WRA 202: Introduction to Professional Writing  
MW 8:30-9:50, 317 Bessey  

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**COURSE GOALS**

WRA 202 introduces you both to the rhetorical principles and professional practices that you will need as a professional writer and to the field of professional writing as it is defined by the professional writing program here at MSU. The principles and practices you engage in for this class will help you understand and respond effectively to professional and workplace writing scenarios. We will devote time to understanding what "professional writing" means and its relevance and place in the corporate world. We will address issues related to genres of workplace writing, design principles, digital writing, and research skills and methodologies. Given the nature of professional writing, the course will involve both individual and collaborative work. This course will primarily focus on the identity and work of the professional writer, and what skill sets should be honed to be ahead in the job market. We will also explore how rhetorical problem-solving principles may be applied to diverse professional writing tasks and situations.

The major goal of the course is for you to learn strategies and methods to write effectively as a professional in the workplace. We will make the class a workshop symposium on professional communications relevant to your intended vocational goals. You are reflect and write about the writing you explore and about how writing "works" in a professional context.

We will investigate the work and professional identities of professional writers: What are professional writers? What kind of work do they do? How are professional writers related to other kinds of writers, such as creative writers, technical communicators, and journalists; equally important, how are they related to designers, information architects, and project managers? By the end of the course you should have a solid idea of what it means to be a professional writer and a sense of which track (Digital and Technical Writing, Writing in Communities and Cultures, or Writing, Editing, and Publishing) you would be most interested in pursuing in this program.

**READINGS**

Required text: Writing on the Job: A Norton Pocket Guide by John C. Brereton and Margaret A. Mansfield

All of our course readings are available on our class ANGEL site (angel.msu.edu) in the “Readings and Materials” tab in ANGEL. You will find a folder for each week with the readings of both the days of the week.
The readings due each day -- along with guiding questions to consider as you read -- are listed on the schedule.

**GRADING**

Project ONE: Professional writer's portfolio: 300 pts  
Project TWO: Investigating professional writing: 300 pts  
Project THREE: Workplace simulation: 400 pts

The final course grade will convert to the University's 4-point scale as follows:

- 93.5-100% 4.0  
- 86.5-93.5% 3.5  
- 79.5-86.5% 3.0  
- 74.5-79.5% 2.5  
- 69.5-74.5% 2.0  
- 64.5-69.5% 1.5  
- 60-64.5% 1.0

**POLICIES**

**Submission Format:** You may write your assignments in MSWORD documents – Times New Roman – double spaced – font size 12 – one inch margins on all sides. All submissions should be in PDF format.

**Attendance and participation:** Participation is absolutely essential. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings due that day. Plan on expressing your ideas, frustrations, questions, confusions, etc., even if you're not able to articulate them without some hesitation—sometimes ambivalent or ambiguous remarks spark the liveliest discussions.

If you are absent, you miss valuable class time with your peers and will have difficulty keeping up with the pace of the class. If you miss class, you are still responsible for obtaining class notes and completing work you missed.

A third absence will make a difference in your final grade; for every absence after two, your final grade will go down .25. Please see your student handbook or the university Ombudsman's web page http://www.msu.edu/~ombud/ for procedures for obtaining an excused absence at MSU. Should a serious medical or family emergency arise that will require your absence beyond four classes, please notify me as soon as possible-and make sure that you notify your academic advisor as well.

**Reading:** Careful reading is an important form of participation in this course. Assigned readings are intended to help you understand the writing assignments and spark ideas for paper topics.

**Late policy:** If you miss more than ten minutes of class, it counts as an absence. Keep in mind that you're responsible for completing all assignments on time, even if you're away—so if you plan to be gone the day something is due, remember to turn it in before
you leave. The due date of each paper is mentioned in the agenda. The policy for late paper submission is -- NO LATE SUBMISSION. However, if you are faced with a personal or medical emergency and have already turned in one late assignment you will need to make arrangements with me as much in advance of the due date as possible.

**Electronic Device Policy:** No Instant Messaging, no Facebook, or game playing while we are having class. Only class related emails and web-surfing will be allowed. Keep your cell phones SWITCHED OFF during class.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the act of using language and ideas from published sources without proper attribution (see your Spartan Student Handbook for policies on Academic Honesty, pp. 76-77). Unfair usage of copyrighted stuff without proper citations will lead to a loss of points and even failure in the course. It is essential that you are very careful about this. In this class, we will work on how to cite others’ ideas and words. If you have questions please ask.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** MSU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discriminations, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements.