

BCMU 301

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## **SYLLABUS Winter 2009**

### READINGS

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

This is the first quarter I'm using Gregg, so I'm feeling my way with it. Most of it should be treated as a reference to solve problems when they come up in your writing, but you should review the material in alongside the chapters that treat similar issues in the O'Connor book.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To provide opportunity to develop practical, real-world skills
2. To develop professional writing and oral communication skills
3. To encourage a methodical, conscious 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. 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..

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	1/5	Introduction/Problem Solving	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	1/7	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	1/12	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	1/14	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	1/21	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 workover the assignments you hand in to see what you missed.</p>				
6	1/26	Informational Messages	GRG, sect. 13	
<p>Every message type we've looked at so far has been "informational" using the direct approach. Today we'll summarize what we know about using the direct approach and introduce the second informational strategy which uses the indirect approach otherwise known as the bad news message.</p>				

7	1/28	Review Assignment, Request Messages, Sales	GRG, 588-90	Assgmt #2
<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>				
8	2/2	Persuasive Requests Workshop Accounting Assgmt	GRG, 591-93	
<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 major group project, a persuasive challenge par excellence. Your job will be to persuade investors to give you the capital you'll need to begin a new business.</p>				
9	2/3	Business Plans Business Plan Video Group Meeting	GRG, 594-96	Assignment #3
<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>				
10	2/9	Report Strategies/Work Plans Making sense of numbers/VAs	GRG, sect. 14, 16	
<p>We'll talk about Option #1 today, which is the possibility of writing a formal analytical report. We'll talk about the elements of a formal report how to develop an useful planning tool for group projects known as the work plan. And 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	2/11	Press Kits/Discuss Option 2		Work Plan due
<p>We'll discuss the second option which is to put together the elements that go into a press kit with a special emphasis on strategies for developing an effective press release.</p>				

12	2/16	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	2/18	Oral Presentations I, Content Group Meeting Time	
<p>We'll talk in this class about the question and answer strategy for developing content for an oral presentation. Goal is to find a way to give audience answers to its question by stimulating it with insights rather than boring them by information dumping. 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	2/25	Oral Presentations II, 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	3/2	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	3/4	Oral Reports	Groups 1 & 2
<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>			
17	3/9	Oral Reports	Groups 3 & 4
18	3/11	Oral Reports	Groups 5 & (6)