

English 323: Writing in the Professional World

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Course Description

The goal of this course is to examine the kinds of writing you are likely to do after you leave the university: letters, resumes, personal and professional statements, emails, reports, and the like.

Assigned Readings, Writings, and the web site

The class schedule, all of the class reading assignments, most of the writing assignments, and many other resources will be available only via the class web site, which is at <http://www.stevendkrause.com/academic/eng323>. Note that this web site is not an EMU address. Some of the readings will be available as links from the class web site, and some of them will be documents you will need to access from the Bruce T. Halle Library's "E-Reserves" system. None of this is terribly complicated, but it does mean that you will need to have regular access to a computer connected to the Internet.

We may also be doing some work this semester with WebCT, which is an Internet-based teaching tool. Stay tuned for details.

Class Participation

Participation is worth 30% of the grade. This is the English Department policy regarding in-class participation:

"Students enrolled in English Department classes are expected to participate in daily interactive activities. They will, for example, routinely discuss reading assignments, write in class on impromptu topics, participate in collaborative activities, or engage in peer review of drafts. Students who miss these activities cannot reasonably make them up. As a result, students who do not participate regularly should expect to receive lower grades in the course, and students who miss more than the equivalent of two weeks of class should consider withdrawing and taking the class in a future semester. Students who know that other commitments will make it impossible to attend at certain times (early mornings, nights, Fridays) should enroll in classes that do not meet at these times."

Here is how this policy applies for this class:

Attendance. Simply put, you can't participate in the class if you don't actually attend, and considering that we will be spending a lot of our class working on writing projects, I

think you will quickly see the value of our face-to-face class meetings. **Missing more than the equivalent of two weeks of class for any reason will likely mean you won't be able to pass the class.**

Two other things worth noting about attendance. First (and I feel a bit foolish in spelling this out), I assume that you will "attend" in an appropriate fashion, meaning I expect you to treat your colleagues and your teacher as you would hope to be treated. If you are doing things like reading the newspaper, napping, or generally being rude, I will ask you to leave. Along these lines, if you are consistently late or leave early, I will consider you absent.

Second, there is **no way to make up for in-class work, regardless of the reason why you missed class.** Please do not send me an email to ask what you've missed.

A special word about cell phones. Please turn off your cell phone and other electronic devices before class. Using them during a class is simply rude. If you don't do this and your cell phone rings during class, I will count you absent or I will require you to sing the class a song.

Diligent in-class work on projects. We will be doing a lot of work during class meetings: writing, peer review workshops, group work, etc. In order to make this aspect of the class useful, you will need to use our class time effectively.

Short homework assignments. I will frequently assign very short writing assignments, some of which will be due in class that day, but most of which will be due the following class meeting. **If you are absent when I assign this work or the class when this work is due, there is no way to make it up, regardless of the reason why you missed class.**

Emailing list responses. Early in the semester, I will register each of you for an electronic mailing list which we will use for announcements, for some "pre-class" discussion of assigned readings, and as part of the email writing project assignment. As a result, you will need to manage your email account.

Signing up for the emailing list is extremely simple:

- Send an email message to <eng323-subscribe@stevendkrause.com>. Leave the subject line blank and do not type anything into the body of this message.

My recommendation is that you use your EMU email for this mailing list, but you can use any other email address as well. However, I would strongly discourage you from using Hotmail (it's not a very good service), and, for those of you who want to use a free email service, I would strongly encourage using Yahoo's email.

- You should receive an email message with the subject line "confirm subscribe to eng323@stevendkrause.com". Simply reply to the message-- you don't need to type anything else.

- After this, you should receive another message with the subject line "WELCOME to eng323@stevendkrause.com". This means you have successfully subscribed to the mailing list. You will probably want to save this message in case you need help accessing this information.
- To send a message to the class emailing list, send it to eng323@stevendkrause.com and then compose the message as you would with any other email. This message will then be sent to all of the other people who are signed on to the mailing list.

How I grade participation. At about mid-term and again at the end of the semester, I will ask you to send me an email where you tell me what grade you think you have earned in terms of participation to date. At the end of the term, we'll repeat the same exercise. We will discuss the procedure for this in class.

Writing Assignments

The writing assignments for the class are worth 70% of the overall course grade. In brief, these assignments are:

- Personal statement assignment
- Email writing assignment
- Letter of complaint assignment
- Response to a letter of complaint assignment
- Resume and application letter assignment
- Informal report assignment
- Formal recommendation report and presentation assignment (which is an assignment you'll work on collaboratively with a few other classmates)

Each of these assignments will be accompanied by a "writer's memo" that discusses the project, and some of these assignments might be collected electronically. We'll get to the details about how this will all work a bit later. While I will assign a letter grade to each of these projects, you should consider the value of this work holistically. In other words, this portion of the course is really "one grade" that happens to have six different assignments.

Late work. Generally speaking, I don't accept late work. I will deduct 10% of the grade (the equivalent of one letter) from the project for each class meeting for which the assignment is late. The only exception to this rule is if you contact me **BEFORE** the class meeting in which the assignment is due, I will often grant an extension.

Unacceptable errors. By "unacceptable errors," I don't mean grammar technicalities (for example, the use of "who" versus "whom," or "that" versus "which"). Rather, I mean errors that interrupt reading and that prevent the reader from understanding your point. **When you write in professional situations, it is critical that you avoid these sorts of**

errors. We will discuss this in class throughout the semester of course, but in brief, if your job letters, resumes, and other professional documents have errors in grammar, style or format, then your audience will not find you credible.

In an effort to promote this careful approach to writing, I will insist that the final versions of the graded writing projects are as clear and error-free as possible. If I encounter more than two unacceptable errors in grammar, style, or format while reading your project, I will deduct 10% of the grade (the equivalent of one letter) from the project, return the project to you, and ask that you resubmit a revised and error-free version by the next class meeting.

Revision. You can revise any and all of the graded writing projects this semester, and you have until the time of our final to complete any revisions. However, there are three important rules regarding revision:

- If you lost points on your project because it was handed in late or because it had unacceptable errors in it, then you cannot get those points back.
- You must **visit me in my office during office hours** (no emails, no quick conversations before or after class!) to discuss your revision with me. If you cannot meet during my office hours because of a schedule conflict, talk with me about setting up an appointment.
- You have only **one chance** to revise each project.

Plagiarism. "Plagiarism" is the act of presenting writing done by someone else as your own. Don't do this. If you plagiarize any of the writing assignments this semester, you will fail the class.

In order to pass the class, you must complete all of the six major writing assignments.