Instructor: Mayra Pacheco, M.S.
Email: mepacheco2@utep.edu
Office hours by appointment

Course Description

Catalog description: The undergraduate writing course addresses specific stylistic requirements and the 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.

Security professionals are busy people under a lot of stress, because by the nature of the job, lives and national/state/local security are on the line. They have a high demand for accuracy, completeness, objectivity, relevance, timeliness, clarity and brevity from all written communications. There is no room for political, social, or other “sides” or biases, misinformation, and unsubstantiated opinions. Misunderstandings or failure to provide the needed information can, and on many occasions has, cost lives. The US Intelligence Community has codified these and related requirements as standards in Intelligence Community Directive 203.

This course seeks to prepare you in the basics of this demanding, non-academic, communication style, so you can “hit the ground running”. In addition, once you learn this style, writing in general will become much easier for you, even for your academic courses. You’ll use a “learning by doing” model to learn the Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) paragraph format and the Conclusion Centric report format while employing the principles of critical thinking (good writing is based on good thinking) and a writing style that is accurate, brief, and clear. You’ll also be reacquainted with the basic rules of grammar, spelling, and syntax. This is critical: basic grammatical and spelling errors can cause the reader to distrust your competence, and therefore undermine your message. This is especially important if the reader, or “customer”, doesn’t want to hear what you have to say, which happens more often than any of us would like.

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.

For policy reasons, you must use your UTEP email address to communicate with me. Please allow up to 48 hours for me to respond to your email, though I will always respond as soon as I can and usually much sooner.

In a seven week course things move quickly, so to ensure that we communicate in time to do you any good:

- In the subject line, include your course number and a brief reference to your issue (e.g., “Late Syllabus Quiz”).
- Sign with your full name. Email addresses alone are not enough for me to quickly identify you, nor is just your first name since sometimes there is more than one student with the same name.
- Carefully consider what you need and include any detail in the text that would help me quickly reply without going back and forth. Practice the skills you learn in this course!
- If the issue is complex or you aren't sure exactly what the issue is (for example, if you can only write a vague note but not fully formulate a question or comment), reach out and we can schedule a time to talk.

Required text


- This text is available online through the library.
- You may also use the new edition, 2023. That is not available online.


The books listed above are available from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) bookstore and online from Amazon (www.amazon.com) or other online booksellers. You can purchase or rent used copies of these texts. Additional reading and reference materials will be posted on the course 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 NLT the 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/.
- Please note that your professor cannot help you with either of these.
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 is provided below. A detailed course schedule is at the end of the syllabus.

Grading

90 to 100% = A
89 to 80% = B
79 to 70% = C
69 to 60% = D
59% and below = F

Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>%Grade</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Weeks 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Weeks 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper (Outline, Draft and finished paper)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Week 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See the Course Schedule at the end of the syllabus for details.

Late Submissions

All activities are due by 11:59 PM MDT on the date noted. If you know you will not be able to meet the deadline – for example, you are traveling to an area with no Internet connection – you must let me know ahead of time. Otherwise, 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 when you communicate to me in a timely manner, for example in the case of an emergency or serious illness, I may allow assignments to be submitted late.

If you have an emergency or unavoidable significant life event 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.

Required Software

You must have regular 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.

Word Processing program. I highly recommend that you take advantage of your free access to Microsoft Office 365 to ensure that all files are compatible with the programs we will use and I can edit them. What’s the point of taking a writing class if your instructor cannot edit your writing! “UTEP has a license for Microsoft Office 365 which allows faculty, staff, and currently enrolled students to install the latest version of Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote) and its related components (Publisher, Skype for Business) on up to 5 personal computers or Macs, and on Android, iPad, and Windows mobile devices. Office 365 includes OneDrive for Business which provides all UTEP users with unlimited storage. Students can use and download the Office 365 apps through the Microsoft Office Portal.”

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty Statement

Cheating is unethical and not acceptable, and will negatively impact or even end your career should you work in the Intelligence Community (and many other fields). One form of cheating, plagiarism, is particularly prevalent in written work. It is defined as using information or original wording in a paper without giving credit to the source of that information or wording. 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.** Please see the this websites to learn more about plagiarism and how to avoid it: [https://libguides.utep.edu/c.php?g=430196&p=3854064](https://libguides.utep.edu/c.php?g=430196&p=3854064).

We will be using Safe Assign, a plagiarism checking tool. “SafeAssign is based on a unique text-matching algorithm capable of detecting exact and inexact matching between a paper and source material. Submissions are compared against the Internet, the ProQuest ABI/Inform database, the Institutional document archives, and the Global Reference Database.”

Guidance on Artificial Intelligence

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E, is not allowed for assignments in this class. Each student is expected to use critical and creative thinking skills to complete tasks and not rely on computer-generated ideas. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

AI allowed only with prior permission from instructor Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E, is only allowed with approval from the instructor BEFORE being used. Without permission, you will be expected to think creatively and critically to complete assignments without assistance from these tools.

If given permission to use any of these tools, students must properly cite and give full credit to the program used upon submission of every relevant assignment. A short paragraph describing how the tool(s) was/were used for the assignment must be included.
**AI allowed with proper acknowledgement**

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E, is only allowed with proper attribution given for its use.

Students must properly cite and give full credit to the program used upon submission of every relevant assignment. For example, text generated using ChatGPT must be cited:


A short paragraph describing how the tool(s) was/were used for the assignment must be included.

**Using AI for brainstorming**

Some AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E, can be beneficial during the early brainstorming stages of an activity, and you are welcome to explore them for that purpose. However, keep in mind that AI-generated ideas are not your own and may hinder your ability to think critically and creatively about a problem. It is also important to remember that these technologies often “hallucinate” or produce materials and information that are inaccurate or incomplete—even providing false citations for use.

You are not allowed to submit any AI-generated work in this course as your own. If you use any information or materials created by AI technology, you are required to cite it like you would any other source. Consider how this will affect your credibility as a writer and scholar before doing so. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

**Free use of AI without acknowledgement**

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, including generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E, is permitted in this class. Students must include a short paragraph, with each relevant assignment, explaining how the tool was used.

**Course Drop Policy**

According to UTEP Catalog, “At the discretion of the instructor, a student can be dropped from a course because of excessive absences or lack of effort. A grade of “W” will be assigned before the course drop deadline and a grade of “F” after the course drop deadline.” See Policies and Regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excuse absences. Therefore, if I find that, due to non-performance in the course, you are at risk of failing, I will drop you from the course. I will provide 24 hours advance notice via email.

Or
I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the Registrar’s Office to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an “F” for the course.

**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/dsso](http://www.utep.edu/dsso)  E-mail: dss@utep.edu  Phone: (915) 747-5148

**Accommodations Policy**

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

**General Guidelines for Online Courses**

**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 make your participation and engagement in the learning process more valuable.

- Ask questions: Professionals ask each other questions before going to their boss (your instructor). If you don’t know the answer you are probably not alone, but it is possible that someone in the course does. 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: “Weasley, Patriot Act Summary”).
- Reach out to others: Offer a fact, article, link or other item that can help others.
• Be appropriate: The online classroom is not the place for insulting or insensitive comments, attacks, or venting. Such language is also unprofessional. 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, and everyone else’s, learning.

• 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.

• In addition, please see the UTEP Netiquette Guide for Online Courses.

Working in Groups is challenging but rewarding when done well. Here are some tips:

• Communicate early and often with your group through a means the group agrees to.
• Learn and respect the strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes of your groupmates.
• Honor all deadlines.
• Pull your weight – do your assignments as well as you are able.
• Reach out to your group when you need help, and be willing to help others who need it.
• Be honest. Trust is perhaps the most important requirement in any group.
• Seek out your instructor’s help as facilitator or coach if the group cannot handle an issue on its own. This will not count against you but will save you a lot of heartburn and improve your results.

Extra Credit Opportunity

There will be an official evaluation near the completion of the course through UTEP. Your feedback is greatly appreciated, and I always take it into consideration to incorporate changes into the course. With that said, if I get a 70% evaluation response rate, I will give EXTRA CREDIT!
# Course Schedule, Due Dates, and Assignments

All assignments are due at 11:59 PM MT. You may want to print this and keep it handy, and/or add these dates to your personal calendars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>%Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BLUF Paragraph Format</td>
<td>Major, Chapters 1, 5</td>
<td>Student Introductions, Syllabus Quiz, BLUF Quiz, Rewrite a Paragraph in BLUF Format</td>
<td>2, 2, 5</td>
<td>21 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Audience and Topic</td>
<td>Major, Chapter 4 Reading to Write: An Introduction to IC Standards and Style MCIIS Style Guide (reference)</td>
<td>Quiz, Rewrite a Paragraph in the BLUF Format</td>
<td>2, 8</td>
<td>28 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity</td>
<td>Major, Chapter 4 Ross-Larson, Part I S&amp;W, Chapters I, II, IV</td>
<td>Quiz, Exercise, Write a Paragraph in the BLUF Format</td>
<td>2, 10, 10</td>
<td>4 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Conclusion Centric Report Format</td>
<td>How to Write an Executive Summary Major, Chapter 6</td>
<td>Quiz, 3 writing exercises</td>
<td>2, 9 each = 27</td>
<td>11 February</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>