ENGL 4920D - Introduction to the Profession
T/TH 10:00-11:15

Instructor: Dr. Shelley Thomas  
Office: SS 336  
Email: sthomas@weber.edu

Office Hours:  
Monday 11:00-12:00  
Tuesday 12:00-1:00  
Wednesday 4:00-5:00  
Thursday 3:00-4:00 (Davis)  
Phone: 626-6814

Required Textbooks and Materials (bring each class period)

• A USB flash storage device (“thumb” drive or “click” drive)
• Course Website <faculty.weber.edu/sthomas>

Course Objectives
This class will introduce you to the various professional genres and environments you may encounter as a professional technical writer. We’ll cover various career paths and the different genres of communication you can expect to find. You’ll gain practice reading and writing business correspondence and reports at a more sophisticated level than English 3100. We’ll look at many models (ones I bring in and also ones you bring in from your contacts) to understand the qualities of successful workplace writing. You’ll also gain an understanding of the process of professional writing.

You will have the opportunity to explore how writers in professional settings make decisions about form, content, and style. This will help you develop the tools you will need to adapt to the different writing environments you will find yourself in once you are out of school.

Grades and Assignments
Your grade will be based on the quality of your work on the following course projects as well as on your daily work, class participation, and attendance. All course projects must be completed in order for you to pass the course.

Grade Range
A: 90%-100%  
B: 80%-89%  
C: 70%-79%

D: 60% - 69%  
F: Below 60%

Grading Criteria
In addition to the general grading description and assignment requirements provided later in this section, the following list of grading criteria categories may be helpful for you to reference as you work through your drafting process. Although many of the categories overlap, they are organized here into nine main categories to help you use them more effectively as a drafting tool:

Compliance with assignment requirements and standards
Analysis of the rhetorical situation, including audience and purpose
Introduction to the Profession

Structure, organization, and accessibility of information
Development and usability of content and textual elements
Writing style appropriate for the rhetorical situation
Appropriate use of graphics
Effective use of design features and formatting
Correctness in grammatical mechanics
Proper citation and documentation methods

Excellence in any technical document will depend upon your performance in these categories. It is my hope that through the semester you will learn to apply these criteria to your own work and to revise all your documents to meet and surpass the professional standards that you will encounter in your future career.

**General Grade Descriptions**
A grade for an assignment is an evaluation of the rhetorical quality of the work: its ability to communicate effectively to an intended audience for a specific purpose situated within a specific context. The following basic grade descriptions are used to distinguish a document’s relative success in meeting the requirements of an assignment. I will provide specific criteria for each major assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A superior document that meets and exceeds all standards. It conveys a superior understanding of audience, situation, and purpose. It is free from grammatical errors and has a style that is clear, concise, and forceful. The information is well-developed; it is thorough, comprehensive, accurate, and appropriate for the audience and context; and it includes appropriate examples and citations. The visual design is accessible and appealing. In short, your document represents your organization well, and your employer would be pleased to distribute it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A very good document that meets the standards for the assignment and engages the audience. It may need improvement in style; it may contain minor flaws in grammar, format, or content that are easily correctable. It is well written and produced, and it exhibits a solid understanding of audience, situation, and purpose. The information is sufficiently developed and organized, and it contains appropriate examples and citations. In short, your document would represent the organization well, but your employer might recommend some ways to improve the document before distributing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>A competent document that meets the standards adequately but may contain several flaws in concept development, details, structure, grammar, design, accuracy, etc. For example, a document may fail to answer one or two significant questions or fail to identify a significant source; or it may need to be better developed or to be redesigned so that the information is more accessible and appealing. In short, your document could not be distributed to your organization’s clients or users without a revision. Your performance on the task might give your supervisor doubts about your communication ability and motivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>A marginally acceptable document that forces the reader to do too much work to understand or read the document because of serious problems in the document. The document may contain numerous and major errors in logic, grammar, or data. The document may meet some standards of the assignment but fails to meet an important requirement. Your organization would not send this document, and, in fact, your employer would probably seriously reconsider your future with the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>An unacceptable document that does not address the assignment. It either does not have enough information, contains major or excessive errors, or does not meet the standards of the assignment. Most likely, it is time for you to find another job or career.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction to the Profession

**Assignments**

- **Reading Responses**: 15%
- **Correspondence**: 25%
- **Collaboration**: 20%
- **Final Report**: 30%
- **Exams**: 10%

**Reading Responses**

*Audience:* Instructor and fellow students.

*Content:* Respond to the readings. I will supply prompts for the first couple of readings and you may choose your response. Later, you will develop reading responded on your own.

*Length:* At least 2 pages.

**Correspondence**

*Audience:* Appropriate for the assignment.

*Content:* This element involves a series of letters (email, two letters of complaint, and a letter of application with résumé).

*Length:* Appropriate to the audience and assignment.

**Collaboration**

*Audience:* High school and early college students.

*Content:* A report surveying the technical communication profession.

*Length:* 4 to 6 pages.

**Final Report**

*Audience:* High school and early college students.

*Content:* Research (both from the internet and from the library) examining a specialization within the field of technical communication that is most interesting to you or about your own profession and the part that writing plays in it.

*Length:* 8 to 12 pages

**Exams**
- Midterm Exam
- Final Exam

**Late Projects**

As in the workplace, most deadlines are based on other demands, requirements, and deadlines and, as such, are frequently inflexible. For example, if you were submitting a proposal for your company or client in response to a government request for proposals (RFPs), a late proposal would not be accepted. It would be unfair to competitors submitting their proposals on time, as well as litigious, to allow you extra time to prepare your response. Our circumstances are not as extreme, but there are penalties for late projects:

- For each day you submit a major project late, your final grade on that project will be reduced by one letter for each day it is submitted late.
- Submit an email notice of your choice to turn in an assignment late (sthomas@weber.edu) and indicate when you will bring in a hard copy to my office. Your assignment will be considered late until you turn it in to me.

Carefully weigh the consequences of submitting your projects late. Again, as in the workplace, it is best to discuss problems in meeting schedules before the deadlines. I will not accept late papers after one week.
Incompletes

Incompletes are given only in rare and extreme circumstances. University policy states “An ‘Incomplete’ may be given by an instructor only when the student, having satisfactorily completed approximately 80% of the required work, is unable to complete the class work for a legitimate reason (such as illness or accident) and, in the opinion of the instructor, could complete the required work without re-registering for the class” (http://documents.weber.edu/ppm/4-19.htm).

Plagiarism and Unethical Behavior

Plagiarism and unethical behavior is not tolerated.

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty in which a person represents someone else’s ideas or written works as if they were his or her own. Whenever you use someone else’s writings, arguments, data, or designs (either directly quoted or paraphrased) in an assignment submitted for a class, you must clearly cite the appropriate references in a format previously approved by your instructor. You must fully indicate the extent to which any parts of the assignment are not your own work. For instance, it would be plagiarism to credit someone else with the content of only one passage in a paper if in fact other passages from that person were included without giving credit. It is also plagiarism to collaborate on a paper or accept collaboration from another person without specific authorization to do so by your instructor.

Any case will result in the student receiving a failing grade for the course and further University disciplinary action according to the Student Code, Section IV:D & X:A & B.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in Room 181 of the Student Service Center. SSD can also arrange to provide materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary.

Electronic Devices

During your scheduled and during scheduled conferences, pagers, cell phones, and any other electronic device that will distract you from class will be turned off (or to silent notification).

Electronic Classroom (Union Building 310)

If the schedule permits, we will have workshops and demonstrations in the Electronic Classroom. I will announce these days in advance and leave a note on the door of our regular classroom. Be sure to check your email before class to know where we will meet that day. I recommend investing in a “click drive” or “thumb drive”; these are USB storage devices that you may purchase at the bookstore. These “click drives” hold much more information than a floppy and they are harder to damage. Keep one with you to save or access your work. Disk problems, printing problems, computer-related crashes, etc. ARE NOT excuses for late work. Remember to safeguard your work: BACKUP, BACKUP, BACKUP! (This means save your work in several places and keep hard copies.)

Be prepared to work in the EC. If you are unaccustomed to working in group situations, bring in drafts to revise or handwritten copies to type. Lack of preparation for working in the EC will result in an absence (see above). Remember, the computers in the EC are for working. Any inappropriate computer activity will be dealt with according to University policy.
Grades

Students are responsible for retaining all documents developed for this course.

Scale for letter grades:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A+} & = 98 \\
\text{A} & = 95 \\
\text{A-} & = 90 \\
\text{B+} & = 88 \\
\text{B} & = 85 \\
\text{B-} & = 80 \\
\text{C+} & = 78 \\
\text{C} & = 75 \\
\text{C-} & = 70 \\
\text{D+} & = 68 \\
\text{D} & = 65 \\
\text{D-} & = 60 \\
\text{E} & = 58 \text{ (and below)}
\end{align*}
\]