

COURSE SYLLABUS

Bus 714 – Elements of Business Writing – 01Z (11156) & 02Z (11157)

SFSU College of Business | College of Extended Learning

Fall 2020 | Wednesday, August 26 – Wednesday, December 9

Meeting times: * Wednesdays **2-4:45** | **6:30-9:15** via Zoom meeting

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Office hours: Zoom conference by appointment

COURSE

Business is about buying and selling – products, ideas, people – and successful buying and selling relies on effective *persuasion*. This means that *good* business is about being persuasive enough so that your target audience will actually *want* the idea or product you’re selling.

Perhaps it’s a new tool you’re marketing to a consumer, or a product idea you’re pitching to a design team, or a strategic plan you’re presenting to a board of directors, or your own services to a prospective employer. To succeed in any of these settings, you must have a clear sense of concept, a well-focused set of arguments, and a convincing sales pitch.

Closing the deal and delivering your “product” to the consumer requires the confident use of language and a mastery of primary argumentative strategies, written and verbal.

Welcome to Business 714. Reading, writing and speaking are three of the most fundamental processes we engage in to make meaning and communicate with one another in all aspects of our personal and professional lives.

This course is designed to review and improve the communicative skills necessary to succeed in a graduate business program like this one, but also to excel in the business world thereafter. In this class you’ll practice various business writing and speaking tasks to reinforce foundation level skills in exposition, argument, research and presentation.

The course emphasizes discussion, oral presentation and business writing equally, with very little organized lecture. The goal is to help you improve your ability to think, write and speak and argue coherently and concisely so that you will be well-prepared for further academic study and well-matched to even the most challenging of today’s business climates.

* For the duration of the school closure in Fall 2020, classes will be held exclusively online, primarily through weekly required Zoom sessions for class discussions and small group work. Supplemental online work will be performed asynchronously via assignments posted on the class course page at gregteach.net/sfsu and in the assignment submission portal in iLearn. Instructions for how to access each of these sites will be covered during the first Zoom session in the first week of class.

PREREQUISITES

This is an integrated course for writing skills and principles of business writing and organizational communication for students who have not met the minimum written English proficiency requirement. Course is restricted to graduate Business students in the BUS MSA, MBA, MBA (SB), MSBA, BLMS, or BLSB program.

Graduate students in other majors may enroll on a space available basis with the consent of the Faculty Director of Graduate Programs. This course may not be used to meet master's degree ATC requirements. (CR/NC grading only).

OBJECTIVES

Broadly, this course helps improve students’ ability to think, write, and argue coherently and concisely, so that they will be well-prepared for further academic study and well-matched to the needs of today’s businesses.

Practically, students should be able to effectively plan, produce, and refine convincing written documents. This is broken into three components (below): know the problem/plan, be convincing, and work well in classes, and the real world.

Students are expected to experience measurable, substantial individual personal growth in the quality, depth and breadth of writing skills they possess, not necessarily meet an arbitrary “absolute” minimum standard for writing.

1. Know the problem, and formulate a plan of action

- a. Understand a problem/prompt/task and develop a plan for responding to it.
- b. Grasp well, and from the start, the nature of desired deliverables.
- c. Students act in a problem-centric manner, and are driven by a solid understanding of prompts they receive, from both professors and top managers.
- d. No “faking it.” Students are emboldened to inquire regarding intent of words, memes, phrases or idioms they do not comprehend.
- e. Responses to prompts are on-target/on-topic and identify and directly addresses core issue(s).

2. Be convincing (3 components)

Critical Thinking

- a. Think critically about the validity and appropriateness of sources, evidence, and argumentation. Understand what comprises compelling evidence.
- b. Using critical thinking, logically organize and effectively inform and craft arguments, that employ evidence.
- c. Know when an opposing view is relevant, and how to respond.

Rhetoric

- a. Structure a document in a coherent manner—appropriate to various assignments, business contexts, and diverse audiences.
- b. Apply business-appropriate written syntax, grammar, and tone in a manner that enhances the persuasiveness of the written work.
- c. Possess knowledge and skills needed to properly cite and reference all sources.
- d. Communicate effectively via graphical means, including crafting and editing charts, tables, figures, illustrations, and any other type of visuals. These vehicles should be seamlessly integrated into written material.

Evidence

- a. Ability to search for and find relevant evidence and literature, and to use these sources persuasively in arguments.
- b. Become familiar with primary research, determination of findings, and reporting results in a concise, compelling manner.

3. Work effectively in classes and the business world

Broadly, students should be able to interact in a responsive and cogent manner with others using written vehicles for expression.

- a. Possess the skills to critique and edit student’s own and others’ written work for improved conciseness, style, persuasiveness, and impact.
- b. Ability to read and extract main messages from others’ complex writing.
- c. Ability to use others’ thoughts and ideas in a constructive and appropriate manner (citing/references).
- d. Be able to function well as a team member when the writing task involves multiple human inputs.
- e. Ability to create and refine coherent documents (style, content) written by several authors.

In addition to competence in standard English grammar and usage, your essays and presentation speech should demonstrate a command of a variety of expository strategies appropriate to college and business audiences, and they should also reflect an informed commitment to standard conventions of academic and professional discourse.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Business Communication

Harvard Business Essentials, 2003
ISBN-13: 978-1591391135
<https://tinyurl.com/y54b9jdi>

Everything's an Argument, 8e

Andrea A. Lunsford, John J. Ruszkiewicz
Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018
ISBN-13: 978-1319056278
<https://tinyurl.com/yxt7sue4>

The Business Writer's Companion, 8e

Gerald J. Alred, Charles T. Brusaw, Walter E. Oliu
Bedford/St. Martin's, 2019
ISBN-13: 978-1319292690
<https://tinyurl.com/yxc2z9w7>

***All 3 course texts are required and should be the editions listed above. Print editions may be substituted for the digital versions included here and ordered from a book vendor of your choice.**

EVALUATION

BUS 714 is a credit (CR) / no-credit (NC) course. All submitted work is evaluated using a standard A-F grading rubric available on the course website. **In order to pass the class and receive a final grade of "Credit," all work must be submitted and you must achieve an average of C or better in *each* of the two main course components ("Coursework" and "Essays & Responses") and in the course overall. See the Grading section below for additional details.**

Classes will be a mix of lecture, discussion, and oral and written presentation work. Homework items must be submitted on the day they are due to receive credit; late homework assignments will not be accepted for credit and in-class exercises and quizzes cannot be made up if you miss class.

I do not give partial credit for partial work – to receive credit on homework items, you must complete the entire exercise as assigned, by its due date. Please email me in advance if you plan on missing a day and/or assignment so that we can make sure your work still gets submitted to me on time. Check the course website (gregteach.net) for a detailed schedule of reading and writing assignments.

There will be alternating in-class and take-home short writing assignments each week, and I'll assign regular reading from course texts and other sources for which you will be responsible every time we meet.

Although this is a reading and writing class, it is still participation-based – I do not lecture for the entire period, and it is not possible to receive a passing grade without doing the reading and then coming prepared to talk about it, write about it, and be tested on it.

Please get in the habit of checking the online reading and homework schedules *well before class meets* to ensure that you have enough time to complete all items as assigned.

***You will need reliable access to a computer with Internet and printing capabilities to succeed in this course as all of the materials needed to pass are accessed online.**

ATTENDANCE

Because course instruction is cumulative in nature, missing *any* class will put you at a serious disadvantage because of missed material that I cannot reteach to you. That said, you can miss **one class** without it affecting your grade adversely. After that, your course average will drop the equivalent of a full letter grade for each missed class. Arriving late or leaving early should not happen either, of course. Lates or early exits will be counted as absences if the pattern persists.

PARTICIPATION

Active participation is vital to your success in the course. To measure your grasp of the material, I have to hear and see you contribute to class discussions and exercises on a regular basis. Please note that the classroom (whether virtual or in-person) should be a safe place for people to voice their thoughts: during discussions and exercises please be sensitive to your classmates.

Take care to listen to what they have to say before you respond, and be vigilant that you are not hurtful in your responses to them.

GRADING

Grades are determined from the following components and valued as shown. This course is not graded on a curve or weighted by category. There are no extra credit opportunities in this class. Assignments have point values (see below) calculated as percentage scores on a standard 100-point scale (100-90 is an A, 89-80 a B, 79-70 a C, 69-60 a D, and everything below 60 an F).

All work must be completed satisfactorily in order to pass the course. Instructor feedback is provided on major writing assignments within 2 weeks of submission in most cases. In-class writing assignments and quizzes are returned the following week of instruction in most cases. Please hold on to all work that I return to you in case your scores do not match what's in the grade book at the end of the term.

Essays & Projects:

Rhetorical Analysis (1)	20 pts
Project Narrative (1)	10 pts
Group Write Analysis (1)	20 pts
Cover Letter (1)	20 pts
Definition Essay (Midterm)	20 pts
Group Proposal (1)	20 pts
Journal Wikis (3)	10 pts

Coursework:

Reading Quizzes (TBD)	10 pts each
In-class homework exercises (TBD)	10 pts each

***All work is required in order to pass the course – no assignments may be skipped. Missed work due to absences must be completed satisfactorily, in consultation with me. The course overall must be passed with an average of “C” (>70%) in order to receive a passing grade of “Credit” for the course. Students who are unable to achieve passing scores on every major assignment will receive a grade of “No Credit.”**

DPRC

Students with verified disabilities have the right to receive reasonable academic accommodations. Those requiring accommodations for a learning or physical disability that may affect their ability to complete course requirements should communicate with me during the first week of the term so that I may adjust course materials or schedules in order to meet individual needs.

The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is designed to facilitate equal educational opportunities for those who need the added support. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building on the main SFSU campus. They can be accessed by telephone, email, and web here: 415.338.2472 // dprc@sfsu.edu // <http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc/>

PLAGIARISM

The work you submit must be your own. Plagiarism is using another person’s words or ideas, either published or unpublished, and passing them off as your own *by not properly citing the original source*. I expect you to periodically use other people’s words and ideas in your own work, but I do not want you to steal them.

The most obvious form of plagiarism is copying directly from print or Web-based materials *without using quotation marks* or other appropriate forms of attribution. A less obvious form, but equally as serious, is summarizing or paraphrasing the ideas of an author *without citing that author as the original source*. A third and often overlooked type of plagiarism is *using an editor – a friend, family member, or tutor – beyond a reasonable level (this would include having that person(s) write any portion of your work for you)*. In each of these instances, your work no longer reflects your own knowledge, voice, style, or comprehension of the given material.

All paraphrases and quotations must be cited appropriately. If you have questions regarding how to properly cite your sources, ask me, ask a research librarian at our school library, or refer to the appropriate citation source materials on the course website.

There is a zero-tolerance policy in this class with regards to willful acts of cheating and plagiarism: Students caught intentionally engaging in these acts will receive an automatic “F” on the relevant assignment. Subsequent infractions will expose you to a lowered or failing course grade because of failed coursework, and it may also invite further disciplinary measures ranging from a warning to a penalty grade to expulsion from the college, per SFSU standards of student conduct and academic integrity.

DATES

It is your responsibility to be aware critical dates and deadlines throughout the term. Below are a few of the most important ones. Please check our online course page at gregteach.net for all assignment deadlines.

First day of class	August 26
Labor Day recess	September 7
Add/Drop deadline	September 14
Veteran’s Day recess	November 11
Withdraw deadline	November 16
Thanksgiving recess	November 23-27
Last day of class	December 9
Last day of the term	December 18