

# University Studies 489: BUS Capstone Experience

Spring 2012 \* 1 Credit \* M 3:00-3:50, Hrs Arranged \* Class # 6341 \* Morrill 105

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## Texts

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Kirszner, L.G., & Mandell, S.R. (2012). *The pocket Wadsworth handbook*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Thomson Wadsworth.

Williams, R. (2008). *The non-designer's design book* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Berkeley, California: PeachPit Press.

**Blackboard:** Part of this course will be online. On a regular basis, you will need to login and check <http://blackboard.ndsu.nodak.edu> for announcements. *Supporting Materials will be posted on Blackboard.*

## Course Description

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The course consists of creating a job packet (report, email, cover letter, resume, and thank you letter) as well as a reflective paper, approximately 12-15 pages in length, designed to provide the student with the opportunity to integrate and synthesize the cumulative academic experience as it relates to the approved Statement of Goals. It also includes edited peer responses to the paper and a presentation of the paper.

## Course Outcomes

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The course outcome is that students will demonstrate understanding of the extent to which the Bachelor of University Studies Degree curriculum provides them with the educational experience necessary to accomplish the goals specified in the approved BUS Student Proposal.

## Assignments / Evaluation

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- Professional Email (50 points)
- Mini-Research Report Memo (100 points)
- Cover Letter (100 points)
- Resume (100 points)
- Thank You Letter (25 points)
- Resume Critique or Mock Interview (50 points)
- Reflective Paper (275 points)
- Final Presentation (100 points)
- Peer Review Drafts and Letters (150 points)
- In Class Activities (50 points)

## Expectations

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- Treat this course as your first place of employment. I can serve as a great job reference if you put forth tremendous effort in the course. All aspects of this course are designed to help you in the workplace setting: memo, resume, and cover letter writing, interviewing, and designing and giving presentations.
- For every credit hour of class time, be prepared to spend three *additional* hours of work. Some weeks will require less time, some weeks will require more, but **this formula is a standard gauge for college education**. This is a SENIOR level course; I expect senior level work ethic and work.
- Show respect for your teacher. Show respect for your classmates, their ideas, and their writing. Learning to respect—even understand—diverse perspectives is one of the hallmarks of a university-educated person.
- Be an active learner. Be observant, thoughtful, and curious.
- Students will not be allowed to use computer problems as an excuse as to why their work is late. They are responsible for backing up their work. Regular completion of all assignments, on time and as scheduled, is important to your success in this course.
- Please use Microsoft Word to complete papers. If you only have WordPerfect or Microsoft Works, you should definitely SAVE AS.rtf (Rich Text Format).
- Emails to the instructor must be error-free (I am an English teacher, after all) and will be responded to within 24 hours Monday-Friday. If a flood or other major disaster occurs during this semester, the instructor will communicate with the class via email on how to complete the course.
- **Any of the following results in a student receiving 50-100% deduction on a paper, assignment, project, etc.**
  1. If the paper requires 5 pages, a paper containing less than 5 full pages (using Times New Roman, 12 point font)
  2. Lack of parenthetical citations and/or lack of a Works Cited page when it's obvious a source(s) has been used.

## Grading Scale

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| Grade Values (letter and numerical) | Grade Definitions  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| A= 901 — 1000                       | Excellent work: exceeds expectations, little or no room for improvements.                              |
| B= 801 — 900                        | Good to very good work. Strong in most or all areas, with some room for improvement.                   |
| C= 701— 800                         | Adequate to good. Fulfills basic requirements of the assignment, but lots of room for improvement.     |
| D = 601— 700                        | Incomplete or deficient. Assignment(s) incomplete or not understood, and/or basic skills lacking.      |
| F = 600 or below.                   | Failure: work not completed or not turned in, basic skills absent, and/or work turned in not your own. |

*Deadlines:* Students will be expected to attend class dates and complete in class activities. You will only receive credit for being in class if you come to class with assignments completed. **Late major work is penalized 10% per late class day**—unless prior arrangements had been made with me. **Late is if you don't have it in when I collect it or ask for it to be submitted. If it isn't in, I am already counting that as one late class day. If missed, minor, daily assignments (like peer review) will be given a zero.** Please see each assignment for individual rubric and evaluation procedures. **If you wish to receive credit for the course, all major assignments must be completed** (job packet assignments, resume critique, reflective paper, and presentation). Even though you are not “required” to complete all minor activities such as peer review, your writing assignments will most likely suffer.

*Peer Review:* If you are late to class on a peer review day, even by a few minutes, you will not be allowed to participate in peer review. In order for peer review to work, students need to be in class on time with a draft to exchange with their partners. If you come in after everyone has already exchanged drafts (or you don't have a printed draft with you), you will receive a zero for that particular peer review assignment.

**General Note:** All papers must adhere to APA guidelines. Students should use Times New Roman 12 point font. The paper should have one inch margins.

## Policies

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*Special Needs:* In keeping with the Americans with Disabilities Act, I would encourage students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course to contact me as soon as possible so that the appropriate arrangements can be made to accommodate particular needs. This syllabus can be made available in alternative formats upon request.

*Other:* Veteran, active duty military personnel, and National Guard members with special circumstances are welcome to and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor, who in consultation with the appropriate office *may* make *reasonable* accommodations.

*Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism:* Work submitted for this course must adhere to the Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct as cited in the *Handbook of Student Policies*: “The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. Occasionally, this trust is violated when cheating occurs, either inadvertently or deliberately. This code will serve as the guideline for cases where cheating, plagiarism, or other academic improprieties have occurred. . . . Faculty members may fail the student for the particular assignment, test, or course involved, or they may recommend that the student drop the course in question, or these penalties may be varied with the gravity of the offense and the circumstances of the particular case” (65). See also: <http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/policy/335.htm>.

*Academic Honesty Defined:* All written and oral presentations must “respect the intellectual rights of others. Statements lifted verbatim from publications must be cited as quotations. Ideas, summaries or paraphrased material, and other information taken from the literature must be properly referenced” (*Guidelines for the Presentation of Disquisitions*, NDSU Graduate School, 4).

*Code of Student Behavior:* All interactions in this course will be civil and show respect for others. Student conduct at NDSU is governed by the Code of Student Behavior: <http://www.ndsu.edu/ndsu/vpsa/code/>.

*Cell Phones:* All cell phones should be turned off. I reserve the right to ask you to leave class if you are being disruptive: texting, taking calls, Facebooking, etc.

*Other:* Be on time. If you are late on a peer review day, don’t expect to be placed in group and given a partner. In addition, if you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to get any notes you may have missed. **I will NOT answer “Did we do anything important today?” emails.**

## Tentative Course Schedule—Always Subject to Change

| Date   | Topic   | Activities  | Please Bring / Have Prepared  |
|--------|---|---|---|
| 1 / 23 | Syllabus  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go over syllabus</li> <li>• Introduce job packet</li> </ul>  |   |
| 1 / 30 | Research Report   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and the job search</li> <li>• Email Etiquette</li> </ul>   | <b>Graduation Application Handbook</b> , 323-328  |
| 2 / 6  | Plagiarism Citation                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plagiarism lecture</li> <li>• APA scavenger hunt</li> </ul>  | <i>Handbook</i> , 155-181 and 236-263 (SKIM)  |
| 2 / 13 | Peer Review<br>C.R.A.P principles of design             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer review</li> <li>• Practice with design</li> </ul>   | Finished scavenger hunt<br><b>Draft of mini research report</b><br><b>Draft of email</b><br><i>Non-Designers</i> , 11-90  |
| 2 / 20 | No school.  |   |   |
| 2 / 27 | Resumes   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm resume categories</li> <li>• Practice writing action verbs and parallel sentences</li> </ul>  | <b>Peer review letter due for memo and email</b><br><i>Non-Designers</i> , 91-143   |
| 3 / 5  | Cover letters   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover letters</li> </ul>   | <i>Non-Designers</i> , 144-end<br>Review <i>Handbook</i> , 323-328  |
| 3 / 12 | No school.  |   |   |
| 3 / 19 | Review<br>Thank you notes                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer review</li> <li>• Write a one paragraph reflection using appropriate design terms from our reading; how did you use them when creating your resume?</li> <li>• Thank you notes</li> <li>• Introduce reflective paper</li> </ul> | <b>Draft of cover letter</b><br><b>Draft of resume</b>  |
| 3 / 26 | Interview Techniques<br>Reflective paper, part I and II | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing Techniques</li> <li>• Reflective part I and II... brainstorm!</li> <li>•</li> </ul>   | <b>Peer review letter due for cover letter and resume</b><br><br>Read 2-3 reflective papers of former students on Blackboard > Course Documents                     |
| 4 / 2  | Reflective paper, part III                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective parts III... brainstorm!</li> <li>• Finding sources</li> </ul>  | <b>Your complete job packet is due today: email, mini-research report, cover letter, resume, and thank you / follow up email via the Assignments function on BB</b> |
| 4 / 9  | No school.  |   |   |

|        |   |  |  |
|--------|---|--|--|
| 4 / 16 | Reflective paper, part III<br>Review design<br>Review citation<br>Presentations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer review</li> <li>• Citation questions</li> <li>• Cover page</li> <li>• Design for paper</li> <li>• Presentation and design</li> <li>• Presentation example</li> </ul> | <p><b>Complete draft of paper</b></p> <p><b>Resume Critique / Mock Interview via the Assignments function on BB</b></p> <p><i>Review Handbook, 331-336</i></p> |
| 4 / 23 | Presentations   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal peer review of slides</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Peer review letter for complete draft of paper</b></p> <p><b>Draft (slides) of your presentation</b></p>   |
| 4 / 30 | Presentations!  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate!</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Presentations!</b></p> <p><b>Paper due via the Assignments function on BB.</b></p>   |

## Mini Research Report Memo

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**Length:** 2 FULL pages, single spaced + reference page

**Due Date:** With entire job packet, April 2, via the Assignments function on BB by 3 pm

**Value:** 100 points

**Part I Assignment:** Your assignment is to write a mini-research report in **MEMO** format (see page 327 in your handbook) describing to me your investigation of the potential employer, the organization, or the graduate school to which you will be addressing your letter of application. The memo, in essence, will be a summary of your research. You will need to determine where you would realistically be interested in applying.

Finding a job (or a school) is all about representing yourself, and for most you, you will be asked to represent and sell yourself in the form of a cover letter, resume, and eventually an interview. The key to selling yourself and a successful interview is to know your audience. This assignment will help you “know” your audience. In addition to your memo, you will be asked to submit a separate reference page listing your sources.

Some hints:

- Decide where you are applying (and for what)
- Choose a company you would really want to work for, a graduate school you really want to attend, or an organization (Peace Corps, for example) that you genuinely want to be a part of
- Get all the information you can about your audience from brochures, help-wanted ads, internet source, application, etc.
- If after gathering information you still have questions (pretend you do), write a formal email requesting more SPECIFIC information (see email netiquette assignment).

**Purpose:** The purpose of the report is to inform me (**address your memo to me**) about the company (school, organization) you are most interested in. It will help you learn more about your audience and create better resumes, applications, etc. This is a professional, formal document. If you get information from an outside source, which you most likely will, make sure to cite the source!

In addition, this assignment will give you practice writing a document seen in the workforce: a memo.

**Audience:** For this writing assignment, your audience will be me. It is okay to use “I.” Tell me about what you learned.

**Evaluation:** Your report should be clear and organized and provide an in-depth look at the company or school you are interested. You should be professional and employ careful editing and correct grammar. See rubric below.

Below are a few things you might want to consider putting in your report.

- Name, title of a person to whom you are applying
- History of the organization as it relates to your application
- Competition for the position
- Size of company, school, organization
- Line of products, programs, and services
- Organizational structure, promotional path, age and background of top management
- Other information that interests you

**Grading Rubric:**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Provides adequate amount of information (in-depth look at company / school), 2 full pages of information  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Follows memo format <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Header information, punctuation</li><li>• Single-spaced</li><li>• Initialed at name</li></ul> | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Document is well organized, transitions are used  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Document is professional and free of editing errors (spelling, grammar, citation)   | 5 4 3 2 1 |

**Please note:** If for whatever reason you would like to propose a different type of report because of your current career goals, feel free to run your ideas by me. This assignment should be useful to you in some way or another. If you would like to propose a different report, you need to do so ASAP.

## Professional Email

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**Length:** Variable, Concise is best

**Due Date:** With entire job packet, April 2, via the Assignments function on BB by 3 pm

**Value:** 50

**Part II Assignment:** This assignment, Part II of the job packet, requires you to write a professional email. You will be asked to write a short email to the employer, organization, or graduate school you are interested in requesting more information. **This should be the same job you are researching and tailoring your cover letter and resume to.** You will need to send this email as well as print off a copy to include in your job packet. Depending on the recipient's preferences, you may also have to follow your email up with a phone call or meet with them in person.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the initial email is to get more information that could help you on your job search as well as make a contact—it is called networking! The email should also get you thinking about communicating professionally electronically. This is a formal email, so you will also get practice in sending important information electronically. Often, people send informal emails addressing formal matters. Always know your audience.

**Audience:** For this writing assignment, you will be expected to identify your audience; most likely, it will be a potential employer or potential professor / school admissions counselor.

**Evaluation:** Your email should be clear and organized (consider your design); it should be respectful and concise. You should be professional and employ careful editing and correct grammar.

### Grading Rubric:

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Addresses Audience Appropriately <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate greeting</li><li>• Descriptive subject</li><li>• Professional voice</li></ul>               | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Provides a clear introduction and purpose and expresses gratitude <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specific request</li><li>• Design that supports your request</li></ul> | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Document is professional and free of editing errors (spelling, grammar, citation)  | 5 4 3 2 1 |

## Thank You Note

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**Length:** Variable, Concise is best

**Due Date:** With entire job packet, April 2, in class (because it is handwritten you cannot submit online)

**Value:** 25

**Part III Assignment:** For Part III of the job packet, you need to pretend you got an interview. Write a thank you note to the person you interviewed with. This thank you letter should be **handwritten** and personal (except for distance students).

**Purpose:** The purpose of the thank you note is simple—express gratitude to the potential employer or graduate school. It is also a chance to reiterate why you are a good fit for the company or school. A thank you letter can help you stand out in a large pool of candidates.

**Audience:** For this writing assignment, you will be expected to identify your audience; most likely, it will be a potential employer or potential professor / school admissions counselor.

**Evaluation:** Your thank you note should be clear and organized; it should be respectful and concise. You should be professional and employ careful editing and correct grammar. Your thank you note should be handwritten, identifying who you are and why you are writing. Make sure you use the person's preferred title, correctly spelled first and last name, and business address. See rubric below.

### Grading Rubric:

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Addresses Audience Appropriately <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate greeting</li><li>• Appropriate card</li><li>• Professional voice</li></ul> | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Provides a clear purpose (expresses gratitude), reiterates why you are a qualified candidate <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handwritten</li></ul>      | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Document is professional and free of editing errors (spelling, grammar, citation)   | 5 4 3 2 1 |

## Cover Letter

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**Length:** 1-2 pages (depending on audience)

**Due Date:** With entire job packet, April 2, via the Assignments function on BB by 3 pm

**Value:** 100 points

**Assignment:** Part IV of the job packet is to write a letter of application for the job or graduate school you researched in your mini-research report. This letter should be 1-2 pages in length. Most likely, a job application cover letter would be about a page. On the other hand, a graduate school application cover letter might be a bit longer. The length will be determined based on your assessment of your audience.

**Purpose:** A good letter of application, like your resume, is both informative and persuasive.

**Audience:** Your audience will depend on where you are applying.

**Evaluation:** I will be looking to see if you how well you addressed your audience. I will also be looking to see if your letter is clear and organized and is both persuasive and informative.

Below are a few things you might want to consider putting in your cover letter.

- State what you are applying for (mirroring the word of the ad or grad program)
- Use specific examples to describe your qualifications AND tie those qualifications to the actual job you are applying for
- Show the company you know how they operate and what they value AND why this interests you
- Refer to your resume (or other enclosed materials)
- Ask for an interview or request a follow-up (make sure to do this appropriately)

### Grading Rubric:

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Provides evidence that the applicant understands the position / company and has researched the it | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Uses specific examples to highlight qualifications  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Addresses audience appropriately—is professional, informative, and persuasive                     | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Document is well organized, transitions are used  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Document is professional and free of editing errors (spelling, grammar, citation)                 | 5 4 3 2 1 |

## Resume

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**Length:** A resume should probably not be longer than two pages (and preferably one) in length.

**Due Date:** With entire job packet, April 2, via the Assignments function on BB by 3 pm

**Value:** 100 points

**Assignment:** Your next assignment is to develop and submit your professional resume suitable for a job interview. Your resume—along with your cover letter— should “sell” you to a possible employer.

**Purpose:** A good resume supports and is supported by your letter of application. It should be both informative and persuasive.

**Audience:** The company, school, or organization you have been planning to apply for.

### Evaluation:

#### Grading Rubric:

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Reflects rhetorical choices based on careful thought to audience, purpose, and situation  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Shows attention to visual choices that help make the document readable  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Employs "reader-centered" readability guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• consistent 3<sup>rd</sup> person point-of-view (don't use I)</li><li>• lists in parallel form, active verbs</li><li>• professional language, clear, and concise</li></ul> | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Fills a page and is no more than two pages, Shows attention to relation among all items in the packet   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Document is professional and free of editing errors (spelling, grammar, citation)   | 5 4 3 2 1 |

## Resume Critique or Mock Interview

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**Due Date:** April 16, in class (may turn in earlier)

**Value:** 50 points

**Assignment:** For this project, students must make an appointment with NDSU Career Services (Ceres 306, 701-231-7111) to have their resume critiqued OR participate in a mock interview. Please choose which one you feel is the most appropriate.

**Purpose:** To prepare you for the job search!

**Evaluation:** Students must submit proof from the Career Center. This could come in the form of a critiqued / signed resume, email feedback, or note from the Career Specialist.

## Reflective Paper & Oral Presentation

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**Length:** 12-15 pages (this does not include the reference page or the cover page)

**Due Date:** April 30 via the Assignments function on BB by 3 pm (paper), April 30 (presentation)

**Value:** 275 points (paper), 100 points (presentation)

**Assignment:** For your final project, I would like you to bring together everything that you have done in your academic career. You will also be required to give a 4-5 minute presentation on your paper with a PowerPoint. You will be expected to highlight what you have done at NDSU and what you plan on doing. Below is an outline I would like you to follow for the paper.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to reflect on what you have done in your academic career. Being able to reflect on your experiences in a clear and concise manner will help you when you get a job or graduate school interview. Hopefully, you will be able to use what you have written down in this paper and apply it to a “real world” scenario. Even though a future employer will most likely not want to read 15 pages of reflection, if you can casually talk through some of your paper, it will give the employer a better idea of your background and why you chose this unique program.

### Part I. My Story

“My Story” serves to introduce you and to orient the reader to the focus of your degree. Part I should be devoted to providing an understanding of who you are and what circumstances led to your choice of the BUS degree. You are expected to articulate the goals expressed at the time you presented the degree proposal and the manner in which the proposed degree was expected to assist the student in achieving the expressed goals.

Part I should be reflective as well as proactive as you equate the value of the degree to future goals. The unique nature of this degree allows the student to choose each course based upon its contribution to the proposed outcome once the General Education Requirements have been met. Attention may be given to personal growth and interests as well as to the growth and changing needs of a specific profession and the need to be prepared for life-long learning. In other words, this section is all about you. It is a chance for you to tell your story. Why college? What NDSU? Why a BUS degree? What’s next?

### Part II. Reflective Experience: Courses

For each of the six areas of general education (Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Science and Technology, Humanities and Fine Arts, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Wellness), discuss your perceptions of the extent to which courses approved in the Program of Study for each of the six areas will and/or will not support the attainment of the goals contained within the Statement of Goals. In addition, evaluate general education as it relates to life-long learning. What is a general education requirement? What classes did you take for general education requirements? How will they help you in the future?

### Part III. Application

Describe a current issue, problem, or situation you may encounter in employment. Relate it to your Statement of Goals (Part I). Be sure to include current literature in the field to develop the example, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Also explain how you would apply your academic background and transferable skills obtained from the courses you have taken to deal with the issue, problem, or situation. Include personal and professional ethics. Provide at least 2 current citations from the literature in your field of study (these should follow APA style in text and on reference page). What is a problem or situation you may encounter in the workforce or graduate school? How do you know it is a problem? How will your NDSU education help you address this situation or problem?

**Audience:** Although I will be the one ultimately grading your papers, please do not address me. Any person picking up your paper should easily understand your purpose (reflection) and what you are trying to do.

**Paper Grading Rubric:**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Provides a clear and concise statement of goals                                   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Provides a description and reflection of course taken to achieve the BUS degree   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Situates academic experience in a real world scenario (application section)       | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Uses two credible sources to support the document                                 | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Document is well organized, transitions are used                                  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| Document is professional and free of editing errors (spelling, grammar, citation) | 5 4 3 2 1 |

**Presentation Rubric:**

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|--|
| Reflects careful attention to the requirements of the assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• carefully developed PowerPoint (CRAP principles of design).</li><li>• multiple learning styles addressed; visuals are used and relevant</li><li>• carefully timed—4-5 minutes</li><li>• summary of paper, material covered (introduction, why NDSU, BUS, what is next)</li><li>• professional dress, eye contact, practiced</li><li>• answers any questions professionally and appropriately</li></ul> |
| Follows careful organization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• logically organized</li><li>• appropriate transitions</li><li>• speech moves logically from one section to the next</li></ul>  |
| Documents show adequate attention to proofing, editing   |

## Peer Review Letters

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**Length:** 1.5-2 pages

**Due Date:** February 27, March 26, April 23

**Value:** 30

**Description and Purpose:** Peer response, a process of reading drafts of assigned writing and offering constructive feedback, is central to a well-functioning writing workshop. Writing has the most potential for improvement when read and responded to by more than one person. Peer response will not only help improve the writing that is reviewed, but it will also give you more practice responding to texts, which will ultimately improve your writing.

The peer response letter is a formal, thoughtful type of response. After you've read your peer's paper, you will write a (minimum) one-page letter to talk about how you've responded to the writing. Most successful letters (A or B level) are 1.5-2 pages.

### Directions:

1. Swap papers with a peer. Your partner will then read the paper, and you will read his or her draft, taking notes on the paper, on the grade sheet, etc.
2. Finally, you will take your notes and the drafts home and write a response letter to your peer that you will give to them in class the next week.

**What to Include in Your Response:** There are several basic types of responses you may include in each response letter. A few follow in the list below.

- Let the writers know what you think they're saying or what you think the writing is doing. If your understanding of the text is drastically different from theirs, they will know there is a problem in clarity.
- Let the writers know which part or parts seem to be working best.
- Ask yourself "Has the writer met each grading criterion listed on the assignment sheet?" This means that you will have to look at the assignment sheet (specifically, the rubric).
- Allow yourself to respond as a reader. If, as you are reading, a question comes to mind, tell the writer what you wondered and where you began wondering. If you respond positively to a word choice, a metaphor, an image, a fact, a claim, or some other part of the text, explain to the writer why you think you responded in that way.
- Make constructive recommendations. In other words, assume that you are looking at one of your own pieces of writing. Assume also that this writing has lots of room for improvement. How would *you* proceed to make it better, to produce a better draft? Be specific.
- When making recommendations, do not begin with editing and mechanics. Large-scale issues such as organization and focus need to be addressed by a writer before grammar and mechanics.

### Responses to Avoid:

- "This part is stupid" or any other disrespectful comment. Such responses are mean spirited and not productive because they offer no direction for improvement.
- "Everything looks good" or any other overly nice, also unproductive comment. Telling people their writing is perfect is always untrue (all writing can improve) and not helpful.

- “Something’s not working on page two” or other overly vague comments. This last type of response is more helpful than disrespectful or overly nice ones, but it needs to be paired with another sentence that explains what you think the nature of the problem is.
- Lots of specific editorial advice (“you need a comma after the word run on page two”). If you edit your peer’s paper, you are assuming the paper is finished other than editing and you are not helping them figure out how to improve their writing in other than surface ways.

### **Format:**

Business letter format

- Typed
- All left justified
- Single spaced
- One blank line between paragraphs
- Including date, greeting, body, closing, signature, even a personalized header as letterhead

### **Grading**

- Are the responses thoughtful and helpful? (This is the #1 criterion for grading)
- Are the responses specific?
- Are the responses respectful?
- Is the letter appropriately formatted and consistent?
- Is the letter reasonably grammatically and stylistically effective (so that it is readable and easy to understand for the peer)?
- Is the letter fully developed (explaining suggestions and responses completely and offering potential ideas for improvement)?
- Is it structured effectively (emphasizing the large scale issues and spending little time and emphasis on small scale issues)?

Check out BB for some examples!

**NOTE:** If you are late to class on a peer review day, even by a few minutes, you will not be allowed to participate in peer review. In order for peer review to work, students need to be in class on time with a draft to exchange with their partners. If you come in after everyone has already exchanged drafts, you will receive a zero for that particular peer review assignment. Please do NOT lie to me and say you have a draft when you actually do not. If you do, I will treat the matter as a form of academic dishonesty.