. *Discussion/Participation/Informal Presentations/Peer Review*

This class **IS PARTICIPATORY BY NATURE!** By that I mean that you are expected to engage with the class by discussing your ideas as well as responding to questions. Remember that "participate" is a verb. (10%) This portion of your grade will be based on

- How well you implement the guidelines and best practices for posting comments and creating reading responses, as presented on our course site and discussed in the textbook.
- The degree to which your peer reviews and responses offer insightful feedback and suggestions on your classmates' drafts.
- The degree to which your reading responses and comment posts demonstrate learning of the course content.
- The degree to which your reading responses and comment posts engage with and contribute to the learning of others in the course.

2. Preliminary Research documents (20%)

Before you can launch into a full-fledged study/proposal, you need to gain some experience. For the first 3/5 of the semester, we will implement several methods such as surveys, observations, interviews, and so forth. I will periodically ask for you to submit proposals, links, fieldnotes, transcriptions, presentation handouts and other materials throughout this time so that I have a good sense of how you are approaching research. Please consult Blackboard for a detailed account of when these materials will be due.

3. Group Research Project (30%)

a. Annotated Bibliography

After gaining experience with our Preliminary Research documents, we will work in groups to propose and conduct an actual study. Before we can launch a study, however, we will need to conduct secondary research on what has already been discovered and how it has been discovered. We will go over how to search the Purdue Library database in order to find scholarly publications. You will pool your resources to create one large annotated bibliography. Consult Blackboard for more information on requirements and due dates. (10%)

b. Internal Review Board (+) Proposal

When researchers conduct a study, they usually need to have it approved by an Internal Review Board who looks for any potential threats to human subjects. We will subject our proposal to the same level of rigor as an IRB would. However, we will go even further by looking for sound methods and methodologies as well – hence the (+). Consult Blackboard for more detailed information and due dates on this assignment. (10%)

c. *Pilot Report and Presentation*

I expect your project to design a complex mixed-methods study. Naturally, there is no way that you will be able to complete it on time. Therefore, after you receive IRB (+) approval, you will need to conduct aspects of the project that are doable and write a report on your findings. In this report you will also detail how you would change your methods listed in the IRB(+) proposal based on the findings you have received. You will also give a formal presentation on your findings. (10%)

4. LinkedIN Project (10%)

We will end by having you create or update your Linked In Profile, to reflect your proficiency with research methods and technologies.

All major assignments will be graded on the standard plus-minus letter-grade scale: A=100-94, A-=93-90, B+==89-87, B=86-84, B-=83-80, C+=79-77, C=76-74, C-=73-70, D+=69-67, D=66-64, D-=63-60, F=59 or below.

Students **must** participate in all of the three major projects and complete a majority of the required weblog posting assignments in order to pass this class. Students with questions about final grades should review university policies regarding grade appeals, which are outlined by the Dean of Students here: http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/gradeappeal.pdf. The University regulations are here: http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu_conduct/stu_regulations.html.

Submitting Assignments

Unless otherwise stated on the calendar (in Blackboard), you must bring a hard copy of every assignment to class *and* submit an electronic copy on Blackboard ***before*** class begins. The system will automatically count your assignment as late if you forget to submit the work online before 10:30.

Also, you may feel free to email me with any questions or requests that you would like. However, please **do not** email me any assignments. My inbox is at 95% capacity and I have to delete any emails with attachments.

Technology Requirements

In order to participate fully in the course, you should already be able to use the technology platform and applications listed below.

- Mac OS X or Windows 7, 8, or 10
- Microsoft Office for the PC or Mac (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) or Apple counterparts (Pages, Keynote, Numbers)
- Web Browser (e.g., Firefox, Safari, or Internet Explorer 8)
- Email Program (e.g., Purdue Webmail, Thunderbird, Gmail, etc.)
- Adobe Acrobat and Reader (for PDF documents, collaborative review)

Technology Responsibilities

Familiarity with certain technologies is crucial for participation and success in the course. If you need any assistance now or at any point during the semester, please do not hesitate to ask.
During the semester, you'll need regular access to the Internet and email. Because the course home page is the main locus of the class community, you are responsible for reading and keeping current with all content posted there, including what has been submitted by both the instructor and your fellow students. You'll be responsible for configuring your system to access course materials, to read course email and participate in online discussions, and to submit your work. Very early in the semester, you will be asked to demonstrate that you can meet these responsibilities:

- Register for the course website and complete your profile information.
- Post a message about yourself and your interests
- Read the course description and calendar, then ask questions when you are uncertain about requirements or activities.
- Set up your @purdue.edu email or an alternative that you can access regularly and reliably
- Become proficient sending and receiving email attachments, resolving file compatibility issues, and following email decorum.
- Check the course calendar before each class meeting.
- Become proficient participating in the class Drupal space.
- Become more proficient with unfamiliar computer technologies and applications, including Web editing software, document cycling systems, desktop publishing applications, and graphics programs.
- Maintain back-up copies of all assignments via your home directory, disks, USB drives, or CDs.

If at any time you have problems accessing the Internet from home, you'll need to find a public lab or connection point. Problems with computers will not be an excuse for falling behind or failing to complete required assignments. If your Internet service goes down, find another connection point. If your computer breaks, use another one. In other words, find a way to complete the assignments on time. Because computer problems are a fact of life, always work to complete your assignments early and make frequent backups to multiple media.

Collaborative Work

Teamwork is a required component of the course. You and your project team members are responsible for updating one another and me about assignment development and progress. In addition, you also are responsible for negotiating together all aspects of your work, including planning, drafting, revising, file managing, and scheduling of assignments. When a collaborative project is assigned, you will receive explicit guidelines for successful collaboration. Individual group members will complete Collaborative Evaluation Forms. For more information about good principles of collaboration, see the brochure, Group Work and Collaborative Writing.

Attendance

Because of the short timespan of the course, attendance will be strictly enforced and will be required at all scheduled electronic and face-to-face (F2F) meetings. Electronic meetings will be scheduled periodically throughout the semester, so your attendance will be required for those meeting. Failure to show up will result in an absence. Since you will be working in project teams during the semester, you also will be required to attend any scheduled out-of-class meetings with your team to complete course assignments.

You may miss 3 classes without any penalty. Unless you have contacted me and made arrangements with me in advance, four absences may result in your final grade being lowered by as much as a letter grade. More than five absences will result in a failing grade for the course. Excused absences may be granted for religious holidays or university-sponsored events, provided you make a written request to me no less than two weeks in advance and that you complete any required work before the due date. Being excessively or regularly late for class or team meetings, both electronic and F2F, can also be counted as an absence.

In certain cases, the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) may make recommendations in cases of bereavement and grief. It is your responsibility to consult the ODOS grief policy and to contact the Office of the Dean of Students should you meet the policy's criteria. Below is the University's Grief Absence Policy for Students

Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS). GAPS Policy: Students will be excused for funeral leave and given the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for misses assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student's family.

Academic Integrity

Purdue students and their instructors are expected to adhere to guidelines set forth by the Dean of Students in "Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students," which students are encouraged to read here:

http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academicintegritybrochure.php

The preamble of this guide states the following: "Purdue University values intellectual integrity and the highest standards of academic conduct. To be prepared to meet societal needs as leaders and role models, students must be educated in an ethical learning environment that promotes a high standard of honor in scholastic work. Academic dishonesty undermines institutional integrity and threatens the academic fabric of Purdue University. Dishonesty is not an acceptable avenue to success. It diminishes the quality of a Purdue education, which is valued because of Purdue's high academic standards."

Academic dishonesty is defined as follows: "Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [University Regulations, Part V, Section III, B, 2, a] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972]"
If you have any questions about this policy, please ask.

In Case of a Campus Emergency

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. You can acquire updated information from the course website, by emailing me, or by contacting me through the English Department at 765-494-3740.

Late Work

The majority of missed class assignments cannot be made up. If a serious and unavoidable problem arises, however, you should contact me in writing prior to the deadline to determine whether or not an extension for the work will or will not be granted.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS SYLLABUS ATTACHMENT

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES are based on a simple concept – if you hear a fire alarm inside, proceed outside. If you hear a siren outside, proceed inside.

Indoor Fire Alarms mean to stop class or research and immediately **evacuate** the building.
Proceed to your Emergency Assembly Area away from building doors. **Remain outside** until police, fire, or other emergency response personnel provide additional guidance or tell you it is safe to leave.

- **All Hazards Outdoor Emergency Warning Sirens** mean to immediately seek shelter (**Shelter in Place**) in a safe location within the closest building.
    - "Shelter in place" means seeking immediate shelter inside a building or University residence. This course of action may need to be taken during a tornado, a civil disturbance including a shooting or release of hazardous materials in the outside air. Once safely inside, find out more details about the emergency*. **Remain in place** until police, fire, or other emergency response personnel provide additional guidance or tell you it is safe to leave.

**In both cases, you should seek additional clarifying information by all means possible…Purdue Emergency Status page, text message, email alert, TV, radio, etc…review the Purdue Emergency Warning Notification System multi-communication layers at http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency_preparedness/warning-system.html*

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURES:

- Review the **Emergency Procedures Guidelines** https://www.purdue.edu/emergency_preparedness/flipchart/index.html
- Review the **Building Emergency Plan** (available on the Emergency Preparedness website or from the building deputy) for:
    - evacuation routes, exit points, and emergency assembly area
    - when and how to evacuate the building.
    - shelter in place procedures and locations

o additional building specific procedures and requirements.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AWARENESS VIDEOS

Shots Fired on Campus: When Lightning Strikes," is a 20-minute active shooter awareness video that illustrates what to look for and how to prepare and react to this type of incident. See: http://www.purdue.edu/securePurdue/news/2010/emergency-preparedness-shots-fired-on-campus-video.cfm (Link is also located on the EP website)

MORE INFORMATION

Reference the Emergency Preparedness web site for additional information: https://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency_preparedness/