WRTG 276-1 | PSCI 299-1 | INTR 299-1 : Communicating Your Professional Identity

Fall 2020 (**Online**) | **Class Wednesdays 325-440 pm**   2 Credits

Instructor: Kellie Hernandez   **Office Hours:** Tues. 3-4 pm and Fri. 10-11 am EDT
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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:
- Explore, construct, articulate, and communicate your professional identity/identities.
- Identify, research, analyze, and construct your interpretations of professional audiences.
- Create messages tailored to audience and purpose through the process of drafting, gaining feedback, and revision.
- Anticipate and avoid unintended messages.
- Represent yourself in a variety of communication situations and through different media, with attention to shaping your message to suit new contexts.
- Evaluate and make decisions about your own professional behavior in different contexts.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Brooks, Katharine. 2017. *You Majored in What?*. New York: Plume. (***Note***: *this title is available as an e-book through the library, but as access is limited, you may wish to purchase your own copy.)*

Additional readings and handouts are available via Blackboard.

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 log into Zoom for my virtual 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 all emails within 24 hours. Please plan your electronic communications accordingly.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS AND PROFESSIONALISM
In the context of this course, showing professionalism involves attending all Zoom meetings, including logging in 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. 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.

ZOOM VIDEO CLASS SESSIONS
This class meets synchronously via Zoom every week. All Zoom class meetings are required, with exceptions made in cases of illness or religious observances. (Please let me know as far in advance as possible if you must miss a class meeting.)

Because a major focus of this course is communication, virtual face-to-face interaction during our class sessions is of vital importance. Students must attend Zoom class meetings with cameras on, provided internet access is stable; please arrange to limit other internet usage in the household to maximize bandwidth for optimal Zoom functioning.

Virtual backgrounds are acceptable, as long as they are not distracting to the class. In addition, please be sure that you are located a quiet space during Zoom class meetings, or mute as necessary.

Zoom class meetings will be recorded and posted to Blackboard via Panopto; this allows you the opportunity to review any portions of the class as needed. Your image may appear in these recordings, which are private and may only be accessed by our class. Video recordings will be deleted after all students' grades have been submitted. See the Panopto privacy statement[1] for more information.

SUBSTANTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLASS DISCUSSIONS
For online discussions in Blackboard and VoiceThread, you should make an effort to post comments that add insight, probe more deeply, challenge (intellectually), and generally help us learn. Substantive comments are the expectation, but it can also helpful to post comments that are "social" in nature. For example, "I agree" is not a substantive comment, but it can be a useful response in that it helps us know that we are being "heard."

As this is a professional communication course, it is expected that you will carefully read and edit your written comments prior to posting in Blackboard; for spoken comments in VoiceThread, you may find it helpful to jot down an outline prior to recording.

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.

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 activities (both during Zoom sessions and online). 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. I 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):

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[1] https://www.panopto.com/privacy/

- o   Networking note to a different audience
- o   Elevator pitch
- o   Project description/abstract (choice of written or spoken version)
- o   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.

Interactive Learning Activities
Some of these learning activities involve synchronous interaction during Zoom class meetings; in other cases, activities are completed asynchronously online.

- Asynchronous activities and assignments
  - o   Class discussions in Blackboard (written) and VoiceThread (spoken)
  - o   Odyssey plans
  - o   Tutorial on researching employers and academic audiences
  - o   Targeted resume outline & presentation
  - o   Project description presentation
- Synchronous activities
  - o   Informational interview with Real Reader
  - o   Mock interview
  - o   Elevator pitch practice
  - o   Spoken and written communication scenarios/role plays

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING[2]
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.

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.

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[2] 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.

Basic Requirements
- Attend Zoom 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 by two points each:

Number of breaches	Points out of 50
1 breach	48
2 breaches	46
3 breaches	44
4 breaches	42
5 breaches	40
6 breaches	38
7 breaches	36
8 breaches	34
etc.	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 a Zoom meeting without prior permission of instructor (unexcused absence); *only excused absences may be made up*
- Not making up an excused absence from a Zoom meeting
- Not turning in a formal assignment or life design notebook entry
- Not completing a module activity or discussion; *peer response activities may be made up as late (see below)*
- Not completing assignments or activities to expected criteria; *these may be made up as late (see below)*
- Failing to incorporate feedback received from peers, instructor, and Real Reader when revising assignments
- Disrespectful behavior towards your peers, instructor, or Real Reader

Examples of being **late** with a required expectation include:
- Being late to a Zoom meeting (arriving after attendance has been taken)
- Turning a formal assignment or life design notebook entry in one week late, or more, to the instructor
- Turning in an assignment one week late, or more, to your Real Reader

- Completing any activity or discussion post late

Two "lates" equal one breach.

A Note on Absences and Late or Missing Work
This course moves at a rigorous pace, and it will be difficult to catch up if you fall behind. It is difficult to make up some of our activities and discussions, both synchronous and asynchronous. 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 Zoom meeting or complete a module 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.**

If you are struggling with a module or 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.

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 points 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 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 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 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 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 assessment, you will not be penalized, provided you submitted the portfolio to your Real Reader on time. In this case, your final portfolio grade will constitute 50% 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 Real Reader assessment.

HOW GRADES ARE CALCULATED

Following are the scales used for grade conversions and calculations.

LETTER GRADE → NUMERICAL GRADE		*FINAL GRADE RANGE*	
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

Example:

Contract: 1 breach	=	48 points
Final portfolio grade of B+ (88 x 40%)	=	35.2 points
Real Reader assessment of 4 + 5	=	9 points
Final course grade		92.2 points → **A-**

Note: decimals ≤.49 will be rounded down; decimals ≥.50 will be rounded up.

ACADEMIC HONESTY[3]

"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."[4]

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

> **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.

> [**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.[5]

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.

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

[4] Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program, "WSAP Instructor Guide." https://docs.google.com/document/d/1X849_qzKBRtg75Gq7sQyoLYm1kuOda1aS0v92d6HtJI/edit?usp=sharing , p. 21.

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

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."[6]
- 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."[7]
- **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 unauthorized aid" and violates the College academic honesty policy.[8] 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.

CREDIT HOUR POLICY STATEMENT

This course follows the College credit hour policy for two-credit courses. An online course is equivalent to its face-to-face counterpart; in this course, instructional time takes different forms, including a combination of online synchronous class sessions via Zoom, narrated PowerPoint presentations, instructor-facilitated asynchronous discussion boards, and one-on-one communications (via email or Zoom) with the instructor. Including instructional time, independent work related to completing course assignments, and interaction with Real Readers, students should anticipate spending approximately 6 hours per week on this course.

STATEMENT ON DISABILITIES

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 Office of Disability Resources.

The University's Office of Disability Resources works "…to ensure that members of our community with disabilities have equal access, reasonable accommodation, and full participation in the University experience."[9] 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 to establish eligibility for academic

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[6] 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 .

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

[8] College of Arts, Sciences and Engineering, "Academic Honesty." https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/policy/index.html#violations (See section V-B-2.)

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

accommodations. The office may be contacted at 585.276.5075 or disability@rochester.edu; please also visit https://www.rochester.edu/disability for information.