

English 421: Course Policies

Course Information

English 421-0701
MWF 1:30-2:20
HEAV 227

Instructor Information

Instructor: Erin Karper
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Required Text

Professional Writing Online (on the web at <http://www.ablongman.com/pwo/>), by Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Patricia Sullivan, and James Porter. Boston: Allyn & Bacon/Longman, 2001. Available at Follett's and University Book Store. Be sure to purchase unopened copies of the guide because used password codes are not transferable.

Course Description and Goals

English 421 helps students become better professional communicators through contextual research and analysis. The curriculum is informed by current research in rhetoric and professional writing and is guided by the needs and practices of business, the high-tech industry, and society at large, as well as by the expectations of Purdue students and programs. Students learn effective strategies for communicating with other people about and with technology, particularly in networked workplaces and through usability testing. They learn how to collaborate with colleagues in project teams as they analyze writing situations and respond to them with informative and visually effective print and electronic documents. The course teaches the rhetorical principles that help students shape their technical writing to suit a range of readers, for multiple purposes, in a variety of professional situations.

Course Goals

- **Writing in Context**
Analyze professional cultures, social contexts, and audiences to determine how they shape the various purposes and forms of writing, such as persuasion, organizational communication, and public discourse.
- **Writing Process**
Develop and understand various strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents that respond effectively and ethically to professional situations and audiences.
- **Collaboration**
Learn and apply strategies for successful collaboration, such as working and

communicating on-line with colleagues, setting and achieving project goals, and responding constructively to peers' work.

- **Research**

Understand and use various research methods to produce professional documents, including analyzing professional contexts, assessing and using information resources, and determining how various media and technologies affect and are affected by users and readers.

- **Technology**

Develop strategies for using and adapting various communication technologies to manage projects and produce informative and usable professional documents.

- **Document Design**

Learn to argue with visual data, understanding and implementing various principles of format, layout, and design of professional documents that meet multiple user and reader needs.

In this course, you will examine some of the writing practices that professionals in your field use to produce documents, including analyzing and revising a professional document. Finally, you will work with a group of students with similar fields of interest to yours to produce documentation on performing a specific task in your field.

Course Policies

Projects and Activities

The course will consist of three major projects:

- **Analysis of Writing Practices:** examining documents produced in a particular field to investigate and theorize about the ways writing functions in your specific writing context, community, and field. Further description available at <<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~karper/421/awp.html>>
- **Revision of a Professional Document** :evaluating the effectiveness of a document from project 1 and revising the document to improve it. Further description available at <<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~karper/421/rpd.html>>
- **Documentation Project:** producing print or online documentation related to using specific pieces of software/hardware or documenting a particular task in a particular field. Further description available at <<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~karper/421/documentation.html>>

You will also complete and submit a midterm and an end of semester progress report. Further description available at <<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~karper/421/progressreports.html>>

Grading

Each of the 3 major projects in the course will be comprised of several components, each of which will be worth a percentage of your final grade. You can earn a

thousand possible points for the semester.

Assignment	Point Value
Analysis of Writing Practices	150 points
Revision of a Professional Document	250 points
Documentation Project	400 points
Class participation and attendance	100 points
Progress reports	100 points (50 points each)

Grades for each assignment will be computed out of their possible point values; scales will be provided with each assignment.

Grades for the semester will be computed as follows:

- **1000-900 points: A**
- **899-800 points: B**
- **799-700 points: C**
- **699-600 points: D**
- **599 points or below: F**

Technical Requirements and Responsibilities

Because the exchange of information and materials in this class will be almost entirely electronic, familiarity with certain technologies is crucial for participation and success in the course. In order to participate fully in the course, you should be willing to familiarize yourself with the technologies and applications listed below.

- Mac OS 9 and Windows XP [both are provided in the PUCG labs]
- Microsoft Office (2001 and/or XP)
- Netscape Communicator and Internet Explorer
- An email program that can handle file attachments (such as Netscape Messenger or Purdue's WebMail)

In the course, you will be working with various text and image manipulation software packages. While familiarity with this software is not required, a willingness to learn and participate is. If you need any assistance now or at any point during the semester, please do not hesitate to ask. During the semester, you'll need frequent access to the Internet to keep up with class assignments. If you have a computer at home, you'll be responsible for configuring your system to access course materials, to participate in online discussions, and to complete other work. If you do not have a system at home, you will be able to use any of the standard PUCG labs. You are also required to subscribe to and participate on a

course mailing list.

Your responsibilities for this course will include:

- Setting up and using your Purdue career account.
- Making sure that you are subscribed to the class mailing list and can send and receive messages.
- Making sure that you can send and receive e-mail attachments and resolve file compatibility issues, and that you can submit documents to the turn-in folder.
- Participating to the best of your ability in any online course activities.
- Observing proper decorum when communicating online with your classmates and instructor.
- Maintaining back-up copies of all assignments.
- Utilizing the course web site for information about the course and the assignments, including checking the course calendar (at <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~karper/421/calendar.html>) frequently for updates to the schedule.
- Minimizing complaints about classroom technologies.
- Making sure that use of the computers in class does not distract you from participating to the best of your ability.

Failure to meet these responsibilities will result in deductions from your class participation grade.

Collaborative Work

Collaborative work is a required component of the course. You and your project team members are responsible for updating one another and me about assignment development and progress. In addition, you also are responsible for negotiating together all aspects of your work, including planning, drafting, revising, file managing, and scheduling of assignments. When I assign a collaborative project, I will provide you with explicit guidelines for successful collaboration. I will also ask individual group members to complete Collaborative Evaluation Forms. The principles of collaboration I encourage students to follow are contained in a brochure on Group Work and Collaborative Writing at <http://www-honors.ucdavis.edu/vohs/index.html>.

Attendance and Late Work

Attendance is required at all scheduled course meetings. Since you will be working in project teams for a portion of the semester, you also will be required to attend any scheduled out-of-class meetings with your team to complete course assignments. Three absences may result in your final grade being lowered by as much as a letter grade. More than three absences can result in a failing grade for the course. Excused absences may be granted for religious holidays, job interviews, documented personal emergencies, university-sponsored events, provided you can provide proof and make up required work (if possible). Being

excessively or regularly late for class or team meetings can also be counted as an absence.

The majority of missed class assignments cannot be made up. If a serious and unavoidable problem arises, however, you should contact me to determine whether or not an extension for the work will or will not be granted.

Academic Integrity

According to the Office of the Dean of Students (<<http://www.purdue.edu/odos/administration/integrity.htm>>):

Purdue prohibits 'dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty.' [University Regulations, Part V, Section III, B, 2, a] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that 'the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest.' [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972]

Academic dishonesty in this course will not be tolerated, and penalties will range from failing the assignment to failing the course. For more information about academic dishonesty, you can read a brochure published by the Office of the Dean of Students at <<http://www.purdue.edu/ODOS/administration/integrity.htm>>.