Instructor: Jessica McCaughey

Email: jessmcc@gwu.edu

Office: During the pandemic, my dining room table, via [my Zoom room](#)

Office hours: 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. EST T/Th and by appointment; I'm very flexible on this, especially for those of you working full time this summer and/or living in different time zones. Early morning and late night Zoom meetings are fine! Just reach out and we'll plan around your schedule.

Writing for the Workplace

UW2020W and BADM 4900W

Summer Session I: May 17 - June 26, 2021

Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:10 p.m. EST - 9:10 p.m. EST (via Zoom)

Course Description

According to a recent study from the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 73.4% of employers state that "strong written communication skills" are among their top hiring priorities. Yet most new graduates struggle with workplace writing. This advanced writing course situates workplace writing as a set of crucial problem-solving skills necessary for all communicators in all fields. Although it often seems purely "practical," workplace writing is in fact a set of complex strategies and tactics that require us to juggle substantial knowledge and often contradictory ideas and interests. Further, contrary to popular belief, workplace writing is not inherently (or even ideally) objective; it has a point of view that's dependent on everything from organizational culture to controversies in the larger world. Workplace writing is also inherently rhetorical, meaning that questions of audience, purpose, and medium, among others, are central to every decision for these communicators.
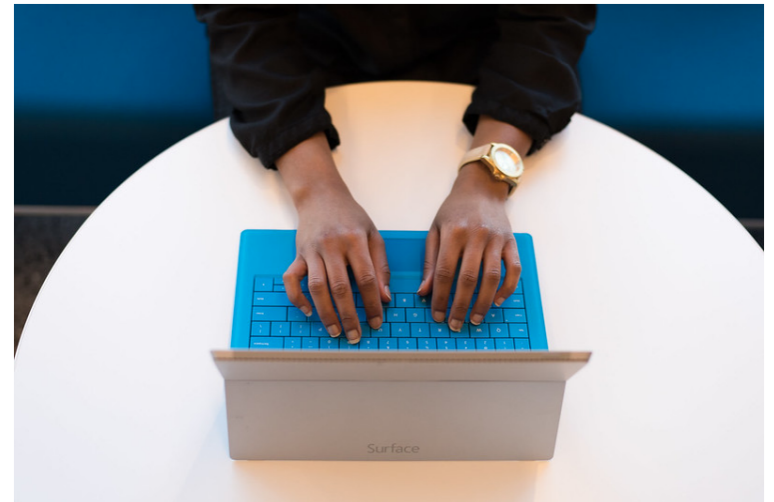
While we will read about and critically consider workplace documents from corporations as well as nonprofits and government agencies, students will be given the opportunity to focus their inquiry on particular settings, as they consider the complexities of communicating in specific careers and industries. As they do so, students will work to understand and interrogate workplace discourse communities; consider, practice, and critically investigate what it means to conduct and communicate research professional settings; grapple with the concepts of agency, power, and ethics in workplace writing; critique and practice visual rhetoric of workplace documents; and write collaboratively.

Course Objectives:

When you complete this class, you will be able to:

- Recognize the rhetorical foundations of various forms of workplace writing and analyze the rhetorical elements, questions, and complexities pertinent to common document genres
- Draft and revise common workplace documents with an eye toward genre conventions and opportunities, as well as particular discourse communities
- Define and identify the unique discourse communities within various workplaces
- Articulate some of the ways workplace communicators specifically must grapple with issues of culture, ethics, race, and gender
- Understand how the workplace writing process may differ from other writing processes, and develop rhetorically informed and realistic invention, drafting, revision, and editing strategies toward a writing process you can implement and advocate for in the workplace
- Develop foundational professional editing practices for clarity, conciseness, correctness, and consistency

How the Course Works

Although this course is entirely virtual, it is very interactive. We will meet via Zoom, embedded in Blackboard. The course is organized into five units, each focused on a different element of workplace communication. During each unit, students will read, participate in extensive discussions of course readings, participate in writing activities, including drafting, gathering feedback, providing feedback to others, revising, and editing major writing assignments outlined below. Our five units are:

Unit 1: Thinking Rhetorically about Genre in Workplace Communication

Unit 2: Discourse Communities

Unit 3: Thinking Rhetorically about Language and Design

Unit 4: Complex Issues in Workplace Communication

Unit 5: Thinking Rhetorically about Your Future as a Workplace Communicator

Course Requirements and Grading

*Note: For the major assignments below, you'll find full writing prompts on Blackboard. Below is a brief overview of each:

10%   Interview Essay – This assignment, tied to our coursework with the Archive of Workplace Writing Experiences, asks you to perform an interview with a professional in your field of choice about their written workplace communication, write about the interview, and contextualize it in a larger field or discipline.

10%   Industry Communication Presentation - This short presentation (5 minutes) calls on the interview and analysis you performed, as well as external research, and offers you the opportunity to share your expertise about writing in a particular industry or type of organization with the class.

15%   **Social Media Proposal** - This assignment asks you to take on the role of a consultant responding to an Request for Proposal (RFP). With the proposal you develop, hone, and "submit," you will showcase your digital workplace writing and rhetorical thinking skills.

10%   **LinkedIn Learning Talk** – For this assignment, you will work in groups of two or three. You'll choose and experience one of GW's (shorter) LinkedIn Learning courses related to workplace communication, and as a group you'll offer your classmates a "Cliff Notes" version in a ten-minute presentation.

15%   **Journal Assignments** – These writings, which will generally be on the shorter side, will be crucial as we work to make sense of workplace writing. They are a space for you to try out ideas, question things, respond to and engage with readings, extend classroom conversations, and anticipate your future workplace expectations. Requirements will vary week to week.

30%   **Professional Documents Sequence** – These assignments allow you the time and space to consider professional documents and your professional persona as they relate to your future work. We will talk and read extensively about the nuances of these tasks, and you will receive feedback from multiple readers as you develop and revise your materials.

      10%   Resume

      15%   Personal Professional Website (including writing samples)

      5%   Summary and Reflection

10%   **Engaged Interactions** - To be engaged in this class means showing up, being prepared, and contributing thoughtfully. Your grade in this area also includes multiple written peer reviews.

Texts

- Archive of Workplace Writing Experiences (www.workplace-writing.org) -- interviews with writers across industries and accompanying transcripts; available for free online
- Additional articles (posted to Blackboard)

Course Schedule

Reading, listening, and writing assignments are to be completed prior to our class session for the date they are listed.

Warning: The schedule below is intense! As our summer session is only six weeks long, each class meeting represents slightly more than one "regular" week's work in a typical semester. If you find yourself falling behind, I urge you to get in touch with me immediately so we can work together to get you back on track.

Unit 1: Thinking Rhetorically about Genre in Workplace Communication

T 5/18	**Why is the transition from writing in the university to writing in the workplace so hard?** Welcome! Tonight we'll get acquainted and begin a conversation that will last for our full six weeks together about rhetoric and workplace writing--particularly about audience, purpose, workplace genres, and the challenges related to each in various workplace communities.
Th 5/20	**If we can never learn every genre, how can we be "prepared" to write at work?** **Read**: • Audience on Writing Commons • Dirk, "Navigating Genres" (on Blackboard under "Readings") **Listen**: To an Archive of Workplace Writing interview of your choice (workplace-writing.org) -- or read the transcript!

	Journal: Write about the interview you listened to. Why did you choose it? What struck you about it? What surprised you, and why? What else did you want to know? (approx. 300 - 500 words)
T 5/25	**What does "rhetorical awareness" look like at work?** **Due: Draft of Interview Analysis for peer review** **Read**: • Rhetorical Analysis in the Real World • "Affect and Wayfinding in Writing after College" by Alexander, Lunsford, and Whithaus **Journal**: First, summarize the "Affect and Wayfinding" article. Then, choose a passage that you found particularly interesting, and dig in! Why did it strike you? What do you make of it? How might you apply it? Finally, write three questions about the text that you'd like to use as a starting point for our in-class discussion about it. (approximately 500 words) LinkedIn Learning Talk: Developing Your Professional Image (Olivia Payne and Lauren Kieltyka)

Unit 2: Discourse Communities

Th 5/27	**Why is collaborative writing so hard?** **Due: Interview Essay** **Read**: • "Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice" by Johns

	- "[Discourse in Organizations and Workplaces](#)" by Gunnarsson - "[Understanding Discourse Communities](#)" by Meltzer - "Challenges in collaborative writing in the contemporary corporation" by Colen and Petelin LinkedIn Learning Talk: Writing Emails People Want to Read (Sani Konukoglu, Abdulaziz Al-Emadi, and Andrew Ferchak)

Unit 3: Thinking Rhetorically about Language and Design

T 6/1	**How much is "emotional intelligence" just attention to rhetoric?** **Due: Industry Communication Presentations** **Read**: - "Emotional Intelligence and Managerial Communication" by Nguyen et. al - "[The Repressive Politics of Emotional Intelligence](#)" by Emre **Journal**: First, choose a quote or paragraph from one of the two Emotional Intelligence (EI) articles you read. Spend some time grappling with it--do you agree with it? Question it? What about it struck you? Try to contextualize it for your peers. Then, consider a time when Emotional Intelligence has played a role in your life, either in work or in school. Tell the story, and focus on the role of EI. Finally, EI and critical thinking are often lumped together as "key skills" for the workplace, and yet many people believe that you "either have them or you don't." How can we (either professors or students) foster these types of skills? Should we? Be as specific as possible. (approx. 400-500 words)

	LinkedIn Learning Talk: Communicating with Diplomacy and Tact (Jack Wilson and Zixin Wuren)
Th 6/3	****Asynchronous Work Tonight**** **Peer Review for Social Media Proposal** (instructions on BB)

T 6/8	**What happens when non-designers have to design workplace documents? (And they will!)**
	
	Due: Social Media Proposal
	Read:
	   • [Designing for Accessibility](#)
	   • [Understanding visual rhetoric](#)
	   • [Fundamental Design Principles for Non-designers](#)
	   • From *Practical Typography:*
	      · [What is Typography?](#)
	      · [Typography in Ten Minutes](#)
	      · [Summary of Key Rules](#)
	
	LinkedIn Learning Talk: High Stakes Communication (Phillip Greene, Tyler Jones, and Daniel Suger)

Unit 4: Complex Issues in Workplace Communication

Th 6/10	**What does it mean to "write like a woman" or "write like a man" at work?** **Read**: - "[The Problem With Telling Women to Email Like Men](#)" by Turk - "[A guide to how gender-neutral language is developing around the world](#)" by Berger - "A Look at Leadership Styles and Workplace Solidarity Communication" by Kelly and MacDonald **Journal:** In what ways do you think your gender or gender broadly influences the ways in which you write, if at all? (approximately 250 words) LinkedIn Learning Talk: Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing (Karisa Gingerich! and Kourtney Sam!)
T 6/15	**What are your ethical and social responsibilities as a communicator on the job?** **Read**: - "[How Equity Is Lost When Companies Hire Only Workers With Disabilities](#)" on NYT - **"[We're Entering the Age of Corporate Social Justice](#)**" by Zheng - "Getting In, Getting Hired, Getting Sideways Looks: Organizational Hierarchy and Perceptions of Racial Discrimination" by Wingfield and Chavez **Watch**: [The Myth of Bringing Your Full, Authentic Self to Work](#) (TEDx) **Journal**: Respond (approximately 300-400 words) to either today's reading or viewing--your choice of focus. LinkedIn Learning Talk: Creating a Career Plan (Elaine Ko, Haoran Zhang! And Taylor Bolden)

Unit 5: Thinking Rhetorically about Your Future as a Workplace Communicator

Th 6/17	**How can you stand out without being extra?** **Due:** Rough (really!) draft of your current resume **Read**: "Hey Students" article from NPR **Journal**: Today, I'd like you to find a current job posting that intrigues you in your potential future field. Link the job at the top of your post, then spend some time considering and answer the following questions: ● Are you currently qualified for this position? Would you be upon graduation? If not, what could you do to get closer to qualified over the next year or two? ● Peruse the organization's website. What do they forefront or showcase in their online presence? What is their mission? What is intriguing or appealing to you about them? ● Does the ad mention writing or communication? How do they describe these needs? How might you display these types of skills on a resume or a cover letter? What additional kinds of writing do you anticipate this job would require? Do you feel prepared to complete such communications? LinkedIn Learning Talk: Rock Your LinkedIn Profile (Holden Haley and Emma Delattre)
T 6/22	**What does it mean to "get it right" in your writing when** **you aren't a member of the discourse community yet?** **Due: Draft of Professional Documents for Peer Review**
Th 6/24	**What can we learn from one another and take with us into the workplace?** **Journal:** Self-assessment--One of the most challenging workplace documents that every employee will have to write at some point in their career (or yearly, in some cases) is a self-assessment of their performance at work. This

	document is formal, and it's also persuasive, as it is often used to determine raises or promotions. Ideally, it serves as written documentation of one's exemplary work over the previous year. You should write this document about your work in this course, in the form of a memo to your instructor. It should be 750-100 words long, and if it's useful, you should feel free to quote or paraphrase from your work in class. The memo should not only capture how you met or exceeded the course objectives, but also the processes of learning and producing good work. If you didn't meet these objectives and expectations, this is an opportunity to make a case for yourself. A good self-assessment of performance considers, foremost, what your supervisor (or, in this case, instructor!) cares about. You might consider questions such as: *What do you see as your most impressive achievement in the class? When and how were you most successful? When did you exceed expectations? Where and when did you struggle, and how did you overcome these challenges? What did you work hardest on, and what did you learn, not only about a topic or skill, but about yourself? What skills related to the class do you want to continue to work on, and how, specifically, will you do so?* **Present**: Each student will give us a 5-minute (screen-shared) "tour" of their documents. Note: The final-final documents are not due until Saturday, but you will need to be far enough along to give us a sense of your documents and the choices you made in building them. These conversations will be casual, and a way for us all to gain a sense of the variety and discipline/industry-specific choices your peers have made.
Saturday, 6/26	**Due: Professional Documents Sequence** (no class meeting--submit on Blackboard by 11:00 a.m.)

Policies and Other Administrative Notes

Technology Expectations

In order to function at full capacity in this course, students should:

·   Be open to learning and registering for new technologies

- Be flexible when technological glitches happen (which is a given)
- Seek technological help when necessary by contacting the GW Division of Information Technology or call them on 202-994-4948

I understand that technology doesn't always work as we expect and that this may cause some delays. However, I expect you to be proactive and to find a resolution for any of these problems. You can ask for my help, but if I don't respond right away, keep working on your own:

- Contact the Division of IT (202-994-4948)
- Contact your classmates, and
- Use the Technology Resources links from Blackboard.

Note: While I may take the technology glitch into account when assessing your grades, if you have not taken adequate efforts to resolve the problem on your own, you may still be penalized for lateness.

Attendance

Students are expected to be in class—for us, that means online at the required times. That said, I understand that emergencies, both personal and academic, do come up. If you miss class time, your "engaged interactions" grade will suffer. Whenever you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from your classmates. Assignments are due on time even if you are absent, but in-class work cannot be made up. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. This policy means that I do not generally require doctors' notes, proof of family illnesses or deaths, or other documentation that would establish an "excused" absence.

Late Work

Although extenuating circumstances do occur, as a general rule, late work is not acceptable. In a six-week summer session, frankly, we just don't have time for it! For smaller assignments, such as homework, late work will not be accepted. For larger assignments, like major papers, late submissions will only be considered if students discuss an extension prior to the due date. If you are going to

be late with an assignment because of an unavoidable situation, let me know before the assignment is due and we can try to work something out. (Note: This applies to final versions of papers; drafts of papers will not be accepted late. Further, if a draft is not submitted, students forfeit the right to feedback and to revision options.)

Academic Integrity and UW1020 Plagiarism Policy

We will spend a good amount of time in class discussing how, when, and why to cite sources in your work. If you have questions or are unsure if you should cite something, please ask. The University Writing Policy:

> Academic writing builds on the work of others who have written and created before us. Academic writers use and cite the ideas, words, and images of others in order to document grounds for knowledge, illuminate contexts of argument, acknowledge intellectual influences, distinguish our own analytical voices, and encourage further investigation and inquiry. If, on the other hand, we take others' work as our own—using their phrases, images, concepts, or arguments without acknowledgement—we not only hamper these goals but also cross the line into academic dishonesty.

GW's Code of Academic Integrity defines academic dishonesty as "cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." My recommended penalty for plagiarism on a first charge is failure of the class.

Disability Statement

Students with documented disabilities are legally entitled to certain accommodations in the classroom. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu. I will be happy to work with students and the DSS to arrange fair access and support.

Advisor Contacts

If you are struggling with an individual class, or several classes, your first line of contact is always the professor. Contact the professor to discuss the situation, whether it be a lack of clarity over what's expected, an acknowledgment of an illness or family problem that has kept you from your studies recently, or anything else. Stay in contact with your professor. If, for whatever reason, you need more assistance than your professor can provide, seek out your academic advisor. Your school or college will have assigned an advisor to you. In cases where serious family or personal emergencies arise that leave you considering withdrawal from one or more classes, your professor or advisor may suggest that you contact your dean's office for help.

Advising contacts are:

CCAS - ccasug@gwu.edu
GWSB - gwsbadv@gwu.edu
ESIA - advising@gwu.edu
SEAS - seasadvising@gwu.edu

Below is the contact information for the dean's offices at the different schools:

CCAS: Phillips Hall, 801 22nd St., 107 Floor; 202.994.6210
ESIA: 1957 E St., NW, Suite 302; 202.994.3002
SPHHS: Ross Hall, 2300 Eye St., NW, Suite 202; 202.994.2160
SEAS: Tompkins Hall of Engineering, 725 23rd St., NW, Suite 105; 202.994.6080
GWSB: Duques Hall, NW, Suite 456; 202.994.7027

Writing Center

The Writing Center offers free, one-on-one sessions with tutors who can help with a variety of writing tasks, including writing assignments, research papers, and personal statements. This is another resource available to you by virtue of being a member of the GW community—take advantage of it! Take responsibility for the quality of your work and get all of you can out of the learning experience. Appointments are recommended. Visit http://gwu.edu/~gwriter/ for more information.

Work In and Out of Class

Per federal and university guidelines, over 14 weeks, students will spend 3 credit hours per week in class (150 minutes), with an additional 1 credit hour (50 minutes) spent either in class or with a hybrid equivalent (online or other guided instruction): 56 hours for the semester. Homework and other out-of-class work is estimated at an average of 400 minutes per week (112 hours over the course of the semester).