

English 310-01 – Communication 350-01

# Writing in the Professions

Capital University – Spring 2007

SS 14/15 – TTh 9:30-10:45

## Policy Statement Schedule of Readings

Dr. Michael C. Kapper  
Assistant Professor of English

Renner Hall 238

Hours: MF 10:00-10:50

TTh 11:00-12:00

[mkapper@capital.edu](mailto:mkapper@capital.edu)

614.236.6555 (office) – 614.837.8010 (home)

## Policy Statement and Reading Schedule: “Writing in the Professions,” Spring 2007

### Policy Statement

#### Course Description

According to the Capital University *Undergraduate Bulletin* for 2006-2007, English 310, “Writing in the Professions” provides “General coverage of the writing activities and tasks commonly encountered in business and technical communication; focused attention will be given to business and technical report writing, proposal writing, and other writing tasks often completed in the corporate and non-profit sectors. (Same course offered as COMM 350.)” (125).

This *Bulletin* copy pretty much tells the story in terms of what we will do in this course. The approach will be a two-track approach: one track focusing on theory and the other on practice. The course for the theory track is charted—the readings and reference materials are selected, and we will begin that track right away. The practice track, however, is more open—while I have some ideas that will *quite likely* make their way into the final syllabus, I intend to involve you, the students, *directly* in the planning of the writing activities of this course (surprise!). That is where we will start the practice track: deciding what types of practice you expect to gain from this course, coordinating your experiences and expectations with my own.

So there will be reading (theory) and writing (practice). Beyond what’s laid out in the remainder of this document, you can expect that—in the near future—you will receive a map for the practice track of the course—a practice track that *you* have helped to design collaboratively.

#### Required Books, Materials, Connections, etc.

*Books.* There are two required textbooks for this course. One we will read cover-to-cover, if not exactly in order. The other is primarily for reference, but it is a good guide to general principles of document design, and I have it on good authority from a former student that it has come in quite useful in her “real-world” experience after taking this course. The required texts are:

- Harty, Kevin, J. *Strategies for Business and Technical Writing*. 5th ed. New York: Longman, 2005.
- Williams, Robin. *The Non-Designer’s Design Book*. 2nd ed. Berkeley, CA: Peachpit, 2004.

*Materials.* Without specific knowledge of what the projects are and of what strategies you will implement to complete those projects, it is hard to say what other materials you will need. My general recommendation is: first, be prepared to choose creative,

attractive, and appropriate materials, as needed, in completing your projects. Second, make sure you have (reliable access to) a printer and a supply of paper. Finally (and most strongly), make arrangements for backing up any data that you create in this course: Flash drives, blank cds, and other removable computer media are appropriate, in case you experience a computer meltdown mid-project in this course (stranger things have, unfortunately, happened).

*Connections.* Email is the most common way I will communicate with you, and the best way for you to communicate with me. I use my Capital email address, and I will use yours, too. Please be sure that you check this address often (at least daily is good). You will also need reliable Internet access because all course materials will be available on Capital's Blackboard Course Management System, and because we will use Blackboard's discussion board feature throughout the semester.

### **Policies Governing This Course**

*Attendance & Participation.* Attendance at and active participation in all class sessions are mandatory and expected. There is no specific grade value attached to attendance, but if you don't attend, you can't participate, and participation will figure strongly in your final grade: for each class session you will either participate actively, or not; if you do, you get credit; if you don't you don't. **Note:** If you are excused from attending class due to a university-sanctioned activity (athletic, musical, etc), you will receive the participation point for that day; beyond these events, however, I do not make any distinction between excused and unexcused absences, and I will require appropriate documentation for these university-sanctioned events.

*Completing Work.* In order to receive a passing grade in the course, all of the major projects (whatever we decide they are) must be completed. Regardless of the weight assigned to a project or project component in the final course grade, failure to complete any project component will result in a failing grade for the course. Under *only* the most extreme circumstances, the grade of I [incomplete] will be considered.

*Late Work.* Turning in work late will severely impact your final grade in the course. All work should be turned in on deadline. Grades on any work not completed and submitted on time will be lowered by *one full letter grade* (e.g., from *A* to *B* for each weekday—not *class session, day*—late (Saturday and Sunday don't count).

*Blackboard.* All course materials will be available through Capital's Blackboard Course Management System. You should know how to log in to Blackboard and gain proficiency in using it. Any course document you lose should be replaced through Blackboard. In addition, we will make extensive use of the discussion groups feature in Blackboard to collaborate outside of class; you will also become comfortable exchanging drafts of papers with your peers via the Blackboard system. Also, please note that while we will be using Blackboard *extensively*, I *will not* be using the grading system on Blackboard: when I've used it in the past, it's been more trouble than it's worth. You can, likely, keep track of your own grades. We will discuss Blackboard in depth early in the course.

*Spell-Check.* Remember, spell-check is *not* infallible. It doesn't know the difference between *there*, *their*, and *they're* or between *here* and *hear*; to be honest, it can't tell whether you mean *to get her* or *together*. Spell checkers are good: they'll tell you when you've put too many *cs* in "necessary" (which is incorrect). But don't just take their word for it—whatever "it" is. If you can't figure out what the correct spelling is, use a dictionary to verify your spell-check's suggestions: it may have several and only one is both correctly spelled *and* the word you want. Remember, too, that spell-checkers can only account for words that are misspelled: they can't help you with homophones (*their/there/they're*) or with words that are often confused, such as *imply* and *infer* or *compose* and *comprise*. So, *please*, use a dictionary in conjunction with your spell checker.

*People-Friendly Environment.* In this class, and when working on projects for this class(, and in life in general!), treat other people like you want to be treated. In practical terms, that means discuss things rationally, even when you disagree; it means that while some ideas are better than others (have more merit, are more practical, will produce a better product), and while some ideas will ultimately be rejected, there are no "stupid" or "lame" ideas. And there are no "stupid" people here, either—everyone here is in college, and that means *something*. Belittling people, their ideas, their identity, or their beliefs will not be tolerated in this class—*period*.

*Academic Integrity and Intellectual Property.* This is a course in writing, and it is a course in which you will be expected to integrate your ideas with those of others, to build on knowledge and information that others have previously put forth, and to generally use information and ideas not your own in your work. In order to do this, you must appropriately give credit for ideas where that credit is due. In short, you must respect the intellectual property of others and not claim their work as your own. Please take seriously the need for appropriate citation and documentation of source material; if you have questions about how to do these things, ask them. Remember that academic dishonesty, especially in the form of plagiarism, is taken seriously in the academy, and can have a range of consequences: failure of an assignment, failure of a course, academic probation, suspension from an institution, and dismissal from an institution. Please take your responsibility to the intellectual property of others and for your own academic integrity seriously.

*Grading.* The subject of grades is always a delicate one. Students want good grades, and—though it may not always seem so—instructors want to give good grades. Grades, after all, reflect the quality of student work, and they are also often taken to reflect the quality of instruction. Everyone would be happiest if every student could earn an A in every course.

You may have heard, too, that instructors and administrators are concerned with "grade inflation," a perennial worry in the university setting which can take two forms: either the grades awarded in the course are too high in relation to the quality of the work completed, or the course is so easy that every student can turn in a stellar

performance in the course. In either case, these high grades mean little—even less than a grade as a measure of performance should be taken to mean. But you may also have heard (or more likely *overheard*) instructors complaining about a sense of “entitlement” to high grades among students: some instructors feel that some students believe their tuition dollars entitle them to a “good grade”—and it’s not really hard to see why when many instructors have had at least one student say, to their faces, “I pay your salary”; after all, the retail adage tells us, “the customer is always right.”

For me, and for this class, however, the biggest issue with grades comes down to a fundamental misunderstanding of what grades are, how they function, and their purpose in the educational setting. Grades lower than *A* are not punishment. I do not believe that every student starts with an *A* in every course, or on every assignment, and goes down from there when s/he “does something wrong.” When I give an objective exam, for instance, I do not keep track of how many points to *deduct* from the total possible points ( $-8 = 92/100 = A-$ ); rather, I keep track of how many points the student has earned through correct answers ( $+92 = A-$ ). Grades in my courses are related to students’ *accomplishments*, not their failings. My grading strategies are meant to make grades into reinforcement, not punishment; I want to focus attention at all times on what students have done *right*, not on what they have “done wrong”; I want students to realize that an *A-* (or a *B+*, *B-*, or *C+*) is a grade they can be proud of.

Of course, with more subjective assignments (essays and the like), this can be trickier. It is tricky because subjective assignments come with a set of guidelines and a plethora of possible strategies for fulfilling the assignment. The question then becomes one of where those guidelines set the bar: do they establish the bare minimum for a passing grade? do they describe what an *A* paper will do? do they establish an “average” performance that will earn a student a *C*? When this is unclear, one of the commonest mistakes that students make is to assume that the guidelines are for an *A* paper: that meeting the guidelines will guarantee them an *A*, leading back to the question of “what did I do wrong?” when the instructor issues a *B+* or a *C* for a paper that meets all of the assignment guidelines.

When making these subjective assignments in this course, I promise that—at the very least—I will tell you where the bar is set. When you receive the guidelines, you will know what grade you will earn by meeting those guidelines. I will also make every effort to let you know how exceeding (or failing to meet) those guidelines will impact the grade you will earn on the project. While I will be more specific with each assignment, know that, in general, I apply the following understanding of letter grades:

- |           |                                                                         |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A         | Outstanding work; work of the highest quality receives this grade       |
| A-, B+    | Well above average work                                                 |
| B, B-, C+ | Above average work                                                      |
| C         | Average work; the assignment guidelines will generally set the bar here |
| C-, D+    | Work slightly below average; adequate but not up to expectations        |
| D, D-     | Below average work; only marginally adequate to the task                |

F Severely below average or incomplete work; inadequate to the task

Please do not expect that assignment guidelines will tell you what you must do to earn each grade (“if you want a B+, do this...”); instead, expect that they will tell you what the general expectations are, what grade you will earn by meeting those expectations, and the ways in which exceeding or not meeting those expectations may impact the grade you earn.

Finally, please note that I have been careful throughout to refer to “the grade you earn” rather than “the grade you get” or “the grade I give.” You will earn your grades in this course; it’s true that I will *assess* your work and *assign* those grades, but my primary goal in this course is to help you *earn* a grade that you and I can both be proud of.

*Reading Responses.* For each reading assigned in the course, you will complete a reading response. Responses will be more than summary; you should think about the points being made in the reading, and consider what you think in response to those points. Your *Reading Response* should then articulate your thoughts. You will post your response to the appropriate discussion board thread in Blackboard, before class on the day for which the reading was assigned, and—to aid discussion—you should bring a printed copy of your response to class.

### Other Important Information on Policies

In addition to these explicitly stated policies, this course will be governed by the policies laid out in the Capital University publication *What Every Student Should Know* (<http://oldsite.capital.edu/cc/stusvcs/2006-students-should-know.pdf>), and other university policies governing student conduct and the conduct of courses on Capital’s campus.

## Reading Schedule

*For each date listed below, please complete and respond to the listed reading **before** class on that day. All readings listed are from Strategies for Business and Technical Communication. Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings.*

- |           |                                                        |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.11.2007 | Introduction (pp. 1-4)<br>Michael E. Adelstein (15-20) |
| 1.16.2007 | John Keenan (pp. 5-14)                                 |
| 1.18.2007 | Peter Elbow (pp. 21-25)                                |
| 1.23.2007 | Linda Flower and John Ackerman (pp. 26-38)             |
| 1.25.2007 | John S. Harris (pp. 39-48)                             |
| 1.30.2007 | Sheryl Lindsell-Roberts (pp. 49-52)                    |
| 2.01.2007 | John L. Munschauer (pp. 263-293)                       |
| 2.06.2007 | Steven Graber (pp. 294-308)                            |

2.08.2007	Richard H. Beatty (pp. 309-325) Burton Jay Nadler (pp. 326-332)
2.13.2007	Stuart Chase (pp. 53-63)
2.15.2007	William Zinsser (pp. 64-71)
2.20.2007	William Lutz (pp. 72-85)
2.22.2007	Alan Siegel (pp. 86-96)
2.27.2007	<b>Mid-Semester Recess</b> (no class; no reading)
3.01.2007	<b>Mid-Semester Recess</b> (no class; no reading)
3.06.2007	University of Wisconsin (pp. 97-102)
3.08.2007	David V. Lewis (pp. 103-113) Royal Bank of Canada (pp. 114-121)
3.13.2007	Allan A. Glatthorn (pp. 122-126) Harold K. Mintz (pp. 127-130)
3.15.2007	John S. Fielden and Ronald E. Dulek (pp. 131-140) Heidi Schultz (pp. 141-166)
3.20.2007	<b>CCCC Convention – Dr. Kapper in NYC</b> (no class; no reading)
3.22.2007	<b>CCCC Convention – Dr. Kapper in NYC</b> (no class; no reading)
3.27.2007	J. C. Mathes and Dwight W. Stevenson (pp. 167-186)
3.29.2007	Richard W. Dodge (pp. 187-194) Christian K. Arnold (pp. 195-199)
4.03.2007	<b>PCA Convention – Dr. Kapper in Boston</b> (no class; no reading)
4.05.2007	<b>PCA Convention – Dr. Kapper in Boston</b> (no class; no reading)
4.10.2007	Vincent Vinci (pp. 200-206)
4.12.2007	Walter E. Oliu, Charles T. Brusaw, and Gerald J. Alred (pp. 207-232)
4.17.2007	David W. Ewing (pp. 233-244)
4.19.2007	Philip C. Kolin (pp. 245-262)
4.24.2007	Dorothy A. Winsor (pp. 333-346) Darrell Huff (pp. 347-354)
4.26.2007	Dan Jones (pp. 355-366) Carolyn D. Rude (pp. 367-378)

## Still To Come...

In the near future, within the first two weeks of class, we will work out what types of projects this course will entail. When that has been decided, you will receive information briefly describing those projects, specific instructions for the first of those projects, and detailed information on the grading breakdown of this course.