



WRITING FOR SECURITY PROFESSIONALS

INSS 2303

INSS 2303 CRN 26328

Writing for Security Professionals

Asynchronous Online Class – Spring 2022

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Office hours: Mondays 13:00 – 14:00 MST <https://washington.zoom.us/j/9077890840>

Course Description

Catalog description: The undergraduate writing course addresses specific stylistic requirements and use of lucid prose in order to communicate efficiently and clearly as a security professional. Students use a "learning by doing" model to become skilled at conveying information to national security consumers in writing using both the Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) paragraph format and the Conclusion Centric report format. Students learn to employ a writing style that is accurate, brief, and coherent.

When writing for security professionals, you must address specific stylistic requirements and use lucid prose in order to communicate efficiently and clearly. In this course, you'll use a "learning by doing" model to learn how to convey information to consumers in written form using both the Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) paragraph format and the Conclusion Centric report format while employing a writing style that is accurate, brief, and clear. You'll also be reacquainted with the basic rules of grammar, spelling, and syntax. The course will use James Major's book, *Communicating with Intelligence: Writing and Briefing for National Security*, as it is the most comprehensive text available on the topic. While working in groups, you will produce a written analysis of North Korea's Supernotes program and the threat it poses to US national security. You will complete every stage of the intelligence writing process, from initial research through the final written report, as if you were a security professional and I were your supervisor.

Communication

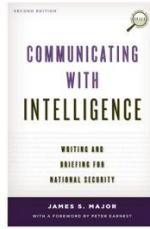
Each week, I will post an announcement on Blackboard reminding you of that week's topic, tasks, and deadlines. I will also post other announcements from time to time. Check Blackboard regularly to make sure you don't miss any important announcements or events noted on the calendar. You can send messages to your fellow classmates or to me through Blackboard messages.

The best and quickest way to reach me is via Blackboard messages. Please allow up to 48 weekday hours for me to respond to your email. I will usually respond within a few hours, but I have over 100 students and sometimes receive a large amount of emails in a short period. I check my messages regularly, but I may not respond on weekends. I will inform you in advance if I am required to be away from my computer and am therefore unable to respond to messages for any other period of time.

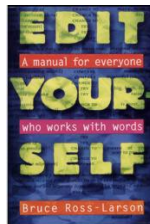
All messages should be written in a professional style, with formal greeting ("Dr. Magee," and signature). **To ensure effective communication, please include a brief explanation of the reason you are emailing in the subject line (e.g., "Late Syllabus Quiz").**

Required text

[James S. Major. Communicating with Intelligence: Writing and Briefing for National Security, 2nd Edition. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. May 2014. ISBN-13: 9781442226623.](#)



[Bruce Ross-Larson. Edit Yourself: A Manual for Everyone Who Works with Words. W.W. Norton & Company. 1996 \(Reissued with new material\). ISBN-10: 0393313263.](#)



[William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White. The Elements of Style, 4th edition. Longman. July 1999. ISBN-10: 020530902X.](#)



The books listed above are available from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) bookstore and online from Amazon (www.amazon.com). It is recommended that you purchase or rent used copies of these texts PDFs and supplemental reading materials will be posted on the UTEP Blackboard course page.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- RECOGNIZE the tight connection between thought and language, and explain why good analysis and communication are impossible without sharp writing skills;
- DISTINGUISH between writing for security professionals and writing in other intellectual professions;
- EMPLOY accurate, brief, and clear English prose;
- DEMONSTRATE techniques for clear writing and constructive editing;
- APPLY methods and procedures unique to writing and briefing for security professionals;
- WRITE and PRESENT a coherent analysis of a national security issue in a format typically utilized by security professionals; and
- EVALUATE and UNDERSTAND the various audiences for which security professionals write, and the special demands and requirements of each.

Course Requirements

Students must read the assigned materials and submit assignments prior to associated unit due dates.

- Each student must maintain a high-speed internet connection for the duration of the class in order to access the course website. All course content (except the textbooks) will be accessible via UTEP Blackboard, which can be accessed at <https://my.utep.edu/>.
- Each student must register for a Blackboard account to access the course. Registration requires a valid UTEP email address, which can be accessed at <https://my.utep.edu/>.

Course Evaluation

Your grade in this course will be based on quizzes, applied writing assignments, and a final paper. The grading criteria for the course, as well as detailed descriptions of each assignment are provided below.

All written assignments must be saved in a word processing document (e.g., .doc, .docx, .pdf) and uploaded in the corresponding assignment link in Blackboard in order to receive credit. All quizzes will be submitted through Blackboard.

Grading Criteria

Module	Description	Points	% of Grade	Due Date
1	Syllabus Quiz	2	2%	Jan 22 @ 17:00
	BLUF Quiz	2	2%	
	Rewrite a Paragraph in the BLUF Format (IRS Exercise)	5	5%	
2	Audience and Topic Quiz	2	2%	Jan 29 @ 17:00
	Rewrite a Paragraph in the BLUF Format (HSBC Exercise)	8	8%	
3	Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity Quiz	2	2%	Feb 5 @ 17:00
	Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity Exercise	10	10%	
	Write a Paragraph in the BLUF Format (Qantas Exercise)	10	10%	
4	Conclusion Centric Report Format Quiz	3	3%	Feb 19 @ 17:00
	Title Writing Exercise	10	10%	
	Executive Summary Writing Exercise	10	10%	
	Introduction Writing Exercise	10	10%	
5	First Draft of Final Paper (Super Notes Paper)	10	10%	Feb 23 @ 17:00
	Final Draft of Final Paper (Super Notes Paper)	16	16%	Mar 5 @ 17:00
	Total	100	100%	

Detailed Assignment Descriptions

Activity: Post Introductions in Discussion Board**Due: End of Week 1**

Post a brief introduction (150 words) in the student forum. The introduction should include details such as why you're pursuing your degree, relevant professional experience including internships, and information that you'd like to share with your classmates and instructor. Personal details are welcome but not required.

Graded Activity: Syllabus Quiz**Due: End of Week 1**

Take the syllabus quiz posted to Blackboard. The syllabus quiz will cover major topics in the syllabus and is designed to make sure that you have taken notice of important information that, if overlooked, could negatively affect your course grade.

Graded Activity: BLUF Quiz**Due: End of Week 1**

Take the BLUF quiz posted to Blackboard. This quiz will cover major topics in the readings and is designed to make sure that you have taken notice of important information that, if overlooked, could negatively affect your comprehension of materials and your grade.

Graded Activity: Rewrite a Paragraph in the BLUF Format (IRS Exercise)**Due: End of Week 1**

Read the provided paragraph about the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigation's (IRS CI) mission. (This paragraph is available on Blackboard.) Determine the "bottom line" of the paragraph. Using only the facts and information provided, rewrite the paragraph in the BLUF style.

Graded Activity: Audience and Topic Quiz**Due: End of Week 2**

Take the audience and topic quiz posted to Blackboard. This quiz will cover major topics in the readings and is designed to make sure that you have taken notice of important information that, if overlooked, could negatively affect your comprehension of materials and your grade.

Graded Activity: Rewrite a Paragraph in the BLUF Format (HSBC Exercise)**Due: End of Week 2**

Read the provided paragraph about the HSBC's banking practices and links to terrorism. Determine the "bottom line" of the paragraph. (You may need to reference the original Rolling Stone article, "Too Big to Jail," in order to place the paragraph in context prior to determining the paragraph's bottom line. Both the paragraph and the article are available in Blackboard.) Using only the facts and information in the subject paragraph, rewrite the passage in the BLUF style.

Graded Activity: Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity Quiz**Due: End of Week 3**

Take the accuracy, brevity, and clarity quiz posted in Blackboard. This quiz will cover major topics in the readings and is designed to make sure that you have taken notice of important information that, if overlooked, could negatively affect your comprehension of materials and your grade.

Graded Activity: Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity Exercise**Due: End of Week 3**

Edit and rewrite the provided passages in order to increase the accuracy, brevity, and clarity of each.

Graded Activity: Write a Paragraph in the BLUF Format (Qantas Exercise)**Due: End of Week 3**

Read the provided articles about Qantas' safety record. Using only the facts and information provided in the articles, analyze the situation and report your findings in one BLUF-style paragraph.

Important considerations:

- BLUF paragraphs are typically three to five sentences in length. In rare cases, when the information being conveyed is voluminous or complex, they may be as long as seven sentences.
- Each and every report must be tailored to the needs of its customer.

In this case, your customer is a Senior Advisor to the Undersecretary for Policy at the U.S. Department of Transportation. Your customer is specifically interested in the safety of U.S. citizens traveling on this carrier.

Graded Activity: Title Writing Exercise**Due: End of Week 5**

Write an appropriate BLUF-style title for each of the following reports: (1) "Meth in Mexico: A Turning Point in the Drug War?" and (2) "Criminal Commodities: Cocaine."

Graded Activity: Executive Summary Writing Exercise**Due: End of Week 5**

Write a one-paragraph executive summary for Report 1, "Mexico Security Memo: The Evolution of a Sinaloa Enforcer Group." This executive summary should be five to seven sentences in length.

Write a multi-paragraph executive summary for Report 2, "Meth in Mexico: A Turning Point in the Drug War?" This executive summary may include as many paragraphs as you deem necessary. Paragraphs in this executive summary should be between three and five sentences in length; longer paragraphs (up to seven sentences) are acceptable but must be justified by the complexity or amount of information presented.

Graded Activity: Conclusion Centric Report Format Quiz**Due: End of Week 5**

Take the conclusion centric report format quiz posted in Blackboard. This quiz will cover major topics in the readings and is designed to make sure that you have taken notice of important information that, if overlooked, could negatively affect your comprehension of materials and your grade.

Graded Activity: Introduction writing Exercise**Due: End of Week 5**

Write a one-paragraph introduction for each report: (1) Mexico Security Memo: Los Zetas Strike in Sinaloa Territory” and (2) “Mexico Security Memo: Increased Violence Likely in Guanajuato”. Each introduction should be three to five sentences in length.

Group Activity: First Draft of Final Paper (Super Notes Paper)

Due: Middle of Week 6

Read the Vanity Fair article “North Korea’s Dollar Store.” Rewrite it as a Conclusion Centric Format Report that includes the following sections: Title, Executive Summary, Introduction, Background (if appropriate), Substantiation, Context (if appropriate), and Outlook. The paragraphs in the report should be in the BLUF format, and each sentence and paragraph should be accurate, brief, and clear. As you decide which information to include in your report and which to omit, consider the needs of your customer: what will the customer need/want to know, based on the customer’s level and reason for requesting the report? For this report, your customer is Senior Advisory to an Undersecretary at the Department of the Treasury who has a strategic interest in North Korea’s apparent ability to evade US sanctions.

After you’ve submitted this first draft, I will provide editorial feedback and return the paper to you for further edits NLT beginning of Week 7.

Group Activity: Final Draft of Final Paper (Super Notes Paper)

Due: End of Week 7

Edit and rewrite your final paper per my feedback and resubmit.

Grading

Please refer to this and the Grading Criteria section of the course syllabus for a comprehensive grade breakdown; do not rely solely on the Blackboard grade report as it is not always an accurate representation of your grade. As always, let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

90 to 100% = A

89 to 80% = B

79 to 70% = C

69 to 60% = D

59% and below = F

Course Schedule, Due Dates, and Assignments

Module 1: Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) Paragraph Format One Week		
Type	Description	Due Date
Activity	Post Introductions in Student Forum.	Jan 22 @ 17:00
Video Lecture	Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) Paragraph Format.	-
Reading	Major, Chapter 1: What It's All About	-
Reading	Major, Chapter 5: Writing the First Draft: Getting the Words on Paper	-
Graded Activity	Syllabus Quiz.	Jan 22 @ 17:00
Graded Activity	BLUF Quiz.	Jan 22 @ 17:00
Graded Activity	Rewrite a Paragraph in the BLUF Format (IRS Exercise).	Jan 22 @ 17:00

Module 2: Audience and Topic One Week		
Type	Description	Due Date
Video Lecture	Audience and Topic.	-
Reading	Major, Chapter 4: Writing with Intelligence.	-
Reading	Reading to Write: An Introduction to IC Standards and Style.	-
Reference	MCIIS Style Guide.	-
Graded Activity	Audience and Topic Quiz.	Jan 29 @ 17:00
Graded Activity	Rewrite a Paragraph in the BLUF Format (HSBC Exercise).	Jan 29 @ 17:00

Module 3: Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity One Week		
Type	Description	Due Date
Video Lecture	Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity.	-
Reading	Major, Chapter 4: Clarity, Conciseness, Correctness, Appropriateness, Completeness, and Coherence.	-
Reference	Ross-Larson, Part 1: What Editors Look For.	-
Reference	Strunk and White, Chapters I-II, IV.	-
Graded Activity	Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity Quiz.	Feb 5 @ 17:00
Graded Activity	Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity Exercise.	Feb 5 @ 17:00
Graded Activity	Write a Paragraph in the BLUF Format (Qantas Exercise).	Feb 5 @ 17:00

Module 4: Conclusion Centric Report Format Two Weeks		
Type	Description	Due Date
Video Lecture	Conclusion Centric Reports.	-
Reading	How to Write an Executive Summary (Compilation).	-
Reading	Major, Chapter 6: Guidelines for the Preparation of Key Judgments. Pages 97-98.	-
Graded Activity	Conclusion Centric Report Format Quiz.	End of Week 5
Graded Activity	Title Writing Exercise.	End of Week 5
Graded Activity	Executive Summary Writing Exercise.	End of Week 5
Graded Activity	Introduction Writing Exercise.	End of Week 5

Module 5: Writing and Publishing Two Weeks		
Type	Description	Due Date
Video Lecture	Writing and Publishing.	-
Reading	Major, Chapter 9: Revision: Polishing Your Writing.	-
Reading	Major, Chapter 8: Beyond the First Draft: Analytical Papers.	-
Reference	Strunk and White, Chapter V: An Approach to Style.	-
Reference	Ross-Larson, Part II: What Editors Cut, Change, and Compare.	-
Graded Activity	First Draft of Final Paper (Super Notes Paper). Draft will be returned to you for editing [Date TBD].	Middle of Week 6
Graded Activity	Final Draft of Final Paper.	End of Week 7

Late Submissions

All activities are due by 1700 MDT on the date noted. Late submissions will be penalized by 10% for each day late after the deadline. If the assignment is more than 3 days late without my permission, no points will be given. In rare, documented circumstances that you communicate to me in a timely manner, I may allow assignments to be submitted late.

If you have an EMERGENCY that interferes with your coursework, contact me as soon as possible and I will work with you to provide extensions and help as much as I reasonably can.

All written assignments must be saved in a word processing document (e.g., .doc, .docx, .pdf) and uploaded in the corresponding assignment link in Blackboard in order to receive credit. Assignments uploaded in a format that is not readable by SafeAssign will be considered late until an appropriate file is uploaded.

Required Software

You must have access to a computer with the following software installed to work efficiently in this course. Computers in the campus labs should already have the necessary software. These programs may already be installed on your computer.

Adobe Acrobat Reader. You can get the program by going to <http://get.adobe.com/reader/> and clicking on the icon that says "Download Now." Follow instructions to install the reader.

Microsoft Office, iWork, NeoOffice or other compatible software. You must have access to word processing, presentation, and spreadsheet software for this course. Don't utilize some obscure software that won't convert; if I can't open your documents, they won't be graded. Microsoft Office is available for use on the computers in the campus labs. PC and Mac users can purchase Microsoft Office from the UTEP bookstore for a nominal fee. Mac users can purchase iWork components from Apple's App Store. Mac users can download NeoOffice free from NeoOffice (<http://www.neooffice.org>). Google Docs is also free and will let you convert to appropriate formats.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty Statement

Cheating is unethical and not acceptable. Plagiarism is using information or original wording in a paper without giving credit to the source of that information or wording: it is also not acceptable. Do not submit work under your own name that you did not do yourself. You may not submit work for this class that you did for another class. If you are found to be cheating or plagiarizing, you will be subject to disciplinary action, per UTEP catalog policy. Refer to <http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm> for further information.

Disabilities Statement

I will make any reasonable accommodations for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please email or call me during the first two weeks of class to discuss any needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact the Disabled Student Services Office in the East Union Building, Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes. The Disabled Student Services Office can also be reached in the following ways:

Web: <http://www.utep.edu/dss>

Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY

E-mail: dss@utep.edu

Fax: (915) 747-8712

General Guidelines for Online Courses

Being Successful in an Online Course: Online Learning is not a Spectator Sport.

It is everyone's responsibility to participate as fully as they can so everyone can get the most from the experience. Here are some simple rules to follow to ensure your participation and engagement in the learning process:

- Ask questions: If you don't know the answer, someone else will. The HELP board is the forum for asking questions related to content OR any problems you are having.
- Please ensure that you have clearly indicated the subject of your message, preceded by your last name (Example: "Rodriguez, Patriot Act Summary").
- Reach out to others: Offer a fact, article, link or other item that can help others learn something you can share.
- Be appropriate: The online classroom is not the place for insulting or insensitive comments, attacks, or venting. Inappropriate behavior will be subject to disciplinary action.
- Be diplomatic: Tolerance and respect of each other's opinions should be upheld, even when strong differences of opinion arise. When sending messages on emotionally charged topics, ensure that they are constructive instead of destructive. Remember, there is a person at the other end.
- Stay focused: Stay on topic to increase the efficiency of your learning.

Communicating Effectively Online: When we converse, we expect other people to observe certain rules of behavior. The same is true online. Here are a few pointers to help you communicate safely and effectively.

- IDENTIFY YOURSELF and clearly summarize the contents of your message in the subject line of your e-mail AND your discussion board postings.
- Avoid using all capital letters. USING ALL CAPS MAKES IT LOOK LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING! IT'S ALSO MORE DIFFICULT TO READ.
- Avoid using sarcasm in your postings and e-mail messages. Sarcasm does not necessarily translate well in the online world, and you may offend someone accidentally.

General Guidelines:

- a) You may WITHDRAW from the course by the withdrawal date with a grade of "W". Withdrawal is *your* responsibility and must be coordinated through the registrar's office; you will receive a failing grade if you just stop logging on.
- b) Please be ON TIME with your assignments. Late assignments, even with documented reasons, may be graded lower at the discretion of the instructor.
- c) WORK TOGETHER to help achieve your goals. Don't hesitate to ask questions when you don't understand something.
- d) I will attempt to maintain the standards outlined in this syllabus throughout the course. If a change becomes necessary, it should be for an equitable reason, and I will inform the students via e-mail as soon as possible.
- e) I am here to assist you. Please e-mail or call me.