

# English 420--Business Writing

**Maymester 2004**

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## Overview

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**Section 0201**  
**Heavilon 227**  
**M-F, 9:50-12:00.**  
**Dr. David Blakesley**  
**Office: Heavilon 302c**  
**Hours: M-Th, 9:00-9:50 a.**  
**m. and by appt.**  
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English 420 teaches students the rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for producing effective business letters, memos, reports, and collaborative projects in professional contexts. The curriculum is informed by current research in rhetoric and professional writing and is guided by the needs and practices of business, industry, and society at large, as well as by the expectations of Purdue students and programs. All sections of English 420 are offered in networked computer classrooms to ensure that students taking the course are prepared for the writing environment of the 21st-century workplace. The course teaches the rhetorical principles that help students shape their business writing ethically, for multiple audiences, in a variety of professional situations.

[Class Mailing List](#)

[Dr. B's Homepage](#)

[Drupal Development and Documentation Project](#)

[Pronoun MOO](#)

[Purdue's OWL](#)

[Professional Writing Home](#)

[PW Documentation](#)

[Job Search Resources](#)

[Resume Resources](#)

[English Department](#)

## Required Texts

While there are no texts to purchase for the course, there will be course readings distributed electronically that you will be asked to read and respond to throughout the course.

## Course Goals

### Writing in Context

Analyze professional cultures, social contexts, and audiences to determine how they shape the various purposes and forms of writing, such as persuasion, organizational communication, and public discourse.

### Writing Process

Develop and understand various strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents that respond effectively and ethically to professional situations and audiences.

### Collaboration

Learn and apply strategies for successful collaboration, such

as working and communicating on-line with colleagues, setting and achieving project goals, and responding constructively to peers' work.

### **Research**

Understand and use various research methods to produce professional documents, including analyzing professional contexts, assessing and using information resources, and determining how various media and technologies affect and are affected by users and readers.

### **Technology**

Develop strategies for using and adapting various communication technologies to manage projects and produce informative and usable professional documents.

### **Document Design**

Learn to argue with visual data, understanding and implementing various principles of format, layout, and design of professional documents that meet multiple user and reader needs.

## **Course Projects & Activities**

### **1. Employment Project**

You will be asked to locate a job for which you are qualified and apply for it. Step 1 of the project asks you to learn about and use various web-based resources for job seekers and ultimately to select one job to pursue. Step 2 asks you to prepare the all-important cover letter (i.e., "Job Application Letter"). Step 3 asks you to prepare a print resume suitable for such a position. In Step 4, you will assess your experience in a "Project Assessment Document." In the process of completing each step, you will work closely with your peers and me to shape your writing so that it represents you and your experience fully and effectively. (Individual; 25% of course grade.)

### **2. Open Source Contexts Project**

In this project, you will be asked to do web-based and library research and to write an informative white paper on the use of Open Source electronic commerce or content management systems or other Open Source solution for business and educational contexts. Is it a good idea for

businesses to invest in electronic commerce and content management systems, for example? How can Open Source solutions help? What are the hidden costs? What examples are out there? (Collaborative; 25% of course grade.)

### 3. Open Source Development and Documentation Project

For Project 3, our class will formally launch the first stage of the Purdue's Open Source Development and Documentation Project. In this project, students interact with new people and new technologies to provide valuable Open Source enterprise and application documentation. Students in a variety of business and technical writing courses will study open source software, talk to its designers and users, use the software themselves, then write and test user documentation, help organizations promote their software in the wider community, and even develop action plans for deploying such software in new business and academic ventures. (Collaborative; 25% of course grade.)

### Grading

Employment Project	30%
Open Source Contexts Project	20%
Open Source Development and Documentation Project	40%
Daily Writing Assignments, Peer Review, Attendance	10%
Total	100%

The three major projects in the course will have several components, each of which will be worth a percentage of your final grade. For the two collaborative projects, students must complete the required [Collaborative Evaluation Form](#).

All major assignments will be graded on the standard letter-grade scale: A=100-90 B=89-80 C=79-70 D=69-60 F=59 or below.

### Technology Requirements

In order to participate fully in the course, you should already be able to use the technology platform and applications listed below.

- Mac OS System
- Microsoft Office (Word and PowerPoint)
- Netscape Communicator and Internet Explorer
- Acrobat Reader
- Email program (including attachments)

## Technology Responsibilities

Because the exchange of information and documents in this class will be almost entirely electronic, familiarity with certain technologies is crucial for participation and success in the course. If you need any assistance now or at any point during the semester, please do not hesitate to ask. During the semester, you'll need frequent access to the Internet and email. If you have a computer at home, you'll be responsible for configuring your system to access course materials, to read course email and participate in online discussions, and to complete other work. (Your Internet Service Provider should be able to help you configure your system.) If you do not have a system at home or cannot get your system configured, you will be able to use any of the standard ITaP labs. One of your first course assignments will be completing a technology checklist and solving any technology access problems that you may encounter. You are also required to subscribe to and participate on a course mailing list.

Very early in the semester, you will be asked to demonstrate that you can meet these responsibilities:

- Have access to your Career Account.
- Set up your @purdue.edu email address and regularly check your email. Alternative email addresses (@yahoo, @hotmail, etc. are not appropriate for professional communication, so you need to use your @purdue account in ENGL 420).
- Become proficient sending and receiving email attachments, resolving file compatibility issues, and following email decorum.
- Send an email message to the class list
- Check the course calendar before each class meeting.
- Become proficient participating in the class Drupal space or Pronoun MOO..
- Become more proficient with unfamiliar computer technologies and applications, including Web editing software, document cycling systems, desktop publishing applications, and graphics programs.
- Maintain back-up copies of all assignments via your home directory, disks, USB drives, or CDs.

## Course Technologies

- Discussion List  
[engl420k020104s-class@relay.cc.purdue.edu](mailto:engl420k020104s-class@relay.cc.purdue.edu)
- ProNoun MOO client  
<http://linnell.english.purdue.edu:7000>
- Dreamweaver (Web Editor)
- Powerpoint, Word, InDesign
- Acrobat and Acrobat Reader
- [Drupal](#)

### Collaborative Work

Collaborative work is a required component of the course and a common mode of interaction in professional life. You and your project team members will be responsible for updating one another and me about assignment development and progress. In addition, you also are responsible for negotiating together all aspects of your work, including planning, drafting, revising, file managing, and scheduling of assignments. When I assign a collaborative project, I will provide you with explicit guidelines for successful collaboration. I will also ask individual group members to complete [Collaborative Evaluation Forms](#). The principles of collaboration I encourage students to follow are contained in the brochure, Group Work and Collaborative Writing <<http://www-honors.ucdavis.edu/vohs/index.html>>.

### Attendance

Attendance is required at all scheduled electronic and face-to-face (F2F) meetings. Since you will be working in project teams much of the semester, you also will be required to attend any scheduled out-of-class meetings with your team to complete course assignments. Three absences may result in your final grade being lowered by as much as a letter grade. More than three absences can result in a failing grade for the course. Excused absences may be granted for religious holidays or university-sponsored events, provided you make a written request to me no less than one week in advance and that you complete any required work before the due date. Being excessively or regularly late for class or team meetings, both electronic and F2F, can also be counted as an absence.

### Late Work

The majority of missed class assignments cannot be made up. If a serious and unavoidable problem arises, however, you should contact me in writing prior to the deadline to determine whether or not an extension for the work will or will not be granted.