

Drew J. Scheler  
ENGL 306, Spring 2016  
Coffrin 103  
8-9am MWF

Office Hours:  
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### **PROFESSIONAL WRITING:**

#### *NONPROFIT WORK, ADVOCACY, AND ETHICAL COMMUNICATION*

#### **Course Description:**

No one would dispute that a professional must possess a command of clear, persuasive written communication. Yet these skills are not easily acquired. In fact, the qualities of excellent writing vary wildly depending on the topic, the profession, the agenda of the organization we write for, and—most crucially—the audience(s) for whom we write. Professional writing is not one-size-fits all. This class therefore covers a range of strategies for controlling and varying written argumentation and prose style across a number of genres, including research briefs, project proposals, public outreach documents, web content, résumés, and cover letters. Importantly, it asks you to do so on behalf of a *real* organization, for *actual* audiences with *strongly held values*.

#### **Service Component**

This course will have us writing content on behalf of a partnering nonprofit organization. This semester we will generate material for **Brown County Community Gardens**, an organization offered through the UW-Extension that provides and maintains about 10 gardening spaces. We will begin by generating some *internally-facing documents* for ourselves and our partner organization: a range of research briefs, interviews, and audience analyses. This will inform our main task: to generate *outwardly-facing documents* for our partners' various audiences.

By conducting these writing tasks in this real-world context, this course will render tangible the writing skills it teaches and the social ways of thinking that underpin these skills. Such service-based composition demands that you consider the ethics of communication itself. Clear prose, for example, is no longer a matter of making ideas accessible in the abstract; it impinges directly on issues of transparency—an ethical obligation to the very audiences that a service-oriented course makes visible. You can expect, then, to think in terms of real-world problems, to confront real-world challenges, and face real-world disappointments. In doing so, you will become familiar with the demands that the professional world puts on written work, as well as the basic technical and social skills that will help you to meet those demands.

While this class is an academic course that will introduce you to specific writing skills, you are not exactly students, and I am not strictly an instructor. Instead, you should consider us to be a writing team consulting for our partner organization(s). You are a staff of writers, and I am your supervising editor. I will serve as the primary liaison between our team and our partner organization. I am responsible for setting our agenda and adapting it based on our partners' needs. Like any editor, I will be responsible for quality control; I will help us select our best work help you choose what to present to our partner. This work will be collaborative in nature. Our class will run as a weekly workshop designed to reflect on one another's writing, support one another as we confront obstacles, and help one another perform to the best of our abilities.

### **Assessment:**

*Professional Portfolio:* While BCCG and its audiences will ultimately judge the quality of your writing, you will have the opportunity demonstrate your qualifications as a strong, self-reflective professional writer through a professional portfolio. This portfolio will include: an introductory letter defending a claim about your writing skills; a brief biography; a professional résumé; examples of documents you've composed in a range of genres; and a reflection on your writing process. We will be using Wordpress as an online platform for this portfolio.

*Project Proposals:* Halfway through the semester, you will be asked to propose and defend one substantive project, or a range of smaller projects, to work on. I will provide substantive feedback and letter grades on these documents, and—if necessary—ask for revisions before approving your independent work for the semester.

*Workshop Spotlight:* Every Friday of this class will find us of workshopping each other's writing. We will take turns presenting our work for large-group peer review. Each student will offer a document draft for the entire group once—this document **will be uploaded by 5pm on Wednesdays** to give each other time to reflect and prepare thoughtful responses. This work will be graded, and feedback on your document will be provided.

*Feedback Spotlight:* With every Spotlight, one of us will lead the feedback process. Each student will offer a feedback draft for the entire group once—this document **will be uploaded by the beginning of class on Fridays**, so you are prepared to lead the feedback discussion. This work will be graded, and feedback on your document will be provided.

*Workshop Participation:* Everybody workshops on Friday—not just those spotlighted. This will consist of uploading a document draft **by class on Friday**, and uploading a feedback document **by noon on Saturday**. Both weekly documents will be graded thus: Complete (100%), Incomplete (50%), or Missing (0%). When you (successfully) offer a workshop spotlight or feedback spotlight, you will receive 100% on the appropriate assignment.

*Weekly Document Revisions:* A document revision will submitted at the beginning of every week—the fruit of the previous weeks' workshops. I will provide brief, public feedback on these to one degree or another, depending on the importance of the task at hand and the usefulness of that feedback for the group. This weekly work will be graded thus: Complete (100%), Incomplete (50%), or Missing (0%).

### **Grading:**

Professional Portfolio: 30%  
Project Proposals: 20%  
Workshop Spotlight: 10%  
Feedback Spotlight: 10%  
Workshop Participation: 15%  
Weekly Document Revisions: 15%

### **Final Grade Scale:**

A ... 92-100%  
AB ... 88-92%  
B ... 82-88%  
BC ... 78-82%  
C ... 72-78%  
CD ... 68-72%  
D ... 60-68%  
F ... 0-60%

**Required Texts:**

This course requires Booth, Colomb, and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. and Williams and Bizup, *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed.

**Class Policies:**

*Participation:* Serious and continuous participation is required. Readings must be done by the beginning of the week. Drafting and workshopping are expected. For that reason, there is no participation grade/penalty. If you cannot meet the demands of this class, you will kindly be asked to withdraw from the course.

*Attendance:* Class attendance is expected. You are not likely to succeed if you miss more than one week's worth (i.e. 3) or more classes. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up with the class, not the class's responsibility to slow down for you. Since your learning and your success are your own responsibility, I will not be formally taking attendance. Noticeable absences from class will be reflected in your participation grade; you will be asked to withdraw from the course if your absences are substantive enough to impair our work for our partner.

*Late work:* We can accommodate some contingencies, but real-world deadlines tend to be inflexible. So communicate if you will have trouble completing an assignment, because **NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED IN THIS CLASS WITHOUT HAVING BEEN COORDINATED AHEAD OF TIME.**

*Email:* I will occasionally contact you individually or as a group to make changes to the syllabus, alter assignments, make announcements, etc. I will tend to email you about things of this nature between 8am and 5pm at least one day in advance, not in the middle of the night and not at the last minute. I will expect you to check for these notes on a daily basis.

*Office Hours and Contacting Me:* Unless there are no classes on that day, I will be holding regular office hours on a first-come, first-serve basis—no appointment necessary. The best way set up a meeting outside of office hours, or to get in touch with me for any reason, is by email. **PLEASE ALLOW A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME FOR ME TO RESPOND.** Don't expect me to receive your email 5 minutes before class or at 1am the night before a paper is due.

**Academic Integrity:**

Every student at St. Norbert College is subject to the Honor Code. For reasons that we will explore in class, plagiarism is an extremely serious offense in academic writing. Additionally, it is extremely unlikely that anything not written by you will fit well with any of the assignments for this course. For a formal description of what counts as academic dishonesty, as well as the consequences for violating the Honor Code, go to <https://www.snc.edu/registrar/HonorCode/>.

**Academic Accommodations:**

In keeping with the St. Norbert College mission to help students develop their full potential, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the College provides supportive services to students with disabilities. For enquiries and further details, please visit the Academic Support Services Office located in Todd Wehr or contact Karen Goode-Bartholomew, Coordinator of Services to Students with Disabilities (Phone: 403-1326), or visit the website [www.snc.edu/academicsupport/disabilities.html](http://www.snc.edu/academicsupport/disabilities.html).

## **Schedule:**

### **UNIT 1—UNDERSTANDING OUR PARTNER AND ITS CLIENTS**

*Jan. 25-29: Introduction to Professional Writing*

Readings: *Craft*, chapters 1-2; BCCG Website; BCCG informational materials

Writing: Course overview

**Community Engagement: Interview with Partner 8-9am on Wednesday 1/27 (at SNC)**

*Feb. 1-5: Researching and Reporting Information: Background 1*

Readings: *Craft*, chapters 3-4

Writing: Research Report 1

*Feb. 8-12: Researching and Reporting Information: Audience 1*

Readings: *Craft*, chapters 5-6

Writing: Research Report 2

*Feb. 15-19: Researching and Reporting Information: Background 2*

Writing: Research Report 3

*Feb. 22-26: Researching and Reporting Information: Audience 2*

Writing: Research Report 4

**Community Engagement: Evening interviews with Partner's Clients at UW Extension building and/or by phone—pending approval of interview questions and client availability**

### **UNIT 2—DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIONS**

*Feb. 29-Mar. 4: Making and Motivating Arguments*

Reading: *Craft*, chapters 7-9

Written Work: Newsletter Articles

**Note: Instructor Leading Students to a Conference on W/F but class will still meet.**

*Mar. 7-11: Fleshing out Arguments*

Reading: *Craft*, chapters 10-11

Written Work: Project Proposals

**Community Engagement: Feedback Visit from Partner on Friday 3/11 (at SNC)**

#### **OPTIONAL LECTURE OPPORTUNITY**

**MAR. 7, 7PM:** TANIA MITCHELL, "HOW SERVICE-LEARNING ENACTS SOCIAL JUSTICE SENSEMAKING," FORT HOWARD THEATRE

**MAR. 8, 10-11:30AM:** TANIA MITCHELL, FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION, LOCATION TBD

*Mar. 14-18: Developing Original Projects 1*

Reading: *Craft*, chapters 12-13

Written Work: Professional Document Drafts

**Mar. 21-25: Spring Break—No Classes**

*Mar. 28-Apr. 1: Developing Original Projects 2*

Reading: *Craft*, chapters 15-16

Written Work: Professional Document Drafts

**Note: No class on Mon.**

**Note: Instructor Presenting Research at a Conference on W/F but class will still meet.**

### **UNIT 3—REVISION: STYLE AND POLISH**

*Apr. 4-8: Sentence-Level Clarity: Storytelling and Nominalizations*

Reading: *Style*, chapters 1-4

Written Work: Professional Document Revisions

**Note: No class on Wed—Advisement Day**

*Apr. 11-15: Sentence-Level Clarity: Old Information and New Information; Topic and Stress*

Reading: *Style*, chapters 5-6

Written Work: Professional Document Revisions

**Community Engagement: Feedback Visit from Partner on Friday 4/15 (at SNC)**

*Apr. 18-22: Paragraph-Level Coherence: Topic Strings*

Reading: *Style*, chapters 7-8

Written Work: Professional Document Revisions

**Final Drafts of all Professional Documents Due Monday 4/25**

### **UNIT 4—PROMOTING YOURSELF AND YOUR WORK**

*Apr. 25-29: Reporting Efficacy 1*

Reading: *Style*, chapters 9-10

Written Work: Résumés

**Community Engagement: Presentation of work (at UW Extension) on Monday 4/25**

*May 2-6: Reporting Efficacy 2*

Reading: *Style*, chapters 11-12

Written Work: Cover Letters

**Professional Portfolios Due on 5/11**