



PROFESSIONAL WRITING

ENG 231-01

T-TH 12:30-1:45, RB 291

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Rory Lee

EMAIL: rlee2@bsu.edu

OFFICE: RB 2108

OFFICE HOURS: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

As a student, you write. A lot. And that's not taking into consideration all of the personal writing you do outside of class, a majority of which is composed through the use of digital technologies generally and social media specifically. However, much of the writing you're required to do and do voluntary doesn't always resemble the writing you'll be asked to produce in the workplace and in other professional contexts. As such, this course focuses on, and works to help you navigate effectively, professional rhetorical situations.

In exploring professional writing, you'll learn what it means to write for and with others as well as how to design and create content for complex environments. In particular, you'll analyze as well as write in select print and digital genres that help constitute the professional sphere. Such genres include, but are not limited to, *emails, proposals, reports, formal presentations, résumés, infographics, viral marketing campaigns, and digital professional portfolios*. In examining and working within these genres, you'll pay particular attention to the way they serve specific purposes, address and fulfill audience expectations, communicate information both alphabetically and visually, and function as social responses to rhetorical situations common to workplace environments.

To begin the course, you'll focus on the rhetorical tradition and, in doing so, work to understand better how professional writing is rhetoric(al). In addition, you'll familiarize yourself with and ultimately employ various rhetorical concepts—such as *the rhetorical situation, exigence, audience, genre, the appeals, delivery, and style*—in an effort to become a better reader and writer of professional texts. One way in which you'll apply these rhetorical concepts is by creating **a formal presentation** for your peers wherein you'll (1) document and share the rhetorical

practices common to a specific profession or (2) investigate the ways that different subjectivities (e.g., race, gender, class, sexual orientation) enhance and/or constrain one's ability to participate in professional rhetorical practices.

Throughout most of the course, you'll also be working on two long-term projects, one *collaborative* and the other *individual*. In groups of four-to-five, you'll create, promote, and sustain **a viral marketing campaign**, and at the end of the semester, you'll leave with **a digital professional portfolio** that you can continue to modify and use to market yourself professionally.

COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES:

Upon successfully completing this course, you'll be able to:

- apprehend that rhetoric and writing are about solving problems, and that failure is paramount to learning and growing;
- explain what professional writing is, produce rhetorically effective professional texts for various audiences, and articulate how professional writing is rhetorical;
- identify, analyze, and feel comfortable working within the genres and media that construct professional rhetorical situations;
- understand better and use strategically various rhetorical concepts;
- recognize the ways technologies, both old and new, inform what, why, where, how, and to whom we compose;
- comprehend what makes texts spreadable, and know how to increase the circulation and rhetorical velocity of your and others' texts;
- classify successful and unsuccessful viral marketing campaigns, and participate successfully in one;
- design a digital professional portfolio that you can leverage in marketing yourself professionally;
- grapple with the implications of using social media in the professional sphere;
- think critically about the intersections of rhetoric, technology, the professions, and culture;
- work collaboratively with others; and
- play.



COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

In order to succeed in this course, you must:

- participate consistently in class and online,
 - read regularly and on time (readings are located in the “Course Library” page on Blackboard),
 - work collaboratively with classmates,
 - complete all major projects and turn them in as they are due,
 - use responsibly your access to technologies, and
 - show respect to both the teacher and your peers.
-

GRADING:

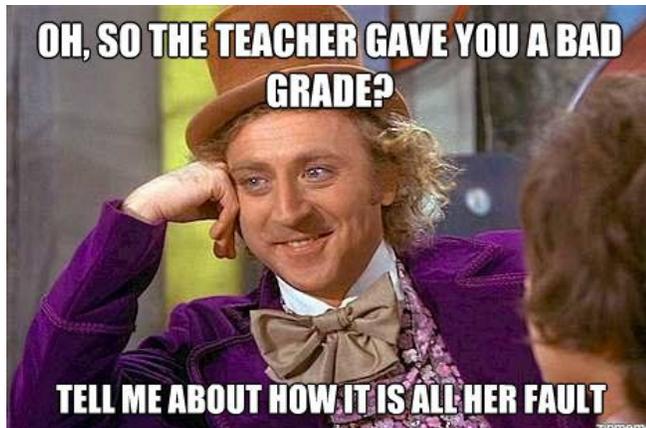
- Project 1: Writing or Subjectivity in the Professions 20% (200 points)
- Project 2: Viral Marketing Campaign 30% (300 points)
- Project 3: Digital Professional Portfolio 25% (250 points)
- Journals (10 total at 15 points per) 15% (150 points)
- QQC (10 total at 10 points per) 10% (100 points)

Total: 1000 points

All projects must be completed to earn a passing grade in this course.

EVALUATION:

- **PROJECTS:** For each project, you’ll be assessed on your ability to adapt to the rhetorical situation you construct and operate within. In general, that means you’ll be assessed on your audience-awareness, genre-awareness, arrangement, style, delivery, rhetorical strategies, and ability to defend your rhetorical decisions. Assessment might also include specific composing areas that will be emphasized during class activities and discussions geared toward said project.



- In addition, you’ll complete a **RHETORICAL RATIONALE** upon finishing each project. These rationales, which I rely on to assess your work, provide you the opportunity to articulate parts of your composing process and to clarify and elaborate on specific portions of your text. More importantly, however, these rationales are a space for

you to defend and justify your rhetorical strategies and approach, to explain why you created the text you did and how it's rhetorically appropriate considering your rhetorical situation.

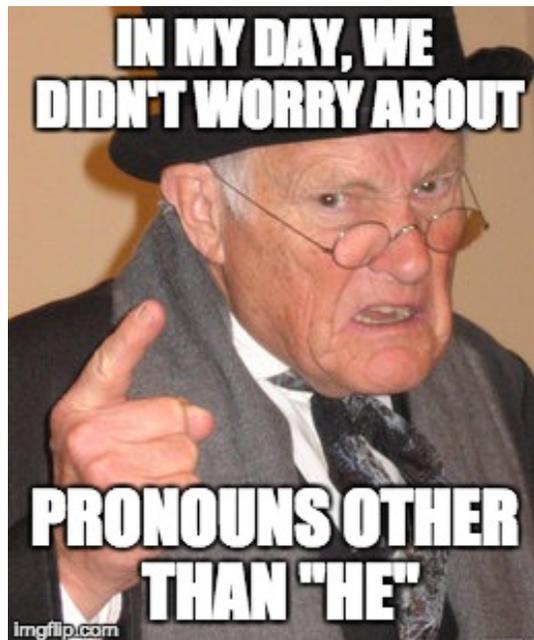
- **JOURNALS:** You'll have 10 assigned journals worth 15 points each (150 points total). You'll also have the opportunity to complete two bonus journals at the end of the semester, each of which is worth 15 points. Journals should be posted *as a comment to my journal prompt* on Blackboard within the "Journals" page. Journals are graded on content, effort, and thoughtfulness.
- **QQCS (AND PARTICIPATION):** You'll have 10 assigned QQCs worth 10 points each (100 points total). "QCC" stands for "question, question, comment," and you'll post two questions and one comment for the assigned readings that include "and do QCC" in the homework section (**HW:**) within the "Course Calendar" page on Blackboard. You'll post your QCC within the "QQCs" page on Blackboard.

All other composed and oral work will be graded on meaning or content and on appropriateness to the assignment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECTS:

- **PROJECT 1 – WRITING OR SUBJECTIVITY IN THE PROFESSIONS PRESENTATION**

(20%): After familiarizing yourself with various rhetorical concepts, you'll create a formal presentation for your peers with one of two potential foci. You can (1) articulate the rhetorical practices (e.g., exigences, audiences, genres, technologies) common to a particular profession. Or, in operating from the mindset that our language constructs our identities (plural) and that professions (wittingly or not) privilege and disadvantage certain identities, you can (2) explore the way a given subjectivity or set of subjectivities (e.g., race, gender, class, sexual orientation) improves and/or hinders one's ability to participate in practices common to a given profession or the professions as a whole. Your presentation must be *7-10 minutes* (no shorter, no longer) and must include some sort of *visual component* (e.g., handout, PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, etc.). **DUE: Tuesday, March**



15th; Thursday, March 17th; or Tuesday, March 22nd (presentations are scheduled for those three days).

- **PROJECT 2 – VIRAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN (30%):** Upon not only learning about viral marketing campaigns (both good and bad) but also examining a select few, you'll work within a group of four-to-five to create your own viral marketing campaign for a (local) cause of your choosing. Each member of your group will be responsible for creating a different text or set of texts, some of which will most likely be collaboratively created, and as a set, these texts should connect to one another with the purpose of raising awareness and fostering desired participation and action from your target audience. In other words, you'll have to consider critically and determine the ultimate goal of the campaign; that is, what do you want your campaign to accomplish and what do you want your audience to do? Included in this campaign is a (1) campaign proposal, (2) two campaign updates, and (3) a final 10 minute report that you'll deliver the last Monday of class (5/2). **DUE: Monday, May 2nd.**
- **PROJECT 3 – DIGITAL PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO (25%):** After thinking about the job market and your future within it, you'll design a digital professional portfolio that you can use and continue to modify as you work toward graduation from Ball State. These portfolios should include materials that would appeal to future employers (e.g., résumé/CV, mission statement, future goals, biography) as well as materials and texts that reflect the rhetorical capacities you've developed as a (professional) writer and composer at Ball State. **DUE: Friday, May 6th.**



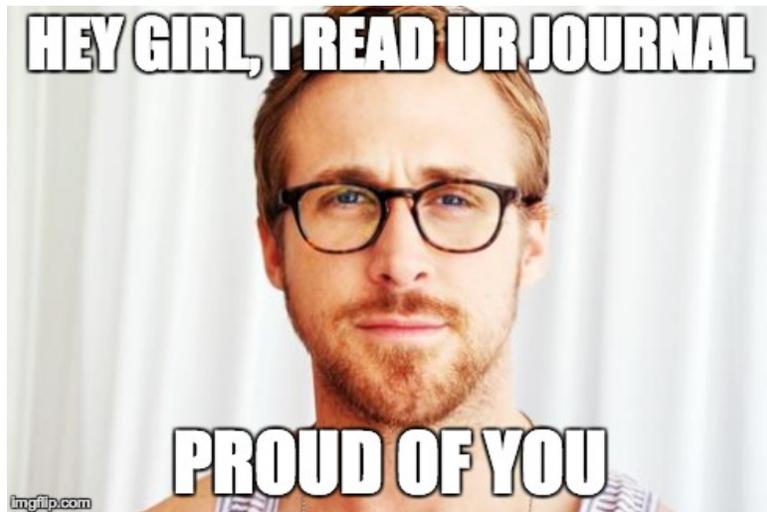
All projects must be grounded within a specific rhetorical situation, one you ultimately construct for yourself, and delivered to your target audience(s).

JOURNALS:

I'll post a prompt for each journal on Blackboard in the "Journals" page. You'll post your response as a "comment" before the class for which it's due. Your journal should be thoughtful and show the depth of your thinking process. Moreover, journal topics sometimes take on a more personal nature and require that you position yourself into the discussion at hand. In other words, these topics will be applicable to you; they're a means for you to make sense of the class, its

projects, and its concepts and keywords. As such, journals are not merely busy work; rather, they're integral to your understanding of class material and furthering your ability to make meaning. Furthermore, since you'll be posting your journal responses in a space where everyone in class has access to them, there is an inherent dialogical aspect. I urge you not to ignore this; that is, read what your peers have written and play off their work if the situation calls for it. Even if you don't incorporate what your classmates say into your journal, you'll want to read what they say regardless so you can learn from one another. It's always valuable to see how your peers are grappling with and making sense of the same prompt.

In addition, we'll frequently share journals in class, so make sure you create content that you're confident talking about and sharing with others. Your journals will be graded on content, and your effort will be seriously taken into account. Unlike free writes completed in class, journals should show more range and depth; there should be a greater sense of coherency. *Simply writing a couple of sentences will not suffice.*



QQCS AND CLASS DISCUSSION:

This course and its content are intended to help you both **know** and **do**: in other words, know about professional writing as well as do professional writing in well-informed, thoughtful ways. Toward that end, we'll work respectfully and collaboratively to see value in different perspectives with the goal of fostering **critical thinking**, which is to say: it's one thing to understand the course material and the ideas expressed therein; it's another to engage with them, discuss them, apply them, critique them, question them, and respond to them. We want to do all of that, not just the understanding. As such: you'll need to come to class ready to think and participate.

As a whole, then, your participation in class is imperative. And if we all participate, you'll want to come to class. Although I'm capable of it, I don't intend to act as a lecturer. In other words, you'll very much dictate where our conversations go. I'll assist us along the way, of course, but in doing so, I'll often look for your input. We truly are, as the metaphor goes, a team. For some of you, this may feel antithetical to your previous classroom experiences; however, over time, I hope you find this model both productive and edifying.

To help you both understand better the readings and prepare for class discussion, you'll provide "two Questions and one Comment" (QQC) for most assigned readings. You'll post your questions and comment (together) to the "QQCs" page on Blackboard. These questions and comments are valuable for three reasons:

1. they let me know whether you're keeping up with the assigned readings,
2. they push you to read texts through a critical lens, and
3. they provide questions, areas, and avenues for us to explore during class discussion.

With the latter, this is your opportunity to ask questions and dictate our discussion of the assigned readings. Put another way, you should be asking questions that are pressing to you (i.e., don't post hypothetical questions, questions for which you already have an answer, or questions that could be answered easily through a quick Google or Wikipedia search). QQC is for your benefit: it is designed so you're able to voice burning questions, so you're able to gain what you desire from the assigned readings. Take full advantage of this opportunity.

In short, while you're in class, please do what you can to make our discussions accessible, productive, and useful to everyone. This takes a great deal of energy; I realize that. Some of the texts we read may seem impenetrable at first because the authors are dense writers, their primary audience isn't undergraduate students, their ideas may challenge your worldview, and/or you're unfamiliar with their historical context. I'll do my absolute best to ensure that our class time is spent meaningfully, but I nonetheless expect you to spend time with the material and work through it in order to help you situate yourself and the reading(s).

ME



WHEN NO ONE PARTICIPATES
imgflip.com

ATTENDANCE AND TARDIES:

Coming to class is (duh!) important. Our time spent as a class sharing ideas, engaging in dialogue, and grappling with larger theories and concepts will prove most beneficial to your development as a student and professional writer. My rules concerning attendance are thus:

- You are allotted 3 "unexcused" absences; consider these 3 "freebies."
- After 3 unexcused absences, your grade will be adversely affected per additional unexcused absence.
- If you accrue 6 or more unexcused absences, *you cannot pass the course.*

There are "excused" absences. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have

a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

Please note that punctuality is important. The class and I start on time; you should be there. **Three tardies will result in an absence.** *It is better to be five minutes early than late.*

Lastly, if possible, please do let me know if you're going to be absent and why. Attendance is mandatory, yes, but I'm also fully aware that life is messy and complicated and that shit happens. Please do keep me in the loop and updated if extenuating circumstances arise.



LATE WORK:

Late work will not be tolerated. Journals and QOCs that are late will receive less credit, and if they are late by more than two class periods, they will receive zero credit. A project will also be marked down a letter grade (e.g., A to A-) for each class period that it is late. In other words, be responsible and punctual in completing your work. That said, extensions are available for those with extenuating circumstances (e.g., ADA, health-related issues, emergencies, severe computer and technical problems, etc.). As such, please do let me know if there's a reason you don't think you'll be able to complete your work on time, so we can negotiate a plan going forward.

PLAGIARISM:

Since we're all here to learn, I assume you won't cheat or plagiarize. Although the concept of originality is fraught and frequently misunderstood and oversimplified, blatant plagiarism is still incredibly tacky. Plain and simple: *it will not be tolerated.*

If you have any questions concerning plagiarism and/or citation, please contact me. As a class, we'll discuss issues of copyright and fair use. For more information regarding Ball State's policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, you can view the Handbook of Students' Rights and Responsibilities:

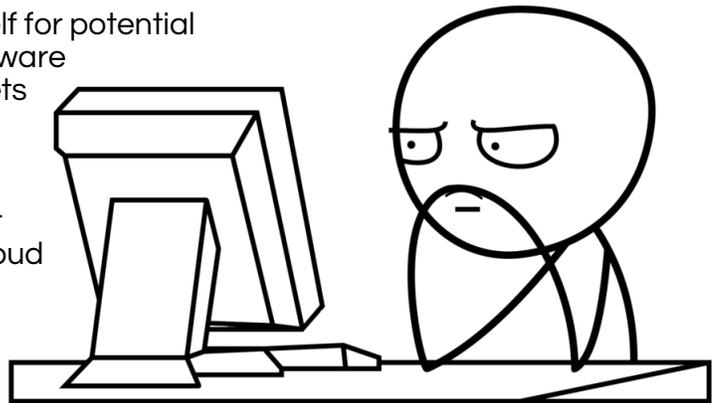
<http://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/studentrights/policiesandprocedures/studentcode/viethicspolicy>

COMPUTER ACCESS AND PRIVILEGES:

Computers (and technology) will be an integral part of the course, and in many ways, the title of the course should be *Digital Professional Writing*. Consequently, you need to have access to computers outside of class, and in particular, you'll need to have Adobe Reader (which is free) to view and read the assigned readings. In addition, you need to bring your laptop/tablet to class every day unless informed otherwise, as we'll engage in many exercises that will require you to write and/or work in digital environments.

That said, don't abuse your computer privileges; that is, don't become physically absent by immersing yourself in your laptop/tablet in ways that aren't pertinent to the class and its materials—*and if I see you doing this, I'll give you a warning; the next time, I'll simply ask you to leave class, and you'll be marked absent for the day.*

Lastly, you need to prepare yourself for potential technological problems. Yes, I'm aware that computers crash and work gets misplaced/erased; thus, you need to take precautions and be prepared for that possibility. Save your work frequently. Back up your work. Buy a flashdrive. Create a cloud account. I urge you, however, to explain your situation to me if one arises, as we all experience difficulties with computers and other technology.



DISABILITY SERVICES:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at [765-285-5293](tel:765-285-5293) or dsd@bsu.edu.

WRITING CENTER:

One key to improving your writing is getting feedback and revision suggestions on your text during the writing process. The Writing Center at Ball State offers free writing feedback sessions (online or face-to-face) to all students. They work with students on essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts. Students can make an appointment by going to

www.bsu.edu/writingcenter, stopping by Robert Bell 295, or by calling 765-285-8370.

CAREER CENTER:

Ball State's Career Center is eager to help you think about your future—whether you're an undergraduate or graduate student, whether you know where you're headed or have no an idea how to start. Their services include individual Career Coaching, drop-in résumé reviews, assistance researching potential careers and internships, and referrals to campus and off-campus jobs. They can tell you more about grad school, job fairs, on-campus interviews, and lots more. The English department's designated Career Coach is Eilis Wasserman, ewasserman@bsu.edu, Lucina Hall 219. You can set up an appointment with her through [Cardinal Career Link](#).

CIVILITY SHEET:

I will tolerate neither disruptive language nor disruptive behavior.

Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to, violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic, or anti-ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category). While I do not disagree that each of you have a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.

Disruptive behavior includes the inappropriate use of cell phones or other technology during class (e.g., checking email, web-browsing, chatting on Facebook, etc.). Disruptive behavior also includes whispering or talking when another member of the class is speaking or engaged in relevant conversation (remember that I am a member of this class as well).

This classroom functions on the premise of respect, and I have no qualms about asking you to leave the classroom if you violate any part of this statement on civility.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY:

This syllabus is subject to reasonable modification given the needs of the class. If that happens, I'll keep you posted.