

THE OPTION IN PROFESSIONAL WRITING

The Professional Writing option is designed for students who want to design, write, and edit documents for corporate, engineering, scientific, industrial, governmental, and nonprofit organizations. These documents include brochures, proposals, technical reports, computer manuals, educational and training materials, and fund-raising publications. Often, professional writers serve as researchers, documentation managers, or liaison personnel among the research, production, and marketing components of an organization.

The courses in the option emphasize the use of rhetorical studies to solve general communication problems. The required courses in writing and editing prepare students for developing online and Web documents, as well as print documents. These courses emphasize a broad range of professional publications and their requirements, including analysis of user needs, information gathering, arrangement, visual design, style, and ethics. Students are encouraged to choose electives in technical and scientific fields in order to better understand the communities in which they will work.

COURSES IN THE OPTION

English 3104: Introduction to Professional Writing (Required)

This course introduces students to the theory and practice of professional writing and its functions in workplace settings. In this rhetorically-based course, students gain experience with a variety of writing situations, composing documents that solve problems or help readers make decisions. Students learn current conventions and broadly applicable procedures for analyzing the audiences, purposes, and situations of professional writing, and learn strategies for adapting these conventions and procedures to meet the unique demands of each new situation and task.

English 3804: Technical Editing and Style (Required)

Technical Editing and Style explores the art of editing from the initial writing task to the final delivery of the document. In addition to learning document management, students study and practice the roles, responsibilities, and tasks that editors perform. The course also covers the rules that govern the fundamentals of style (correctness, clarity, and propriety) and the principles needed to match the tone and formality to the aim, audience, and occasion of the work.

English 3814: Creating User Documentation

This course prepares students to create print and online documentation to enable people to accomplish a given set of tasks (e.g., user guides, online help, policy and procedure manuals, tutorials, and how-to books). Readings include rhetorical theory and discussions of professional

practice. Students learn the principles of user and task analysis, information design, usability testing, and indexing. In addition, they have opportunities for hands-on experience with clients and end-users.

English 3824: Designing Documents for Print

This course prepares students to design and produce complex documents such as proposals, brochures, booklets, and newsletters using computer technologies. Students learn rhetorical and visual factors (e.g., legibility, readability, layout, and integration of text/images) that contribute to the effectiveness and usability of documents. In addition, students study the use of color and electronic image editing. They also master some of the technologies necessary to publish documents from their desktops. In addition to working on individual projects, students engage in collaborative exercises intended to sharpen their teamwork, peer critique, editing, writing, audience-awareness, and design skills.

English 4804: Grant Proposals and Reports

This course prepares students to write a variety of grants, proposals, and reports for both nonprofit and corporate organizations. Students study the purpose and theory behind such documents and learn how content, style, and design work together to create a persuasive package. After learning the uses, purposes, conventions, and strategies for producing and presenting a variety of different proposals and reports (e.g., grant and bid proposals, recommendation reports, and feasibility studies), students practice writing and presenting such documents for real-world clients.

English 4814: Writing Documents for the Web

This course prepares students to create documents for the World Wide Web. By studying how people read, navigate, and process online information, students learn effective principles for writing and editing text, integrating graphics, and designing pages and sites to serve a variety of purposes. In addition, students master some of the technologies necessary to produce successful Web pages. They apply current research on information design and usability to evaluate existing Web sites for clarity and effectiveness, and work in teams to create original Web sites for real-world clients.

ENGL 4824: Science Writing

This course introduces students in the natural and social sciences to the range of discourses used in those fields. Singly and in collaboration with their peers, students practice composing a variety of scientific documents, including grant proposals, research and review articles, poster presentations, and descriptive and informative abstracts. Through required reading, class discussion, and lecture, students learn the rhetorical characteristics of scientific writing, the

problems associated with communicating across disciplines, and the mechanics of publishing in scientific fields.

English 4874: Issues in Professional and Public Discourse (Required)

This course prepares students to analyze and critique scientific and engineering documents, business communications, and representations of events, studying the consequences of those documents, communications, and representations. In doing so, they gain a clearer understanding of the rhetorical value of style, arrangement, and delivery. Consequently, they will be able to function more fully as citizens within our society and be more competent rhetoricians, regardless of their chosen profession. In addition, this course introduces students to essential legal and ethical principles needed to make sound writing decisions. Legal issues covered include freedom of the press, libel, invasion of privacy, research sources, obscenity, and copyright.

English 3764: Technical Writing

This course introduces students in technical fields to the types of writing expected in their workplaces. Students learn to compose documents such as correspondence, instructions, reports, abstracts, reviews, research posters, and proposals for a variety of audiences, including managers, peers, technicians, and lay people. In addition, the course addresses discipline-specific citation methods, technical research skills (including use of electronic databases), electronic communication, collaborative writing, and ethical issues in scientific and technical communication.

English 3774: Business Writing

This course introduces students in business fields to the types of writing expected in their workplaces. Students learn to compose documents such as correspondence, feasibility studies, annual reports, and proposals for a variety of audiences, including managers, peers, customers, and the public. In addition, the course addresses discipline-specific citation methods, research skills (including use of electronic databases), and ethical issues in business communication. By developing practical workplace documents, students learn the principles of problem-solving, deadline management, audience awareness, and collaborative writing essential to successful professional communication.