BCOM 3113: Written Business Communications
Spring 2015

Spears School of Business
Oklahoma State University

Instructor:
Kim McCrackin

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Office Hours: Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. by appointment or by phone. You may also e-mail me at any time, and I will respond as quickly as I can. When sending an e-mail please indicate in the subject line your class and section number

Course Site: Desire2Learn (Online Classroom): http://oc.okstate.edu
Distance Learning Support: spearsdistance@okstate.edu or 405-744-4048

Overview of the Course

The purpose of this course is to help you develop skills in effective written communication. Efficient written communication in the workplace is of the utmost importance in today’s fast-paced environment. Learning these skills will make you a more valuable and productive employee and provide you with a competitive edge in the workforce. This course will familiarize you with various types of business writing from the traditional business letter to email correspondence and report writing.

Course Goals/Objectives

In this course, you will learn the skills necessary to efficiently and effectively produce written correspondence for work-related situations. You will become acquainted with various types of writing and review basics of correct writing such as grammar and punctuation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Objective</th>
<th>Program Learning Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students should demonstrate proper business formatting in Microsoft Word (resume, email, memo, letter, and short reports)</td>
<td>Technological Competence &amp; Written Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students should be able to properly research, evaluate, incorporate, and document sources</td>
<td>Critical Thinking, Written Communication &amp; Ethical Decision Making</td>
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Students should be able to strategize an effective and grammatically correct written response to a typical business scenario

| Business Knowledge & Competency, Critical Thinking, & Written Communication |
| Students should write effective job search documents, including resume and cover letters | Business Knowledge & Competency, Critical Thinking, & Written Communication |

**Course Textbook**

*Required Text*

Lesikar’s Business Communication: Connecting in a Digital World 13e by K. Rentz & P. Lentz with Connect Plus. (This is an e-book. You also have the option of purchasing a hard copy when you register at the McGraw-Hill Campus link through D2L).

**Attendance Policy**

Although points are not given for viewing class lectures or reading text chapters, they are not considered optional. In order to get the most out of the class and perform your best on assignments, you will need to access all the materials available to you. Not submitting assignments or accessing online class materials will be considered non-attendance, and it will be recommended that you drop the course.

**Grading Policy**

The grades in this class break down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homework Assignments</th>
<th>185</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Qs</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message Portfolio</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Package</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report and Summary</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>760</strong></td>
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</table>

Letter grades will be assigned according to the standard scale.

- 90-100% = A
- 80-89% = B
- 70-79% = C
- 60-69% = D
- Below 60% = F

Grades are rounded up at .5 (i.e., 89.5 = 90; 89.4 = 89)
Description of Course Requirements

Homework Assignments

Connect (Online Lesikar Text Exercises). In Connect, you will complete multiple-choice questions for each assigned textbook chapter. There will be 10 questions for each chapter, and you will have three attempts to get as many of the questions correct as you can. Your final attempt will show you your score, which questions you missed and give you feedback about the question. You may print out your final attempt to assist in studying for your exams. **If you do not complete these assignments within the assigned time frame, you will not be able to complete them later.** The system is set up to create fairness among students, and I do not have the ability to change individual due dates.

LearnSmart Achieve. Also, through Connect, you will have access to Achieve where you will complete homework assignments related to grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and word choice. These are adaptive assignments, meaning they will be different for everyone. You will receive fewer, more, or different questions based on your answers. It is best to be thoughtful and honest when responding because not doing so may result in additional (not fewer) questions to complete. Achieve helps you work on your areas of weakness and practice those skills before submitting work for a grade in the class. Completion of your Achieve Personalized Study Plan will take place during the first four weeks of the semester. I recommend spending time each week working on your personalized program. It should take you around five hours to complete the program. This assignment receives a grade and is not considered optional.

Writing Assignments

For each writing assignment, I will place an assignment sheet in the content section of D2L with instructions and expectations. Each assignment will be between one to three pages in length, which will be specified on the assignment sheet. These assignments will be graded on the following.

- Content based on conventions discussed in class and in your textbook
- Organization techniques typical for the specific type of document
- Format (traditional letter, memo, email, etc.)
- Word choice
- Grammar/spelling
- Punctuation

Message Portfolio (100 pts)
You will begin by writing a Message Portfolio. In this portfolio, you will submit three one-page messages. Two of them will be given a formatting grade, and one will be graded on all aspects
mentioned above. You will submit all three messages together, and I will select which of the three assignments I will grade for the class. You must, however, submit all three assignments because you will not know which one will be graded.

**Job Package (175 pts)**
For the job package, you will write a tailored (solicited) cover letter and resume. You will locate a job advertisement you are interested in and write your messages as if you were applying for that position. But before you begin any of these, you should complete the *Do What You Are* personality assessment on the HireOSUgrads website. It costs you nothing, and you will receive a 25 point completion grade. This will help highlight your unique personality strengths to assist in your job search as well as help you make decisions about your current or future career path.

If you completed *Do What You Are* in the past, please make sure you can still access your report. You will not need to do the assessment again. I will be able to see when it was completed.

**Problem Solving Report and Transmittal Message (150 pts)**
You will write a 3-5 page report in which you will research and provide a solution to an operational problem. You will then create a message of transmittal to accompany the more lengthy report.

**Submitting Writing Assignments**

Each assignment should be submitted in the corresponding dropbox folder on D2L by the assigned date and time. If you have submitted your assignment and decide you would like to make changes prior to the deadline, you may resubmit your assignment. This will override any prior submissions.

I will then grade your assignment, make comments, and upload your feedback in the corresponding dropbox folder where you submitted your initial assignment. It is important for you to review my comments so that you can identify and practice areas that need improvement. Assignments will be graded carefully, so make sure to proofread before submitting your final drafts. Grading is a time consuming process, so please be patient, and I will return your feedback and grade as quickly as possible.

All assignments will be automatically submitted to Turnitin (plagiarism detection program) when they are downloaded to the dropbox folder, so it is critical that your writing be in your own words. Turnitin checks your work against all online documents, documents submitted by other classes and universities, as well as the assignments submitted by your classmates. I have a zero tolerance policy for cheating in this course. Cheating on exams or assignments will result in a zero for the assignment or an F! in the class (or possibly other sanctions assigned by the university). It is better to receive a lower grade than to receive a zero on your assignment. You may not collaborate on assignments or exams with other members of the class.

A percentage of similarity on your Turnitin report does not automatically indicate plagiarism. The program focuses on similarities, so if your writing is unoriginal, you may notice a higher
percentage of similarity. This means that you should consider rewriting portions of your assignment and use fresher, more unique wording.

Each assignment is expected to be in the corresponding dropbox folder by the date and time assigned. Each day an assignment is late will result in the deduction of a letter grade. There are no exceptions unless you have made prior arrangements with me.

**Exams**

You will take three exams throughout the semester. These exams include multiple-choice and true/false questions. The exam content will be based on video lectures and readings. Each exam will be worth 50 points. Each exam will be administered online and must be monitored by an approved proctor. Upon enrolling each semester, contact the CEPD Distance Learning office to inform them of your proctoring site. You can call (405) 744-4048, or read the proctor policies and exam procedures, and complete the appropriate Testing Center form at http://spears.okstate.edu/distance/guide. If you are taking your exams on an OSU campus, you only need to fill out the Student Information Form. If you are taking them at any other location, the Proctor Agreement Form is required.

Please be aware that some facilities may charge an additional fee to proctor your exams. Your exams will be available for you to take for the entire week they are assigned. Make sure to check the hours of the testing facility you will be using.

Asking for exam information or content to the class via e-mail or other means could be considered a form of academic dishonesty. If you have any questions about an exam, it is best if you ask me.

**Make-up Policy**

You are expected to take each exam on the date given and submit each assignment in a timely manner. If for any reason you cannot attend an exam or submit an assignment, you must notify me prior to the due date. There is no guarantee that an assignment can be made up. Unless you have made special arrangements with me or have an emergency situation, once a deadline has passed, assignments will receive a letter grade off per day late. Once you have taken the final exam, the class is complete.

Please do your best and be concerned about your grade throughout the entire semester. No additional bonus points will be given at the end of the semester to raise your grade. Please be responsible throughout the semester to follow the schedule, be aware of due dates, and pay attention to any correspondence I send by email or post on D2L. It is each student’s responsibility to know what is due and when it is due.

**University Policy**

*Drop Policy*
Information about university drop policy and dates is at this website:  
http://registrar.okstate.edu/  
Click on “class schedules,” and “short, internet, and outreach courses”  
To drop this course, contact the Registrar’s office, (405) 744-6876, or drop through SIS (Student Information Services).

Academic Integrity  
Oklahoma State University is committed to the maintenance of the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct of its members. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, fabricating information, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and fraudulently altering academic records) will result in your being sanctioned. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript (F!), and being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal the charge. Contact the Office of Academic Affairs, 101 Whitehurst, 405-744-5627, http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu/.

Accessibility  
Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact the instructor as soon as possible, so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunity. For more information about OSU Student Disability Services, please go to:  
http://sds.okstate.edu/

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

This class is a business course and a good place to practice using professional business communications. In keeping with that objective, here are some expectations about the emails you exchange with your professors this semester and with your colleagues, supervisors, and potential employers in the future:

- Use a subject line to explain the purpose of your communication. If your recipient is one of your instructors, be sure to indicate the class and section in which you are enrolled.
- Include a salutation in your communication, and use the highest level of courtesy in addressing the individual. Examples: “Hello, Mr. Smithers;” “Dear Ms. Simpson;” or “Hi, Dr. Flanders.” Hint: Avoid, “Yo, Lisa!” Pay attention to their response. If your recipient says, “call me Ned” or if he signs his emails to you as “Ned,” that response is a clue that you may call him “Ned.”
- Don’t assume a position of informality in your business email. Time and relationship-building efforts can guide when you may “informalize” your business relationships. In some cases, it may never happen.
- Provide relevant information and actionable items. Think about what you want the receiver to do after receiving your message? Do not just vent or express concern; instead, communicate information and request an action. Put yourself on the other side of the communication and think about how you would like to be approached.
- Use common courtesies, e.g., be sure to thank your recipient for his/her consideration to your request when you are asking for anything.
• Pay attention to your grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
• Avoid using all capital letters; in an email, all capital letters can be perceived as SHOUTING!
• Avoid texting language. Exceptions are understandable but should be rare. If you’re sending your professor an email from a battlefield in Afghanistan, we’ll cope with some texting.
• Include a clear signature block with your full name and any contact information the individual will need to reach you. If it’s a business communication to an employer or prospective employer, also include your snail mail address.
• Be careful about including quotations and sayings in your signature block. Think about the impression your message sends to someone who doesn’t know you, and be judicious. In most instances, save the quotations for your emails with friends on your personal email account.
• Sign off on your emails with “Sincerely,” “Best regards,” etc.
• Basic questions to ask yourself before you hit “Send:” Would I write this email if I was trying to impress my boss? If I were the recipient of this email, would the email cause me to feel angry, annoyed, or cooperative? (Hint: Aim for cooperative.)
# BCOM 3113 Spring 2015 Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic/Reading</th>
<th>Assignment/Due Dates (all assignments are due by 11:59 p.m.)</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 1  
Jan 12 – Jan 18 | Introduction to course  
Chapter 1: Understanding Workplace Communication | Ch. 1 Text Questions 1/18 | 5 |
| Week 2  
Jan 19 - Jan 25 | Chapter 3: Adapting Your Words to Your Readers | Ch. 3 Text Questions 1/25 | 5 |
| Week 3  
Jan 26 – Feb 1 | Chapter 4: Constructing Clear Sentences and Paragraphs | Ch. 4 Text Questions 2/1 | 5 |
| Week 4  
Feb 2 – Feb 8 | Chapter 5 Writing for a Positive Effect | Ch. 5 Text Questions 2/6  
LearnSmart Achieve 2/8 | 125 |
| Week 5  
Feb 9 – Feb 15 | Exam 1: Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5  
Chapter 6: Choosing the Best Process and Form | (Exam 1 can be taken from 2/9-2/13)  
Ch. 6 Text Questions 2/15 | 50 |
| Week 6  
Feb 16 – Feb 22 | Chapter 7: Getting to the Point in Good-News and Neutral Messages | Ch. 7 Text Questions 2/22 | 5 |
| Week 7  
Feb 23 – Mar 1 | Chapter 8: Maintaining Goodwill in Bad-News Messages | Ch. 8 Text Questions 3/1 | 5 |
| Week 8  
Mar 2 – Mar 8 | Chapter 9: Making Your Case with Persuasive Messages and Proposals (pp. 227-254) | Ch. 9 Text Questions 3/8  
Message Portfolio 3/8 | 5  
100 |
| Week 9  
Mar 9 – Mar 15 | Exam 2: Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 | Exam 2 can be taken any time between 3/9-3/13 | 50 |
| Week 10  
Mar 16 – Mar 22 | **SPRING BREAK!** | | |
| Week 11  
Ch. 10 Text Questions 3/29 | 25  
5 |
| Week 12  
Mar 30 – | Chapter 13: Conducting Research for Decision Makers | Ch. 13 Text Questions 4/3  
Resume and Cover Letter 4/5 | 5  
150 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apr 5</th>
<th>Week 13 Apr 6 Apr 12</th>
<th>Chapter 11: Preparing Informative and Influential Business Reports</th>
<th>Ch. 11 Text Questions 4/12</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr 12</td>
<td>Week 14 Apr 13 – Apr 19</td>
<td>Chapter 12: Choosing the Right Type of Report</td>
<td>Ch. 12 Text Questions 4/19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 19</td>
<td>Week 15 Apr 20 Apr 26</td>
<td>Chapter 2: Communicating Across Cultures</td>
<td>Ch. 2 Text Questions 4/24 Report and Summary 4/26</td>
<td>5 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 26</td>
<td>Week 16 Apr 27 – May 3</td>
<td>Exam 3: Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, 2</td>
<td>(Exam 3 can be taken from 4/27-5/1)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Text Questions = 60 points total

*Syllabus changes may be made as needed*