

English 333:
University of Southern Mississippi
Fall 2009

Writing in Academic, Professional and Public Contexts

Instructor: Dr. Sheldon Walcher

Office Hours and Location: Thursdays, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; LAB 370

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Technology Coordinator: Cacee DeYoung — cacee.deyoung@gmail.com

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Anderson and Trimbur. *Writing in Academic, Professional and Public Contexts: USM Custom Edition*. Cengage Learning.
- Regular access to the internet to complete assignments and download materials from our Blackboard/WebCT companion site at: southernmiss.blackboard.com
- A USB flash or jump drive with at least 2GB of storage

COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 333 aims to prepare students to read, conduct research, and communicate more effectively in a range of academic, professional, and public settings. Specifically, you will complete a number of projects designed to acquaint you with the audiences and types of documents you are likely to use as you advance in your educational and professional careers. Because successful communication in the 21st century increasingly requires writers to engage their audiences in a variety of media and formats, in addition to producing traditional print documents (i.e., letters, reports, proposals, etc.), you will also be exposed to a number of digital genres, including audio and video podcasts, blogs, and websites.

Two assumptions will be key to this work:

- Writing and speaking are rhetorical: effective communicators must carefully consider their audiences and their purposes as they plan, draft, and revise their communications.
- Academic, professional and public audiences often differ in how they read and respond to communications: effective communicators must learn to recognize and negotiate such shifting demands in each new context they face.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Analyze a writing task and its rhetorical context, including the purpose of the document, its audience, its uses, and its constraints.
- Understand the basic features of several academic, professional and public genres, and how to modify these features in response to new audiences and situations.
- Create usable, persuasive, clear, accurate, and readable documents.
- Understand the specific expectations of audiences in your chosen academic and professional field, and to adapt your communications to more effectively address these expectations
- Develop a professional style of working in teams and managing group projects.
- Conduct more advanced research in a variety of contexts, and to more effectively incorporate this research in your writing.

COURSE DESIGN

English 333 is what is known as a “hybrid” course, meaning it combines traditional face-to-face class meetings with several elements of online instruction. This design should ideally give you more flexibility in terms of how you go about studying and learning. Given that this course may be very different from others you have taken, however, you may need to adjust how you think about and prepare for class.

Each week the course will be composed of four different but closely related components: 1) an online course reading and assignment; 2) a course lecture; 3) a discussion section meeting; and 4) drop-in hours in the Multimedia Writing Studio. In order to succeed in this course, you will need to actively engage in all four of these components on a regular basis.

Online Readings and Assignments

You will need to buy a print copy of the required textbook *Writing in Academic, Professional and Public Contexts* to gain access to the online content of this course, which will be within our English 333 Blackboard/WebCT companion site. Each Saturday, a new set of course readings will be made available that will focus on a different aspect of writing. Along with study guides and a weekly set of mandatory diagnostic tests, you will also have access to a range of supplementary material designed to help you with your **blog assignment**, which you will need to complete and post at the end of every week.

Course Lectures

Every Monday from 5:00 - 6:15 p.m. we will meet in JGH 116 for a lecture session. These lectures will go over key aspects of the online course readings, as well as specific writing and research strategies relevant to your weekly assignments and course postings. Occasionally, guest speakers from different fields/professions may also be invited to discuss aspects of writing in real-world situations. All major **course projects** will be distributed during the course lecture, and you will have an opportunity to ask specific questions about these assignments. All course lectures will also be posted online as streaming videos.

Discussion Sections

In addition to course lectures, each student is enrolled in a Discussion Section, which will meet once a week for approximately one hour to review the course material, and to provide additional opportunities to gain help with weekly blog assignments and course projects. Discussions sections will be lead by experienced TAs who have been trained in the use of various tools and applications relevant to this course. These same discussion leaders will also be available each week to assist students in the Multimedia Writing Studio.

Multimedia Writing Studio

To assist you in completing your weekly writing assignments, and to help you learn more about communicating in digital contexts, we have created a computer lab specifically for students enrolled in this course, the Multimedia Writing Studio. The Studio is located in LAB 334, and it is equipped with several workstations, each loaded with a host of web design, image, video and audio processing applications. In addition, a limited number of video cameras, laptops, and microphones will be available for students to check out for use in conjunction with their final group projects. The Studio schedule will be posted in the coming days.

ONLINE ACCESS

To access the online components of this course, you must first go to <http://southernmiss.blackboard.com>, then follow the log-in instructions. You will need to have your EMPLID and password (the same information you use to access SOAR and register for classes.) If you have any questions or run into difficulty accessing the Blackboard/WebCT material for this course, please call the iTech Helpdesk at 601-266-4357, or e-mail them at helpdesk@usm.edu. You can also get help as well as specific instructions on how to use various components of Blackboard/WebCT by visiting http://www.usm.edu/lec/des/students/blackboard_student_tutorials.php. You can also contact Cacee DeYoung, the Technology Coordinator for this course, at cacee.deyoung@gmail.com.

REQUIREMENTS

In order to earn at least a “C” in this course, students must satisfactorily fulfill all of the following:

- Complete all **reading assignments** along with the online **pre and post-diagnostic quizzes**
- Complete all **weekly blog assignments**, to be posted online.
- Submit all four **course projects** (see Course Schedule for details.)
- Prepare an extended **group project** composed of multiple documents (some students may be given an opportunity to present their projects to the entire class at the end of the semester);
- Compile a **final portfolio** to be submitted with a **final self-evaluation** (in lieu of a final exam);
- Maintain regular attendance; actively participate in course discussions; complete any additional homework or activities assigned; etc.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Weekly Blog Assignments (10 pts total)

Short writing assignments related to material covered in readings and course lectures. These assignments may include rough drafts of larger projects. Individual assignments will not be graded. Students who complete all weekly blog assignments will receive 10 points. Conversely, 3 points will be deducted for every blog assignment not posted by the specified deadline (with deductions accruing even beyond the 10 point total for this component.)

Course Projects (10 pts each -- 40 pts total)

Longer writing projects that incorporate what students have learned in each unit. These projects will receive individual letter grades, and must be submitted to Discussion Section Leaders in a folder with any notes, rough drafts, or any other material that reflects the work that went into producing the final draft.

Group Project (20 pts)

A collaborative project in which students work in groups to propose and then create a series of documents that address a real-world writing need for a particular audience and/or organization. The group project will consist of several components, and all members will receive the same grade on all items:

- A proposal: addressed to your discussion section leader, detailing the project you hope to complete and how it fulfills the specific requirements of the assignment;
- A progress report: explaining the steps your group has taken to complete the project in a timely and effective manner;
- Project documents: the actual documents your group has created to address the writing need you identified in your proposal.

Additionally, some group members may be asked to report the results of their work to the rest of the class.

Final Portfolio (20 pts)

Each student will submit a final portfolio at the end of the semester containing the following items:

- A) REVISION OF ONE COURSE PROJECT: a systematic and major rewrite of at least one of the course projects, along with any drafts/notes;
- B) FINAL SELF-EVALUATION: your answers to a detailed list of questions that ask you to critically reflect on what you have learned this semester.

Participation (10 pts)

Your contributions to course discussions; participation in group work; use of the Multimedia Writing Studio; etc.

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Students will be expected to fully engage both the online and face-to-face components of this course. This means that attendance at your assigned Discussion Section meetings each week is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences from these meetings will automatically result in the lowering of your final grade. Participation in weekly Course Lectures is also mandatory, and can be fulfilled either by attending the live session held each Monday evening, or by viewing the video version of the lecture available online later each week. (Note: Blackboard/WebCT keeps detailed records of student access and use of all pages.)

LATE WORK

No late work will be accepted unless a prior agreement has been reached with your Discussion Leader. If you feel you may be unable to post an assignment on time, you should contact your Discussion Leader as soon as possible, but no later than two days before the due date. After reviewing the work you've done on the project, your Discussion Leader *may*—at his or her discretion—give you a new deadline. In all other cases, work posted late will automatically be docked one letter grade for every twelve hours past the deadline.

PLAGIARISM

All members of the academic community at the University of Southern Mississippi are expected to take responsibility for academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism – the willful copying/presenting of another person's work as if it were your own – and other forms of cheating are unacceptable. The penalties for such behavior can include being failed for the course or even expulsion from the university. If you have any doubts as to what constitutes plagiarism, please refer to your student handbook for USM policies on Academic Honesty, or talk to your Discussion Leader. Also note that work submitted for this course may be screened using plagiarism detection software. By enrolling in this course, students give permission for their essays to be submitted to and analyzed by Turnitin.com, employed by the University to identify and document plagiarism.

ADA NOTICE

The University of Southern Mississippi is committed to providing equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you feel you may need accommodations in this or any class, please contact the Office of Disability Services (118 College Dr. #8586, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001) at 601-266-5024 (Telephone), 601-266-6837 (TTY), or 601-266-6035 (FAX).

THE WRITING CENTER AND THE SPEAKING CENTER

The Writing Center and the Speaking Center are free programs available to all students at the University of Southern Mississippi. They both offer one-on-one help with a range of different kinds of projects, at nearly all stages of the process. Both centers are currently located in the Cook Library, Room 112. For more information about services available at the Writing Center, hours of operation, or to set up an appointment, please call 601-266-4821, or visit <http://www.usm.edu/writingcenter/>. For more information about the Speaking Center or to schedule an appointment, please call 601-266-4965, or visit them on the web at: <http://www.usm.edu/speakingcenter/>.