COMM 110 - Research Component - Spring 2012

Syllabus

Trinity Western University
Course Syllabus | Communications 110 (3 s.h.)
Research and Writing in Communications
Spring 2012

Spring semester 2012
M/W 1:10 — 2:35
Loranne Brown & Bill Badke
Course material can be found online on
MyCourses
Course wiki/blog:
comm10writers.wetpaint.com
COMM110.posterous.com. Password:
twewriter
Upload assignments to: MyCourses

Instructor: Loranne Brown MFA
Office: Strombeck 116
Office Hours DROP BY — 1:00 — 2:15
BY APPOINTMENT — call to arrange
Home phone: 604-532-9612
cell: 778-388-9612
Email: Loranne.Brown@twu.ca

Prerequisites
None.

Course description

This writing-intensive course orients students to the demands of academic research and writing within the Communications major. By course completion the diligent student should be able to write lucid, academic, and researched prose in the genres of cultural critique, scientific reporting, and term papers. Central to the course are the twin emphases of critical thinking strategies and research methods in the information age. Note: COMM 110 is a required course for all COMM majors and may serve as a pre-requisite for other COMM courses.

Class objectives

Students should leave COMM110 with a clear orientation to writing expectations in the department and confidence in their abilities to meet them. General objectives include:

1. Introduce students to the different types of academic writing they will encounter in the communications program.
2. Orient students to the standards and discourses of cultural criticism, scientific reporting, and term paper writing.
3. Help students master issues of grammar, style, organization, and documentation of academic prose.
4. Increase students’ advocacy and argumentation skills through critical thinking and writing critically.
5. Educate students to the full array of evidence and ideas available to them through online and traditional research methods, and to learn ways to guard against plagiarism in the handling of same.
6. Give an appreciation for the ethical requirements of research and writing within Christian and marketplace contexts.

More specifically, by semester end, students should be able to:
1. Articulate the types of academic writing expected of them in the TWU communications program
2. Understand academic research methods and documentation
3. Understand the sources and various forms of information available to them
4. Choose appropriate reference sources to aid them in developing a working knowledge of their topic
5. Narrow topics and write focused research questions
6. Demonstrate the basic skills of Boolean and controlled vocabulary searching, and be able to describe the differences between them
7. Use a bibliographic manager (RefWorks) effectively to create a bibliography that conforms to the required style guide (MLA or APA)
8. Write well within three genres
9. Analyze documents through critical thinking and be able to articulate the difference between poor, average, and good writing

Required Textbooks
- *Little, Brown Handbook*. You should have a copy of this handbook from English classes. Keep it! Use it!

Recommended Reading

Communicating with the Instructor
Email, phone calls, in person, through the class weblog. I prefer to receive assignments via MyCourses or email attachment (MSWord (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf)), so please keep your virus protection up to date.

Assignments and projects
This course is very much hands-on. The assignments are designed to help you understand your strengths and correct your weaknesses as a writer. The following list breaks them down and gives brief descriptions. You will receive handouts with further details—do not attempt to do these assignments based on the overly-brief summaries given here!

Grammar presentation - 10% of final grade

Everyone will contribute one presentation in class and an article (250-500 words) to the class wiki on one of the 20 most troublesome elements of grammar (perhaps one with which you struggle). You will become our resident expert on that topic throughout the semester and will be responsible to watch for examples of it during peer critique and help your peers correct it. *Due: According to sign-up*

Information Literacy Assignments - 20% of final grade

The following 5 assignments will be interspersed through the course. They focus on the information literacy skills needed to produce a high quality academic essay and will lead the student through the process required to complete the capstone paper (see below). Detailed assignment sheets will be available at: [https://sites.google.com/site/williambadke2/COMM110Research](https://sites.google.com/site/williambadke2/COMM110Research). Submit all assignments by e-mail: badke@twu.ca. All assignments are due by beginning of class period (1:10 p.m.).

- Assignment 1: Internet, specialized reference sources. Due: February 1
- Assignment 2: Research questions, thesis statements, preliminary outline. Due: February 15
- Assignment 3: Catalog searching. Due: Feb. 22
- Assignment 4: Scholarly journal articles; preliminary bibliography. Due: March 14
- Assignment 5: Response to instructor's comments. Due: Last class
Personal essay - 10% of final grade

A short (min. 500 word) essay that we'll use as a way of getting to know you through casual, personal writing. You'll use a variety of writing prompts to stimulate the process, like: "Failures to Communicate," "Good/Bad Bosses," etc. This may take the form of a rant about a pet peeve or passion. **DRAFT due at NOON Wednesday Jan. 18; FINAL Due: Wednesday Jan. 25.**

Journal article review | Writing in the social sciences - 10% of final grade

Understanding the structure of journal articles is key to reading and writing academic papers. You will browse articles in the journal Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies, found in the TWU library database, and select one for in-depth analysis (500 words). Further instructions on MyCourses.

**Due: DRAFT due at NOON on Monday Feb. 20; FINAL due Monday March 5.**

Profile or Cultural Critique - 15% of final grade

A slightly longer assignment (500-750 words). Choose from one of these options, depending on your communication stream:

(a) Profile. Interview and write a journalistic profile of someone. You'll focus on journalistic concerns and writing conventions.

(b) Cultural critique. Engaging with and critiquing culture by critiquing/reviewing a TV show, movie, video game, etc. You'll use the vocabulary, format, style, etc. of media studies.

**Due: DRAFT due at NOON on Monday Mar 12; FINAL due Monday Mar 19.**

Capstone paper - 20% of final grade

You will develop a researched term paper of significant length (at least 1500 words) arguing a main thesis through the development of three to five arguments. You will determine a thesis, develop an outline of key arguments, research evidence for each argument, document their sources, and write effective prose using university-level diction and grammar. You'll be assessed on writing ability, organization, thesis support, quality of arguments, and documentation. Everyone in the course will critique each other's work, suggest research strategies, brainstorm topics, etc. **Important note:** if your instructor allows it, you may use a research paper assignment from another course for this project—our focus is less on the content and more on the writing. **Due: at NOON on Wednesday, Mar 21; FINAL due Wednesday, April 1.1**

Class Participation - 15% of final grade

There are three parts to your class participation grade. First is attendance: you may have two unexcused absences this semester. Any more unexcused absences will result in a reduction of your class participation grade (see attendance policy at the end of the syllabus for more details). Second, we will have numerous exercises and bits of work that will not necessarily be graded, but will count toward your class participation grade. Finally, there will be on-going peer critique sessions in which you are expected to contribute constructive criticism and your individual expertise (see Grammar assignment, above).

**Determination of Final Semester Grade:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Breakdown</th>
<th>Grading system (Standard TWU system)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The maximum # of points available in this class is 1000:</td>
<td>A+ 90-100% B+ 77-79% C+ 67-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar presentation</td>
<td>A  85-89%   R  73-76%   C  63-66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research assignments (cumulative)</td>
<td>A- 80-84%   B- 70-72%   C- 60-62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal essay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, I use the following standards to inform what my grades mean:

A. A superlative grasp of materials and concepts. Outstanding application of imagination and style. Publishable as is; meets professional standards.

A- Publishable with minor editing

B+. Publishable with some editing

B. An above-average grasp of materials and concepts. Fundamentals are employed with flair. Publishable with moderate editing.

B- Publishable with significant editing.

C. Average grasp of material and concepts, consistent effort in weekly assignments, and an ability to incorporate the fundamentals of grammar and style. Publishable with major editing.

C- Contains some minor grammar, spelling errors, etc. or one serious error.

D. Requires extensive rewriting or contains multiple errors.

F. Unacceptable work; contains serious factual errors. Or, failure to submit assignment.

(Tentative) Course schedule

Important! The readings and class topics may change if necessary! Please keep current with the discussions in class. If you can’t be present for some reason, please contact another student in the class to find out what you missed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Monday class</th>
<th>Wednesday class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome to Writing and Researching for Communications!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Informal writing – personal essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing prompts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>For next time: Read Murray, Chapters 1 - 3. Read Badke Ch. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jan 16</td>
<td>Jan 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samples of published personal essays. Developing the draft. Structure: sentence, paragraph, essay Starting the grammar wiki. Assigning articles.</td>
<td>Draft personal essay due today in class. Critiquing the draft. Guidelines for peer critique For next time: Read Badke Ch. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jan 23</td>
<td>Jan 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Editing the draft. Identifying common problems.</td>
<td>Final personal essay due today. Research - Welcome to the Information fog For next time: read Murray, Ch. 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For next time: Read Badke Ch. 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>