

GBUS 291: Business Communication

Fall 2014 – Mondays and Wednesdays 10:00 am – 11:15 am

Patterson 211

Instructor: Deborah Downing Wilson, Ph.D.

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Course Description

This course focuses on the concepts and processes associated with communications in the business arena. Emphasis is placed on the students building the foundations for effective communications at work, in groups and teams, and across cultures. Topics covered include the writing process, business correspondence, reports and proposals, and presentations.

SNC Mission Statement

Sierra Nevada College graduates will be educated to be scholars of and contributors to a sustainable world. Sierra Nevada College combines the **liberal arts** and **professional preparedness** through an interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes **entrepreneurial thinking** and environmental, social, economic and educational **sustainability**.

Student Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively in business situations by writing with purpose and clarity.
2. Compose business messages that include professional tone, positive language, inclusive expression, plain English, emphasis, conciseness, and clarity.
3. Apply effective writing and formatting techniques to the composition of e-mail messages, interoffice memos, routine letters, press releases, goodwill messages, persuasive messages, negative messages, and formal reports.
4. Give a professional oral presentation.
5. Write persuasive résumés and cover letters and demonstrate superior interviewing techniques when applying for employment.

Textbooks:

Guffey, M.E. and Loewy, D. (2013). Essentials of Business Communication (Ninth Edition). Cengage Learning. ISBN: 978-1-133-19036-3. **(Rent this!)**

Aaron, J.E. (2012). The Little, Brown Compact Handbook (Eighth Edition). Pearson Education Inc. ISBN: 978-0-205-23660-2. **(Buy This!)**

Notes: Please turn your phone off and put it away before entering the class. Bring a laptop if you can, but leave it off until it's needed for class activities. Please do not eat your breakfast in this class.

This is a hands-on class, which will provide you with the opportunity to develop the skill set necessary for the effective presentation of yourself and your message in professional settings. We will work from the premise that language use in professional settings is not just a manipulation of

formal units, but also a generative, collaborative process in which participants rely on various kinds of specialized knowledge to design, deliver, and interpret messages.

Class Requirements:

Attendance: This class is highly participatory. Most of the class meetings will include group work designed to breathe life into some of the ideas we'll be discussing. Together with your classmates, you will be creating and participating in the business communication practices that underlie success in professional life. There will be no way for you to make up a class if you miss it, so it's important that you **come to every class, come to class on time and participate fully** in the activities of the day.

Group Work: Success in professional life often depends on effective communication within and between small groups, in conferences, business meetings, and group discussions. For this reason small groups will be organized at the beginning of the course and most of the class activities will be carried out in and among these groups.

Written Assignments: An important goal of this course is the development of a personal repertoire of business writing skills. At the successful completion of this class you will be a competent writer and interpreter of formal letters, persuasive messages, negative messages, press releases, business email correspondence, personal resumes, and more. Often you will be asked to prepare rough drafts of these types of correspondence and bring them with you to class, where we will edit and rewrite them as a class activity. It is vital that you come fully prepared to participate in these events. (Your participation grade depends on it.)

Presentations and Student-led Discussions: During the course your group will be preparing and delivering several short presentations and facilitating the discussions that follow. You will also create and deliver a final presentation, which will comprise 25% of your overall grade. At the end of week five, students will meet with me to discuss the design and content of your final presentations. You will be encouraged to create and develop a final presentation that reflects your career goals, and that you may actually use outside of this course. During the final weeks of class you will work within your groups to develop content, prepare visual aids, and perfect your delivery before making your presentation to the class. More complete assignment prompts will come later.

Readings and Quizzes: The readings in this class have been carefully chosen to be thought-provoking and directly relevant to the class activities. They are neither lengthy nor arduous. You must keep up with the readings to participate fully in the class discussions and activities. In order to inspire you to do all the reading, on the days readings are due there will be a short quiz at the beginning of class. If you are late or absent, you cannot make these up.

Midterm Assessment: On October 17th midterm grades must be submitted to the registrar. Each student should plan attend office hours on either October 13th or 15th. Together we'll discuss your progress in the class and agree on a midterm grade. (I'll pass around a sign-up sheet in class.)

Final Reflection: At the end of the term you will be asked to go back and review your experiences in the class in sequential order, to think about the material we have covered, and to write a reflection on your own learning and development (or lack of it) this quarter. This reflection (750-1000 words) should include a good account of three of the course learning objectives, and demonstrate a solid understanding of how these new skills will be applied in your professional life. You will turn this in as part of your final portfolio, and submit a copy to the homework address. I'll post a more detailed prompt later in the term.

There will be no midterm and no final exam in this class. Instead, you will collect all of the work you have done throughout the class (written assignments, presentation notes, visual aids, final reflection) plus your final presentation materials and paper, and arrange them in a **portfolio** to be turned in **at 11:30 am on Tuesday, December 9th**. Later in the quarter I'll post a detailed guideline for building your portfolio.

It is important that your grade reflects both the effort you put into this class and the knowledge you take away from it. For this reason you are welcome to make a grading appointment with me on Wednesday, December 10th. Together we will discuss your participation and learning in the class and agree on a final grade.

Grading:

Attendance (present, on time, prepared, involved):	25%
Written Assignments:	15%
Group Work:	15%
Quizzes:	15%
Final Reflection:	5%
Research Presentation and Paper:	25%

Course Outline: Subject to Change!

Please be sure you are always using the most current version of this outline.

Week	Day	Learning Objective and Reading Assignments Readings to be accomplished <u>BEFORE CLASS</u> and subject to QUIZ
I	Introduction and Course Planning	
	8/18	Getting to know each other and structuring the course to meet your needs.
	8/20	Group assignments and course overview
II	A Bit of Communication Theory	
	8/25	Communication: What is it, exactly? Read: Guffey & Loewy, pages 1-12 QUIZ
	8/27	Nonverbal communication Read: Guffey & Loewy, pages 12-15 QUIZ Amy Cuddy: Your Body Language Shapes Who You are
III	Cultural Roots of Communication	
	9/1	Labor Day – No Class
	9/3	How culture shapes your message and constrains your interpretations Read: Guffey & Loewy, pages 16-27 QUIZ

IV	Finding Your Professional Voice Part I: Written Communications	
	9/8	The writing process Reading:
	9/10	Let's start with something simple - memos and emails
V	Written Communications Cont.	
	9/15	Writing thank you notes Reading:
	9/17	Just say no...(writing negative messages)
VI	Written Communications Cont.	
	9/22	Informative writing – responses to inquiries Reading:
	9/24	Informative writing – business reports
VI	Written Communications Cont.	
	9/29	The science (and art) of persuasion: part I Reading:
	10/1	The persuasive business letter
VII	Finding Your Professional Voice Part II: Oral Communications	
	10/6	Rethinking perfection – Public Speaking: It's just another kind of conversation. Tailoring your message to your audience, and tailoring your talk to your message Reading:
	10/8	Making the most of your Q & A: Encouraging feedback, handling criticism with grace, dealing with difficult questions and unsavory audience members
VIII	Oral Communications Cont.	
	10/13	The science (and art) of persuasion: part II The power of attention Reading:
	10/15	Developing audience participation skills: Offering restorative feedback
IX	Impromptu Speaking	
	10/20	The instant 3-part structure
	10/22	Impromptu practice
X	Avoiding Death (By PowerPoint) – Creating Powerful Visual Aids	
	10/27	PowerPoint should structure your conversation, not eliminate feedback
	10/29	Minimizing visual aids and maximizing their impact
XI	Now that you have the skills, let's get the job.	
	11/3	Formal letter of introduction – first draft
	11/5	Formal letter of introduction – rewrite
XII	Resume Writing	
	11/10	Your resume – first draft
	11/12	Your resume - rewrite
XIII	The Job Interview	
	11/17	What to say, what not to say, and how to say it (or not)
	11/19	Interview Bunko
	Thanksgiving Break – Give Thanks!	

XIV	11/24	No Class
	11/26	No Class
XV	Group Work on Final Presentations	
	12/1	
	12/3	
XVI	Finals Week!	
	12/9	Portfolios Due at 11:30 am Final Presentations 11:30 am – 2:30 pm

Resources: (Incomplete)

Bergman, Eric. (2012). *5 Steps to Conquer 'Death by Powerpoint'*. Petticoat Creek Press.
O'Hair, Dan; Stewart, Rob; Rubenstein, Hannah. (2012). *A Speaker's Guidebook* (5th Edition). Boston. Bedford/St. Martins.
Marshall, Lisa. (2013). *Smart Talk: The Public Speaker's Guide to Success in Every Situation*. New York. St. Martins.
Quintanilla, Kelly M. and Wahl, Shawn. (2014). *Business and Professional Communication* (2nd Edition). Sage.
Zeoli, Richard. (2008). *The 7 Principles of Public Speaking*. New York. Skyhorse Publishing.

Prim Library Resources

Using the library's resources effectively (not just Internet resources) contributes to developing each of SNC's core themes by exposing students to high quality academic resources, diverse opinions, new ideas, and a future that includes building on a liberal arts education. In this course, you will be expected to utilize the library's resources (either on-site or remotely) as you complete your assignments.

Prim Library Resources:

1. Materials on reserve (ask for these at the circulation desk; for use inside Prim Library)
2. Reference materials (for use inside Prim Library)
3. Books (can be checked out)
4. Electronic databases (for peer-reviewed research articles, reviews, newspaper and magazine articles) Electronic databases, such as EBSCO: Academic Search Premier.
5. Hardcopy periodicals
6. Lib Guides: <http://Libguides.sierranevada.edu> These web pages contain instructions about how to use resources available at Prim Library, how to evaluate the appropriateness of information from the Internet for a research paper, how to cite sources, and other topics related to finding and using information.

Sanctions for Cheating and/or Plagiarism

The Honor Code

The faculty of SNC believes students must be held to high standards of integrity in all aspects of college life in order to promote the educational mission of the College and to encourage respect for the rights of others. Each student brings to the SNC community unique skills, talents, values and experiences which, when expressed within the community, contribute to the quality of the educational environment and the growth and development of the individual. Students share with members of the faculty, administration and staff the responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment conducive to learning and personal development, where actions are guided by mutual respect, integrity, responsibility and trust. The faculty and students alike must make diligent efforts to ensure high standards are upheld by their colleagues and peers as well as themselves. Therefore faculty and students accept responsibility for maintaining these standards at Sierra Nevada College and are obligated to comply with its regulations and procedures, which they are expected to read and understand.

Consequences of Violating the Student Honor Code

SNC students and faculty share the responsibility for maintaining an environment of academic honesty. Thus, all are responsible for knowing and abiding by the SNC Faculty/Student Honor Code published in the current SNC Catalog. Faculty are responsible for presenting the Honor Code and the consequences of violating it to students at the start of their classes AND for reporting all incidences of academic dishonesty to the Provost. Students are responsible for knowing what constitutes CHEATING, PLAGIARISM and FABRICATION and for refraining from these and other forms of academic dishonesty. Violations of the Honor Code become part of a student's academic record.

- 1st Offense: Student receives a zero for assignment/exam and counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.
- 2nd Offense: Student fails course and receives counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.
- 3rd Offense: Student is expelled.

ADA Accommodations

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with a documented disability are eligible for support services and accommodations. If a student wishes to request an accommodation, please contact the Director of Academic Support Services, Henry Conover, at (775) 831-1314 x7534, hconover@sierranevada.edu or go to the OASIS offices on the third floor of Prim Library within the first week of the semester.

The SNC Email System

The SNC email system is the official communication vehicle among students, faculty members and administrative staff and is designed to protect the confidentiality of student information as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 Act (FERPA). Students should check their college email accounts daily during the school year.

Students have a right to forward their SNC e-mail to another e-mail account (for example, @hotmail or @gmail). However, confidentiality of student information protected by FERPA cannot be guaranteed for SNC e-mail forwarded to an outside vendor. Having email redirected does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with official communication sent to his or her SNC email account.