

ENGLISH 324: WRITING IN THE SCIENCES*Spring 2012*

Instructor:	Karen Sorensen
Office:	Morrill Hall, 203C
Office Hours:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:30 a.m. Wednesdays, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m., and by appointment

Welcome to English 324, Writing in the Sciences! This course is focused on *practical application of writing skills* and has been developed for students with science-based majors. If you do not have a science major—for example, if you have a liberal arts major and are not bound for a career in academics—you might want to consider taking one of the many other business communication courses that are more specific to your field. You certainly are welcome here, but you may not feel the course content applies as much to you.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

We will study and practice writing conventions of the sciences for academic, scientific, and public audiences. Prereq: ENGL 120; junior standing. Students will learn how to...

- **Gen Ed Outcome 1:** Communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and genres, using a variety of communication skills.
- **Gen Ed Outcome 6:** Integrate knowledge and ideas in a coherent and meaningful manner.
- **Gen Ed Outcome 1:** Write and speak effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences in a variety of genres and media.
- **Departmental Outcome 4:** Manage sophisticated writing and research projects as well as presentations.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND EMAIL POLICIES

karen.sorensen@ndsu.edu (please note the spelling of my last name, particularly the last “e”) Phone: 231-7143 (English Dept. main number. Please do not leave voicemails. Try email instead.)

Email is the best way to contact me. Rude, poorly written, or demanding emails may not receive a response, except (perhaps) to suggest a rewrite. If you write to request an appointment, politely inquire about when I’ll be available. Provide a reason why you can’t make it to my office hours. Give several different days and times that might work for you. I am not in my office every day.

I will normally respond to email once per day during the week and usually not at all on the weekend or on holidays. Read assignment sheets closely as soon as they are available, ask questions in class, and work on projects early in case you run into problems. I want to help you, but excessive student reliance on instructor access 24-hours a day does not mimic a realistic work environment. Thoughtful preparation early in a project will make this type of reliance unnecessary.

EMAIL POLICIES

Students are required to use their NDSU email for this class. Please check it regularly (at least once per week day, especially the evening or afternoon before class) and always use it when communicating with me. I will only reply to emails regarding student- or course-related matters if they are sent to me from NDSU accounts. I will send out an email before class if it needs to be canceled, except when the entire University shuts down.

COURSE DETAILS

All policies, assignments and content in this syllabus are subject to change at the instructor’s discretion. Changes will be announced in class, via blackboard, or via email. Student work and emails may be used as examples in future classes.

REQUIRED TEXT: *Always bring your book to class unless told otherwise.*

Penrose, Ann M., and Steven B. Katz. *Writing in the Sciences: Exploring Conventions of Scientific Discourse*. 3rd Edition. New York: Longman, 2010.

The reading is very important. Even if we don't go over it in class, you are still expected to know the information it contains—and be able to apply it.

WORKLOAD

You can expect a *minimum* of 3 to 6 hours of homework for this course every week.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT

Students with disabilities or other special needs who require special accommodations in this course are invited to share these concerns or requests with me as soon as possible.

VETERANS AND ACTIVE MILITARY PERSONNEL

Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances are welcomed and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor.

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE

Please reserve the *entire final exam period*. Depending on how quickly we move through the semester, we may or may not need to use that time to finish up the term.

Finals

11 a.m. Tue/Thurs Engl 324	section # 7708	Mon, May 7	1 p.m.
2 p.m. Tue/Thurs Engl 324	section # 8007	Wed, May 9	1 p.m.

TECHNOLOGY

All students must be able to open .docx files. If your computer does not have the capability open these files, the help desk at ITS should be able to help you solve this problem. If that does not work for you, all computers on campus are capable of opening these files. Files sent to me must be in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format.

BLACKBOARD

I will post assignments and other information on Blackboard. You will be expected to print out many assignment and worksheets. Make sure to check the site every evening the day before class, but I will may also send out an email letting you know there are materials there. If you need assistance with Blackboard, please contact http://www.ndsu.edu/its/instructional_services/blackboard/.

COURSE POLICIES**CODE OF ACADEMIC HONESTY**

The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. NDSU Policy 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, up to and possibly including suspension and/or expulsion. Student academic misconduct records are maintained by the Office of Registration and Records. Informational resources about academic honesty for students and instructional staff members can be found at <http://www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty/>.

PLAGIARISM

If papers or portions of papers have been copied or adapted from others without adequate citation, they are considered to have been plagiarized. *Purchasing, "borrowing," or taking information, text, illustrations or ideas from someone else without citation is also plagiarism.* If you plagiarize on any assignment, you will fail the entire course, not just that assignment. The incident will be reported and a record made at the Office of Registration and Records; you may also face disciplinary action as indicated in the Code of Academic Honesty.

ATTENDANCE

In compliance with NDSU University Senate Policy, Section 333: Class Attendance Policy and Procedure, the English department has established the following attendance policy: "All English department courses require active learning. Students are expected to speak, listen, and contribute. Therefore, prompt, regular attendance is required. Students who miss more than four weeks of class during the standard academic semester will not pass the course. Moreover, each student is accountable for all work missed because of absence, and instructors have no obligation to make special arrangements for missed work."

What this attendance policy means to you

All absences count toward your total—regardless of reason for the absence. Each person has two days per semester that can be missed and still earn an "A" in that grading category. Let me (and your group) know you will not be in class as soon as you know. If you face extraordinary circumstances—hospitalization or family emergency—contact the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs with appropriate documentation. This way, you will receive official excuses for all your classes, as well as advising and help about catching up, etc.

In addition, try not to be late for class—late arrivals disrupt others and often some of the most important information about the class itself is conveyed in the first ten minutes. Everyone runs late sometimes, so you are allowed two late arrivals. After that, every two late arrivals will be counted as an absence. **If you are not present for attendance, you must make sure after class that your late arrival was noted or the absence mark may remain in the grade book and inadvertently be counted as an absence.**

When you are absent, you are responsible for catching yourself up. Check blackboard. Do the reading. Do not expect a "rerun" of the class session. If you miss, you take responsibility upon yourself for recouping what you missed as a result. Do not, under any circumstances, send me an email that asks "if" we did anything in class. Of course we did! If we didn't, we wouldn't have had class. If you want to know what you missed, check blackboard then visit me during office hours. If you send me an email asking what we covered, I will refer you to blackboard and/or tell you to come to my office hours.

Last, and perhaps most important: if you accrue 8 absences, you will fail the course. There are no exceptions to this rule, regardless of the reason for the absence.

GROUP WORK

If you get kicked out of a group or for some reason end up completing a group assignment on your own, the equivalent of two full letter grades will be deducted from your final grade for each group assignment. In addition, you must start over, from scratch. You cannot use any of the work produced by the group. Normally group members will receive the same grade for each assignment unless I determine that a group member is not participating or contributing at an acceptable level.

GRADING

The grades on your transcript should reflect your real abilities and knowledge level. To give you a grade you don't deserve is like lying to your future employers. That said, please know that I do not "bump" grades for any reason. I do not nudge a grade up because you are "close" or because you "tried really hard," nor do I "round down"

90 - 100%	A
80 - 89%	B
70 - 79%	C
60 - 69%	D

grades because you *didn't* try hard but still managed to produce good work. In short, you must earn your grades in this class, so don't ask to have them artificially increased at the end of the term.

Understand that grades start from a 0 and build to higher grades. The rubric is the explanation for the grade you've earned on particular assignments. If you have questions, I am happy to meet with you during office hours to discuss your paper and the grade. Do not approach this topic in an impolite, abrasive, defensive, offensive, or aggressive manner, please.

If you are concerned about your grade at any point in the semester, I encourage you to speak with me. I can further clarify assignments or give you input on how to improve. The Center for Writers is also a wonderful [free resource](#) on-campus (in the library) that can help you improve your work. Sometimes people are embarrassed to go to a writing center because they think it means they aren't good writers. On the contrary! The best writers use all the resources at their disposal to make their text the best possible.

A SHORTHAND EXPLANATION OF WHAT GRADES MEAN...

- F** – Unacceptable work.
- D** – Work almost meets the bare minimum of acceptability. Lacks evidence of careful planning, execution, attention to detail, and/or skill. Does not meet minimum professional requirements.
- C** – Average work. **Meets all the requirements in most or all areas**, but does nothing to "stand out" from the crowd.
- B** – Above-average work. Shows attention to detail that **exceeds what might be expected and even what was requested**. Work was carefully planned and time was clearly devoted to honing and crafting it. It exhibits adherence to professional standards. It is on time, well edited, professionally presented, and attends to the needs of its audience.
- A** – Exceptional work. Far better than average. This work could be presented in a professional environment and it would be extremely difficult to tell that a student produced it or that it was the result of a school assignment. No corners were cut. Every element was carefully crafted with attention to every detail and with skill. **Exceeds expectations in all areas evaluated**.

DRAFTS AND REWRITES

Rewriting assignments will not be an option for this course. I am happy to answer questions and offer input on your papers if you visit me during office hours, but I won't do a "pre-grade" for you. If you have specific questions about certain areas of the paper, I can look at those with you on workshop days or during office hours and I may read sections if requested. Please don't email me your draft and ask me to read it to see if "this is what [I] wanted." I can also answer specific questions via email (note email policies above). Do not assume that meeting with me and getting feedback results in an automatic A.

LATE PAPERS

Late papers will not be accepted for points, but you may still turn them in and request feedback. Papers must be handed in during class or during my office hours **no later than the due date**. Papers may **not** be dropped off in my mailbox, on my desk, or under my door. In some cases, I may accept emailed copies of your assignments. You must request this option and explain why you need it. On a few assignments, this option will not be possible at all.

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEWS

ATTENDANCE (Individual: 50 points)

All absences and late arrivals will affect this category. It will be the most straightforward to grade and the easiest for you to earn an “A” in. Don’t waste your absences early in the term; if you have an emergency or illness (for example) later in the term, you will wish you had saved them.

0-2 absences = A

5 absences = C

8+ absences =

3-4 absences = B

6 - 7 absences = D

Fail the course

DAILY WORK (Both group and individual: 50 points)

Daily work will occur intermittently throughout the semester. You will receive a $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, $\sqrt{-}$, or 0 on these assignments. At the end of the semester, these scores will all be averaged. That average will determine what percentage of 50 points you receive. Please note that you will not be able to make-up daily work, regardless of the reason for your absence. If you are in a school activity (or something else) and will miss a lot of class, please take that into consideration now, before the course starts, to determine if the inability to make up daily work will affect your grade too negatively for you to be able to accept. Daily work will include Peer reviews, described below.

Peer Review

Learning how to give and receive criticism is integral to becoming a professional in any field, but especially in a field which generates a lot of written work. For that reason, we will have many peer reviews in this course. All will be guided with worksheets. None will be anonymous. Remember as you are reviewing the works of others, you are also honing the skills you need to look critically at your own work. You are also learning how to weigh criticism so you can decide whether to make suggested changes or not.

INTERVIEW (Individual project: 100 points)

You will interview a professional in a scientific field; try to find someone in a position similar to the kind you would like to have after you graduate, if possible. You will prepare for the interview by doing background research and preparing interview questions. Afterwards, you will write a report about what you found out, what was surprising, what confirmed what you already thought, how much time that person spends writing, what types of documents the person writes, etc.

REFLECTION AND PORTFOLIO (Individual letter; samples mixed: 100 points)

The end of the semester is a good time to look back and examine all the work you’ve completed. First, gather and examine your completed assignments. Next, review the goals that you set for yourself at the beginning of the course. Now, write a letter exploring your progress in this class. You will answer questions like: Did you meet your goals? How or why did you meet them? Or, why didn’t you meet them? How did you shape each project to meet your own learning goals? You will turn in one copy of this letter with your name. You will turn in a second unnamed copy in a folder along with clean, ungraded, unmarked anonymous hardcopies of your Proposal, Individual Analysis, Annotated Bib, and Public Document. The folder should be labeled “English 324—Spring 2012.” These anonymous copies will be used by the English Department to examine course outcomes. I will grade the copy of the letter with your name and you can get this letter back during the final exam period. You will need to contact me next semester (Fall 2012) in order to pickup your portfolio (after week four), if you would like it back.

PROPOSAL (Group project: 100 points)

Your proposal will focus on the topic you would like to work on for your annotated bibliography. This topic must be scientific but have relevance to some segment of the general public at large (folic acid to pregnant women, negative environmental impact of paint products, etc). Eventually, you will

combine your information with that of your group to create the public document and presentation. Written in memo format, this type of academic proposal provides enough information that I as your instructor will be able to make an informed decision about whether to give your topic idea the green light. Include pertinent information that will help me decide whether or not this topic will be substantial enough to support all the projects to which it will relate. Describe why it is important for you to research your chosen topic and how it will be able to support such extensive work done on it. Describe how the overarching topic will be broken down into subtopics for individuals within the group to research.

Annotated Bibliography (Individual project: 200 points)

Now that you've identified your topics for the group and for each member within that group, you will do an *individual* evaluative annotated bibliography that explores the state of scholarship and the arguments about it. The annotated bib must contain between six to ten source articles which you read, annotate, cite, and evaluate for their usefulness. Focus on the history and development of your topic—who were the first people to discuss it? Who were the influential people that shaped it? What is the state of research and controversy pertaining to your topic now? Where is the conversation headed? This review will be written for professionals in the field who may not be experts on the topic, but who understand the field.

Grant Proposal (Group project: 100 points)

After your group has written coordinating annotated bibliographies, you will respond to a "request for proposals" indicating that funding is available to create a public document (which may take many forms) for distribution. Your group will work together to write a grant proposal with addresses this call, using the research that you've all already gathered as the basis for your research.

Public Document (Group project: 50 points)

After your group has received the green light from your grant proposal, you will create a public document which, in lay terms, takes a stand on the issue and/or explains it to your audience. The public document can take the form of a brochure, flyer, fact sheet, public service letter, or article in a non-scientific magazine. Make enough copies of your public document to distribute to everyone in the class plus the instructor. Your public doc is due on the day your group presents.

Presentation (Group project: 25 points)

Your group will present the topic you've researched and the public doc you've created to the class. Make an outline of what each member of your group will say and practice presenting it over and over until it is almost second nature. When you present, be prepared to look out at your audience and assess their level of engagement. Each member of your group members must participate equally and each of you needs to be prepared to answer questions afterwards. Because time is so scarce, you will likely have to whittle down to the most essential information, good practice for any profession.

Group Member and Self Evaluation (Individual project: 25 point)

You will evaluate (and be evaluated by) your group members. Their scores will be averaged to determine what percentage of the points you receive. This assignment will help you get a glimpse of how others perceive your contributions to your group. It can sometimes be an eye-opening experience and sometimes it can reaffirm what you already knew.