

INTRO TO PROFESSIONAL WRITING

ENG 231 | section 800 | online, asynchronous



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SYLLABUS BREAKDOWN

- [Course Description](#) – 1
- [Course Goals](#) – 2
- [Required Materials](#) – 3
- [Assignments](#) – 3
- [Evaluation Criteria](#) – 4
- [Learning Online](#) – 4
- [Expectations & Course Policies](#) – 5
- [Course Calendar](#) – 7
 - [Project 1 What Is Professional Writing?](#) – 7
 - [Project 2 Communication Strategy](#) – 8
 - [Project 3 Informal Report](#) – 9
 - [Project 4 Portfolio](#) – 10

COURSE DESCRIPTION

from the **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 technical and professional communication (TPC), 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 digital portfolios.

COURSE GOALS

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

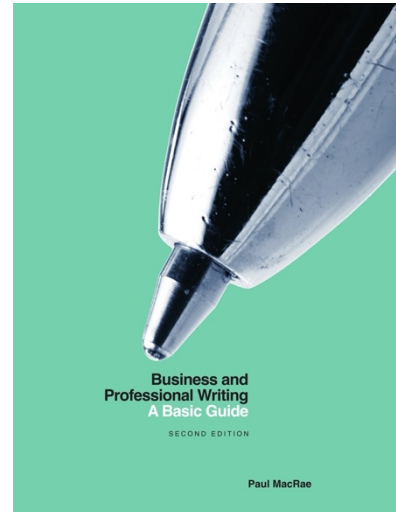
By achieving the course outcomes you will simultaneously develop numerous NACE ([National Association of Colleges and Employers](#)) workplace competencies:

Course Outcomes	NACE Workplace Competencies
Describe professional writing practices	Communication
Analyze print and digital documents	Communication Critical Thinking Equity & Inclusion
Use appropriate research methods	Teamwork
Identity and reflect on patterns	Communication Critical Thinking
Design a portfolio of work	Career and Self-Development Communication Professionalism

REQUIRED MATERIALS

1. MacRae, Paul. *Business and Professional Writing: A Basic Guide*, 2nd ed. Broadview, 2019. 978-1554814718.
2. Microsoft Word (as students, [you have free access to Microsoft Office](#))

I will make additional readings available through Canvas, which you will use to submit work and access readings, weekly instructions, assignment prompts, and discussion boards. Consider downloading the free smartphone app!



ASSIGNMENTS

Major Projects

Project 1: What Is Professional Writing? (100 pts)

First you will read about the rhetorical, ethical, and technical issues that concern professional writers and practice writing in multiple genres. You will submit four documents: a brief professional bio, a memo, a letter, and a 1-page handout. **Due 2/4**

Project 2: Communication Strategy (150 pts)

Next you will choose an academic unit (department) and research what 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, a 4-page report, and a revised organizational document. **Due 3/3**

Project 3: Informal Report (250 pts)

You will work in teams of three to identify an issue that is local to Muncie, Ball State, or central Indiana; research and evaluate solutions; then write a problem-solving report that outlines this research and makes recommendations. Each team will submit two documents: a research plan and a 5–6-page problem-solving report. **Due 4/14**

Project 4: Portfolio (100 pts)

For the final project, you will create a portfolio that demonstrates your knowledge of professional writing theory, genre, and design. You will include a bio, a résumé, three documents that represent you and your work, and a reflection. **Due 5/2**

Process Work

Rough Drafts & Peer Review (100 pts)

Writing is a process that benefits from feedback, and you will submit rough drafts for each of the four major assignments to receive feedback from me and from your peers.

If you submit your drafts (60 pts) and provide feedback to your peer groups (40 pts) on time, you will receive full credit.

Homework & Discussion Board Posts (100 pts)

Throughout the semester, I will ask you to engage in low-stakes homework assignments and discussion board posts. Unless otherwise specified, discussion board posts should be 150–250 words max, and you should thoughtfully engage 1–2 other people’s posts. If you submit this work on time, you will receive full credit.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

For each major project, you will be assessed on your rhetorical choices: audience awareness, genre conventions, clear arrangement, accessible style, effective delivery, and persuasive rhetorical strategies. Each assignment will be accompanied by its own specific instructions and evaluation criteria. All process work (rough drafts, peer review, discussion board posts, and homework) will be assessed as complete/incomplete.

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%	0– 59%
744– 800	720– 743	696– 719	664– 695	640– 663	616– 639	584– 615	560– 583	536– 559	504– 535	480– 503	479– 0

LEARNING ONLINE

Learning online is different than learning in a traditional, face-to-face classroom. One of the most substantial differences between face-to-face and online learning is time management. Sometimes, a regularly scheduled meeting time is what motivates us to tune into class. An asynchronous online class requires more personal responsibility and a better sense of time management throughout the week. I recommend developing a specific time that you "tune into" class throughout the week: checking email and Canvas announcements, responding to discussion board posts, and completing assignments.

You are expected to be an active participant in this course. Even though you may not see your classmates and instructor, our course is designed to include discussion and other forms of collaboration and communication. You should be willing and ready to regularly communicate with me and your classmates online.

You can access more information about online learning and expectations for participating in our online class in the Welcome module on Canvas.

EXPECTATIONS & 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.

When you share and compose media for this course, I ask that you be mindful of accessibility and include alt text, captions, and/or a transcript where appropriate.

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.

Basic Needs Security

I encourage anyone who lacks access to sufficient food to eat or a safe and stable place to live to contact the folks at Student Affairs and/or visit the [Basic Needs Security Hub](#). This resource offers information about food insecurity, housing support, financial resources, wellness, and homelessness.

COVID-19 Safety & Wellness

The university no longer has a COVID-19 policy, but that doesn't mean that COVID is no longer a risk. Individuals are encouraged to make personal health decisions regarding wearing a well-fitted face mask. I wear a mask for both my and your safety, and I will hold a mix of in-person and Zoom office hours this semester. If you are sick—even if you don't think it's COVID—please do not attend in-person office hours.

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](#).

Feedback

You will receive feedback from both me and your peers this semester. I will provide written feedback through Canvas on all homework and major projects. I will survey the discussion board, but you will mainly receive feedback from your peers on discussion

board posts. You will also receive feedback within peer feedback groups. I will randomly assign you to peer feedback groups of 3–4, and these will be the people who you share your rough drafts with throughout the semester.

Late Work

Assignments are due by the time specified on Canvas. However, there's a good chance that at some point throughout the semester, you will need some extra help or time. **You can request a one-week extension for any assignment excluding the final project by emailing me before the deadline.** You aren't required to provide a reason—just a polite email letting me know, e.g., “Hello Dr. Allison, I'm using an extension on the homework assignment due tomorrow. Thank you!”

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

You will be held to Ball State's standards of academic integrity, which can be accessed in the Student Handbook under [“Student Academic Ethics Policy.”](#) You must document all sources you use, whether quoting directly or paraphrasing. Using generative AI tools to complete your assignments is a violation of Ball State's Academic Ethics Policy unless the AI use is explicitly approved. If you are in doubt about what is acceptable, please ask.

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, 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 to an online class, and we will use different technologies this semester to complete work and communicate. You will use Canvas to submit work, access unit modules and weekly instructions, read assignment sheets and supplemental readings, and contribute to the discussion board.

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. I prefer email to Canvas messages, but I will check both. **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.

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. Plan ahead because appointments book quickly!

COURSE CALENDAR

This is an asynchronous online class, so the schedule is organized by what you need to complete *each week* rather than what you need to complete for specific class periods. Every Monday, you should review the weekly welcome page that outlines the work you need to complete that week (indicated in the left column in the table below).

Homework and major projects are due by the end of the week (Sundays at 11:59pm Eastern Time), and discussion board posts are due by the end of the work week (Fridays at 5pm). Rough drafts are due earlier in the week.

PROJECT 1: WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL WRITING?

WEEK 1 – INTRO TO PROFESSIONAL WRITING	
Qualities of professional communication Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch.1, “Plain Language” • Ch. 2, “The Seven Cs of Good Professional Communication” 	Due Friday, 1/12: discussion board post Due Sunday, 1/14: professional bio with profile image
WEEK 2 – GENRE CONVENTIONS	
Genre conventions of professional documents; Introduction to Project 1 Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6 “Formatting for Correspondence” • Ch. 7 “Emails and Memos” • Ch. 8 “Letters: Good News, Neutral, and Bad News” • Ch. 9 “Persuasive Letters” 	Due Friday, 1/19: discussion board post Due Sunday, 1/21: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • memo • letter
WEEK 3 – DOCUMENT DESIGN	
Usable and accessible document design Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 5 “Basic Document Design” • PDF: “Principles of Design” (Kimball & Hawkins) 	Due Friday, 1/26: discussion board post Due Sunday, 1/28: handout

WEEK 4 – REVISING & EDITING	
Peer reviewing Project 1	Due Tuesday, 1/30: rough draft due to Canvas and to peer review group
Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3 “The Eighth C: Learning Grammar Language” • Chapter 4 “Copy-Editing” 	Due Friday, 2/2: peer feedback Due Sunday, 2/4: Project 1

PROJECT 2: COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

WEEK 5 – PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS	
Introduction to Project 2 Communication Strategy	Due Friday, 2/9: discussion board post
Ethical communication	
Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 12 “News Releases” • Chapter 14 “Promotion on the Web” • PDF: “Understanding Ethical and Legal Considerations” (Markel) 	
WEEK 6 – MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS	
Analyzing rhetorical design choices re: purpose, audience, context	Due Friday, 2/16: discussion board post
Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 13 “Brochure” • PDF: “Understanding Visual Rhetoric” (Cohn) 	Due Sunday, 2/18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • audience analysis • folder of textual and visual documents to analyze
WEEK 7 – ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES	
One-one-one Zoom conferences	Sometime this week: conference with Dr. Allison
Categorizing materials for analysis and formatting a report	Due Sunday, 2/25: research notes

WEEK 8 – WRITING, RESPONDING, & REVISING	
Drafting and peer reviewing	<p>Due Tuesday, 2/27: rough draft due to Canvas and to peer review group</p> <p>Due Friday, 3/1: peer feedback</p> <p>Due Sunday, 3/3: Project 2 Communication Strategy</p>

PROJECT 3: INFORMAL REPORT

WEEK 9	
NO CLASS – Spring Break	<p>Due Sunday, 3/10: Project 3 survey</p> <p>Due Sunday, 3/10: midterm reflection</p>
WEEK 10 – WORKING IN TEAMS	
<p>Introduction to Project 3 Informal Report</p> <p>Working collaboratively</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 17 “Informal Reports” • Chapter 18 “Formal Reports” 	<p>Due Friday, 3/15: discussion board post</p> <p>Due Friday, 3/15: email with team norms and ideas for issue to research</p>
WEEK 11 – PRIMARY & SECONDARY RESEARCH	
<p>Developing research plans</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDF: “Introduction to Primary Research: Observations, Surveys, and Interviews” (Driscoll) • PDF: “Conducting Research for a Document” (Oliu, Brusaw, & Alfred) 	<p>Due Friday, 3/22: discussion board post</p> <p>Due Sunday, 3/24: research plan</p>
WEEK 12 – TEAM CONFERENCES	
<p>Team Zoom conferences</p> <p>Informal report genre conventions</p>	<p>Sometime this week: conference with Dr. Allison</p>

WEEK 13 – REPORT DRAFTING	
<p>Creating visuals to represent data Drafting</p>	<p>Due Friday, 4/5: discussion board post</p> <p>Due Sunday, 4/7: rough draft due to Canvas and to peer review group</p>
WEEK 14 – RESPONDING & REVISING	
<p>Drafting and peer reviewing</p>	<p>Due Tuesday, 4/9: peer review feedback</p> <p>Due Sunday, 4/14: Project 3 Informal Report</p>

PROJECT 4: PORTFOLIO

WEEK 15 – PROFESSIONAL REPRESENTATION	
<p>Introduction to Project 4 Portfolio Building <i>ethos</i> through writing and design</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 10 “Cover Letters” • Chapter 11 “Résumés” 	<p>Due Friday, 4/19: discussion board post</p> <p>Due Sunday, 4/21: résumé</p>
WEEK 16 – PORTFOLIO DRAFTING	
<p>Portfolio content and design feedback Course evaluations</p>	<p>Due Tuesday, 4/23: rough draft due to Canvas and to peer review group</p> <p>Due Friday, 4/26: peer feedback</p>
WEEK 17 – FINALS WEEK	
<p>Project 4 Portfolios are due to Canvas by 11:59pm on Thursday, May 2nd.</p>	