WRT 276 / PSC/IR 299: Communicating Your Professional Identity

Spring 2019: CRN 43931, Thurs. 450-605, Dewey 4-162   2 Credits

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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.

COURSE GOALS
Through this course, you will learn to:
- Discover and define your professional identity/identities.
- Research and define your audience.
- Tailor your message to audience and purpose.
- Avoid unintended messages.
- Represent yourself and your message in various situations (e.g., written correspondence, spontaneous conversations, and interviews) and through different media (writing, speaking, and online).
- Expand your understanding of what it means to be professional in different contexts.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Readings and handouts are available via Blackboard and course reserves in the Library.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS AND PROFESSIONALISM
In the context of this course, acting responsibly involves attending all classes and meetings, arriving on time to class and out-of-class meetings, being fully present during class and during meetings (no phones, please!), responding promptly to communications, participating in class 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. We recognize that you all come into this class with different understandings of professionalism based on different cultural backgrounds and experiences. For this reason, we 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.

Please bring your laptop or tablet to class each week, as in-class activities will often involve writing. Please notify me in advance if you do not own a laptop; we may be able to make arrangements for you to borrow one. When using a laptop or tablet in class, please avoid distracting behavior, such as working on homework for other classes and checking email or social networking sites.

INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENTS

Because our class meets just once a week, I will do my best to give you written feedback on your work within a week of receiving assignments. I will post comments and feedback through Blackboard. It is important that you review these comments and feedback after each assignment is returned.

PEER FEEDBACK
Throughout the semester you will receive feedback from your instructor, peers, and Real Readers (described below) on your work: this includes your writing, speaking, listening, peer response, and work during in-class activities. This feedback is meant to help you strengthen your professional communication skills. You'll document your level of success in these areas through reflections, responsiveness to feedback on individual assignments, and a final portfolio.

In working with your peers during peer response workshops and activities, personal and sensitive information may on occasion be shared. This information should remain in the classroom and never be shared with others outside of our class. Please consult me with concerns.

REAL READER PROGRAM
In this class, you will interact with "Real Readers"—alumni and professionals in the world of work who can tell you about their professions and act as a relevant audience for your work. We will discuss how to work with the Real Readers in a professionally appropriate way as part of the course. Please note that working with Real Readers (most of whom are UR alumni) is a benefit of enrolling in this course. Since your partnership with a Real Reader is part of this class, please do not share his or her contact information with others. If you have any questions about appropriate interactions with Real Readers outside of the regular 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 drop by during my office hours (see page 1), 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 all emails within 24 hours. Please plan your electronic communications accordingly.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING[1]
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):
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.

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[1] 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.

How Does Contract Grading Work in this Course?
50% of your final course grade is contract-based and equals ***basic requirements*** plus ***additional activities*** of your choice, with grade reductions resulting from any ***breaches***.

This is represented by the following equation:

50% of final grade = [Basic Requirements + Additional Activities] – Breaches

(I) Basic Requirements

- Attend class 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.

(II) Additional Activities
Additional activities are flexible opportunities to further practice your writing and speaking skills, to explore and develop your professional identity, and to interact further with your Real Reader. You may complete a maximum of four additional activities. A 500-word reflection paper is required for each additional activity; see separate Additional Activity Guidelines handout for specific instructions regarding additional activity options and what is expected of these reflections.

Assuming that you have met all of the basic requirements as detailed in Part I, additional activities affect your contract grade in the following way:

- no additional activities   = **Contract grade of B-**.
- one additional activity   = **Contract grade of B**.
- two additional activities   = **Contract grade of B+**.
- three additional activities   = **Contract grade of A-**.
- four additional activities   = **Contract grade of A**.

The assumption is that in a professional setting, if you simply meet the minimum expectations, you will be doing a fair, yet average, job—roughly equivalent to a B-. If you go above and beyond what is required, however, you will truly excel in your job and set yourself apart. You have an opportunity to model this through the contract grade.

(III) Breaches
Failing to meet the basic requirements detailed in Section I, or "breaches," will affect your course grade in the following ways:

- A ***major breach*** typically involves requirements that, if not met, significantly hinder your ability or your classmates' ability to learn positively and productively from course activities; or behaviors that negatively affect our classroom atmosphere. Major breaches include such things as:
    - Missing class without a valid reason and without prior permission of instructor
    - Turning in the midpoint or final portfolio late to instructor or Real Reader
    - Not turning in an assignment to instructor or Real Reader
    - Not completing a peer response activity
    - Failing to incorporate feedback received from peers, instructor, and Real Reader when revising assignments

Each major breach will lower your contract grade (based on basic requirements and additional activities, as described above) by 1/3 of a letter grade. For example, a grade of B would be lowered to a B-.

- A *__minor breach__* typically involves requirements that, if not met, negatively affect our classroom atmosphere and/or your learning, but not in a severe way, including such things as:
  - Arriving late to class
  - Poor workmanship on an assignment; not meeting assignment criteria
  - Turning in an assignment late (applies to assignments other than the midpoint and final portfolios, which count as a major breach)

Three minor breaches equal one major breach.

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.

- 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 are not met.

3.) Real Reader Assessment
As 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 semester, as well as the level of professionalism you have exhibited in interacting with your Real Reader throughout the semester. Real Readers will provide their assessment through answers to the follow 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 averaged together, and converted to a letter grade.

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

Final portfolios that are submitted late might not be reviewed by your Real Reader in time for final grades to be calculated; in this case, you will receive a zero for the 10% Real Reader assessment.

How Grades Are Computed
Following is the 100-point scale used for calculating your final grade. Please also see separate grading worksheet.

LETTER → NUMERICAL GRADE	REAL READER ASSESSMENT SCALE	RANGE
A = 97	5.0 = A (97)	95 – 100 = A
A- = 92.5	4.5 = A- (92.5)	90 – 94 = A-
B+ = 88	4.0 = B+ (88)	87 – 89 = B+
B = 85	3.5 = B (85)	83 – 86 = B
B- = 81	3.0 = B- (81)	80 – 82 = B-
C+ = 78	2.5 = C+ (78)	77 – 79 = C+
C = 74.5	2.0 = C (74.5)	73 – 76 = C
C- = 71	1.5 = C- (71)	70 – 72 = C-
D+ = 68	1.0 = D+ (68)	67 – 69 = D+
D = 64.5	No feedback due to late	63 – 66 = D
D- = 61	submission = 0	60 – 62 = D-
E = 58		Below 60 = E
No assignment submitted = 0		

Example:

Contract grade of B	85 x 50%
Final portfolio grade of A	97 x 40%
Real Reader assessment of 4.5	92.5 x 10%
Final course grade	= 90.55 → **A-**

POLICIES ON ABSENCES, LATE AND MISSED WORK

As stated previously, you are expected to meet certain standards of professional behavior in this course. Not meeting these expectations (such as missing class without prior notice, turning in work late or not making up missed work) count as major or minor breaches of the contract.

Absences and Missed Classwork

While attendance at all classes is required, absences due to illness or religious holiday observance are excused as per College policies. Advance notice is required, and missed work must be made up as the instructor deems appropriate. Not completing make-up work will result in the absence counting as a major breach.

Late Assignments:

Formal and informal assignments that are submitted late will result in breaches as follows:
- Up to one week late: counts as one minor breach
- Up to two weeks late: counts as two minor breaches
- More than two weeks late: becomes a major breach

Turning in the midpoint and/or final portfolio late to your instructor or Real Reader will result in breaches as follows:
- Up to one week late: counts as one major breach
- Up to two weeks late: counts as two major breaches
- More than two weeks late: counts as three major breaches

ACADEMIC HONESTY[2]

"It is through our own honesty and our trust in others' honesty that we can learn from each other and work together to create new knowledge. For this reason, when dishonesty enters our community, we put in question all of the work we do and undermine our ability to bring new knowledge and good to the world."[3]

As defined in the University of Rochester College of Arts, Sciences and Engineering Academic Honesty Policy:

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[2] Adapted from Solveiga Armoskaite and Deborah Rossen-Knill's course at the University of Rochester, LIN 161: Modern English Grammar.

[3] Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program, "WSAP Instructor Guide." https://docs.google.com/document/d/1X849_qzKBRtg75Gq7sQyoLY m1kuOda1aS0v92d6HtJI/edit?usp=sharing, p. 21.

> **Academic honesty** means acting with truthfulness and sincerity in carrying out all aspects of our individual and collaborative work, maintaining ownership over our work and acknowledging our debt to the work of others.
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> [**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.[4]

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."[5]
- 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.
- 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."[6]
- **When in doubt, contact your instructor *before* turning in work.**

ADDITIONAL CAMPUS 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 take advantage of the following resources on campus:

DISABILITY SERVICES AND SUPPORT
The University's office of Disability Services and Support works "…to ensure that members of our community with disabilities have equal access, reasonable accommodation, and full participation in the University experience."[7] The office is located in Taylor Hall and may be contacted at 585.276.5075 or disability@rochester.edu.

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[4] College of Arts, Sciences and Engineering, "Academic Honesty." https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/policy.html

[5] Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program, "Academic Integrity: Understanding How to Give and Receive Help when Writing Papers." https://writing.rochester.edu/assets/pdf/AcademicIntegrity2013.pdf.

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

[7] Disability Services and Support, "Your Abilities Are Welcome Here." https://www.rochester.edu/disability

If you have a disability for which you may be requesting an academic accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the access coordinator for your school to establish eligibility for academic accommodations.

THE 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 Gwen M. Greene Center for Career Education and Connections [provides students] with the resources and tools they need to develop connections between their aspirations, academic pursuits and co-curricular experiences."[8] See the separate handout on working with the Greene Center. To set up an appointment, stop by 4-200 Dewey Hall, call 585.275.2366, or log into Handshake at https://rochester.joinhandshake.com to make an appointment. Also, be sure to visit the Greene Center's website at www.rochester.edu/careercenter.

CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING
"The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) is a resource available to all students in Arts, Sciences and Engineering. All kinds of students with all kinds of GPAs and academic records make use of our programs. We work with strong students who wish to become even better, as well as with students who have not yet tapped into the strategies needed to succeed in college, and everyone in between." [9]

CETL offers study groups, tutoring, individual study skills counseling, study skills workshops, and a study skills course. To make an appointment or to learn more, stop by the office (1-154 Dewey Hall), call 585.275.9049, or send an email: cetl@rochester.edu.

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[8] Gwen M. Greene Center for Career Education and Connections, "About Us." http://www.rochester.edu/careercenter/about/vision.html

[9] Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, "Undergraduate Students: Overview." https://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND IN-CLASS WORK
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):
  - Networking note to a different audience
  - Elevator pitch
  - Project description/abstract (choice of written or spoken version)
  - LinkedIn profile

Informal Assignments
Informal assignments are an opportunity to use writing as a tool for thinking, to explore a genre of writing and speaking, and/or to practice skills learned in class.

- Career exploration reflective essay
- Informational interview with Real Reader + reflective essay
- Two audience analyses (one accompanying each set of application materials as per above)
- Two reflective essays (one with the midpoint portfolio and one with the final portfolio)
- Mock interview preparation worksheet
- Final portfolio revision plan

In-Class Work
In-class assignments are an opportunity to create and receive feedback on documents and spoken presentations in various genres; for some of these, you will have the option to revise for the formal "choice assignment" as described above.

- Elevator pitch
- Project description/abstract (both written and spoken)
- LinkedIn profile
- Mock interview
- Spoken and written communication scenarios