

SCH-MGMT 310, Management Communication
Junior Year Writing Core Syllabus
Spring 2008

SCH-MGMT 310, Management Communication, is designed to help you polish your communication skills, both written and oral, as you prepare for a career as a business professional. Instruction, assignments, and activities will focus on the kinds of communication tasks you will likely encounter in your field. In the process of your studies this semester, you will develop not only your writing and speaking skills, but also, and most importantly, your critical thinking skills.

Mission

Business Communication courses in the Isenberg School of Management offer you opportunities to learn about leadership and management communication, as well as to practice critical thinking and business writing skills. To accomplish these goals, our courses encompass:

- Interactive approaches that focus on developing leadership and management communication, teamwork, and interpersonal skills
- Exercises that promote practice in argument, persuasion, communication strategy, page design, and graphics
- Assignments that result in at least 20+ final draft pages of quality writing by the end of the course, including business documents of varying values, lengths, and types
- Engagement in key writing processes, including giving feedback, working with peer editors, self-editing, revising, and proof reading
- Support to help you improve grammar and style points: face-to-face conferences, writing center tutoring, writing resources
- Reading, writing, and discussion on issues and trends in management communication, including ethical and cross-cultural communication
- Professional and career writing assignments aimed at helping you develop the kinds of writing-thinking skills that are expected in your major fields
- Research writing focusing on information analysis, citing and listing information sources, and documenting sources.

By the end of SCH-MGMT 310, then, I expect that you will be able to:

- Demonstrate professional writing skills (including peer editing and revision)
- Develop an appropriate strategy for a number of communication tasks
- Demonstrate a strong command of standard English, including issues of grammar, spelling, and usage
- Perform library and field research and provide source documentation in APA format
- Demonstrate knowledge of standard business document formats and requirements

Required texts

Business Communication (custom edition)

Inside Business Writing by Dina Friedman et. al.

These texts are available at **Amherst Books on Main Street**. In addition, other readings may be placed on reserve.

You are also required to have a **handbook of English language usage**. Your handbook from ENGL 112 will suffice; if you no longer have access to that text, you must purchase or borrow another one. See me for suggestions and/or text approval.

Components of your grade

Your final grade will be assigned on a scale of 500 points, as follows:

Unit 1: Business Communication Basics	100 points
Unit 2: Proposal Writing	100 points
Unit 3: Writing in the Major: Briefing Memo (group project)	150 points
Unit 4: Public Speaking	50 points
Unit Quizzes	20 points
Revision	30 points
Engagement and Participation	50 points

See the handout entitled “General Assignment Descriptions” for details.

Notes on Class Administration

1. Office Hours

- My office is SOM 208. Office hours are on Wednesdays from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm, and by appointment.

2. Reaching Me

- E-mail: paradiso@som.umass.edu.
- Phone: 577-2237. Feel free to leave a message.

3. Class Meetings

• Attendance

Regular attendance is critical to success in communication classes; in performance courses, absences and lack of participation reduce learning benefits for all. We in the Business Communication Program truly want you to learn from each other, and for this reason all 310-390 courses follow a strict attendance policy. Avoid serious point deductions from your final grade, or even a failing final grade, by noting these policies:

- **Point penalties for absences.** Only two absences are allowed without penalty or excuse after the add-drop period and before semester end. **Each successive absence after the first two, whether excusable or unexcused, is subject to a 10-point penalty**, which will be deducted from the final grade.

- **Penalties for lateness counted as absence(s).** Note that if you arrive 20 minutes or more after the start of class (or leave more than 20 minutes before the end of class), **every such instance of lateness (20+) will count as an absence, subject to the 10-point deduction described in #1.**

One absence will also be counted for 3 late arrivals of 5 or more minutes: **each set of 3 late arrivals (5+ minutes) is thus also subject to a 10-point penalty deduction as described in #1.**

- **Failing the course because of excessive absences.** Following University guidelines, if someone misses more than 20% of the classes required during a semester, the 10-point penalties will no longer be applied; **instead, a failing course grade will automatically be assigned.**

For example, if our course schedule includes 28 class meetings and you miss more than 6 of those class meetings ($28 \times .20 = 5.6 = 6$, rounded to the nearest whole number), you would be assigned an F for the course, regardless of points accrued or deducted.

- **Arranging to make up work in advance of an absence.** Absences may be unavoidable on occasion, including during add-drop period, but in **all cases** of absence you are responsible for completing missed assignments. If you anticipate an absence for religious observance, jury duty, etc., at any time during the semester, see me **in advance** to discuss handing in work, completing tests, and so forth. Note that it's often not possible to make up what was missed in a class, such as this one, that is interactive rather than lecture-based.
- **Quizzes may not be made up under any circumstances.** Quiz dates are announced on the Semester Overview Calendar and on each unit calendar, and they take place during the first ten minutes of class. If you are absent or late, you will earn a zero for the quiz. No exceptions will be made.
- **Timeliness**
On time arrival to class is expected. Lateness is strongly discouraged, because it is unprofessional, it is disrespectful, and it disrupts class. If you must be late for good reason, notify your instructor in advance. If you are late more than twice, expect to face penalties as outlined above.
- **Civility**
To ensure an optimum learning environment for all, cell phones and all other electronic devices should be turned off as you enter class (not set on vibrate or on Text, but **turned OFF**). Similarly, all devices should remain off until class is over.

As well, I ask that you make respectful contributions to class discussions, speak and ask questions civilly, and listen politely to your peers during class presentations. These common communication courtesies help ensure a positive class environment.

4. Reading and Writing Requirements

- Drafts and revisions are required. If you come to class without a draft on a day when a draft is due, you will lose points *both* on that assignment and on your engagement grade.
- Late papers or projects are subject to penalty. Generally speaking, this means one grade off for each business day the paper or project is late (an A project becomes an A-, then a B+, then a B, etc.).
- When you turn in major assignments, all materials must be presented neatly in a 2-pocket folder. This includes your final draft, *all* early drafts, all peer and writing-center edits, and any notes, outlines, or other planning materials. In short, your folder should contain evidence of your writing process. I will not accept loose or clipped-together papers. Get a folder.
- Read *all* of the material assigned for the day, and be prepared to speak up to offer opinions and ask questions. I will monitor your progress on this front as part of your engagement grade.

Grading: Quality Expectations and a Conversion Chart

Based on University Faculty Senate standards, “C” is the baseline average grade. An assignment must be of reasonably *above average* quality to be assigned a “B” grade; “A” is reserved for work or performance that demonstrates *absolute highest standards of excellence*.

Not all criteria in each category described below will apply to every situation, but the descriptions should help you understand parameters for assigning final grades in 310-390 classes.

Quality Expectations and Category Descriptions

- A** Almost Impeccable Product (Written) or Performance (Presentation) and Excellent Effort -- Product and/or performance meet highest standards for all criteria applied. Work is notably and consistently strong across categories. Results "raise the bar" for all. Communication behavior demonstrates the highest degree of productive leadership and interpersonal skills. Very high-quality edits are consistently given, sought, and acted on during revision. The writer proofreads to 97% correctness level or higher.
- A-** Superior Product and Effort – Meets very high standards for writing and speaking. Occasional product/performance may be slightly and/or consistently flawed in execution. Effort may be considerable, but may be slightly unfocused or misdirected in one or more categories affecting the quality of the final product. Communication behavior demonstrates highly productive participation, positive leadership and strong interpersonal skills. High quality edits are given and sought, and the writer attends to feedback, but occasional points may be lost for less than impeccable proofreading.
- B+** Very Good, Above Average Product and Effort – Again, high standards are met, and product and effort are very good across all criteria categories. Final products/performance may show a bit less effort than needed, however, or the

writing or speaking is moderately "off-task." Communication behavior demonstrates productive participation and above average interpersonal skills. Very good quality edits may be given and sought, but edits and revision may not be as thorough or insightful, and proofreading may be slightly less thorough.

- B** Very Good, Above Average Product and Effort - Product/Performance are generally of very good quality; some work stands out for excellence, but a small number of papers or presentations may be less effective, given the assignment purpose and audience. Slightly above average standards for product or performance are met, but with occasional weaknesses demonstrated in category elements or in task execution. Communication behavior shows more than adequate participation and interpersonal skills, and generally good quality edits were given and sought, but again, the writer may not proofread as diligently as needed for a higher score.
- B-** Good, generally Above Average Product and Effort - Product/Performance are generally of very good quality, but may be flawed across more categories than papers assigned higher grades. Some work stands out, but some papers or presentations may be less effective in meeting assignment requirements. Average to slightly above average standards for product or performance are met, but with some weaknesses in category elements or in task execution. Communication behavior usually shows more than adequate participation and interpersonal skills, and good quality edits are given and sought, but the written products may show that the writer needed to pay more attention to feedback and to proofread a bit more diligently to earn a higher score.
- C+** Commendable, Average Product and Effort – There is evidence of satisfactory work, and baseline standards are met or exceeded for most or all criteria applied. Some persistent areas of weakness are visible across categories, but in general, product and effort meet the requirements for the task. Communication behavior shows fair participation and adequate interpersonal skills, but may not show sustained, extended or in-depth effort. Fair quality edits may be given and sought, but the writer at times should pay more attention to feedback when revising, and should proofread to find and fix correctness errors.
- C** Satisfactory, Average Quality Product and Effort – There is evidence of satisfactory work, and Product/Performance usually meets baseline standards, but with occasional serious flaws or deficiencies in one or more categories. The writing or speaking demonstrates competence, but with fewer noticeable areas of strength. Most tasks are executed competently, but some problems with task execution may be evident, as well as more somewhat more limited skill and knowledge development. Communication behavior generally shows adequate participation and attention to feedback, but may show less self-direction. Assignments may be more often late and occasionally missing; good or fair quality edits may be given and sought, but the writer may not often seek high quality edits, or revise sufficiently based on the feedback received, or proofread carefully and consistently.
- C-** Generally Satisfactory, Average Quality Product and Effort – There is evidence of competent work, and Product/Performance usually meets baseline standards, but results may show deficiencies in one or more categories, and lower than average

quality results. There are fewer areas of strength observed in writing or speaking, and problems with task execution may be more often evident, along with more limited skill and knowledge development. Communication behavior generally shows participation and attention to feedback, but may show less in-depth thought and self-direction. Assignments may be more often late and occasionally missing, and the writer may not seek higher quality edits, or revise sufficiently based on the feedback received. Proofreading is likely inadequate to ensure that the products meet higher standards for correctness.

- D+** Minimally Acceptable, Below Average Product and Effort – Although there is evidence of effort, and some core course objectives were met, final product quality and overall performance do not generally meet minimal Junior Year Writing standards, There’s scant evidence of focused, self-directed effort, and task execution is generally poor, with few strengths observed. Although the writer may be well-meaning, the efforts are often incomplete or misdirected. The writing or speaking reveals problems with competency in key skills or knowledge and also more serious deficiencies. Assignments are generally of lower quality, late, or missing. Few and low quality edits were sought and given, and there’s a pattern of missing edits, minimal or misdirected revision, and less proofreading. Behavior may show consistent lateness and/or absences that negatively affect the overall outcome. At this level of performance, the writer/speaker is not meeting JY Writing minimum requirements, but is deemed to have earned a passing score in the course based on point totals.
- D** Borderline Acceptable, Below Average Product and Effort – Overall Product/performance does not meet minimal Junior Year Writing standards, and barely fulfills core objectives for the course. Task execution is negligible and efforts are largely incomplete or misdirected. The writing or speaking reveals serious deficiencies in core skills and knowledge. Problems may be compounded by excessive absences and failure to complete required assignments. Quality edits are seldom sought and given, and there’s a pattern of missing edits, minimal or misdirected revision, and minimal proofreading. Communication behavior may show negligible or less productive participation, a low level of positive engagement, and consistent lateness or a higher absence rate. At this level of performance, the writer/speaker is deemed to have earned only a minimal passing score in the course based on point totals.
- F** Unacceptable, Below Standard Product and Effort -- Product/Performance does not meet minimal standards for JY Writing and does not demonstrate sufficient understanding of core course objectives, concepts, and/or skills. Written products may be inappropriate; required assignments are missing or of very low quality, and have not enabled the writer to accrue enough points through course work to achieve a passing point total for the course. Communication behavior shows negative or no participation in individual or team presentations and may show a very high absence rate and/or consistent lateness. Work does not meet minimal editing, revising, and proofreading requirements, and the writer/speaker is deemed to have failed the course.

Grade Conversion Chart

Use this chart to convert your writing assignment scores to points and your accumulated points to letter grades:

Letter grade	Points/credit hour	100 point scale	500 point scale
A	4.0	95-100	475+ points
A-	3.7	91-94	455-474
B+	3.3	88-90	440-454
B	3.0	84-87	420-439
B-	2.7	81-83	405-419
C+	2.3	78-80	390-404
C	2.0	74-77	370-389
C-	1.7	71-73	355-369
D+	1.3	68-70	340-354
D	1.0	65-67	325-339
F	0.0	Below 65	Below 325 points

Program Policy on Academic Honesty

The integrity of any educational degree depends on the particular school's reputation for promoting ethics, honesty and professionalism. The Isenberg School of Management holds high expectations for ethical behavior, and so dishonesty carried out in SOM 310-390 courses, in the form of cheating, falsification of materials, plagiarizing the work of others, or facilitating others' acts of dishonesty, is unacceptable, whether intentional or accidental. Fortunately, in SOM 310-390 courses you'll have many opportunities to learn how to properly credit your sources of ideas and information.

As you begin your communication course it will help if you keep this basic definition in mind: **plagiarism is the unethical and often illegal practice of not giving credit for ideas and materials that others have developed.** Plagiarism also includes using ideas or work you have developed in projects with other students, representing ideas taught by a teacher as your own, or even representing as original your own work that you've already submitted to, or intend to submit to another class.

If you are an international student, note that cultures can have different rules for research and writing, and guidelines you followed somewhere else may not apply in the United States. For example, while in some cultures copying the work of others is acceptable and a mark of respect, in the U.S., professional writing is expected to explicitly acknowledge all influences (people, theories, facts) that shaped the work, by citing and listing such sources. U.S. business professionals engaged in research-related writing are expected to show original thinking, but while also leaving a documentation trail that other researchers can follow.

Because academic honesty is so important to your integrity and to the school's, we urge you to reduce the possibility of plagiarism by following what is called a "show-proof" process when you research and write.

- First, demonstrate that you know how to cite and list sources using a common style guideline (APA is the standard in 310-390 courses).
- Second, keep your research and reading notes, your outlines and print-outs, and your revised drafts, and submit all of these elements with your final drafts -- to help verify that the work you produce in your 310-390 course is the result of your own effort.
- Third, know that it is seriously unethical to use work in one class that you prepared in another class without express permission of both professors.
- Fourth, understand that work is not original if you have already used it or intend to use it concurrently. Your instructors expect you to turn in assignments unique to your particular course, unless you have discussed other arrangements in advance.

Ethical Point: avoiding plagiarism is about showing respect to our colleagues. It's important to say who helped us produce a paper or document, and it's important to acknowledge how their ideas, information, or theories helped us. We are all building on each other's contributions, and learning to properly document sources enables all of us to give credit where it is due.

Penalties for Dishonest or Plagiarized Assignments

Even though this is one of our least pleasant responsibilities, SOM 310-390 instructors are obligated to check the authenticity and quality of your written work. If we see a reason to look more deeply into some aspect of an assignment, the burden of proof is always on your shoulders to outline how the writing developed, to show what information was most useful, and to explain which other writers and researchers influenced the thinking in the assignment.

Again, the “show proof” process is critical. Your documentation should be thorough and correct, because **submitting undocumented or improperly documented written work will result in a failing grade being assigned to that assignment.**

In addition, because faculty members are obligated to report and handle all cases of academic dishonesty, **if an assignment is judged to have been plagiarized, the writer could face even more serious sanctions, such as a failing course grade.**

For these reasons, we strongly invite you to consult your instructors or writing center tutors if you need help with research writing, and with documenting sources. In addition, remember to regularly consult your writing handbook and the online resources that are available to you on this web site.

General Assignment Descriptions

Semester Overview Calendar

Dates	Topic	Assignment
1/31-2/14	Business Communication Basics: Case analysis	Case response due 2/21 Unit quiz: 2/14
2/21-2/28	Special topics	(No major assignment) Unit quiz: 3/4
3/4-3/27	Argumentation and proposal writing	Proposal due 4/1 Unit quiz: 3/27
4/1-4/24	Briefing Memo—Group Project	Project description memo due 4/8 Interview report due 4/10 Progress report due 4/15 Unit quiz: 4/17 Final project due 4/22 Group oral presentation 4/24 Individual reflection memo due 4/29
4/29-5/8	Oral Presentations	Individually scheduled for 4/29, 5/1, 5/6 and 5/8

For each unit, I will distribute a more detailed calendar with daily reading and writing assignments.

Note that assignments and due dates sometimes overlap. This means that you may be working on two or more assignments at once, in addition to your assignments for your other courses. Keep your eye on the calendar, and **manage your time wisely!**

General Assignment Descriptions

Unit 1: Business Communication Basics: Case Analysis (100 points)

In this unit, you will learn strategies for a number of different rhetorical situations. We will try to touch on the most common situations that may arise for people in particular majors. Your project will be a case analysis in which you will critique the rhetorical strategies employed by the characters in a published business case, and prepare correspondence related to the case. You will also learn peer editing skills, which you will use throughout the course.

Objectives for mastery include:

- Practicing strategic communication in letters, memos, and e-mail
- Learning persuasive writing techniques
- Developing professional writing skills and knowledge of formats
- Acquiring professional writing skills (especially peer editing and revising)

Unit 2: Argumentation and Proposal Writing (100 points)

In this unit you will learn how principles of classical argumentation are applied to business proposals. You will also learn the basic elements that constitute an effective proposal. Your project will be to create a persuasive proposal memo using appropriate evidence, argumentative strategies, and audience analysis.

Objectives for mastery include:

- Practicing strategic communication
- Developing critical thinking
- Analyzing audiences
- Conducting research
- Learning about rhetorical argument
- Developing technical writing skills
- Practicing mechanics of effective writing, editing, and revision
- Writing professional documents

Unit 3: Writing in the Major: Briefing Memo—Group Project (150 points)

In this unit, your task, as a group of three or four, will be to research a bill currently before Congress that relates to your major or area of study, and write a 4-6 page briefing memo that analyzes the problem and explains how it affects or will affect a particular workplace. Your research must include a face-to-face or telephone interview with someone working in your field. Your group will prepare a brief presentation for the class on your project. Finally, you will write a memo to me reflecting on the group process.

Objectives for mastery include:

- Acquiring knowledge about collaborative writing processes
- Practicing collaborative writing and editing
- Writing to learn about one's field or profession
- Acquiring knowledge about management and leadership communication
- Developing strategic communication skills
- Practicing principles of argument and critical thinking
- Conducting research
- Developing interviewing skills
- Documenting source material
- Practicing page design/visual rhetoric
- Choreographing group presentations
- Practicing public speaking in a group setting

Unit 4: Public Speaking (50 points)

In this unit, each of you will give a 5-7 minute presentation about a trend or issue affecting your field (some restrictions apply). While part of your presentation should be informative (that is, you should aim to tell us something we don't already know), you may also use part of the time to engage us in an activity or facilitate a discussion. **Visual aids are required.** The presentation will be recorded on video, and you will be required to watch the video (in private) and evaluate yourself as a speaker. Your presentation will also be critiqued by your peers and by me, your instructor.

Objectives for mastery include:

- Learning to give an effective presentation
- Establishing and maintaining audience interest in an oral context
- Understanding and practicing components of oral delivery
- Designing visual aids
- Identifying and learning about trends or issues in your field

Note: **Rescheduling talks is nearly impossible.** Let me know well in advance of any conflicts, because **failing to give your talk on the day scheduled is grounds for a failing grade in the course.**

Other Grade Components

Revision (30 points, distributed over the first three assignments)

Revision is a necessary skill for all management professionals. You are expected to complete drafts on time, obtain and offer thoughtful and constructive edits, and revise your work. Note that drafts and revisions are required, not optional. If you come to class without a draft on a day when a draft is due, you will lose points *both* on that assignment and on your Engagement score.

Unit Quizzes (20 points)

At the end of each unit (except for the last one, on oral presentations), there will be a quiz to determine the extent of your mastery of the concepts covered during the unit. Each quiz is worth 5 points.

Quizzes take place in the first 10 minutes of class. If you are late or absent, you will earn a zero on the quiz. There are no extensions or make-ups for quizzes.

Engagement and Participation (50 points)

I will monitor your demonstrated commitment to improving your writing and thinking skills throughout the course. This is not a course in which you will be fed information to memorize; to be successful in this course, you will need to be an active participant in your own education. Specifically, this means you will need to expend mental effort to understand the principles of business communication and how they apply to the rhetorical task you are charged with performing. It is up to you to identify and work to strengthen any weaknesses you may have in the written and oral presentation of your ideas. I am here to help you strengthen your skills, but in the end, they're *your* skills.

I will keep an eye on your engagement in the learning process in these areas as well:

- Your progress in mastering conceptual and mechanical elements of your writing (includes homework)
- The amount, tone, and quality of your class participation
- The degree, regularity, and quality of your participation and leadership in your group
- How well you manage your writing time
- The degree to which you are prepared for discussion (having read the assigned materials)
- Your overall pattern of attendance, timeliness, and courtesy
- The degree to which you take personal responsibility for your writing and speaking development