

INTRO TO PROFESSIONAL WRITING

ENG 231 | section 002
MWF 10–10:50am | Robert Bell 290



Dr. Allison Hitt
she/her/hers



email: ahitt@bsu.edu
Zoom office hours: MW 11am–12:30pm, by appt.
office phone: 765-285-8539

COURSE DESCRIPTION

BSU course catalog: Introduction to the Professional Writing major. Familiarizes students with the genres, technologies, and practices of professional writing in everyday and workplace contexts. *Prerequisite: C or higher in ENG 104 or ENG 114*

From Dr. Allison:

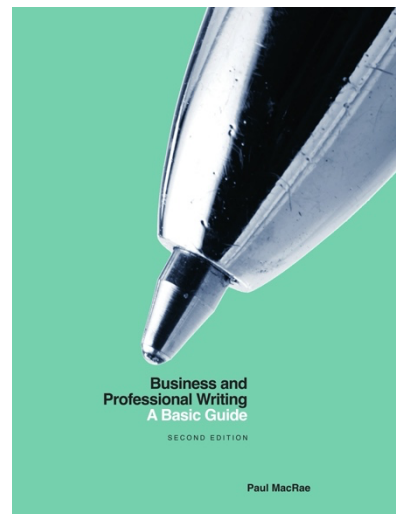
ENG 231 is both an introduction to the Professional Writing major at Ball State University and an introduction to the academic discipline and professional practice of professional and technical communication (PTC), focusing specifically on workplace and organizational writing. This course takes a rhetorical approach to professional writing, meaning you will be studying the purpose, audience, and contexts of both digital and print documents. Like professional writers, you will write and design with different technologies, work collaboratively, and create usable and accessible documents in a range of genres—from a résumé and audience analysis to research reports and multimodal presentations.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

MacRae, Paul. ***Business and Professional Writing: A Basic Guide***, 2nd ed. Broadview, 2019. 978-1554814718.

I will make additional readings available through Canvas, which you will access regularly throughout the semester to submit work and to access the course calendar, weekly modules, readings, assignment prompts, and class notes.

woman with face mask icon: becris at flaticon.com
hand holding smart phone icon: freepik at flaticon.com



LEARNING OUTCOMES

ENG 231 introduces the concept of knowledge work and professional writing for knowledge work environments. In ENG 231, students will learn to do the following:

- Define core concepts of professional writing, such as genre, audience, user-centered design, technology and multimodality, usability, and accessibility
- Describe how professional writing practices function within organizations and workplace settings
- Analyze print and digital documents to better understand the rhetorical, social, cultural, and ethical implications of professional writing in everyday experience
- Use appropriate research methods to conduct research individually and in teams
- Identify and reflect on patterns in their own writing practice and in the writing practices of the organizations and communities in which they work and live
- Design a portfolio of work that showcases their writing strengths and communicates who they are as a professional

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Project 1: What Is Professional Writing? (150 pts)**

To get a sense of what professional and technical communication involve, we will read about rhetorical, ethical, and technical issues that concern professional writers. You will submit five documents in different genres: a brief professional bio, two memos, a letter, and a 1-page handout.

2. **Project 2: Communication Strategy (200 pts)**

Professional organizations rely on clear, effective communication to connect with and persuade their audiences. You will choose an academic unit (department) and research the types of print and digital documents that they create for and circulate to students. Along with writing a report synthesizing these findings, you will identify an organizational document that could be more effective and revise it. You will submit three documents: an audience analysis, 4-page report, and revised organizational document.

3. **Project 3: Informal Report (300 pts)**

You will work in teams of three to identify an issue that is local to Muncie or Central Indiana, research and evaluate solutions, write a problem-solving report that outlines this research and makes recommendations, then deliver a 7–10-minute presentation of your findings in class. Each team will submit three documents: a research plan, 5–6-page problem-solving report, and a slide deck.

4. **Digital Portfolio (200 pts)**

Writing portfolios showcase an individual's best work and highlight the range of professional skills that writers possess and can use in future jobs. For the final project, you will create a digital portfolio that demonstrates your rhetorical

knowledge of professional writing theory, genre, and design. Portfolios will include a statement of educational and professional experiences, résumé, three documents that are representative of you and your work, and a reflection.

5. Drafts & Homework (150 pts)

Writing is a process that benefits from practice and feedback. If you submit homework on time, you will receive full credit (50 pts). You will also submit rough drafts for each of the four major assignments to receive feedback from your peers. If you submit your drafts (60 pts) and peer-reviewed feedback (40 pts) on time, you will receive full credit.

EXTRA CREDIT: Take class notes (5 pts/day) for up to 25 points. Take reading notes (5 pts/reading) for up to 25 points. Post resources about mental health and academic success to the discussion board (5 pts/post) for up to 15 points. **40 points max**

EVALUATION CRITERIA

For each project, you will be assessed on your rhetorical choices: audience awareness, genre conventions, organization, accessible style, effective delivery, and persuasive rhetorical strategies. Each assignment will be accompanied by its own specific instructions and evaluation criteria.

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93-100%	90-92%	87-89%	83-86%	80-82%	77-79%	73-76%	70-72%	67-69%	63-66%	60-62%	59% & below
930-1000	900-929	870-899	830-869	800-829	770-799	730-769	700-729	670-699	630-669	600-629	590-0



I will provide written feedback on each major assignment that you submit. Please read that feedback carefully prior to emailing me about your grade.

COURSE POLICIES

Accessibility

I am committed to creating a classroom environment that is respectful of and inclusive to different learning and writing processes—whether that is in person or through Canvas. All the multimodal materials I share will be made accessible: videos will be captioned, audio will have transcripts, and images will be described. If we can work together to make the class more accessible, let me know.

Canvas Accessibility

Canvas provides a user experience that is easy, simple, and intuitive. Special attention has been paid to making Canvas screen-readable. The Rich Content Editor encourages users to create accessible content pages, e.g., text formatting is accomplished using styles. Canvas is designed to allow limited customization of colors and schemes to be accessible for all users. Find more information by visiting the Canvas Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT): <https://www.instructure.com/canvas/accessibility>

Accommodations

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. The [Office of Disability Services](#) coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Attendance

I will take attendance this semester for contact tracing purposes only, i.e., to make sure that we stay adequately safe if someone in class gets sick. Now more than ever, use good judgment about coming to class if you are sick. Set boundaries with yourself about your physical and mental health. If you can, let me know about your absence prior to class; otherwise, follow up with me through email.

Basic Needs Security

Anyone who lacks access to sufficient food to eat or a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support: <https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/dean-of-students>. If you are comfortable in doing so, let me know and I will direct you to appropriate resources. For example, Cardinal Kitchen is the campus food pantry, which is available for use to all undergraduate and graduate students.

COVID-19 Safety

Based on current CDC guidance recommending the wearing of face masks for all people—regardless of vaccination status—in public indoor settings in communities where the rate of coronavirus transmission is substantial, all employees, students, and campus visitors are required to wear a mask while inside any University building. If you choose not to wear a mask during class (or refuse to wear a mask in a way that complies with CDC guidance), you will be asked to leave. These safety guidelines are nonnegotiable: I care about my students' health, my health, and my family's health.

Diversity & Inclusion

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect

and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge and through university resources that you can access through The Multicultural Center's website:

<https://www.bsu.edu/campuslife/multicultural-center/resources>

Late Work

Assignments are due by the time specified on Canvas. However, we are in the middle of a pandemic, and there's a good chance that at some point (or at many points) throughout the semester, you will need some extra help. *You can request a one-week extension for any assignment excluding the final project by emailing me.* If you get sick this semester, we will work together to come up with a catch-up plan.

Respect

I ask you to be respectful and remain open to ideas and perspectives that challenge your own. I expect you to be respectful when participating in class discussions, interacting with me in class and through email, and working with your peers. *You do not have to agree with someone to treat them, their ideas, and their work respectfully.*

Technology

Technology is integral to the writing process, and we will be using different technologies this semester to complete work and communicate.

In-Class Technology Usage

On the days we meet on campus, you are welcome to bring a laptop, tablet, or smartphone to class for taking notes and completing in-class writing exercises if you prefer. I expect you to be responsible with your technology use. You are welcome to wear headphones during individual work but not during lectures or group work. If you need to take a phone call, please step outside to take the call. If I ask you repeatedly to stop doing something on your phone or your technology use becomes distracting to others, you will be asked to put it away.

Canvas and Online Communications

You will use Canvas to submit work, access calendars and each week's module, download assignment prompts and readings, and contribute to the class notes. I expect you to check your BSU email daily and to respond within 24 hours during the work week, just as you will expect me to do. *All email messages to me regarding this class should include the course number in the subject line and should be respectful and professional.* If your message is urgent, please note that in the subject line.

Title IX

Consistent with the University's Notice of Nondiscrimination and in accordance with the U.S. Department of Education's implementing regulations for Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"), Ball State University prohibits sexual harassment that occurs within its education programs and activities. This prohibition extends to all applicants for admission or employment and to *all students (any status) and all employees (any status)*. An individual who is found to have committed sexual

harassment in violation of this policy is subject to the full range of University discipline, up to and including termination of employment or expulsion. The University will provide persons who have experienced sexual harassment with ongoing remedies as reasonably necessary to restore or preserve access to the University's education program and activities.

Inquiries concerning the specific application of Title IX at Ball State should be directed to Ms. Katie Slabaugh, Associate Dean of Students/Title IX Coordinator in the Frank A. Bracken Administration Building, room 238, 765-285-1545, kslabaugh@bsu.edu.

RESOURCES

The Learning Center

The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. Students can begin making appointments on Thursday, August 26, 2021. Tutoring and Academic Coaching will begin on Monday, August 30, 2021.

To make an appointment, visit my.bsu.edu and click on "TutorTrac" in the Additional Tools section, or just go directly to <https://ballstate.go-redrock.com>. For information about programming, visit bsu.edu/learningcenter or call 765-285-1006.

Writing Center

All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295, Bracken Library, or online) to get additional feedback on your writing. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to www.bsu.edu/writingcenter. Online and in-person appointments are available seven days a week; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly!

COURSE CALENDAR

In the schedule below, the left column indicates the topic we will discuss in class that day and what is due. The right column indicates what homework you need to complete for the following class. With the many unknowns of this semester, it's possible that our schedule will change. You will receive an updated calendar if that's the case.

WEEK 1	
Mon, 8/23: Introduction to ENG 231	Buy textbook. Review sample bios and write a 150-200-word professional bio. Post to Canvas.
Wed, 8/25: Introduction to Project 1, rhetorical terms & concepts due today: professional bio with photo	Read Chapters 1 "Plain Language" and 2 "The Seven Cs of Good Professional Communication."
Fri, 8/27: Introduction to professional writing, plain language, & writing for diverse audiences	Read Chapters 6 "Formatting for Correspondence" and 7 "Emails and Memos." Write a 1-page memo with best practices for email use. Post to Canvas.
WEEK 2	
Mon, 8/30: Genre conventions: memos and email due today: memo #1	Read Chapter 8 "Letters: Good News, Neutral, and Bad News." Following the guidelines on p. 174 in the textbook, write a 1-page "bad news" memo that addresses the elimination of "casual day" at work. Post to Canvas.
Wed, 9/1: Genre conventions: letters due today: memo #2	Read Chapter 9 "Persuasive Letters." Write a one-page formal letter to your former high school guidance counselor

	who wants to inform graduating seniors about the major(s) you are pursuing at Ball State. Post to Canvas.
Fri, 9/3: Writing persuasively due today: letter	Read Chapter 5 “Basic Document Design” and “Principles of Design” PDF. Visit your department’s various social media platforms. Select two documents: one that is designed well and one that could be improved. Post to Canvas.
WEEK 3	
Mon, 9/6: NO CLASS – Labor Day	
Wed, 9/8: Designing usable & accessible documents due today: two designs	Design a single-sided, illustrated handout for people over the age of 65 that warns them about online scams and provides information about how to avoid them. Post to Canvas.
Fri, 9/10: Handout workshopping due today: handout	Read Chapters 3 “The Eighth C: Learning Grammar Language” and 4 “Copy-Editing.”
WEEK 4	
Mon, 9/13: Editing & revision strategies	Revise your five documents based on the feedback you have received. Post to Canvas and bring ONE clean copy of each document to class on Wednesday.
Wed, 9/15: Peer review due today: Project 1 draft	Based on the feedback that you receive, revise Project 1 and submit it to Canvas by the start of class on Friday, 9/17. <i>If you want additional feedback, consider making an appointment with the Writing Center.</i>

Fri, 9/17: Reflections & introduction to Project 2 Communication Strategy due today: Project 1	Read “Understanding Ethical and Legal Considerations” PDF.
WEEK 5	
Mon, 9/20: Ethical communication	Read Chapter 12 “News Release.”
Wed, 9/22: Promotional strategies & genres	Read Chapter 14 “Promotion on the Web.”
Fri, 9/24: Social media analysis	Following memo formatting, draft a 1-page audience analysis for the organization you’re researching for Project 2: Who are they? What is their mission statement and/or purpose? Who do they serve? Post to Canvas.
WEEK 6	
Mon, 9/27: Organizational strategies due today: audience analysis	Read Chapter 13 “Brochure” and “Understanding Visual Rhetoric” PDF. Find and bring to class a brochure either from the organization you are researching or from another BSU campus organization.
Wed, 9/29: Multimodal analysis due today: brochure	Collect as many documents from your organization as possible: print texts that they distribute, digital texts, web and social media platforms, texts that are created for different audiences, etc. Take notes on the rhetorical situation of each document. Create a shareable folder for your documents and be prepared to discuss during Zoom conferences.
Fri, 10/1: Class cancelled for one-on-one Zoom conferences.	Read Chapter 17 “Informal Reports.” Continue to take notes on your organization’s communication strategies.

WEEK 7	
Mon, 10/4: Organizing and formatting reports (& appendix items)	Compile and post your research notes to Canvas. This is not a draft; it's an opportunity to get feedback on your research <i>before</i> drafting. We will discuss these notes in class on Wednesday.
Wed, 10/6: In-class conferences; drafting due today: research notes	Develop your notes into a draft. Submit to Canvas for peer review on Friday and bring TWO print copies to class. <i>If you want additional feedback, consider making an appointment with the Writing Center.</i>
Fri, 10/8: Peer review due today: Project 2 draft	Based on the feedback that you receive, develop your rough draft. Submit a revised draft to Canvas to workshop on Wednesday.
WEEK 8	
Mon, 10/11: NO CLASS – Fall Break	
Wed, 10/13: Peer review; in-class revisions due today: Project 2 draft (revised)	Based on the feedback that you receive, revise Project 2 and submit it to Canvas by the start of class on Friday, 10/15.
Fri, 10/15: Midterm & self-care reflections due today: Project 2 Communication Strategy	
WEEK 9	
Mon, 10/18: Introduction to Project 3, working collaboratively	Complete the survey posted to Canvas, indicating your preferences re: developing teams.

Wed, 10/20: Vetting potential client/issues Developing team norms	Email me (ahhitt@bsu.edu) with your team norms and expectations for each other, cc'ing all team members.
Fri, 10/22: Introduction to primary research: observations, interviews, surveys due today: team norms	Read "Introduction to Primary Research: Observations, Surveys, and Interviews" PDF and "Conducting Research for a Document" PDF.
WEEK 10	
Mon, 10/25: Primary research	If your team plans to interview someone or survey a group of people, brainstorm a list of people with expertise/experience and questions that you might ask.
Wed, 10/27: Secondary research	Based on your team's understanding of the issue, develop a 1–page memo (two pages max) that outlines your plans for both primary and secondary research. This should include information that you already know, in addition to what information you need to learn. You will have an opportunity to finalize this in class on Friday.
Fri, 10/29: Research plans due today: research plan	
WEEK 11	
Mon, 11/1: NO CLASS – Team Conferences	Review Chapter 17 "Informal Reports."
Wed, 11/3: Report writing: how-to	Assign report sections to each team member and create a collaborative document that everyone can access/edit.

Fri, 11/5: Analyzing reports: determining features of the genre	Continue to research and draft.
WEEK 12	
Mon, 11/8: In-class drafting	Research! Draft!
Wed, 11/10: Incorporating sources and building ethos	Read Chapters 15 “Individual Oral Presentations” and 16 “Group Presentations.”
Fri, 11/12: Creating visuals to represent data in reports and presentations	Develop your report into a rough draft and post to Canvas. For peer review on Monday, please print and bring to class a copy of your report drafts for each team member.
WEEK 13	
Mon, 11/15: Peer review due today: Project 3 draft	Revise your reports and start planning for your team presentations. Determine roles for each team member.
Wed, 11/17: In-class drafting	Finalize a 7–10-minute presentation that introduces us to the issue you researched and what solutions you recommend. Submit your slide deck to Canvas for easy access in class.
Fri, 11/19: Team presentations due today: 7–10-minute presentations	Finalize Project 3 deliverables and submit to Canvas. due by the end of the day Sunday, 11/21: Project 3
WEEK 14	
Mon, 11/22: Introduction to Project 4 Digital Portfolios Building <i>ethos</i> through writing and design	Review your documents from the semester: Which ones are you proud of? Which ones demonstrate growth, knowledge, and skill? Consider compiling documents over the break.

Wed, 11/24 & Fri, 11/26: NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break	
WEEK 15	
Mon, 11/29: Writing portfolio analysis: What skills should professional writers highlight?	Read Chapter 10 “Cover Letters” and Chapter 11 “Résumés.” Draft or revise a résumé that includes <i>current</i> information. Post to Canvas and bring TWO print copies to class.
Wed, 12/1: Résumés & professionalism due today: résumé	Revise your résumé based on the feedback you receive. Compile documents for your portfolio, paying attention to how the design emphasizes information.
Fri, 12/3: Document design	Work on your portfolio.
WEEK 16	
Mon, 12/6: Portfolio drafting	Continue working on your portfolio. The written content should be “finished” for peer review, although the design does not yet need to be finished. Post to Canvas.
Wed, 12/8: Portfolio workshopping due today: Project 4 draft	
Fri, 12/10: Troubleshooting; course evaluations	
WEEK 17	
Mon, 12/13: NO CLASS – optional Zoom conferences	
The final examination period for this class is Wednesday, December 15 from 9:45–11:45am, so you need to submit your Project 4 Portfolios to Canvas by 11:45am . We will NOT meet in the classroom during our final exam slot.	