

Fall 2015

# ENGL 2155

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English 2155: Introduction to Professional Writing

*The Rhetoric of Social Media*

Section: 001

LA 390

T/Th 2:00-3:15

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### Course Description

Whatever your chosen career path, at the core of every profession is the need to communicate effectively and appropriately, through written, oral, or visual means, or a combination of all three. This course is designed to introduce students to different kinds of writing and composing that occur while using social media. While professional writers are typically employed as journalists, critics, technical editors, grant writers, and legal aids, the emergence of social media as an essential feature of our daily lives has created a deep need for people who are also skilled in its uses.

During the first part of the course, we will focus on strengthening your writing skills, introducing you to concepts of document design, and developing a critical understanding of the complex nature of text production in professional settings. You will also explore your own career goals in light of professional development, research, and reflection on communication, writing, and technology possibilities. In the second part of the course, we will explore real world applications of professional writing through proposing and writing a feature article for a particular publication. This will involve being introduced to research methods, incorporating visual and verbal elements, and finding an appropriate audience. Lastly, you will work in groups to create a presentation based on an in-depth study of a particular kind of social media.

### Course Objectives

By the end of this semester, students will be able to:

- Understand why using social media in rhetorically effective ways will aid them professionally;
- Work productively in a group to carry out a task;
- Have the ability to manipulate, analyze, and compose, within different social media platforms;
- Develop strategies for making their prose clear and precise;
- Experiment with different social media to determine which ones are appropriate to specific situations;
- Strengthen their skills in oral, visual, and written communication;
- Transfer the skills they have learned in this class by adapting them to real-life situations ie. aiding in their job search, using social media in their workplace, and understanding the implications—ethical, political, professional, and social—of using social media.

### Required Textbooks/Materials

Shirky, Clay. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. Penguin, 2008  
Johnson, Christopher. *Microstyle: The Art of Writing Little*. Norton, 2011.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

### *Professionalism (15 pts)*

Your professionalism grade will be based on the following factors: attendance, which includes being prompt, participating in discussion and group activities; turning in homework on time, and observing the rules below. To sum up: Reading the assigned work, joining in class discussion, whether it's F2F or in Google docs or another social app, working with your peers, and turning in assignments on time are essential for passing this class. These activities correspond to making it to work on time, being prepared and actively engaged in your work, and contributing daily to the success of the company, organization, or university where you work.

### Class Rules that Factor into Your Professionalism Grade

- Come to class on time and be prepared to participate in activities.
- Do the readings and bring the book or article to class. (Print out Moodle articles)
- Check Google docs frequently for updates about the class.
- Turn in all assignments on time. Type all of your assignments, including homework, journals, grammar work, using the proper format.
- Do not leave the room to answer a phone call UNLESS it is an emergency.
- Do not talk to others while I or your classmates are speaking.
- Do not use your phone or the computers in class to do anything but the activities assigned.
- Be an active participant in group work. Stay on task and let me know if anyone is not participating.

### **Major Assignments/ Description and Points Awarded**

- *Reading Responses (assigned weekly throughout semester—due before class—if submitted after class starts you'll receive ½ credit) (up to 5 pts each)*

These short, biweekly writing assignments will be based on prompts related to the readings/viewings for homework and will act as quizzes. They should be in your Assignments folder in Google docs as READING RESPONSE Assignments. You can have individual documents for each response or you can have one document for all of them (either way, each response should have a title of the reading/viewing and the date).

- *Social Media Exercises. (3 x 15 pts.)* These will be short papers (3 pages) that will engage you in observation, research, and analysis of social media apps and their uses in professional settings.
- *Social Media Slide Presentations (group-based project with research, includes an annotated bibliography, reflection essay, group presentation--30 pts)*

Working in groups of three, you will create a slide presentation, focusing on the possibilities and the perils of using a particular social media. Groups will be formed around interests. The group will research, write, and design the presentation together.

- *Tweeting #English2155/Writing Microstyle. (20 pts.)* Starting in week 3, two people will be assigned to tweet about social media issues related to class. All members of the class will be involved in using the hashtag #English2155 plus others hashtags they think are significant.

### **Grading and Grade Distribution**

Assignments are weighed based on their point value. Your grade will be calculated by dividing the points you've earned by the points possible for each assignment. For a final grade, students will receive an A (91-100), B (81-90), C (71-80), D (61-70), F (below 60). I do not curve grades; therefore, if your point average is 88.9 or less, you will receive a B for the class. I refuse to engage in grade grubbing. If you are worried about the grade you'll make, please make sure to speak to me about it before the end of the semester so we can strategize how to improve it.

I will provide a more extensive handout of the general criteria I use for each assignment.

## Course Policies

### *Attendance*

As noted above, attendance is part of your professionalism grade and is mandatory. Additionally, coming to class unprepared is unacceptable. Any work that is done in class cannot be made up due to absences (unless the absence has been cleared with me first) or turned in late. Assignments due that day will face a penalty of ½ grade per day late. If you have any obligations coming up where you will miss class, please let me know so we can arrange for you to make up the work before class. More than 3 absences will result in a ½ grade deducted from your final grade.

Please do not come to class late. I understand occasional tardiness but chronic tardiness is unacceptable and will affect your professionalism grade. Being late three times is equal to one absence.

### *Submitting Work*

All assignments must use MLA formatting and citation except for the response assignments. All assignments should be uploaded into google docs with an appropriate title based on the assignment. For ex. Last name, Digital Literacy Assignment, Final version.

### *Late Work*

*All assignments are due on the date scheduled and will be penalized as noted below.* I will not accept late drafts or online homework assignments. If they are not turned in on time, they will receive a zero. Thus, the late policy only covers final versions and does not include drafts due in class. If you are absent during a peer review or do not have a draft for review, you will receive a zero. To receive feedback, you may come to my office hours or go to the writing center.

Late assignments will be penalized the point equivalent of a 1/2 letter grade per day. I do not accept assignments via email unless we have made this arrangement beforehand

### *Conferences*

At least once during the semester I would like to meet with each of you to discuss your progress in the class and any challenges you are having with the material and/or assignments. These conferences will be mandatory and will result in the equivalent of two absences if you miss it.

### *Group Work*

This class will involve working in groups formally and informally. A basic assumption of a course that is student-centered is that we learn not only from the professor and the readings but also from our peers. Working with people is essential in the workplace, thus, observing rules of courtesy and being a good communicator, both speaking and listening, are skills you should apply in this classroom. Disparaging remarks, private conversations or working on the computer while someone is speaking are unacceptable.

### *Drafting and Peer Review*

In order to improve your writing and receive feedback during the writing process, you will be involved in the writing process which includes submitting drafts for peer review. This involves, sharing your work with others, and providing and receiving feedback. We will discuss drafts as a class and in small groups. You will receive participation credit for sharing and responding to drafts. If you do not show up with a draft, you will not receive any points nor will you get any feedback unless you come to my office hours. I will not collect drafts regularly but I expect that you will be revising your work accordingly. You may come to my office hours or an agreed upon time for feedback. I also recommend visits to the writing center.

### *A Word about the Computer Lab*

Having a class in the computer lab provides us with a great opportunity to utilize the Web and specific social media for research and composing purposes, to work with different kinds of technology firsthand, and to

emulate real work experiences. Working in a computer lab requires different kinds of responsibilities and objectives. *It's easy to get distracted when in front of a screen so make every effort to focus on the information I am imparting.* When I say, Lids/phones down. I mean it. Please respect me when I tell the class to disconnect while I am conveying important information or providing a short lecture or explaining an assignment.

#### *A Word on our Digital Learning Modalities*

We will be using collaborative writing tools as a way to extend classroom conversation and share research findings and information as well as work collaboratively on providing feedback on your ideas and writing: using Google Docs. I hope these tools may contribute to your own growing digital literacy as well as be used experientially as a future tool for teaching.

### **University Policies and Resources**

#### *Academic Integrity*

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu>.

#### *Accommodations*

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>.

#### *Writing Center*

The English Department's Writing Center is an indispensable facility and resource free to all UNO students. Please take advantage of the highly skilled tutors who will provide you with feedback on your drafts, help with particular grammar and usage issues, and general expertise in academic and creative writing. Writing tutors do not proofread your papers but help you become better readers and writers of your own work. Hours will be posted in the first few weeks of the semester or you can simply drop by the Center in LA334 to begin working with a tutor.