

Introduction to Research and Writing on Contemporary Policy Challenges II

Summer 2022

Course 5878

Vienna University of Economics and Business

Univ. Prof. Jonas B. Bunte
Email: jonas.bunte@wu.ac.at

Tutor: Susanna Bottaro
E-mail: susanna.bottaro@wu.ac.at

Course Description

This might be the most important course you take during your college career. If you want to change the world, you will need to learn how to communicate messages accurately, correctly, and persuasively. If you want to advance in your career, you will need to learn how to write effectively, clearly, and concisely. Whatever career you choose, recent research shows that two thirds of salaried workers have jobs that require writing, and these workers spend upwards of 40 percent of their workday writing. Furthermore, almost three quarters of workers complain about poorly written memos and reports they receive from others.

The course is an introduction to the techniques and types of professional writing. It is designed to help strengthen skills of effective communication. In professional situations, communicators must focus on purpose, audience, and style—foci that are different than typical academic writing that students may be familiar with. For this reason, this course will offer hands-on introduction to the various types of professional writing.

Specifically, you will be introduced to different kinds of memos, various types of public relations communications, and several types of official reports. You will develop a thorough awareness of the intended audiences, develop a strong voice, and improve your mastery of grammar and syntax. In addition, we will encourage thoughtful document design and visuals to facilitate comprehension, readability, and usability.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- Analyze situation, audience, and purpose as they apply to various non-academic writing contexts, such as internal communication (Background Memos, Recommendation Memos, etc.) and external communication (i.e., Press Releases, Op Eds, etc.).
- Produce clear, concise, effective communication.
- Apply communication principles to composing and delivering typical professional messages.
- Give and receive constructive criticism on professional communication.
- Design accurate and visually appealing written reports.

Times and Location

- Di, 01.03.2022, 13:00-15:30 Uhr, Room D4.0.039
- Di, 08.03.2022, 13:00-15:30 Uhr, Room D4.0.127
- Di, 15.03.2022, 13:00-15:30 Uhr, Room D4.0.127
- Di, 22.03.2022, 13:00-15:30 Uhr, Room D4.0.127
- Di, 29.03.2022, 13:00-15:30 Uhr, Room D4.0.127
- Di, 05.04.2022, 13:00-15:30 Uhr, Room D4.0.136
- Di, 26.04.2022, 13:00-15:30 Uhr, Room D4.0.133
- Di, 03.05.2022, 13:00-15:30 Uhr, Room D4.0.133
- Di, 10.05.2022, 13:00-15:30 Uhr, Room D4.0.136

Class Modalities

Each meeting will follow the same structure:

- Motivation: We will start with an anecdote illustrating how a particular type of non-academic writing mattered in the real world. Think of the press release that saved human beings or the internal memo that prevented a war.
- Instructions: We will then review the formal requirements of various types of non-academic documents.
- Examples: Following this, we will evaluate several real world examples of the respective documents and analyze if they successfully accomplished the task they were set out to do.
- Hands-on experience: Students will then start the task of writing such a document themselves. Students will be given a specific scenario and develop their own professional document in the context of a particular case.
- Skill Session: Finally, the meeting will conclude with a short skill session on a specific topic related to non-academic writing. Examples include issues of the process (e.g., overcoming writer's bloc), style (e.g., conciseness), and language (e.g., transitional devices).

Assignments

- Active participation in class and contributions to the discussion (20 points)
- Six writing assignments (10 points each, 60 points total)
- Peer Review (10 points)
- Final document portfolio (10 points)
- Sum: 100 points

Your final letter grade will be determined by the percentage of points that you achieve relative to the maximum number of points possible. The following scale will be used:

- 91 - 100 points = Note 1
- 81 - 90 points = Note 2
- 71 - 80 points = Note 3
- 61 - 70 points = Note 4
- 60 points or less = Note 5

Dates, Topics, and Readings

Week 1

- Topic: What this course is about and writing process
- Skill session: How to get started on writing assignments
- Readings:
 - Janet Mizrahi (2015) "Fundamentals of Professional Writing," in Janet Mizrahi *Writing for the Workplace Business Communication for Professionals* (p.3–18), Business Expert Press, New York, NY.
 - Kevin Wilson and Jennifer Wauson (2010) "Audience Analysis," "Brainstorming," "Research," "Outlining," and "Writing a Draft," in Kevin Wilson and Jennifer Wauson *The AMA Handbook of Business Writing* (p.3–13), American Management Association, New York, NY.
- Assignment due prior to class: None

Week 2

- Topic: Background Memo
- Skill session: Finding information
- Readings:
 - Kenneth Roman and Joel Raphaelson (2000) "Memos and Letters That Get Things Done" in *Writing that Works* Collins Reference.
 - Julian Maynard-Smith (2021) "Research Your Readers" in *The Ultimate Guide to Business Writing* Routledge.
- Assignment due prior to class: None

Week 3

- Topic: Press Release
- Skill session: Conciseness
- Readings:
 - Andy Maslen (2010) "Press Release" in *The Copywriting Sourcebook* Marshall Cavendish Business.
- Assignment due prior to class: Background Memo

Week 4

- Topic: Op Ed
- Skill session: Structure and Paragraphs
- Readings:
 - Andy Maslen (2010) "Headline" in *The Copywriting Sourcebook* Marshall Cavendish Business.
- Assignment due prior to class: Press Release

Week 5

- Topic: Study Results Memo
- Skill session: Transitions and Transitional Devices
- Readings:
 - Rapport F, Clay-Williams R, Churruca K, Shih P, Hogden A, Braithwaite J. The struggle of translating science into action: Foundational concepts of implementation science. *Journal of Evaluation and Clinical Practise*. 2018, 24(1):117-126.
 - Tom Bosschaert (2018) What stops the science of sustainability being used in practice?
- Assignment due prior to class: Op Ed

Week 6

- Topic: Recommendation Memo
- Skill session: Sentence Variety
- Readings:
 - Kenneth Roman and Joel Raphaelson (2000) "Recommendations and Proposals that sell Ideas" in *Writing that Works* Collins Reference.
- Assignment due prior to class: Study Results Memo

Week 7

- Topic: Annotated Bibliography
- Skill session: Quoting and Paraphrasing
- Readings:
 - Leslie F. Stebbins (2015) "The Wisdom of a Crowd of Experts" in *Finding Reliable Information Online: Adventures of an Information Sleuth* (p.55-88), Rowman and Littlefield.
 - Joyce Valenza (2016) Truth, truthiness, triangulation: A news literacy toolkit for a "post-truth" world, *School Library Journal*
- Assignment due prior to class: Recommendation Memo

Week 8

- Topic: Grammar and revision
- Skill session: Document Design
- Readings:
 - Julian Maynard-Smith (2021) "Revise for Meaning", "Trim verbosity and clichés", "Simplify your sentences", "Revise for style and emotion", "Fix your punctuation", "Check your grammar" and "Check your spelling and capitalisation" in *The Ultimate Guide to Business Writing* Routledge.
- Assignment due prior to class: Annotated Bibliography

Week 9

- Topic: Peer Review of Portfolio
- Skill session: Online presence
- Readings: None
- Assignment due in class: Peer Review
- Assignment one week after class: Final document portfolio

Course Policies

What I expect from you

- Willingness to work: As a rule, one ECTS corresponds to three hours of scientific work per week (including lectures, laboratories, recitations, discussions, fieldwork, studies, etc.), averaged over the semester. In other words, students will have to invest time and effort, otherwise the learning experience and grades may not meet your expectations.
- Etiquette: You are expected to read the assigned readings before each class period. The lecture and activities will not present the contents of the readings again, but will build on it. Your active, informed and civil participation in discussion and class activities is expected.
- Obligations to other students: You will be assigned to a team of approximately 5 students who will work together throughout the semester. Each team will have the opportunity to agree on how the teamwork should happen. You are expected to work with your teammates in the manner that all team members agreed upon.

What you can expect from the instructor

- I offer a learning environment that challenges you in order to provide opportunities for growth. I will be prepared to the best of my abilities.
- I encourage you to explore your own ideas in response to the assigned tasks. I will be open-minded in responding to your ideas and suggestions. I will offer constructive feedback.
- I am open to constructive feedback from you on my performance. If you have ideas or suggestions, please do not hesitate to discuss them with me. I am committed to make this the best possible classroom experience.

Attendance Attendance is mandatory in all sessions of the course. The attendance requirement is fulfilled if the students are present at least 80%. Students who do not meet the required minimum attendance must be de-registered from the PI as soon as possible. In the event of an absence, the lecturer should be informed in advance.

Notice of Special Regulation for Covid-19: If a student is required to quarantine, or is otherwise prevented from attending class, due to a certified case of Covid-19 infection or a federally mandated Covid-19 lockdown, and this affects either attendance or the completion of an exam or other required course assignment, the course instructor is empowered to provide an alternative means for said student to meet the attendance/assessment requirement as necessary. The same means will be required of any student in the same situation in the same course.

Late work and missed exams

- Late assignments: Due dates are due dates. Late work will be subjected to a penalty in the form of points deducted. This deduction will increase exponentially with lateness. More specifically, I will deduct 50% of the points achieved for a 12 hours delay, and 100% for more than 12 hours. Make-up assignments will not be permitted. The only exception is if you have a legitimate excuse. This requires that you notify me **before** the assignment is administered. Further, written documentation of the circumstances is required.
- Extra credit: Extra credit activities or coursework resubmission will not be permitted.

Grade disputes It is understandable that, at times, you have questions or concerns with regard to a grade you received on one of your assignments or exams. However, in order to turn questions about your grade into a learning experience, your grade dispute will be received in the following way:

1. Cooling off period: Neither I nor my tutor will consider any grade related inquiries for 48 hours after the grades have been handed out. This ‘Cooling off’-period provides the opportunity to let the initial emotions subside and think more clearly about the issue at hand.
2. Written memo: Write a short memo explaining why you believe that your answer is correct, and why you therefore should have received full points. It is expected that you address the comments that the grader has provided. Email this note to me or the TA at least 24 hours prior to meeting me or the TA. Bring your exam or assignment with you to the meeting. This step serves the purpose of encouraging you to critically re-evaluate your exam or assignment. Looking through your notes and developing a case for your answer is an additional learning opportunity.
3. First tutor, then professor: If this course has a tutor, contact her or him first with your dispute (using the two steps described above). However, if your meeting with the tutor has not resolved the issue, then you may contact the professor.

Course Atmosphere We are jointly responsible for maintaining a constructive learning environment in the classroom. Students whose behavior is disruptive either to me or to other students will be asked to refrain from such behavior or, in severe cases, to leave the classroom. Mutual respect is expected of everyone in the classroom, and personal attacks will not be tolerated. Please contact me if you have any concerns in this regard.

Academic Misconduct Students are expected to do their own work. Engagement in any form of Academic Dishonesty (plagiarism, use of unauthorized aids, consultation with other students, etc.) will have serious consequences for the course grade. In addition, additional sanctions from the university are to be expected. See §51, Paragraph 2, Items 31 and 32 Universitätsgesetz.

Sexual Harassment I do not tolerate sexual harassment, sexist behavior or bullying. The Hochschulrichtlinie (university guidelines) prohibits sexual harassment according to iSd §8 Bundes-Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (Federal Equal Treatment Act). This is a serious offense and I want to make clear that I will be an ally to anyone affected. In addition, I recommend the conflict and bullying advisor program at WU. If needed, you can use the services of an counselor through this program.¹ WU settles accounts with these counselor on a trust basis, that is, the counselor does not provide any data about the person seeking counseling to WU. Nonetheless, WU is paying for the first five counseling hours.

Support for students with disabilities It is important to me to ensure equal opportunities for students with and without disabilities and to pay special attention to the needs of students with disabilities. If necessary, you are strongly encouraged to contact me so as to ensure the best possible access to the course. It is important to me that everyone who would like to take part in this course is not prevented from doing. Please feel free to contact me about this. I also recommend the mentoring program BeAble. This program is aimed at students with physical disabilities, chronic illnesses, or a learning disability. Those affected are accompanied and supported by colleagues from the more advanced semesters.²

Statement regarding diversity I strongly believe that diversity is an asset rather than a liability. For one, in a globalized world you will be exposed to people who are different from you. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that people who are different in almost all cases bring something valuable to the table: Experiences that you can learn from, insights that were not apparent to you, skills that you do not have, or knowledge that you can benefit from. It is my intention to create a learning environment in this class that allows everyone to share their unique strengths. This is not only my personal belief. After all, research shows that the best work is usually produced by groups that combine the different comparative advantages of their group members. I therefore emphasize that I will welcome anyone to my class, regardless of your sexual orientation, religious observances, political orientation, physical characteristics, cultural background, nationality, or any other characteristic. I recognize that I myself am not perfect, but I promise you to make every effort. If you have any concerns with respect to your acceptance in the classroom I strongly encourage you to talk with me.

¹More information here: <https://www.wu.ac.at/universitaet/organisation/interessensvertretungen/arbeitskreis-fuer-gleichbehandlungsfragen/harassment>

²More information available here <https://www.wu.ac.at/studierende/mein-studium/bachelorguide/foerderprogramme/beable-ungehindert-studieren/>