English 230.01: Writing for Workplace and Public Audiences

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Course Goals and Materials

Prerequisite:
ENG 101 or equivalent.

Course Overview:
In English 230, we will discuss the range of nonfiction/expository genres in which writers engage outside academia. Our purpose will be to fully familiarize ourselves with these genres through reading and writing in them. This course differs from English 101/102 (College Writing) in that we are not learning how to write for the university and its demands. Rather, we are exploring what kind of writing gets done outside the university, and what the habits and conventions are of these genres. We will also discuss the position of the writer him or herself within these genres, and what kind of writing the workplace and public spheres produce, sustain, and promote. Finally, we will discuss the types of rhetorical strategies that these writing genres require of both writers and readers, and how a deep consideration of these strategies is critical to developing as an author of such genres prevalent in the public sphere.

Students should recognize that this is a general education writing course that will require weekly writing of substance. We will operate as a writers’ group, bringing work to the table for regular review and revision. To facilitate the flow of these different writing activities, at the start of the class students will choose a particular area of inquiry around which to construct their various writing genres. For example, a student might investigate disability issues in the workplace and the public sphere. Her research question driving the semester’s work might be, “What does it mean to be a member of a protected class (e.g. have a physical disability/be differently abled) in North Carolina?” The student would then attempt to answer this inquiry through the various assignments, with each taking a different perspective on the subject. The individual profile might focus on a professional in an organization designed to advocate for greater accommodations for certain disabilities; the literary journalism piece might examine a particular student’s experiences with living with a disability in academic or work life; the case study might document the workings of a company dedicated to employing the disabled; and so on. In each case, the writer will be required to consider the particular audience invoked by and the different conventions of each genre.

English 230 satisfies three of the six hours of the Reasoning and Discourse (GRD) requirement at UNCG, which asserts that students “gain skills in intellectual discourse, including constructing cogent arguments, locating, synthesizing and analyzing documents, and writing and speaking clearly, coherently, and effectively” (http://www.uncg.edu/casa/GenEd.html).

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):
Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify key features and concerns of non-academic (workplace and public) writing genres
2. Analyze the style, content, and larger communal or work-related purpose(s) of several different genres of writing
3. Demonstrate appropriate knowledge and command of the writing conventions of several different genres of writing
4. Differentiate between different types of arguments, and different uses of evidence, relevant to diverse non-academic/workplace/public genres of writing
5. Demonstrate the ability to write clearly, coherently and effectively about writing in workplace and public settings
6. Adapt modes of communication to one’s audience
7. Incorporate constructive feedback from readers to improve written work

Required Texts: The assigned texts are to be read for the day they appear on the schedule. Be sure to get the correct edition of our textbook. You can also order the textbook online from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or other seller.

ISBN: 9781457611131

PDFs and Links: You can find the readings that aren’t from our textbook on our Blackboard site.

Sample Texts: For each assignment, we will spend at least one class period examining samples of that genre of text. For convenience, we will generally examine samples that are posted online. You will be responsible for posting the URL for one sample and preparing to talk about the text (what it says, who its intended audience is, how it uses or breaks genre conventions) and what we can learn about the genre by examining this text.

Grades and Evaluation

Grading Scale: I utilize the full range of grades from A to F (including plusses and minuses), in keeping with university grading policies. Your final course grade will be based on the following components that make up our work for the semester. UNCG defines an A as excellent; a B as good; a C as average; a D as lowest passing grade; and an F as failure. In adherence to this scale, you should understand that a C means you successfully met the requirements of the course, not that you did poorly, which would be indicated by either a D or an F. Likewise, an A or B indicate that you met and exceeded course requirements.

1. Letter of Introduction (SLOs 1, 4-7): 5% of final course grade
This formal one-page letter will introduce you as the writer, your academic interests, and the topic that you intend to focus on throughout the remaining assignments. It will also contain an explanation of how this topic is relevant to the workplace and/or public spheres and how it is suitable as the subject of other assignments (in terms of scope, interest, etc.). Although this assignment is brief, you should take it very seriously, especially since it is the first formal piece of writing you will turn in to me.

2. Social Media - Twitter (SLOs 1-3, 5-7): 5% of final course grade
For this portion of your grade you will set up a Twitter account. You will use this account to follow an expert in your chosen topic of inquiry. You will also be responsible for posting the URL for one sample and preparing to talk about the text (what it says, who its intended audience is, how it uses or breaks genre conventions) and what we can learn about the genre by examining this text.
3. Blog (SLOs 1, 4-7): 10% of final course grade
The blog is a popular online genre that capitalizes on the ubiquitous nature of Internet writing, providing public space for many voices when only a few voices can be made heard in print. Throughout the semester, you will write five posts for your blog, which will be linked to your Professional Website. You will also link your blog to Blackboard so the class can easily find it. You will use the blog as a tool for reflecting on your work for the semester. I will post prompts on Blackboard to guide your writing. Consider using Blogger, which is accessible through iSpartan, although you can use a more familiar blogging site if you prefer.

4. Op-Ed (SLOs 1, 4-7): 10% of final course grade
Op-eds, or “opposite the editorials,” are condensed forms of argument written in the public forum, usually printed in newspapers or posted on news websites. Your editorial will be an exercise in concise argument, and it will be your first opportunity to frame your central inquiry as an argument for a public audience. While the op-ed is not a research-heavy genre, anchoring your work with a couple of brief references to sources can often strengthen your position.

5. Individual Profile (SLOs 1, 4-7): 15% of final course grade
This piece will rely on information from one or more interviews with people involved in the student’s topic of inquiry. This profile will be modeled upon profiles of well-known workplace and public individuals found in magazines such as Time Magazine or Life, wherein the writer provides information about the individual(s) and how they participate in workplace and/or public venues.

6. Resume and Cover Letter (SLOs 1, 4-7): 10% of final course grade
These items will be tailored towards a specific type of job the student is interested in that is related to his or her topic of inquiry. When you submit your materials, include the job ad that you are applying to. Don’t worry too much about whether you are qualified for the job at this moment. We will engage in enough willing suspension of disbelief to imagine that you will be qualified for the job when you complete your college education. These documents are very brief exercises in persuading your audience that you are the right person for the job.

7. Professional Website and Website Presentation (SLOs 1-7): 35% total of the final course grade: Website = 25%; Presentation = 10%
This is the culminating assignment of the semester. The website will serve as an online portfolio, a collection of all your revised and polished writing from the course. You will receive training sufficient to build an attractive, professional looking website through Google Sites or other. At the end of the semester, you will offer a five-minute presentation of your website to the class, commenting reflectively on why you chose certain fonts and features as well as how you think your website demonstrates your mastery of non-academic genres.

8. Participation (SLOs 1-4, 6-7): 10% of final course grade
Because class time will be largely spent in large and small group discussions, class participation is vital for you to succeed in this course. This portion of your grade will be based on your contributions to class discussions; your level of preparation for each class period (completed reading and writing assignments, sample genre texts, etc.); and your involvement in group activities. See the rubric below for a better understanding of how your participation will be assessed. This is especially important for Peer Review Days. On Peer Review days, as indicated on the Course Schedule, bring three printed versions of your work. Your work should be complete by Peer Review days. If you know you will be absent that day, please plan in advance to share your work with your Peer Review group.
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<th>A</th>
<th>Superior communicative skills; excellent preparation for class discussion; always volunteers; student exemplifies mastery, rigor, and intellectual curiosity regarding course readings and concepts while also introducing relevant independent insights to the discussion; student demonstrates enthusiasm and takes initiative, particularly during group activities.</th>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good communicative skills; solid preparation for class discussion; consistently volunteers; student exemplifies interest and engagement regarding course readings and concepts; student demonstrates positive attitude; makes meaningful contributions during group activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Adequate communicative skills; fair preparation for class discussion; occasionally volunteers; student exemplifies competence regarding course readings and concepts; student demonstrates an inoffensive, but noncommittal attitude; sporadic contributions during group activities.</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Limited communicative skills; uneven preparation for class; rarely volunteers; demonstrates indifference or irritation when prompted; inattentive during class; rare contributions during group activities. [Performance may be marked by other flaws: consistent tardiness; disruptive; etc.]</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Weak communicative skills; little to no preparation for class; little evidence of reading assignments (this can include not buying or printing the course texts or not making up missed material); never volunteers, or doesn’t respond when prompted; demonstrates potential hostility to discussion; irrelevant, distracting, or no contributions to group activities.</td>
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**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Because your active involvement in this course is so important, I will take attendance. You can miss two class periods with no penalty, although you will still be responsible for submitting your work on time, especially since almost all assignments in this course are submitted online. If you miss three class meetings, you will be penalized by a half-letter deduction from your final grade. If you miss four classes, you automatically fail the course. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences (with the exceptions listed below).

In addition, it is vital to get to class on time. I take attendance at the beginning of class, so being late may result in you being marked absent. Besides, tardy students are very distracting and irritating. Being late three times constitutes an absence.

You are by state law allowed two excused absences for religious holidays. These absences do not count toward the total maximum allowed above. If you plan to miss class due to a religious holiday, you must notify me at least 48 hours prior to the absence. You are still responsible for submitting work on time.

Now, life often intervenes with the best plans. So, if you have extenuating circumstances such as a death in the family, chronic illness/injury requiring prolonged medical treatment, etc., then you should immediately contact the Dean of Students Office for advocacy. To speak with a staff member in the Dean of Students Office, make an appointment by contacting Heather Mitchell, Student Services Manager, at 336-334-5514 or via email at heather_mitchell@uncg.edu. You can also use the department email, deanofstudents@uncg.edu for more general information. You will need to provide your name, your UNCG ID number, a telephone number that you can be reached, and a general description of why you would like to meet. If your situation is urgent, you may opt for a walk-in appointment (Monday – Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm), and the staff will connect you with the appropriate person as soon as possible. The Dean of Students office is located on the second floor of the Elliott University Center (EUC).

**Email Policy:** Email is the best way to reach me, but please know that I typically check my email from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. You can reasonably expect responses from me within 48 hours. If I have not
responded in that time, you should feel free to email me again with the same question or concern. It is good practice to treat email as a writing situation that reflects on you as an individual. Use appropriate language and etiquette: present yourself professionally. This doesn’t mean emails have to be long and elaborate, but they should be moderately professional forms of communication with your instructor.

**Late Work:** I will not accept any work after the day and time it is due. If you miss a deadline, you may not submit or present your work. If a major essay or presentation is due on a certain day, and you fail to complete the assignment, you may not finish your work or turn it in at a later date. You will receive a zero for that assignment. Computer or printer problems do not qualify as cause for extra time.

**Assignment Submission:** All essays will be submitted electronically through our course submission email address: ENG230Fall2014@gmail.com. Assignments are due at 9:30 AM the day of class. All files must be formatted in either .doc or .docx (compatible with Microsoft Word) unless it is a Blog post or Tweet. I will return your draft with comments using Track Changes, so be sure you have Track Changes activated.

**Academic Integrity:** “Academic integrity is founded upon and encompasses the following five values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Violations include, for example, cheating, plagiarism, misuse of academic resources, falsification, and facilitating academic dishonesty. If knowledge is to be gained and properly evaluated, it must be pursued under conditions free from dishonesty. Deceit and misrepresentations are incompatible with the fundamental activity of this academic institution and shall not be tolerated” (from UNCG’s Academic Integrity Policy). To ensure that you understand the university’s policy on academic integrity, review the guidelines and list of violations at <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu>. I expect you to abide by the Academic Integrity Policy. If I find evidence of plagiarism, I will judge what is best for the situation, from a very stern reprimand to giving you an F for the semester.

**Accommodations:** Students with documentation of special needs should arrange to see me about accommodations as soon as possible. If you believe you could benefit from such accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services on campus before such accommodations can be made. The office is located on the second floor of the Elliott University Center (EUC) in Suite 215, and the office is open 8am to 5pm, Monday - Friday. Telephone: 334-5440; e-mail: oars@uncg.edu.