RWS 5315 Professional Writing and Rhetoric

I. Course and Instructor Information:

Instructor: Dr. Teresa Quezada

Office Hours: By appointment – as an online class, we can usually resolve issues via email or phone.

E-mail: tquezada2@utep.edu
Please use my UTEP email to contact me – I can respond to your emails much faster this way.

Section (s): RWS 5315 – Professional Writing and Rhetoric
CRN 25724

II. Course Description:

The primary goal of RWS 5315 is to develop students' effective communication in professional, contexts. This effective communication is based on an awareness of and appreciation for discourse communities as well as knowledge specific to subject matter, genre, rhetorical strategy, and writing process.

The class presents an approach to communication that helps students determine the most effective strategies, arrangements, and media to use in different situations within the workplace. You will produce a variety of documents and presentations while gaining more confidence and fluency in visual, oral, and written communication.

As an online, graduate course, you will be expected to review the assigned work for the week, post discussions, peer reviews or other assignments when due and understand the concepts in the readings, videos and other supplementary resources posted on BlackBoard, UTEP's Learning Management System (LMS). The self-directed pace and learning is a common expectation of many jobs today. Thus, the online aspect of the course is designed to help students communicate in an online environment and asynchronously. While the course is asynchronous, please recognize that the material is arranged and due on a weekly basis and you must submit assignments by the due dates.

BlackBoard will provide students with permanent access to the syllabus, course calendar, supplemental reading materials, and discussion groups. Please note that assignments are visible only through the due date. It is vital that students check and participate in the online environment consistently as it is an integral part of the course. Assignments will be presented, prepared and evaluated entirely on-line.

III. Learning Outcomes:

In this course you will

- Analyze workplace rhetorical situations, including audience, purpose, and context and understand how these interrelate with the writing task:
- Learn conventions of workplace composing using various media;
- Use generally accepted conventions of correctness and design in the production of composing assignments;
- Conduct research in workplace context that will inform your writing;
- Work collaboratively in teams to produce written documents and multi-media presentations;
- Consider the ethical dimension of composing and working within organizations; and
- Recognize and respect various cultural attitudes toward and conventions for workplace communication.
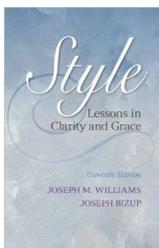
IV. Required Texts and Materials:
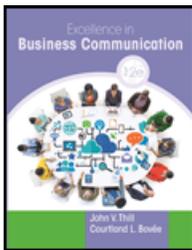
Thill, J.V. and C.L. Bovée (2015). *Excellence in Business Communication.* 12th edition. Pearson.
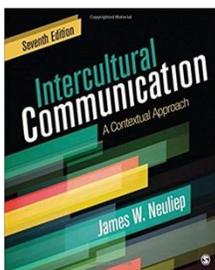
Neuliep, J.W. (2018). *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach.* 7th edition. Sage.

Williams, J.M. and J. Bizup (2014). *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace.* 12th edition. Pearson.

Please make sure you obtain the required editions. Previous and, in some cases, international editions are available, but these have different content and page numbers so they will not correlate to the assigned readings and tasks.

Internet access and access to BlackBoard.

Electronic storage capacity for all your documents. This can be a flashdrive, dropbox or other cloud storage, One Drive (storage provided by UTEP), whatever you prefer, but make sure you keep copies of all your **submitted** assignments until final course grades are **posted**.

V. Course Assignments (this syllabus provides an overview of major assignments, minor assignments will be available through BlackBoard)

Participation in Class: Participation online is mandatory. The activities included in this category ensure that students learn the material, are capable of analyzing it and applying it to their own writing and that of their peers. This score will include exercises, discussion postings, peer reviews, and other work the instructor assigns. These points will be determined and distributed by the instructor. Participation or minor assignments cannot be made up. **250 points.**

Professional Writing in my Profession/Discipline: descriptive message formatted as memo and addressed to course instructor. **50 points.**

Routine or Positive Message: Message that includes a neutral tone and is intended to convey information or present a perspective. **75 points.**

Sensitive or Negative Message: Message that communicates sensitive or bad news. **100 points.**

Instruction Memorandum: The memorandum will explore the cultural business communication practices of a country **outside North America** and will be directed toward colleagues. **125 points.**

Persuasive Messages: You will write two messages regarding a management situation to your supervisor and to an employee you supervise, in each case attempting to achieve specific actions. **125 points.**

Policy and Procedures Manual Section – Group Project: You will collaborate with your colleagues to draft a section of your employer's policy and procedures manual. **100 points**.

Proposal/Report with Recommendation – Group Project: The proposal/report will include a cover letter, executive summary, analysis of a workplace situation requiring a solution, proposed solution with implementation timeline and costs, and reference pages. You will complete this project as a member of a team. You will also develop a draft presentation based on the contents of the proposal/report. **175 points.**

Grade Distribution (Students can earn a total of 1000 points for the course):

> **1000-900 = A**
> **899-800 = B**
> **799 -700 = C**
> **699- 600 = D**
> **599 and below = F**

VI: Course/Instructor Policies:

Contacting your Instructor: The easiest way to contact me is through my UTEP email: tquezada2@utep.edu. I will generally respond to e-mails within 24 hours, Monday through Friday – note that this is a generally accepted business practice.

Your e-mails are also considered workplace writing so they should be formatted accordingly and composed with the rhetorical situation in mind.

Projects Format: Assignments must be word-processed using Microsoft Word and saved as a ".doc" file or ".docx" file. Use 12 pt. font, one-inch margins, and spacing appropriate to the genre you are composing. Use a font style that is easily readable like Times New Roman, Arial, or Georgia. The required draft presentation must a Powerpoint presentation so that I may see your script in the notes section of the presentation.

Students should name each submitted assignment with their last name, first name and an abbreviation of the assignment. For example, if I were submitting my persuasive messages assignment, I would name my file:

> Quezada_Teresa_PersuasiveMssg.docx

Note that the application will add the appropriate extension (".doc" or ".docx").

I will not accept files without this naming convention and students may receive a zero for that assignment if it is not submitted correctly or to the correct assignment space in BlackBoard.

Discussion Board Posts may be composed in Word so you may use the editing tools available in Word and then pasted onto the Discussion post or Assignment dialog box. However, avoid attaching documents or other files to the discussion board; utilize the dialog box provided for submissions.

Minor assignments can similarly be composed on Word and then copied onto the assignment **dialog box** – not the comments section – of the assignment link.

Rough Drafts: Part of the participation grade will include the submission of rough drafts. To get the most useful feedback, rough drafts should be underline completed projects. They must also be submitted before or on the due date.

You will be assigned a peer reviewing group. Students who fail to submit drafts for peer review at the designated times will be barred from participating in group assignments and must complete those assignments individually. These students will automatically receive a zero on the group contract assignment (a 50-point participation assignment).

Bottom line: submit drafts for peer review and peer review your colleague's work; do so on time.

Rough Draft Feedback: On the rough drafts, students will receive marginal comments as well as comments at the end of the project. The purpose of this feedback is:

1. To make sure the assignment meets the requirements and is on the right track; and consequently,
2. To comment on the "big issues." Students will receive comments based on the most important elements of the assignment. Addressing these concerns should help students write a more effective project. The comments will NOT focus on grammar and such—so it is a good idea to get additional help from the Writing Center for this. We will work on general grammar and usage items in class to address some issues, but remember this is not a grammar or editing course. Your textbook and handbook are also valuable resources – use them to their fullest.

You will receive feedback from two primary sources in class: your colleagues and your instructor. Your feedback to your colleagues will help in two ways: you will provide a new perspective to your colleagues' writing, and your own writing will be informed by both the strengths and weaknesses you identify in the writing you review. That will make you aware of your own composing process and strengthen your own review/revision process.

Participation/Attendance: Attendance is determined by class participation online. Students must be prepared, participate in online discussions, and become familiar with the material in each of the modules consistently to understand and incorporate the rhetorical strategies and

processes used to complete the projects.   Class participation assignments cannot be made up.

University Writing Center: UTEP's University Writing Center (UWC) offers free writing tutoring assistance for all UTEP students. The tutors are undergraduate and graduate students, as well as writing instructors, who can help with all parts of a writing assignment, including prewriting, organizing, revising, and editing. On-line consultations are available; here is the link for the UWC: http://uwc.utep.edu.

Technology: If home access is not possible, and you reside in the El Paso area, arrangements can be made to use a computer regularly on campus to complete the work. Student computer labs such as ATLAS **(http://atlas.utep.edu)** are often available until midnight, but schedules do vary. All work is submitted online, and not having access to a computer will not be an excuse for incomplete or late assignments.

Technology problems are also not an excuse for work that is late or missing. Expect that at some time, the network will be down, computers will go on the fritz, or some other small catastrophe will occur. Work to have a Plan B as much as possible – having your work saved separately from your primary device is usually a key to plan B.

You will need the following software on your computers to efficiently work in this course. In some cases your computer may already have some of these programs installed.

- ➢ Adobe Acrobat Reader. You can get the program by going to http://www.adobe.com/ and then clicking on the icon on the center of the screen which says 'Get Adobe Reader'? Follow instructions to install the reader.
- ➢ Adobe Flash Player. You can get the player by going to http://www.adobe.com/ and then clicking on 'Get Adobe Flash Player?' Follow instructions to install the player.
- ➢ Apple QuickTime Player. You can get this player by going to http://www.apple.com/ . Once there, click on the 'Downloads'? tab on the top of the page and then click on QuickTime 'Download'? and follow instructions.
- ➢ Microsoft Office. I recommend buying this if you do not have any word processing software or presentation software. As students, you can generally buy this entire package for about $25, far less than the store price of approximately $400. Contact the help desk at 915.747.HELP (4357) or at helpdesk.utep.edu to coordinate the software purchase and installation. With your authorization, the Help Desk can remotely access your devices to trouble shoot and/or install software.

Time Zone: All due dates/times are Mountain Standard (MST); El Paso County is the only county in Texas to fall within this time zone.

Online "Netiquette": As an online course, most, if not all, student-to-student, student-to-instructor, and instructor-to-student interactions will be online and many will be public to the

entire class, so respectful, effective online communication is essential to foster a productive online community. Keep these guidelines in mind as you respond to posting prompts, peer reviews, and other online communication:

- Always consider your audience. Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading the postings.
- Be respectful and courteous to classmates and instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated. I will intervene in discussions that I determine are disrespectful or discourteous. Continued violation may result in low grades and/or referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for appropriate disciplinary action.
- Do not use inappropriate language, all capital letters, or language short cuts. Online entries and e-mails should be written in Standard English with edited spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Remember that all communication within the class context, to your fellow students and to your instructor should be considered writing in a professional context.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a f2f situation.
- Be sure to read everyone's responses before posting. Avoid repetition of what someone else has already said. Add something new to the discussion!
- Do not copy another classmates' response on a discussion board.
- No credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.
- Be sure to post in a timely fashion to receive credit for attendance and for the discussion. **Late postings will not receive credit.** Pay close attention to the posted deadlines.
- The class management system, BlackBoard, is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).

Drop Policy: I do not automatically drop students even after they have missed major assignments. You must initiate the drop yourself, so be mindful of University policy regarding dropping classes and drop dates. A 7-week course is particularly rigorous, and the deadlines arrive faster than anticipated; situations arise that may make course completion difficult. If this is the case, make sure you contact me as soon as you become aware of the challenge.

Late Work: Given the nature of a 7-week course, and since this course is a graduate level course towards a graduate certificate, late work **will not** be accepted. If you experience difficulties in completing major assignments, contact me as soon as possible to discuss options.

Academic Dishonesty: Academic Dishonesty is **NEVER** tolerated by UTEP.   All cases are reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Sanctions may include expulsion. All work submitted must be original; students may not submit graded work from another course.

Forms of academic dishonesty include: *Collusion*—lending work to another person to submit as his or her own; *Fabrication*—deliberately creating false information on a works cited page, and *Plagiarism*—the presentation of another person's work as your own, whether meaning to or not (i.e. copying parts of or whole papers off the Internet). See OSCCR site at http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity/ for additional information.

Copyright and Fair Use: The University requires all members of its community to follow copyright and fair use requirements. Students are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend students nor assume any responsibility for student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject students to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies.

Group Assignments: Group assignments can sometimes create tricky situations. Some students don't always "pull their weight" and this upsets group members that are doing their work, and contributing and collaborating professionally with their group. Despite this drawback, group assignments are valuable because they help students work together for a common goal. Group work is a professional life reality; learning how to work in a group and in a virtual environment will be central to projects in this class.

While you will be assigned to a peer review team, you will choose your own team to complete the major group assignments. Especially in an online course, be mindful that many students opt for this type of course because they may be taking the course from remote (or even international) sites or have other responsibilities that require a flexible course schedule. Choose group members carefully to ensure you have the greatest opportunity for collaboration and success.

Documentation Styles: APA style will be accepted.

Realize that the most important words in a paper are yours as the student, researcher and writer, not those of the supportive research. You should strive always to draw inferences from research material and weave into projects your reaction and evaluation of source material.

One of the worst things students can submit to peer groups or instructors is a "patchwork"—that is, a project that simply links a series of quotations or paraphrased sentences that is followed by citation or footnote numbers.

ADA: The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities.   If you suspect that you have a disability and need an accommodation, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at (915) 747-5148 or cass@utep.edu. The CASS is located in Room 106, Union East Bldg. Students are responsible for presenting the instructor any CASS accommodation letters and instructions.

Nature and Time Spent on Course: This course intends to help students develop a wide variety of strategies for communicating professionally in high stakes situations. Success in this course requires dedication and focus.

The course focuses on theoretical concepts that influence how you will draft the final text that you must produce. While grammar and mechanics, that is writing fluency, are always important and part of the assignment evaluations, minimal course time will be dedicated to grammar and mechanics per se. The required textbooks provide additional resources and exercises that you may review and complete if you believe you need additional practice. I may also post additional resources on BlackBoard for students to consult.

Be sure to allocate sufficient time for the class projects and work. As a 7-week course, each week in class is comparable to approximately 2 weeks in a traditional 16-week course. Thus, you must be prepared to dedicate almost double the time to this course as you would to one scheduled for 16-week completion. The general rule for traditional classes is that students spend two to three hours working outside of class for each class credit. Because this is a graduate, 3-hour class, you may spend up to 18 hours researching and writing each week. Since the course is on-line, you can further expect another 6 hours per week accessing the supplemental materials available on BlackBoard – the same amount of time you would expect if attending class in a traditional face-to-face (F2F) course.

Many studies indicate that successful online learners budget time in manageable chunks on a regular basis for online courses. The course deadlines are designed to help you do this. You will note that, for the most part, minor assignments are due on Wednesdays and Fridays by 11 PM. Most major assignments are due on Sunday nights by 11 PM.

By necessity, you will be managing several concepts and assignments at once. You will be finalizing an assignment and posting, researching, drafting and reviewing an assignment as new material is introduced. Make sure that you are aware of the assignments that are coming up so you can begin researching and drafting with plenty of time.

Comments from your instructor: Regardless of your profession, communicating effectively and professionally is valued by a myriad of employers. My goal is to help you succeed and learn the strategies to help you communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and with a variety of audiences. It is extremely important that you communicate with me immediately if you are not receiving feedback either from me or your colleagues on drafts and assignments. We can usually resolve issues if we address them timely.

VII. Course Calendar is a separate document also available through BlackBoard that lists required readings and assignment due dates. It is subject to change. Changes will be announced via BlackBoard.