

# Business Writing

Instructor: Dr. Beth Tomlinson

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Class meeting dates/times: A-BLOCK

CIMBA, Summer 2023

## Course Description

This course is designed to prepare you to participate effectively in workplace communication. Managers and other business professionals communicate to solve problems both internally and externally in the workplace. The class is writing-intensive, in that you will be expected to engage in writing during most class meetings. The course also includes several presentations, as the ability to communicate one's ideas across multiple channels, including orally, is critical to business settings. The course is workshop-based, as practice is essential to learning written and oral communication skills.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

Through this course, students will learn to communicate relevant information clearly, accurately, and succinctly to audiences by using written and oral formats associated with business contexts. Specifically, students will be able to:

- Analyze purposes of business messages and determine appropriate communication channels
- Compose and design written and oral business messages for particular audiences
- Collect and organize information through research to prepare and deliver business messages in written and oral formats
- Compose business messages and credit sources appropriately
- Apply editing, proofreading, and revising techniques in business messages
- Practice employment communication skills

## Course format

This course includes lectures and workshops. Course materials include chapter assignments, writing improvement exercises, class discussions, writing assignments, peer reviews, oral presentations, team activities, grammar review, etc. You should anticipate intensive and time-sensitive work. You will work individually, with one partner, and with a small team for various activities and assignments throughout the course.

## Required materials

Microsoft Office

Materials, including the e-book, are provided to you in ICON- The University of Iowa's learning management system: <https://icon.uiowa.edu/>

Guffey, M. E. & Loewy, D. (2022). *Essentials of business communication*. 12th edition. Cengage.

## Expectations for students

Daily attendance AND active participation are expected and will affect your ability to pass the course. You are expected to attend each session for the entire class period (see policy below). In-class activities cannot be made up, as these typically take place in the moment and often involve teamwork.

## Attendance policy

Attendance at all classes and CIMBA-sanctioned activities is mandatory. All unexcused absences will have the following consequences:

- a. 1st absence will result in a loss of a 1/3 of a letter grade in that class
- b. 2nd (cumulative) absence will result in a loss of an entire letter grade in that class
- c. 3rd (cumulative) absence will result in a dismissal from the program.

Absences due to illness require a note from the CIMBA Office Staff. If a student is sick and cannot attend class, they must inform the CIMBA Staff immediately. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.

## Assignments and grading

<b>Major Assignments</b> (w denotes a writing activity, o denotes an oral activity)	<b>Points possible</b>
Resume (w)	20
Ch. 4- Radical rewrite (w)	10
Travel instructions (w)	15
Claim letter (w)	20
Ch. 7- Claim denial: Whining on the web (w)	20
Business report (w)	80
<b>Presentations</b>	
Partner presentation (o)	20
Impromptu participation (o)	15
Final report presentation, with outline and slides (o and w)	50
<b>Participation</b>	
Pre-arrival assignment	20

Cross-cultural activities (email, epic fails activity) participation (w)	10
Bad water case: audience analysis, document (w)	20
Ch. 3- Costco and pizza writing activities (w)	10
Negative messages activities (case and role play) (w and o)	8
Persuasion activities (social media analysis, sales pitch)	10
Decision-matrix activity participation (w)	10
Executive summary participation (w)	10
Daily engagement/participation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- student attends all classes</li> <li>- actively participates in class discussions/<b>in-class</b> writing and speaking activities, including ones not listed above</li> </ul>	42
TOTAL	380

A=380-340 B=339-302 C=301-265 D=264-228 F=227-0

The grading scale already incorporates rounding. Additional requests for rounding will not be considered.

## Major assignments

Additional details will be discussed in-class and via assignment guidelines.

**Resume:** prepare a **one-page resume**. Ensure that you include reference to the skills you are learning during CIMBA's study abroad program. Assessment criteria include formatting, coverage of educational credentials, coverage of employment/volunteer/skills, and adherence to business writing standards.

**Claim Message:** Prepare a one-page **business letter** using full-block format where you report on a problem you encountered with a service or an item that you have purchased in your hometown. Address your letter to the company, and ensure you indicate your mailing address as well (it is fine to use a fake address for yourself for this assignment). Assessment criteria include a clear, appropriate opening; logical, accurate explanation of validity of the claim in the body of the letter; an appropriate closing; your view and professionalism; appropriate formatting, and adherence to business writing standards.

**Claim Denial- Whining on the Web:** See Chapter 7, Writing Improvement Exercise 7.8. Submit a copy of the complaint along with your response **written as a professional email**. Assessment criteria include an appropriate strategy for the opening; clear and complete body that avoids legal liability and conveys fairness to the reader; closing that manages the business relationship; business formatting; and adherence to business writing standards.

**Business Report:** You are working as a consultant for a local Italian company (more details forthcoming in-class). You have been asked to determine three options for corporate retreats in

Italy or nearby to Italy (within an hour's drive of the borders). [Report details and assessment criteria are available here.](#) Further updates and details may be provided in-class or via ICON.

**Final Presentation:** This presentation will be based on your yardstick report. The premise for your presentation is that the CEO of the local Italian company has asked you to share three options for the corporate retreat with the management team, and to make a research-based recommendation. View this as a boardroom-style presentation. [Further details are available here.](#) Updates to details and guidelines may be provided in-class or via ICON. The presentation materials include a PowerPoint slide deck and a presentation outline.

## Partner presentations

Oftentimes in the workplace, you will have to teach a new employee. In our class, you and one partner will prepare an **8-10 minute presentation**. NOTE: anticipated presentation dates are noted below in the syllabus calendar. However, these may be subject to minor changes if guest speakers/tour arrangements shift.

Speaking time needs to be evenly balanced between you and your partner. During the presentation, you need to accomplish the following tasks:

- Introduce or review the concept
- Provide examples associated with your concept
- Engage your classmates in a brief activity designed to teach and reinforce the concept

### Presentation topics

1. Prominent cross-cultural mistakes companies have made and how to avoid them
2. Parts of speech
3. Famous plagiarism cases and their consequences
4. Commas
5. Techniques for overcoming writer's block
6. Apostrophes, semicolons and colons
7. Modifier errors
8. Tips and tools for conducting a successful business meeting
9. Commonly confused words
10. Verb tenses and verb agreement
11. Passive vs. active voice
12. Key principles for composing effective press releases
13. Techniques for improving reading speed
14. Number rules in business writing
15. Parallelism
16. How color affects communication
17. Strategies for dealing with a difficult boss
18. Dealing with customer complaints effectively over the phone
19. Subliminal communications in business
20. Managing emphasis and sentence-length

## Detailed Schedule

This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please pay attention to updates during class and delivered via ICON and/or email.

**Pre-travel:** complete the introductory assignment.

Date	Topic	Due	Reading	In-class
<b>Week 1</b>				
T 5/16 11:30-1	Introduction		Syllabus	Activity: introductions
W 11:30-1	Cross-cultural communication	.	Ch. 1	Discuss cross-cultural communication
R 11:30-1	Planning business messages	Presentation 1	Ch. 2	Foundations of business writing <i>Workshop: Bad Water Case</i>
Afternoon class R 2-5	Organizing and drafting messages	Presentations 2, 3, 4	Ch. 3	CostCo activity, sentence structure review <i>Workshop: Ch. 3 Pizza promotion writing improvement exercise (Due at end of class)</i>
F 11:30-1	Revising, editing, and proofreading messages	Presentations 5, 6	Ch. 4	Discuss editing, proofreading, and revising <i>Workshop: Ch. 4 Radical Rewrite (Due at end of class)</i>
<b>Week 2</b>				
M 5/22 8-9:30	Guest speaker and employment communication	Bring a rough draft of your resume.	Ch. 13	Guest speaker: Mr. Giovanni Canazza <a href="https://www.linkedin.com/in/gcanazza/">https://www.linkedin.com/in/gcanazza/</a>  Best practices for resumes <i>Workshop: resumes</i>
Afternoon class M 2-5				Company tour
T 8-9:30	Employment communication	Presentations 8, 9 <b>DUE by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday: revised resume</b>	Ch. 14	Finish discussing resumes/cover letters if necessary. Discuss interviewing and success stories. <i>Activities: drafting success stories, answering interview questions</i>
W 8-9:30	Positive and neutral messages	Presentation 10	Ch. 6	Discuss best practices for positive and neutral messages <i>Workshop: writing travel instructions (due at end of class)</i>

R 8-9:30	Negative messages	Presentation 11 <b>DUE before class:</b> Claim message	Ch. 7	Discuss best practices for negative messages  <i>Activities: case and role play</i>
<b>Week 3</b>				
M 5/29 11:30-1	Persuasive messages	Presentation 12	Ch. 8	Discuss best practices for persuasive messages, including AIDA strategy <i>Activities: Social media analysis and sales pitch creation</i>
T 11:30-1	Research best practices	Presentation 13 <b>DUE before class:</b> Claim denial "Whining on the Web"	Read <a href="#">How to Make a Decision Matrix</a>	Discuss research methods  <i>Activities: Survey analysis, and decision matrix slides</i>
W 11:30-1	Report writing basics Business reports and executive summaries	Presentations 14, 15 Identify locations for business report and start researching.	Ch. 10	Executive summaries Report types Activity: 10.14: plagiarism, paraphrasing, and citing <i>Activity: writing an executive summary</i>
Afternoon class W 2-5		Continue researching.		Guest speaker or tour [If not available, we will discuss professionalism during this time.]
R 11:30-1	Design principles for business genres	Presentations 16, 17 Continue researching.		Design principles <i>Activity: infographic critique</i>
<b>Week 4</b>				
M 6/5 9:45-11:15	Business presentations	Finish researching business report locations. Start working on final presentation.	Ch. 12	Discuss best practices for presentations, and start discussing slide design as time allows.
T 9:45-11:15	Editing and revising	<b>DUE: Final report (due by Tuesday 11:59 p.m.)</b>		Finish discussing slide design  Workshop: guided editing for the final report
Afternoon class T 2-5	Impromptus			Impromptu formulas and practice

W 9:45- 11:15	Listening skills			Practice several approaches to listening and giving feedback
R 9:45- 11:15	Final report presentations	<b>DUE before class:</b> presentation slides and outline		Deliver final presentations during Thursday's class and final exam time
Final exam time R 4-6	Final report presentations			

## Policy Statements

### Classroom environment and civility

You are expected to interact with peers and the instructor respectfully at all times. You will be expected to share your views on the readings we will be doing, as well as the topics addressed during class. This course is designed to help you participate in professional situations. Toward that end, I ask that you become actively involved in the classroom by expressing your viewpoints in a civil and respectful manner, while maintaining an open-minded approach to others' viewpoints, even when they differ from your own. Inappropriate conduct will cause you to lose participation points (unprofessional conduct, texting/other cell phone activities, working on irrelevant materials during class time, distracting the class from the topic with meaningless comments, talking to your neighbor).

### Due dates and late work

Assignments need to be completed by the scheduled due time. If you have questions regarding the assignment, you should contact the instructor prior to the due date to allow time for response and effective communication. Late work will not be accepted, except in extreme cases where you have discussed a change in the assignment due time with me and received my permission **prior to** the set due time.

### Academic integrity and plagiarism

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me *before* the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

You are responsible for knowing and abiding by these policies. **Plagiarism** is using or attempting to pass off ideas, writing, materials of another as your own. This includes, but is not limited to, using AI to generate materials, others' homework, tests, papers, online papermills, webpages, music, presentations, graphs, and images. Plagiarism also includes reusing your own materials without acknowledging the reuse. Materials borrowed from others need to be

properly cited to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism in this class will result in failing the project and may lead to failing the course, as well as other possible sanctions.