

# WRTG 276/INTR299/PSCI299: Communicating Your Professional Identity

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Fall 2023 | Wednesday | 325-440pm – LeChase 181 | Section 276-1

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**Office Hours:** Tues. 11am-12pm & 2-3pm – WSAP, Rush Rhees G-138S (near the Art/Music Library);  
Thurs. 6-7 pm Zoom - <https://rochester.zoom.us/my/kelliehernandez>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interactive course teaches “real life” communication skills and strategies that help students present their best professional selves and develop a fulfilling career. Students will explore and articulate their internship, career and graduate school goals for distinct audiences and purposes as they develop a professional communication portfolio of materials such as resumes, cover letters, statements of purpose, electronic communications, elevator pitches, project descriptions and abstracts, and online profiles (i.e., LinkedIn). Students will revise and refine their written and spoken work across the semester based on feedback from peers, instructors, and alumni. By the semester’s end, students will have gained extensive experience with the communication skills expected in today’s competitive environment.

Students will receive two credits for successful completion of this course. Audits are not permitted. Courses in the WRTG 27X series may not be taken more than once for credit.

## COURSE GOALS

Through this course, you will learn to:

1. Explore, construct, articulate, and communicate who you are or might be as a professional, with an emphasis on your own interests and values.
2. Identify, research, analyze, and construct your interpretations of professional audiences, with attention to different professional environments and values.
3. Drawing on awareness of language choices and their effects, create messages tailored to audience, purpose, and context through the process of drafting, gaining feedback, and revision.
4. Drawing on awareness of language choices and their effects, anticipate and avoid unintended messages.
5. Represent yourself authentically and with integrity in a variety of communication situations.
6. Within the course’s “workplace” community, interact in a manner that is guided by professional integrity.

## PREREQUISITES

Completion of the Primary Writing Requirement.

## READINGS

Assigned readings are available via Blackboard; some readings are also available via course reserves and as e-books through River Campus Libraries.

## REAL READER PROGRAM

In this class, you will interact with a “Real Reader”—a UR alumnus/alumna or professional out in the world of work who can tell you about their profession and act as a relevant audience for your work. We will discuss how to work with your Real Reader in a professionally appropriate way as part of the course. Please note that working with a Real Reader is a benefit of enrolling in this course. Since your partnership with your Real Reader is part of this class, please do not share their contact information with others. If you have any questions about appropriate interactions with your Real Reader outside of course assignments, please ask me.

## CONTACTING YOUR INSTRUCTOR

I will be delighted to discuss your work with you, as well as your suggestions, ideas, and concerns about this course. You should feel free to visit my office hours, or I’m happy to make other arrangements. Please email me in advance if you need to cancel an appointment. Email is the best way to reach me for quick questions and concerns. I will generally respond to emails within 24 hours. Please plan your electronic communications accordingly.

## **CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS AND PROFESSIONALISM**

In the context of this course, showing professional integrity involves attending all class meetings, including arriving on time and being fully present throughout (no phones, please!). Additional expectations include responding promptly to communications, participating in discussions and activities, providing and listening to feedback in a thoughtful manner, and generally being a good citizen.

A critical outcome for this class is increasing awareness of appropriate professional behavior in our multicultural world. I recognize that you all come into this class with different understandings of professionalism based on different cultural backgrounds and experiences. For this reason, I encourage you to use our course as a space to ask questions and come to common (if not always shared) understandings of what it means to be professional in different contexts.

## **FEEDBACK IN THE COURSE**

Throughout the course you will receive feedback from your peers, from your Real Reader, and from me on your work: this includes your writing, speaking, listening, peer response, and class discussions. This feedback is meant to help you strengthen your professional communication skills. You will document your responsiveness to feedback received over the duration of the course in the final portfolio.

I will do my best to give you written feedback on your work within one week of receiving assignments and will post comments and feedback through Blackboard. It is important that you review these comments and feedback after each assignment is returned.

## **OVERVIEW OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

### ***Formal Assignments***

Formal assignments go through the full peer response/revision/instructor (and in some cases Real Reader) feedback cycle.

- Networking note to Real Reader
- Two sets of application materials:
  - Two resumes (or one resume and one CV)
  - Two cover letters (or one cover letter and one application essay)
- “Choice assignment” (choose one of the following):
  - Elevator conversation
  - Networking note to a different audience
  - Project description/abstract (choice of written or spoken version)
  - LinkedIn profile

### ***Life Design Notebook***

The life design notebook is a collection of short written reflections, a few paragraphs long, on a series of topics covered throughout the course. There are 14 required entries. Specific prompts will be provided.

### ***Additional Learning Activities***

Some of the activities below are completed in class; some will be assigned as homework.

- Online career exploration research
- Research and analyses of two professional audiences
- Informational interview with Real Reader
- Elevator conversation practice
- Project description speaking practice
- Quincia AI resume review
- Quincia AI interview practice
- Mock interview with a peer

## **CREDIT HOUR POLICY STATEMENT**

This course follows the College credit hour policy for two-credit courses. This course meets once weekly for 75 academic minutes per week. Interaction with Real Readers and associated work, as well as additional activities completed outside of class, account for approximately 25 minutes per week. Students should also anticipate spending about 240 additional minutes on independent work related to completing course assignments. The average total course work per week is approximately 340 minutes.

## ASSESSMENT AND GRADING<sup>1</sup>

Rather than providing an individual grade for each assignment, your course performance will be assessed using the grading method described below. This method has been designed to account for your commitment to meeting expectations of professional behavior, your engagement in the process of becoming a flexible, conscious communicator, and assessments of the quality of your work by both your instructor and your Real Reader.

No Incomplete will be given, except in the case of medical or other documented emergency.

**Your final grade will be comprised of the following components (see below for full explanation of what these entail):**

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|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Contract grade:         | 50% of final grade |
| 2. Final portfolio:        | 40% of final grade |
| 3. Real Reader assessment: | 10% of final grade |

### 1.) Contract Grade

Contract grading is an approach that gives you a great deal of control over your course work and grade. The purpose of the contract grade is to evaluate your level of professionalism and your ability to autonomously pursue your own work.

#### ***How Does Contract Grading Work in this Course?***

50% of your final course grade is contract-based, which means you must meet the basic requirements below to earn 50 points. Point reductions result from any **breaches** you incur throughout the semester.

#### **Basic Requirements**

- Attend all class meetings, and be on time.
- Be prepared for and engage productively in class activities.
- Complete all assignments on time and according to criteria.
- Interact with instructor, classmates and Real Reader respectfully and with integrity.
- Polish and proofread all final revisions of assignments so that they are free of errors and conform to your audiences' expectations of professional communication.
- Use the "signal and pathway" method of citing all material that is not your own.
- Communicate with your instructor (ideally in advance) about any issues that prevent you from meeting course requirements.

#### **Breaches**

Failing to meet the basic requirements detailed above, or breaches, will reduce your contract grade (50 points) by two points each:

- 1 breach = 48 points; 2 breaches = 46 points; 3 breaches = 44 points; etc.

#### ***What Constitutes a Breach?***

In the professional world, *not showing up* is one of the least professional things one can do. Lateness, while not as bad, is also considered unprofessional. You will avoid breaches if you demonstrate a commitment to the importance of *showing up*, on time, in this course.

Thus, a **breach** represents an instance of *not showing up*, or not fulfilling a required expectation. For example:

- Missing class without prior permission of instructor (unexcused absence); *only excused* absences may be made up
- Not making up an excused absence from class
- Not completing an in-class activity, such as peer response
- Not turning in an assignment; however, most assignments may be turned in late with instructor approval

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Deborah Rossen-Knill's course at the University of Rochester, WRT 245: Advanced Writing and Peer Tutoring; Risa Applegarth's writing course at the University of North Carolina; and Jane Danielewicz and Peter Elbow, "A Unilateral Grading Contract to Improve Learning and Teaching," CCC 61:2 (December 2009): 244-268.

- Turning in the midpoint portfolio more than two weeks late to the instructor and/or Real Reader (one breach for each)
- Poor workmanship on an assignment or in-class activity; these may be made up as late with instructor approval
- Failing to incorporate feedback received from peers, instructor, and Real Reader when revising assignments
- Disrespectful behavior towards your peers, instructor, and/or Real Reader

Examples of being **late** with a required expectation include:

- Being late to class (i.e., arriving after attendance has been taken)
- Completing an in-class activity late, such as peer response
- Turning in a formal assignment or life design notebook entry late
- Turning in an assignment late to your Real Reader
- Turning in the midpoint portfolio up to two weeks late to the instructor and/or Real Reader (one late instance for each)

**Two “lates” equal one breach.**

### ***Absences, Late Work, and Missing Work***

This course moves at a rigorous pace, and it will be difficult to catch up if you fall behind. Therefore, if you are struggling with an assignment, please contact me before it is due. I will be glad to help you utilize resources and support to enable you to complete your work in a timely manner.

In addition, it is difficult to make up some of our in-class activities and discussions. However, I understand that absences are occasionally unpreventable, such as in cases of illness or religious observances. If you are unable to attend a specific class meeting or complete an activity, please contact me in advance with a plan for making up what you will miss.

**Not contacting me in advance will result in a breach or a “late,” as specified above.**

### ***Special Note Regarding the Midpoint Portfolio***

The midpoint portfolio is an important milestone of this course and is integral to the process of drafting and revision for the final portfolio. As such, a student who has not submitted a midpoint portfolio by two weeks after the due date will be advised to withdraw from the course (or in certain extenuating circumstances, to take an incomplete) and retake the course in a future semester.

## **2.) Final Portfolio**

40% of your final course grade will be based on how well your final portfolio meets the specific assessment criteria described in the assignment prompt. The portfolio will be given a letter grade and converted to a points value out of a total of 40.

- In general, A-range work may need a tweak here or there, but generally accomplishes all the expectations well.
- B-range work may need tweaking in many ways, or it might be quite effective in some ways but not others.
- C-range work carries out each expectation, but in a way that consistently requires some revision (as opposed to editing).
- Below a C: fails to carry out several expectations in a competent way, or completely fails to address a key expectation.
- D-range work does not carry out several expectations in significant ways (ways that require revision) or does not carry out a particularly important expectation such that the overall success of the work is undermined.
- E-range work does not carry out the large majority of the expectations; central criteria not met.

A final portfolio turned in without prior submission of a midpoint portfolio will not be graded. In this case, the portfolio will be considered a midpoint portfolio.

### 3.) Real Reader Assessment

For the final 10% of your final course grade, your Real Reader will assess your written and spoken communication skills, as evidenced by your final portfolio submitted at the end of the course, as well as the level of professionalism you have exhibited in interacting with your Real Reader. Real Readers provide their assessment through answers to the following two questions:

1. Hypothetically, how likely would you be to refer this student to your network of contacts based on the **quality of the materials** you have reviewed?
2. Hypothetically, how likely would you be to refer this student to your network of contacts based on the student's **professional behavior**?

The above questions are answered on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = not likely and 5 = extremely likely, are added together to make up your Real Reader assessment, out of 10 points.

In the rare event that your Real Reader does not submit the final assessment, you will not be penalized, provided you submitted the portfolio to your Real Reader on time. In this case, your contract grade will constitute 55% of your final grade, and your final portfolio grade will constitute the remaining 45%.

### HOW GRADES ARE CALCULATED

Following are the scales used for grade conversions and calculations.

<u>LETTER GRADE → NUMERICAL GRADE</u>	<u>FINAL GRADE RANGE</u>
A+ = 100	
A = 97	95 – 100 = A
A- = 92.5	90 – 94 = A-
B+ = 88	87 – 89 = B+
B = 85	83 – 86 = B
B- = 81	80 – 82 = B-
C+ = 78	77 – 79 = C+
C = 74.5	73 – 76 = C
C- = 71	70 – 72 = C-
D+ = 68	67 – 69 = D+
D = 64.5	63 – 66 = D
D- = 61	60 – 62 = D-
E = 58	Below 60 = E

Note: decimals <.49 will be rounded down; decimals >.50 will be rounded up.

**Example:** Contract: 1 breach & 1 “late” = 48 points (*note that one “late” does not impact the grade*)  
 Final portfolio grade of B+ = 35.2 points (88 x 40%)  
 Real Reader assessment: 4 + 5 = 9 points  
 Final course grade = 92.2 points → **A-**

### ACADEMIC HONESTY<sup>2</sup>

According to the College’s Academic Honesty Policy, [plagiarism is] the representation of another person’s work as one’s own, or the attempt “to blur the line between one’s own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source.” (Council of Writing Program Administrators, January 2003, <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9>). More specifically, [it is] the use of an idea, phrase, or other material from a written or spoken source without signaling the source at the place of use in a work for which the student claims authorship.

Examples include: the misrepresentation of sources used in a work for which the student claims authorship; the improper use of course materials in a work for which the student claims authorship; the use of papers that are purchased and turned in as one’s own work; submission of written work such as laboratory reports, computer programs, or papers, which have been copied from the work of other students, with or without their knowledge and consent.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Solveiga Armoskaite and Deborah Rossen-Knill’s course at the University of Rochester, LIN 161: Modern English Grammar.

Students can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating the source of any idea or wording that they did not produce, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, and in a list of references (e.g., bibliography or works cited page). Sources must be given regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarized in the student-writer's own words. Direct quotes must always be placed in quotation marks in addition to the other citation information that is required.<sup>3</sup> This applies to all drafts of work submitted, both rough and final, including written work, spoken work, online media such as LinkedIn, etc.

In cases of suspected academic dishonesty or plagiarism, the College's procedures and policies governing academic honesty will be followed. Any incident of academic dishonesty in this course will be reported to the Board on Academic Honesty and be subject to the academic honesty policy's sanctioning guidelines. An academic honesty policy violation can affect not just your grade, but also your future applications for leadership positions, internships, jobs and graduate schools, as well as your visa status in the case of suspension or expulsion.

### **Course-Specific Academic Honesty Expectations**

- You are expected to adhere to the guidelines in "Academic Integrity: Understanding How to Give and Receive Help When Writing Papers"<sup>4</sup> and "Academic Honesty with Online Learning Tools."<sup>5</sup>
- Working with peers in the ways specified as acceptable in the guidelines is fine, but collaboration in which group members all participate in completing a single assignment is not allowed unless the instructor indicates that work may be completed in groups.
- You must attribute and cite all source material used in completing assignments, including reflections and audience analyses. These may be unfamiliar genres, but they do require citation if sources are used; you should follow citation guidelines discussed in class.
- Sample documents will be used in class to demonstrate genre conventions and the range of choices writers have. Document design, such as resume formatting (font choice, headers, bold/italics, and layout), may inspire the "look" of your documents; however, work completed for class should be your own, including content, organization, sentence structure, etc.
- Large Language Models such as ChatGPT are tools that can help you write and become more effective writers. They can also take over your writing, your thoughts and your learning. In this writing course, to help you become more flexible and intentional writers, some assignments will purposefully involve GPT, and some will purposefully avoid it. When the assignment includes GPT, you can choose to use it or not; if you do use GPT, you should do so only as indicated in the assignment. To do otherwise risks an academic honesty violation. That said, if you would like to use GPT in ways that I have not identified, please bring your ideas to me before you begin the assignment so that we can work out whether or not GPT use might be possible.
- More generally, pre-approval is needed for any technology-based or human-based help on your coursework that is potentially unauthorized. Once approved, this help should be acknowledged in your work (e.g., through a foot/endnote).
- You must include the following honor pledge with your final portfolio: "I affirm that I have not given or received any unauthorized help on this assignment, and that this work is my own."<sup>6</sup>
- **When in doubt, contact your instructor *before* turning in work.**

### **Public posting of past course work (e.g., via GitHub or LinkedIn):**

In professional contexts, it is common and acceptable to share past work. In academic contexts, however, making past course work available to other students (e.g., posting course projects or code on GitHub) qualifies as "giving

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<sup>3</sup> College of Arts, Sciences and Engineering, "Academic Honesty." <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/policy.html>

<sup>4</sup> Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program, "Academic Integrity: Understanding How to Give and Receive Help when Writing Papers." <https://rochester.app.box.com/s/s63knn1lhkr7rbf9fq35sks9gtzwp8>

<sup>5</sup> Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program, "Academic Honesty with Online Learning Tools." <https://rochester.app.box.com/s/4axjoc5nszk4lnkdyiz698hj6iwh198m>

<sup>6</sup> College of Arts, Sciences and Engineering, "Academic Honesty." <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/policy.html#pledge>

unauthorized aid” and violates the College academic honesty policy.<sup>7</sup> In this course and in communication in general, the goal is to successfully meet the expectations of multiple audiences and communities; in this case, this includes your professional and academic audiences. To communicate professionally while maintaining academic honesty, consult with your instructors to identify acceptable ways to share your work professionally without violating the academic honesty policy. Some solutions include receiving permission from the course instructor to post your work publicly (each and every time, ideally in writing) or creating a password-protected website to share your work professionally.

### ADDITIONAL CAMPUS RESOURCES

- **Office of Disability Resources:** Please know that this classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and that I invite you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. In addition, you may wish to connect with the Office of Disability Resources by calling 585.276.5075 or via email at [disability@rochester.edu](mailto:disability@rochester.edu); please also visit the website at <https://www.rochester.edu/disability>.
- **Writing and Speaking Center:** At the University of Rochester, we all communicate as writers and speakers, and every writer and speaker needs an audience. The Writing and Speaking Center is a free resource available to all members of the University--undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty. The Writing and Speaking Center welcomes visitors who are at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming ideas to polishing a final draft. Similarly, students can visit a Speaking Fellow at any point as they are developing or practicing a presentation. To learn more about the Writing and Speaking Center's services and/or to find a tutor, please visit <http://writing.rochester.edu>.
- **Gwen M. Greene Center for Career Education and Connections:** The Greene Center provides students with the resources and tools needed to develop connections between their personal and professional aspirations, academic pursuits and co-curricular experiences, including on-campus employment, research activities, and internships.<sup>8</sup> See Blackboard for more information on working with the Greene Center on assignments in this course. To set up an appointment, stop by 4-200 Dewey Hall, call 585.275.2366, or log into Handshake at <https://rochester.joinhandshake.com>. Also, be sure to visit the website at <https://careereducation.rochester.edu>.
- **The Learning Center:** The Learning Center supports students through its wide range of services, which include study groups, one-on-one tutoring, the Study Zone, and the Academic Success Coaching Program. To learn more, visit <https://www.rochester.edu/college/learningcenter>. To make an appointment, stop by 1-154 Dewey Hall, call 585.275.9049, or email [learning@rochester.edu](mailto:learning@rochester.edu).
- **Medallion Program:** The mission of the Medallion Program is “to prepare individuals to understand, develop, believe in, and demonstrate their leadership capacity.”<sup>9</sup> This WRTG 27X course counts for three of the Level 1 domains: Practical Competence, Cognitive Complexity, and Intrapersonal Development. Medallion Program participants should email the WRTG 27X lead instructor at [laura.a.jones@rochester.edu](mailto:laura.a.jones@rochester.edu) after successful completion of the course for verification. For more details, visit: <https://www.rochester.edu/college/odos/leadership/medallion/index.html>.

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<sup>7</sup> College of Arts, Sciences and Engineering, “Academic Honesty.” <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/policy/index.html#violations> (See section V-B-2.)

<sup>8</sup> Gwen M. Greene Center for Career Education and Connections, “Mission, Vision, & Values.” <https://careereducation.rochester.edu/mission-vision-values/>

<sup>9</sup> Office of the Dean of Students, “Leadership.” <https://www.rochester.edu/college/odos/leadership/medallion/index.html>