Management Writing (MSM-60230, Section 01) will meet during Fall Semester 2014 on Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 2:00 p.m. to 3:20 p.m. during the first half of the semester, August 25 through October 8, 2014.

The course instructor is Professor James S. O’Rourke (234-B Mendoza College of Business, Office phone: 574.631.8397. Home phone: 574.272.1773. Mobile: 574.339.1836. E-mail: jorourke@nd.edu).

Required Textbooks


Purposes of the Course

• To give students an appreciation for the importance of effective communication in business and society;

• To help students understand how business writing and the messages it conveys are the products of a process that begins with critical thinking;

• To improve students’ writing skills, including expression issues related to language use, style, tone, grammar, punctuation, and organization;

• To facilitate the integration of communication skills with an understanding of theory and strategy;

• To assist students in making decisions about document preparation, including format, layout, and design.
• To provide students with an understanding of the ethical dimensions of business writing.

**GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Readings.** We expect you to read the assigned chapters from the textbooks and reprints distributed in class and to master the material they contain.

**Participation.** We expect full and active participation by all students in our classroom discussions and critiques.

**Attendance.** We expect you to attend class. Your instructor will take roll at each meeting session to determine who is present and who is not. We also expect you to arrive at class on time. Since this course has just 14 meeting dates, we regard your absence from any of them as a serious matter. If you incur *more than one unexcused absence*, please expect to receive a lower grade as a result.

**GRADES**

This is a performance course designed to diagnose your current writing abilities, to provide you with a clear sense of writing standards in the North American marketplace, and to assist you in improving your skills of written expression. While, there are no scheduled examinations, we will administer occasional quizzes based on textbook readings. You will be required to produce written responses to a number of separate writing assignments.

An important part of the learning process involves your willingness to discuss your writing as well as your reaction to and understanding of the managerial problems presented as writing opportunities. Many of these will arise during classroom discussion of the case studies which serve as the basis for our work this semester.

**Grade Weights.** Each assignment will be weighted according to this scale:

| Assignment #1: Case Solution / Correspondence | 20% |
|                                             |     |
| Due: Monday, September 8, 2014              |     |

| Quiz: Grammar, Style and Usage               | 05% |
|                                             |     |
| Due: Monday, September 15, 2014             |     |

| Assignment #2: Case Solution / Correspondence | 20% |
|                                            |     |
| Due: Wednesday, September 17, 2014          |     |
Assignment #3: Collaborative Writing Project .......................... 20%
Due: Monday, September 29, 2014

Final Examination ................................................................. 20%
Due: Wednesday, October 8, 2014

Classroom Discussion & Participation .................................. 15%

Grades are important, of course, for all degree-seeking students. Grades are somewhat less
important, however, than learning outcomes. Your careful attention to classroom discussion and
written assignments is of considerably greater importance than whether you earned an A, an A-,
or, perhaps, a B+ in a 1.5 credit-hour course. We are sensitive to your interest in doing well and
will do all that we can to help you.

**GRADING PHILOSOPHY**

Your grade for any particular assignment in this course is a reflection of your professor’s
judgment of the quality of your work. We can grade only on the basis of what you give us, not
on what you had sincerely intended to do. Submit your work on time, follow the assignment
directions, do your own work and you’ll have little trouble achieving the course objectives as
well as your own.

Your grade in this course will be based on your performance as evaluated by your professor.
However, please be aware that the Mendoza College of Business Grading Guidelines call for a
grade point average between 3.3 and 3.6 for each graduate section.

Your instructor is seeking to assess your abilities as measured against the standards of the
marketplace. Those standards have been developed over a period of more than 30 years, dealing
with business, government, industry, the press and the public. We are asking you to do what
your employers will ask of you: prompt, competent, quality work.

Once a grade has been assigned and recorded, it cannot and will not be changed unless evidence
is provided that your professor has made an error. A difference of opinion between you and your
professor about the quality of your work is not evidence of error.

**THE ETHICS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

Language, as you know, has great power. It can convey impressions and communicate
knowledge and information. It can transmit feelings and emotion, as well. Language, depending
on how it is used, can inspire, enrage, inform, persuade, entertain, assure, or offend.

Business writers, as well as those who speak on public occasions, occupy a special position of
power. Their words can influence others, urging them to action, or restraining them from acting.
Their words can be a source of inspiration and motivation to others. Because of this, writers and speakers must choose their topics, organizational patterns, evidence, and words with great care.

Three basic principles guide our discussion of ethics in this course. First, we contend that all parties in the communication process have ethical responsibilities. Second, ethical writers, readers, speakers, and listeners possess attitudes and standards that pervade their character and guide their actions before, during, and after their speaking and writing. Third, management communication is not value-neutral. What you say, what you write, and how you choose to speak and write will have consequences for your audience. Your obligation is to speak and write for the betterment and benefit of your audience. To do otherwise is a serious ethical lapse for a management communicator.

Public communication is held to a higher standard of responsibility than private communication. To speak or write freely and privately among friends with no expectation that your words will become public is one thing. To speak in public or to write for publication with the expectation that your words will receive widespread attention is quite another. Please understand that public communication is a serious matter, particularly if you occupy a position of responsibility. And please know that if words have the power to injure or harm others, they can inflict harm on the sender, as well.

**CASE ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENTS**

You will be asked to analyze and write a response to two of the case studies listed in your syllabus. You’ll find all of the cases in your textbook, along with a detailed writing assignment. In each instance, you must produce a business memo and a professional business letter.

Your business memos should contain the following elements:

- A *summary paragraph* disclosing the key recommendations offered in your analysis of the issues in the case.

- A *background section* providing details essential to a reader’s understanding of what happened, including the basic facts of the case.

- A *discussion section* addressing the implications of the facts and assessing both critical issues and stakeholder interests. This should be the largest section of your memorandum.

- A *recommendations* section listing actions recommended in response to the case and specific, by-name or by-department ownership of those actions. Suspense dates for completion of the actions may be included, as well.
You may select any case listed in the syllabus to submit in satisfaction of these two writing assignments.

**COLLABORATIVE WRITING**

You must collaborate with at least one other classmate from this section of Management Writing to produce a document that provides practical communication policy guidance for managers. **That assignment is due on Monday, September 29, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.**

You may select one other person in this section with whom to work on this assignment. If (and only if) you think there is enough work in your topic selection for three people, please provide your instructor with a one-page (or single screen) outline of your ideas and explain why you think it will take three people to get it done. We’re open to any reasonable argument. No groups of one, however, and no groups of four.

**Paper Format, Length, and Appearance.** This is a formal, collaborative document. Your paper should be no less than 7 pages and no more than 10 pages in length, exclusive of cover sheet, table of contents, endnotes, and attachments. It should be single-spaced within paragraphs and double-spaced between paragraphs. If you need an exception to this general guideline, please speak with your instructor. Each paper should have:

- A cover sheet with your proposal title, author names, course and section number.
- A table of contents with page reference numbers (cover sheet and table of contents should be separate text files and unnumbered).
- Page numbers (pagination begins on the first page of text); please do not number the cover sheet or table of contents. The first visible page number should appear at the foot of page two.
- One-inch margins throughout.
- Proper and scrupulous endnote documentation of all paper-based, telephone, face-to-face interviews, or online research.
- Boldfaced descriptive headings and subheadings to organize the contents.
- A single staple affixed to the upper left-hand corner of the paper.

**Topic Selection.** If you choose not to accept the collaborative writing topic as outlined below, you may negotiate an alternative topic with your instructor. Innovative suggestions are always welcome. Think about it, talk it over with your teammates and see your instructor. Now is the
time to begin thinking about your writing partner and your topic selection. Here is a brief list of topics that might prove interesting and worthwhile:

- “When Two Become One: Communicating in acquisitions and mergers.”
- “Watch What You Say: What does a manager need to know about libel and slander?”
- “Responding to Requests for an Employment Reference: What can you say?”
- “Congratulating an Employee: How to say thank-you for a job well done.”
- “Communicating in a Product Recall: What should a company say?”
- “Communicating Good Intentions: What should a company say about philanthropy and corporate contributions?”
- “Communicating Corporate Heritage: Best practices in managerial story-telling.”
- “Communicating Grief: The task of telling others when an employee dies.”
- “Communicating Promotions: Is it possible to screw up good news?”
- “Communicating Corporate Culture: What should a manager say about ethics to employees and other stakeholders?”
- “Balancing Privacy with Concern: What can a manager say when an employee is ill?”
- “Balancing Privacy with Curiosity: What can a manager say when an employee is dismissed?”

You can probably think of a dozen more, given your interests and experience. We’re open to a very wide range of topics, but are mostly interested in having you investigate and learn about a subject that will be useful and productive for you, personally and professionally. Please speak with your instructor early and often about your work on this particular assignment.

One further note: No hypothetical companies, fictitious sources or characters may be used in constructing your collaborative paper. Focus less on your own personal experience and more on the experiences and judgement of professional managers and the companies they work for. Your examples and illustrations must all be authentic and factual, and, of course, must be properly documented with appropriate endnotes.
COURSE POLICIES AND STANDARDS

Please seek help as soon and as often as you need it. Do not wait until it is too late for us to help you. We are here to assist you with the task of learning and improving your writing.

Deadlines. There are no automatic extensions, make-ups, or incompletes. You will be graded down for failing to meet deadlines. If you cannot meet your responsibilities in the course, see or call your instructor in advance of deadlines. We know that, from time-to-time, everything from a job interview to illness may keep you from attending class. Please let your instructor know in advance and he or she will make every effort to accommodate your needs.

Absence. We will have just 14 meeting sessions in this course. We regard your presence as especially important, even if your instructor does not formally take roll at the beginning of each class. If you cannot be here, let your instructor know about it in advance. We have found, over the years, a remarkable correlation: those who come to class faithfully seem to do better in the course. If you incur more than one unexcused absence from this course, please expect to receive a lower grade as a result.

Incompletes. As a rule, we just do not award incompletes. They’re genuinely a pain in the neck. You begin the new term with the obligations of the previous semester hanging over your head. Both instructor and student feel harried and unhappy about the situation. In unusual cases, though, such as hospitalization or genuine emergency, an incomplete “X” will be assigned. The student must complete all class assignments within one semester or the Registrar will assign a grade of “F” unless an extension is approved by both the instructor and the Dean, and we notify the Registrar.

The Notre Dame Honor Code. Much of the educational process at Notre Dame involves group discussion and collaborative activities. Neither the Mendoza College nor the Fanning Center for Business Communication wishes to hinder the learning that can and often does take place in that environment. Fairness, however, requires that certain limits be observed in the actual production of assignments.

In this course, all writing tasks – with the exception of the collaborative writing project – are to be accomplished by each student working independently. No student should copy another student’s work or represent work done by someone else as if it were his or her own. Evidence of plagiarism is cause for serious disciplinary action by the College. Please, do your own work. We strongly endorse and support the principles and process outlined in the University of Notre Dame Honor Code. Please read that document and use its precepts as a guide.
Mon 25 Aug 2014  The Role of Writing in Business
Reading: O’Rourke, Chapter 1, “Management Communication in Transition.”
Reading: O’Rourke, Appendix A, “Analyzing a Case Study.”
PowerPoint: “Management Communication,” 15 slides.

Wed 27 Aug 2014  The Basics of Correspondence: Memos and Letters
Discussion: “The Principles of Communication.”
Reading: Alred, Chapter 1, “The Writing Process.”
Reading: O’Rourke, Appendix C, “Sample Business Letter.”
Reading: O’Rourke, Appendix D, “Sample Business Memo.”
Reading: O’Rourke, Appendix E, “Sample Strategy Memo.”
Case Study #1: O’Rourke, Case 5-1, Cypress Semiconductor Corporation.

Mon 01 Sep 2014  Communication and Strategy
Reading: O’Rourke, Chapter 2, “Communication and Strategy.”
Reading: Alred, Chapter 7, “Correspondence.”
Case Study #2: O’Rourke, Case 11-2, Dixie Industries, Inc.

Wed 03 Sep 2014  Audience Analysis
Reading: O’Rourke, Appendix F, “Documentation.”
Reading: Alred, Chapter 3, “Research and Documentation.”
Case Study #3: O’Rourke, Case 3-1, Excel Industries, Inc.

Mon 08 Sep 2014  Communication and Ethics
Reading: O’Rourke, Chapter 3, “Communication Ethics.”
Reading: Alred, Chapter 4, “Business Writing Documents and Elements.”
Case Study #4: O’Rourke, Case 3-2, A Collection Scandal at Sears, Roebuck & Company.
PowerPoint: “Communication Ethics,” 15 slides.
Assignment: First case solution (letter and memo) due.
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Wed 01 Oct 2014  How Culture Affects Communication
Reading: O’Rourke, Chapter 10, “Intercultural Communication.”
Reading: Alred, Chapter 11, “Grammar.”
Case Study #11: O’Rourke, Case 10-1, Oak Brook Medical Systems, Inc.

Mon 06 Oct 2014  Writing for Multiple Audiences
Reading: Alred, Chapter 12, “Punctuation and Mechanics.”
Classroom: Return and Review of Collaborative Writing Assignment.
Case Study #12: O’Rourke, Case 1-2, Great West Casualty v. Estate of G. Witherspoon (A).

Wed 08 Oct 2014  Final Examination
Reading: O’Rourke, Chapters 1-3, 5-11.