Professional Communication

Level
Advanced undergraduate writing course

Themes
- Professional Writing
- User-Experience Design
- Usability
- Web Development
- Multimodal Composition

Key Texts
Richard Johnson-Sheehan, *Technical Communication Today*

Robert Knight, *Writing Public Prose*

Jacqueline Rhodes & Jonathan Alexander, *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies*

Jessica Abel, *Out on the Wire: Storytelling Secrets of the New Masters of Radio*

Digital Resources
W3Schools Web Tutorials
Transom.org
Freesound.org
Audacity

Learning Outcomes
- Learn about basic theories of usability, user testing, and user-experience design
- Practice multimodal writing strategies for digital communication
- Collaborate on a team project
- Revise digital and print documents based on feedback
- Use writing to develop professional aims, skill, and documents

UX Design, courtesy of Careerfoundry.

Professional communication is the study and practice of relaying technical information to a variety of audiences, including public, civic, academic, and workplace. This course provides instruction and practice in professional communication, focusing on clarity, design, and inventive techniques which are useful across professional writing environments, modeling traditional professional documents, such as reports, letters, memos, and evaluations, which are part of everyday acts of professional communication, as well as professional job documents like resumes and cover letters. By analyzing writing situations, students develop skills for communicating across professional writing environments. This course introduces you to adaptive practices and genres of writing which will serve writers throughout their careers in academia or industry.

Professional communication denotes a wide range of information exchanges which take place across fields (such as a scientist communicating with the public), organizations (such as a business advertising to a target audience), and modalities (such as a potential client interacting with a professional website). Professional communication is broad field of communication studies which includes subfields like technical writing, public writing, and business writing. While technical writing focuses on communicating in field-specific genres, professional writing is characterized by a focus on clarity, accessibility, and design for broad workplace audiences. Through reports, proposals, usability testing, a presentation, and professional website design, students will learn about user-experience design and multimodal writing in professional communication.

Major Assignments

	Points	/100
Discussion Posts, 2000 words		**20**

Students will compose 4 analytical discussion posts (500 words each) throughout the semester. 400- word posts and 100-word responses. Posts and responses should be focused, crafted, edited, and carefully revised. Responses are due before the following class.

Group Writing Projects, 1700 words (per student)		**20**

Elevator Pitch, 400 words
5

For the elevator pitch assignment, students will write and present a brief proposal for a podcast episode related to topics in their academic field or profession. Podcasts may discuss issues in a profession or field, topics related to professionals generally, or an interdisciplinary issue which overlaps several fields. The class will select their podcast groups based on the elevator pitches.

Instructional Podcast, 1000 words
12

Working in groups, students will build from the elevator pitch to create an instructional podcast mini-series communication directed at a professional audience. The series will take the form of three episodes, designed and produced individually or collaboratively, and a podcast website.

Progress Report, 300 Words
3

Midway through the podcast assignment, you will submit a report detailing the progress you have made, including what has been finished and what still needs to be completed. You should include a plan for completing the project, as well as a reflection on working with your group.

Individual Writing Assignments, 2200 words		**35**

Introductory Email, 200 words
2

Using a standard email format and an effective professional style, send a message to a professional working within your field (e.g nurse, doctor, engineer, technical writer, etc.).

Professional Correspondence, 250 words
4

Using professional correspondence style, draft a parody letter to an actual company or organization. Feel free to create any outlandish scenario and/or characters for your letter, but be sure that the content is not inappropriate. Check out Ted L. Nancy's website for examples.

Application Packet, 700 words
12

Produce an application packet with a job description analysis, cover letter, and a resume. Students will find and use a specific posting for a job, internship, graduate school, and/or professional organization and write an analysis of the job description that details requested materials and a characterization of ideal candidates. Students will craft materials in response to the posting with rhetorical savvy.

User Experience Report, 250 words
3

Develop a user test methodology for your professional website. Using test groups from inside the class, you will conduct user tests to measure the functionality and readability of your website. Based on your evaluation of that data gathered in the usability report, you'll then revise your website before submitting it for a final grade.

Professional ePortfolio Website (Final Project)
14

Using your skills in information design, professional communication, and digital media which we will practice all semester, you will design a professional website aimed at not only future employers and members of your field but also public audiences. The word count for this assignment will come from analytical and descriptive web pages which demonstrate professional knowledge of your particular field with the rhetorical aim of communicating with a variety of audiences.

In-Class Assignments, 250 words	25

Class Participation *20*

Class participation includes contributing to discussions; coming to class prepared and on time, participating in class activities; providing adequate drafts for group work; and paying close attention to lectures and class activities. In general, students are expected to contribute constructively to each class session. Because this course relies heavily on workshops and in-class writing activities, students should bring computers and writing tools to each class meeting. This grade includes minor assignments such as weekly writing as well as other homework and classwork assignments.

Twitter Participation *5*

You are required to participate outside of class by posting at least once per week on Twitter (using #UFProfComm in your tweet) and submitting a link to Canvas. Tweets should consist of responses to readings or class discussions, relevant content you wish to share with the class, new concepts you encounter, and responses to other student Tweets.