

# PROFESSIONAL WRITING

## UST 102 Section 501

This syllabus can be accessed on line at

<http://webCT.csuohio.edu>

the attached sheet lists steps to follow in registering yourself for WebCT.

Time: Spring Semester, 2004; Saturday 9 - 11:50 am

Location: UR 27

Instructor: Harriet Tramer

Phone: 1-216-321-8250

e-mail: harriet@wolf.csuohio.edu

Office: Room 217 in the Urban Building

Office hours: Before or after class or by appointment

### TEXT

Piotrowski, Maryann V., Effective Business Writing: A Guide for Those Who Write on the Job, Second Ed., New York: HarperPerennial, 1996.

### OBJECTIVES FOR THE CLASS

This course is designed to acquaint you with the principles of writing, granting you experience that will prove helpful when you complete assignments for other classes. Hopefully, you will come to understand that being a good writer and being a careful/ skeptical reader are essentially one and the same thing. Your realizing this fact will make the writing process far less daunting.

You will also be asked to consider "stylistic issues," paying attention to how writers say something as well as to what they say. Doing that will help you to better decipher what an author is communicating. It will also guide you through the pages, allowing you to get the message at a faster pace.

### SCHEDULE FOR THE CLASS

#### FIRST SEGMENT

Date of Session: January 17, 2004

#### SECOND SEGMENT

Date of Session: February 14, 2004

First paper is due that day.

#### THIRD SEGMENT

Date of Session: March 13, 2004

Second paper is due that day.

## FOURTH SEGMENT

Date of Session: April 17, 2004

Third paper is due that day.

### **FINAL PAPER IS DUE MAY 8, 2004**

### **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE CLASS**

You will be expected to complete four papers, each of which is to be at least 750 words in length. Focusing only upon material from one particular segment, these assignments, will be due **February 14, March 13, April 17 and May 8, 2004**. Information about them can be found in the appropriate modules.

*You will always receive comments on your papers. But if you turn in an assignment early, you will receive a tentative grade and comments that you can use in completing a final draft.*

*Also, by submitting one of the four assignments at least a week before it is due and agreeing to have it posted (anonymously) you will automatically earn a 100 for that paper. Other students will be encouraged to read and respond to your submission in preparing their own paper. Details of this arrangement will be determined by the class itself.*

### **HINTS FOR WRITING PAPERS**

When completing the papers, remember the following:

1. Focus fully on the topic at hand, instead of flitting from one idea to another. Doing that will help you to organize your thoughts and present cohesive, easily comprehended arguments.
2. Clearly state your point of view. Often, it is best to do that in broad terms right at the beginning of your paper. Following that strategy will help you organize your thinking and make your points. It nurtures cohesiveness.

Defining terms is also important, as this puts you in charge of your writing. Whenever possible, supply specifics, strengthening your writing. Examples are always helpful.

3. Good writing is marked by "tensions." Tensions occur when opposing views are juxtaposed one against the other. That is why you should not simply present your opinion. Rather, you should also present the views of people who "disagree" with you. Doing that, will not only enliven your writing, it will also help you to better formulate and express your thoughts.

4. Present direct quotes from your sources. Following that strategy will grant your writing an extra dynamic. It will also lend your paper "credibility," showing you have done your homework.

NOTE: You should provide attributions for your quotes. If you present an excerpt from one of the posted papers, for example, simply say paper by student # x, or words to that effect.

5. Give your paper some depth by talking about "isms" or "ings." For example, you might say: "America's economic system exemplifies the free enterprise model, being guided by supply and demand. And it follows from this fact that our health care delivery system is profit-driven."

Making statements of that nature allows you to draw links and understand the facts at hand from a broader perspective. It may engender questions about whether our health care delivery system can be transitioned into another form when it is embedded in a consumer-based economy.

## **USEFUL WEB SITE FOR WRITING PAPERS**

The CSU Writing Center

<http://www.csuohio.edu/writingcenter/writproc.html>

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

It is highly advisable that you attend class. Your attendance will be reflected in your final grade. Much of the material that is to be contained within your papers will be discussed during class.

## **GRADING SCALE**

Record your grades on this chart:

Paper One \_\_\_\_\_

Paper Two \_\_\_\_\_

Paper Three \_\_\_\_\_

Paper Four \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

You can earn a total of 400 points in the class, 100 points on each of four papers. Your final grade will be determined in accordance with this chart

400 - 372 A  
371 - 360 A -  
359 - 348 B+  
347 - 332 B  
331 - 320 B-  
319 - 308 C+  
307 - 280 C  
279 - 240 D  
239 - 0 F

## **POLICY FOR AN INCOMPLETE GRADE**

You will receive either an "X," or an "I," depending upon which is applicable. If you request an incomplete, you will receive an "I." But if you simply do not complete assignments, you will receive an "X." DO TRY TO TURN IN ALL ASSIGNMENTS ON TIME.

## **WARNING**

Things can happen which prevent students from completing a final assignment, despite the fact they have been keeping up with their work. In these cases, an "I" is a legitimate option. But instructors are not obliged to give an "I" to students who have failed to turn in several assignments by the end of the semester.

In fact, they are strongly advised against doing that. Also, very late papers generally do not represent anybody's best effort. And grades tend to reflect this fact. A late withdrawal may be a better alternative if you have had a hard semester. It will not lower your grade average.

# SEGMENT ONE

## WRITING THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE: HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

Date of the segment: **January 17, 2004.**

Date paper is due: **FEBRUARY 14, 2004**

### READINGS FROM THE TEXT FOR THE SEGMENT

Chapter One: "Bad Writing Is Bad for Business," 1 - 4.

Chapter Two "Getting Started," 5 - 15.

### OUTSIDE READINGS FOR THE SEGMENT

Sometimes, writing entertains or informs. That might be the case with a newspaper article. On other occasions, it becomes transcendent and helps to spark social movements, raising awareness. Here are two documents, often credited with achieving this level of excellence.

#### **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"**

This letter was written by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the midst of boycotts and other social actions then ongoing in Birmingham, Alabama. Although . King originally directed this letter to fellow clergy, it came to reach a much broader audience.

You can access a copy of the letter by clicking on the URL below:

<http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/letter.html>

Here is some background information about Dr. King

[http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/History/U S History/By Time Period/20th Century/People/King\\_Martin Luther Jr 1929 1968 /](http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/History/U_S_History/By_Time_Period/20th_Century/People/King_Martin_Luther_Jr_1929_1968/)

#### **Carson, Rachel, Silent Spring, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962.**

In his introduction to the Silent Spring,  
<http://ecr.ulib.csuohio.edu/cgi-bin/ecr.cgi?x=3/tram/tramab.pdf>  
former vice president Al Gore notes that: "*Writing about the  
Silent Spring is a humbling experience for a elected  
official because Rachel Carson's landmark book*

*offers undeniable proof that the power of an idea can be much greater than the power of politicians."*

Keep those comments in mind when you read the following excerpt from the Silent Spring.

<http://ecr.ulib.csuohio.edu/cgi-bin/ecr.cgi?x=3/tram/tramac.pdf>

Here is an article about the impact of Ms. Carson's writings  
Watson, Bruce, "Sounding the Alarm"

<http://www.smithsonianmag.si.edu/smithsonian/issues02/sep02/presence.html>

Here is more information about Ms. Carson  
Rachel Carson Organization  
<http://www.rachelcarson.org>

## INFORMATION FOR PAPER DUE February 14, 2004

You should begin this assignment by reading the material listed directly above. Then, you should consider "stylistic" issues, how the two authors made their points, not what they said.

In comparing the writing of Ms. Carson and Dr. King, you might pay attention to the following:

1. Dr. King maintains that civil action is not only morally correct, it is also very effective politically. And his words gain power as he leads readers to realize there may be no clear demarcations between these two realms.

Does Ms. Carson talk in moral or religious terms, or does she present environmental activism as being more a matter of survival than anything else? The latter may be the case as there is an element of urgency to her writing.

2. When Dr. King wrote the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," he was already very much in the media for his civil rights activities. Among other things, he had spearheaded the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which extended from December, 1955 to December, 1956. The letter is dated April 16, 1963.

By the time she wrote the Silent Spring, Rachel Carson had already published a series of well-received books on nature. She was not, however, as widely recognized as was Dr. King. Does that fact work to differentiate their writing styles?

3. Dr. King notes that the major impediment, preventing people from gaining their freedom, may not be the racist sheriffs but moderates who do not get involved. And he urges them to rectify this oversight.

Ms. Carson also takes a "this means you" stance. She states in her own adroit way that we are all responsible for making our environment safer.

Does the fact that they take a somewhat analogous approach create commonalities between Ms. Carson's book and Dr. King's writing?

4. Dr. King's letter and Ms. Carson's book were both written during the 1960s, a turbulent time during which people were re-examining our system and taking action. Are both of their writings marked by the tenure of the times?

You can receive a total of 100 points on this paper. Presenting details and clearly stating your point of view will help you to achieve a high grade. Examples are always welcome and will strengthen your writing.

# SEGMENT TWO

## THREE ARTICLES: SAME TOPIC

Date Of Segment: February 14, 2004

Date Paper Is Due: MARCH 13, 2004

### READINGS FROM THE TEXT FOR THE SEGMENT

Chapter Three: "Making Your Message Accessible," 16 - 29.

Chapter Four: "Shaping Paragraphs and Sentences," 30 - 39.

### OUTSIDE READINGS FOR THE SEGMENT

All three of these readings deliver the same message. Some observers maintain that people are sick because they are poor. But these articles view that dynamic from a very different vantage point. They maintain that people are poor because they are sick.

Taking this perspective, they argue for social programs targeted at "upgrading" the health of the indigent, making them more employable. Such efforts will, it is maintained, prove cost effective in the long run as they help people get off welfare.

Epstein, Helen, "Enough To Make You Sick"  
<http://ecr.ulib.csuohio.edu/cgi-bin/ecr.cgi?x=3/tram/trambg.pdf>

Solomon, Andrew The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression, New York, Scribner, 2001, 335 - 360.  
<http://ecr.ulib.csuohio.edu/cgi-bin/ecr.cgi?x=3/tram/trambh.pdf>

Perez-Pena, Richard, "Asthma Project Reaches Out in Harlem"  
<http://ecr.ulib.csuohio.edu/cgi-bin/ecr.cgi?x=3/tram/tramau.pdf>

### INFORMATION FOR THE PAPER DUE MARCH 13, 2004

There are many divergent ways to make the same statement. These differences touch upon stylistic considerations and they help to determine how much "punch" a message delivers. Some writers make their points by presenting statistics which are "hard to dispute." Others, however, rely more upon a personal approach, telling life histories.

In completing this paper, you should carefully read the three articles listed above. Then, you should detail what stylistic "flourishes" contribute to one/ all of them being

powerful. You might, for example, say, "I was touched by the challenges this author described person X as facing."

Or, you might indicate that you found the facts and figures, pertaining to the link between poverty and health, that a writer related quite persuasive. In that case, you might say something to the effect that, "I had never previously thought in these terms, but after I saw this chart, I began to think that X."

You can receive a total of 100 points on this paper. To earn a high score, make certain that you clearly state your point of view and provide details. Examples are always helpful and will work to make your writing more interesting.

# SEGMENT THREE

## HEALTH ISSUES/ WEB

### SITES

Date of Segment: **March 13, 2004**

Date Paper is Due: **APRIL 17, 2004**

### READINGS FROM THE TEXT FOR THE SEGMENT

Chapter Five: "Editing For Language, Style, Tone,"  
40 - 59.

Chapter Six; "The Politics of Business Writing,"  
60 - 66.

### ON LINE CURRICULUM FOR THE SEGMENT

An online curriculum about health care issues has been prepared for this segment. However, it is not being placed in this module at this time for a good reason. URLs are constantly being shifted.

Which means that the curriculum will need to be updated between now and the point when this segment starts. So, printing it out now and handing it to you, would be a waste of both time and paper.

You will have access to this curriculum at least a week before this segment starts. It will be e-mailed to you and will also be placed in the Discussion segment of webCT.

### INFORMATION FOR PAPER DUE APRIL 17, 2004

Web sites represent a blend between the written word (print) and the visual (television). For that reason they present a unique challenge and can prove quite powerful if they live up to their potential.

In completing this paper, you should familiarize yourself with the online curriculum designed for this segment. Then, you should note if your opinion as regards urban sprawl was "changed" because of what you read/ saw.

When approaching these issues, be sure to keep in mind the unique potential of web sites. And you should focus upon a web site that strikes you as being particularly persuasive/ powerful because it achieved this potential.

You might, for example, say something to the effect that, "This web site caught my attention because it presented beautiful pictures of x. And once I was drawn to it, I read some of the material it contained and learned y."

**NOTE:** If you do not think that any of the web sites you visited were particularly impressive, that is an honest opinion. You should simply state that is the case and explain why you reached that opinion.

You can receive a maximum of 100 points on this assignment. To earn a high score, be sure to clearly state your point of view and provide details. Examples are always welcome.

# SEGMENT FOUR

## URBAN SPRAWLING

Date of the Segment: April 17, 2004

Date the Paper is Due: MAY 8, 2004

### READINGS FROM THE TEXT FOR THE SEGMENT

Chapter 7: "Writing for Special Purposes," 67 - 108.

### ON LINE CURRICULUM FOR THE SEGMENT

An online curriculum about sprawl has been prepared for this segment. However, it is not being placed in this module at this time for a good reason. URLs are constantly being shifted.

Which means that the curriculum will need to be updated between now and the point when this segment starts. So, printing it out now and handing it to you, would be a waste of both time and paper.

You will have access to this curriculum at least a week before this segment starts. It will be e-mailed to you and will also be placed in the Discussion segment of webCT.

### INFORMATION FOR PAPER DUE MAY 8, 2003

In completing this assignment, you might proceed through the following steps:

1. Familiarize yourself with the on line curriculum about sprawl, concentrating upon the segments – What Is Sprawl?, The Roots of Sprawl, The Brawl Over Sprawl - that discuss how it has left its imprint upon our environment.

Then, take a walk/ ride around a neighborhood with which you are acquainted. As you do that, look for signs that sprawl is having an impact, manifesting itself in ways described by the readings.

These signs might come in many shapes and sizes. Big box stores might be clustered around a freeway connection. Or, new houses, McMansions. may be situated in new developments..

If you visit an inner city area, however, you might be confronted with a very different reality. There may be evidence that the populations is declining and businesses have left for more outlying areas. This decay represents the flip side of sprawl.

2. After you have written a synopsis of what you saw, you should turn again to the on line curriculum about sprawl. Focus this time upon the segments entitled Combating Sprawl that deals with responses to this phenomenon. Taking all of the information you garner into account, write an account of how the negative impacts of sprawl that you saw could be constrained.

Possibly, for example, smart growth, with the number of new homes allowed in the area being strictly limited, would improve the situation. Zoning ordinances that disallow big box stores might be another consideration.

The information contained in the segments entitled Cleveland, Ohio and Portland, Oregon Growth Boundaries may provide information that will help you complete this portion of the assignment.

Many inner city areas are now undergoing a resurgence. If that is what you glimpse, simply note that is the case. These revitalization efforts represent, on either a conscious or an unconscious level, efforts to combat sprawl by keeping the inner core vital. You might interpret them in this manner and write about the fact.

**NOTE:** In completing this paper, you should mix and match. Some of what you write might reflect your own personal observations, indicating that: I saw X and it struck me as being Y. But you should also intersperse into such comments information garnered from the readings.

You might, for example, say: What I observed impressed me as being exactly what the author was talking about in Y article. At that point, you might proceed to present a direct quote from the piece in question.

*In a way, your paper should represent a blend between journalism, reporting on the world around you, and a research paper. It will exemplify the latter in that you are to bring into your dialogue information obtained from your reading of the online curriculum.*

You can receive a maximum of 100 points on this assignment. To earn a high score, be sure to clearly state your point of view and provide details. Examples are always welcome.

