

BCMU 301/2

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Balmer Café or by appointment

## **SYLLABUS**

**Fall 2008**

### READINGS

- *Woe Is I*, Patricia T. O'Conner. (PTO)
- *The Gregg Reference Manual*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed., William A. Sabin (GRG)
- Coursepak
- Recommended: *American Heritage Dictionary*, collegiate edition

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To provide diagnosis for bad writing habits and prescriptions for a cure
2. To develop professional practical, real-world writing and oral communication skills
3. To encourage a methodical, strategic-thinking approach in solving communication problems
4. To provide opportunities to develop group communication skills
5. To teach communications tools necessary for finding a job

### CLASS PARTICIPATION

Since an important dimension to this class is using and practicing with the tools you will be taught, I will be calling on each of you randomly to give you the opportunity to think on your feet--or in your seat, as the case may be. In order to participate effectively, you will have to integrate the information presented to you in the lectures, the packet, and the text as we go along. You will not do well in this class if you wait until the midterm to learn this material.

## GRADING

There will be two individual assignments and one group assignment that will be graded acceptable or unacceptable. Drafts for your accounting class assignments will be due on the days indicated. They will be graded credit/non-credit. An unacceptable assignment must be redone or lose 50 points off a base grade of 500 points. Failure to submit an ungraded assignment will result in a loss of 75 points. There is a cover letter/resume assignment which is optional.

Positive grades will be given to the third letter/memo assignment (75 points), the midterm (150 points), the individual written report (125 points), and the group oral report (150 points). My evaluation of your effort, class participation, and improvement could possibly bounce your final grade up or down a point or two.

Calculating Your Grade: At the end of the quarter, when you know all your scores, add them up and divide by 5 to render a number on a 100 point scale. That number translates into your grade according to the following table:

### Grade Scale

97	4.0
95.5	3.9
94	3.8
92.5	3.7
91	3.6
89.5	3.5
88	3.4
86.5	3.3
85	3.2
83.5	3.1
82	3.0
80.5	2.9
79	2.8
77.5	2.7
76	2.6
74.5	2.5
73	2.4
71.5	2.3
70	2.2

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<u>Class</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Assignment due</u>
1	9/24	Introduction/Problem Solving	BM, Intro	PTO 1
<p>This class will focus on the course objectives and the approach that I take toward teaching practical communications skills appropriate for the workplace. We'll also introduce the four problem solving steps appropriate for any problem solving challenge, adapted here for CMU challenges</p>				
2	9/29	Analysis		PTO 2, 6
<p>This class will begin with an exercise that will introduce the three phases of the Analysis process: defining the problem, defining the goals, and defining the audience. Then continue with a detailed discussion of each element.</p>				
3	10/1	Strategy		PTO 3, 4
<p>In this class we continue development of the problem solving process by exploring basic elements that compose the Strategy step: Composition and Organization. Composition is about generating the raw material of your message; Organization is how you structure it.</p>				
4	10/6	Execution	GRG, sect. 12,	PTO 5
<p>If the strategy stage is about the raw meat and the skeleton of your message, Execution is about dressing it up so it can go out in public. We'll focus on effective paragraphs and formats, vigorous sentence style, and working quickly and efficiently.</p>				
5	10/8	Evaluation, Workshop	PTO 7, 8, 9	Assgmt #1
<p>This stage is about straightening the tie, polishing the shoes, and making sure everything is perfect. We'll finish up our discussion of PTO and common usage mistakes and work over the assignments you hand in to see what you missed.</p>				
6	10/13	Review Assignment, Request Messages, Sales	GRG, sect 13	
<p>We shift in this class from informational to request messages. We'll spend a little time talking about the direct request and move to Sales letters and the problem/solution strategy.</p>				

7	10/15	Persuasive Requests Business Plans	GRG, 588-90	
<p>In this class we build upon what we learned from junk mail letter strategy to a broader category of persuasive messages in which your goal is to motivate a resistant audience to action. We'll extend this discussion to a consideration of the Business Plan group project. Your job will be to persuade investors to give you the capital you'll need to begin a new business.</p>				
8	10/20	More Business Plans Video, Group Meeting	GRG, 591-93	Assgmt #2
<p>We'll go into more detail about the strategies and objectives of a business plan. We'll talk about various investor types and how you have to shape your presentation to meet the investment objectives of each. We'll watch and critique the oral presentation of a group presentation from a previous class.</p>				
9	10/22	Press Kit /Work Plans Group Meeting	GRG 594-96	
<p>We'll talk more about getting organized for the business plan presentation and about how the work plan can help you in that. We'll also introduce the Press Kits project today. I'll give an overview and talk in some detail about how to write a Press Release.</p>				
10	10/27	Visual Aids in Reports	GRG, sect. 14	Assgmt #3
<p>This class will focus on how to make sense of numbers and to talk about them in a way that stimulates them with insights rather than boring them with abstractions. We'll also talk about how to put together an effective chart by outline four criteria you should use to evaluate the effectiveness of any chart you create.</p>				
11	10/29	Press Kit Secondary Pieces	GRG, sect. 16	Work Plan due
<p>We'll discuss strategies for brochures, backgrounders, websites, videos, and other secondary pieces designed to supplement the cover letter and release.</p>				
12	11/3	Mid-Term		
<p>Test will have two parts. Part I, worth 75 points will be short answer questions testing your knowledge and skills regarding material presented in class so far. Part II will be a 75-point writing exercise similar to the homework assignments you've done. You will have the full two hours to complete the test.</p>				

13	11/5	Oral Presentations, Content/VAs Group Meeting	
<p>We'll talk in this class about the question and answer strategy for developing content for an oral presentation. We'll also be talking about the use PowerPoint and other visual aid possibilities. There are so many ways to go wrong here. You need to learn what they are and avoid them</p>			
14	11/10	Oral Presentations, Delivery	
<p>This class will focus on delivery skills and rehearsal strategies. We'll watch a video of a student group and critique the delivery of its presentation, and then outline what goals you should be setting for yourself to achieve as a group when you get in front of the class.</p>			
15	11/12	Finding a Job/Resumes, Info interview	Press Kit
<p>We'll be looking at how to get ready for the job search and the things you need to know and how to find them before you sit down to write your resume or improve the one that you have. We'll talk about different organizational strategies and about focusing on achievements rather than duties.</p>			
16	11/17	Content Rehearsals	
17	11/19	Content Rehearsals	
18	11/24	Oral Reports	
<p>It's all you now. This will be your opportunity to show me that you've learned what persuasion really means so that by the end of your presentation I'll be salivating to invest with your new startup.</p>			
19	11/26	Oral Reports	
20	12/1	Oral Reports	
21	12/3	Wrapup	
<p>In the last class we'll do peer and course evaluations. I'll also be returning your graded Option 1/2 assignments and the evaluations and grades for those groups who have made their presentations in the days preceding.</p>			