

Written Communication: Business

ENGL 100WB

Spring 2026 Section 13 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/20/2026

Contact Information

VANESSA POWERS (she/her)

vanessa.powers@sjsu.edu; M-F between 9am and 5pm

MW 9:00 - 10:15; Sweeney Hall 242

Online Office Hours: By Appointment

Office Hr.: MW: 8:00 – 9:00; FOB219

Course Information

Writing is a part of any career – whether it be emails, memos, reports, presentations, instructions, or more, it's likely you will (and do) communicate in with different kinds of writing. In this class, we'll explore foundational principles of professional writing by asking questions: who is my reader, and how do I assess what they want (or need) from my writing? How can I build goodwill through writing? How can I develop clarity and concision in my writing? To answer these questions, we'll use a rhetorical lens, working to understand what rhetoric is and how it can be useful to professional writing.

By remaining enrolled in this course, you acknowledge that you've read and agree to adhere to the policies outlined in this syllabus.

Course Description and Requisites

Written communications for business majors; includes minimum of 8,000 words of writing spaced throughout the semester.

Satisfies Writing in the Disciplines (WID).

Prerequisite(s): 1B or equivalent second semester composition course (with a grade of C- or better); completion of core GE; and upper division standing. Or Graduate or Postbaccalaureate level. Allowed

Declared Majors: All Business Administration majors, Industrial Arts, Industrial Technology, Professional & Technical Writing, Public Relations, Hospitality Management, Organizational Studies, and Information Science & Data Analytics.

Grading: Letter Graded

Note(s): Must be passed with C or better to satisfy the CSU Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR).

* Classroom Protocols

Course Policies/Resources

Attendance/Participation: Regular, weekly participation is expected. Please plan to attend class. See *Engagement Project*.

Assignment Deadlines: Everything is always due on Sunday. There is 24-hour grace period for late assignments, after which I will not accept it. Be careful not to treat the grace period like the deadline – consistent (late) submissions become problematic.

Peer Feedback: Students will be asked to review each other's writing assignments to provide constructive feedback. If you miss a peer review or draft submission, you will be required to attend a tutoring session at SJSU's Writing Center to make-up for the collaboration and feedback space the class is meant to provide. Here's their link: [Writing Center](#)

⚙️ **Accessible Education Center:** Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The [Accessible Education Center](#) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process.

Disclosure of Sexual Violence: SJSU fosters a campus free of sexual violence, including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SJSU student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students. To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

[Office for Title IX and Equal Opportunity](#)

[Counseling & Psychological Services | Student Wellness Center](#)

© **Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism:** Cheating is the actual or attempted practice of fraudulent or deceptive acts for the purpose of improving one's grade or obtaining course credit; such acts also include assisting another student to do so. Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating, which consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished works of others by misrepresenting the material (i.e., their intellectual property) so used as one's own work. Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from 0 or F on a particular assignment, through an F for the course, to expulsion from the university. For more information, see [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](#).

©Academic Integrity and the use of AI/ChatGPT:

CSU Policy on Academic Integrity is essential to the educational process. Traditional academic practices require that faculty or instructor address cases of academic dishonesty in the classroom. The Student Conduct Procedures (Executive Order 1098,) Article II, I, Cases Involving Academic Dishonesty, insists that, in addition, CSU faculty or instructors shall promptly refer any alleged infraction, to a central location so that a student can be held accountable for multiple academic violations and the campus can recognize any patterns of misconduct. For any alleged violations of academic dishonesty within a semester, the faculty/instructor may refer a student to the Office of Student Conduct.

***A special note about the use of Artificial Intelligence:**

Use of artificial intelligence (AI), unless specifically directed by the instructor as part of the assignment/syllabus, is considered a violation of [CSU Student Conduct Code](#), under Plagiarism/Cheating (1.a-c).

You are welcome to use AI tools like **ChatGPT**, **Copilot**, or others as part of your thinking process in this class. This is **optional** – you can complete all assignments without AI. If you choose to use it, please follow the guidance below.

When AI Can Help You	What AI Should <i>Not</i> Do For You
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brainstorm or explore different sides of an issue• Get sample outlines or ways to organize your ideas• Revise and proofread your writing• Clarify confusing terms or summarize policies• Challenge your own assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replace your engagement with course materials• Write full responses that you copy and paste• Legal Analysis (AI often gets the law wrong!)• Decide your opinion – you still need to think

How to Report AI Use in Your Work: If you use AI for any part of your work, include a brief **AI use note** at the end of your post or quiz:

What tool you used (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot); How it helped you (brainstorming, organizing, etc.); What you added or changed using your own thinking or the textbook. **Example:** I used ChatGPT to generate examples of how firms assign workstations. I added ideas from the textbook about firm structure and noted a missing point about hybrid work.

[Withdrawal Policy](#) | [Financial Aid and Scholarship Office](#)

Program Information

Writing in the Disciplines (WID) courses develop students' abilities to communicate effectively in their major course of study and in their careers. With an emphasis on critical thinking, these upper-division core courses advance students' understanding of the genres, audiences, and purposes of college writing while

preparing them for successful communication in their chosen professions. Completing Writing in the Disciplines with a C or better is an SJSU graduation requirement.

Writing in the Disciplines Learning Outcomes Upon successful completion of a Writing in the Disciplines course, students should be able to:

1. explain, analyze, develop, and critique ideas effectively, including ideas encountered in multiple readings and expressed in different forms of discourse;
2. organize and develop complete discipline-specific texts and other documents for both professional and general audiences, using appropriate editorial and citation standards; and
3. locate, organize, and synthesize information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and to communicate that purpose in writing;
4. produce discipline-specific written work that demonstrates upper-division proficiency in language use, grammar, and clarity of expression.

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 8000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Goals

Course Goals: After successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

- Create texts and make presentations that are appropriate for a variety of audiences and situations.
- Analyze organizational and rhetorical situations in business communications and employ appropriate strategies for communicating based on audience, purpose, and context.
- Identify and explain genres and written and visual conventions used in business communications.
- Participate in both intra-organizational communication as well as communications with others outside of the organization.
- Explain the role of ethics in business communications.
- Understand the role of collaboration in business communications.
- Use photos, illustrations, and other tools as appropriate in business communication.
- Communicate complex data.
- Understand the basic principles for document layout and design.
- Adapt a text to meet the needs of varying audiences.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome 1: Produce discipline-specific written work that demonstrates upper-division proficiency in language use, grammar, and clarity of expression.

Learning Outcome 2: Explain, analyze, develop, and criticize ideas effectively, including ideas encountered in multiple readings and expressed in different forms of discourse.

Learning Outcome 3: Organize and develop essays and documents for both professional and general audiences.

Learning Outcome 4: Organize and develop essays and documents according to appropriate editorial and citation standards.

Learning Outcome 5: Locate, organize, and synthesize information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and to communicate that purpose in writing.

Course Materials

Zero Course Cost Materials: There are no required textbooks – readings will be provided via weblinks, videos, or PDFs.

Course Requirements and Assignments

PROJECTS: you must complete all five to pass (C or above), per grading contract; Project A is required for students wanting an A.

3 Three Things: To further develop our public speaking muscles, we'll have opportunities to practice throughout the semester. At the start of each class, I'll alert 3 people that they're going to answer "Three Things" at the end of class. This also serves to help us bring each class to a close and reflect on the days work.

User-Centered Design: For this assignment, we'll be focusing on formatting alone to set the tone for the rest of the class. Your job is to make your documents easy to read - always think about how to take readers through information quickly.

Group Project: Business Plan or Proposal. In groups of five, you'll plan a new business venture and write the proposal. The structure and format of proposals varies depending on the business. There is no single way to do this. We'll work in teams to create a plan, pitch deck, and pitch presentations.

Email Series: I will be responding to homework assignments via email. **Reply to all of my emails**, matching my tone, by explaining how you understand the feedback and/or addressing questions posed. (There are a total of 5 emails: User-Centered Design, Persuasive Letter, "Bad News" Letter, Report on Workplace Culture, and Resume/Cover Letter.) Each email is **due no later than three days from receipt**. Do not fall behind (cannot be made up after Week 12).

✂Applying for Professional Jobs: This project will help prepare us develop the necessary documents needed for finding and applying for a job or internship. We'll go through the whole process: job search – accepting offers. I'm here to help you work on these materials so that when you are ready to enter the job or internship market you feel prepared.

Report Deck: Presenting your Research & Recommendations: deliver research and recommendation to a real-world audience based on a topic of your choosing. This is a real-world problem-solving exercise based on research and analysis that offers a recommendation to a specific audience in response to a specific

problem (no general audience or student audiences can be used).

Project A, Additional work required for an A: This project, required to earn an A in this class, is designed to help reinforce our work in this class.

✓ Grading Information

Evaluation of Student Performance/Grading Policy:

How to earn a C (not much less than to earn a B)

To earn a C, I ask that you:

- Participate regularly in Discussion Forums/completes 75% discussions
- Receive an "Assignment Complete" mark for ALL 5 Projects and 10 out of 13 "other assignments." Includes participating in draft, peer review, and revision process.
- Participates, attends class regularly (not missing more than 4 weeks), submits drafts and engages in providing useful feedback. See Engagement Assignment on Canvas.

How to Earn a B

To earn a B, I ask that you:

- Participate regularly in Discussion Forums/completes 85% of discussions
- Receive an "Assignment Complete" mark for ALL 5 Projects and 8 out of 10 "other assignments." Includes participating in draft, peer review, and revision process.
- Participates, attends class regularly (not missing more than 2 weeks), submits drafts and engages in providing useful feedback. see Engagement Assignment on Canvas

How to Earn an A

To earn an A, I ask that you meet the requirements for a B **AND** complete an additional project: **Project A**

Rationale: You will never see significant raises or promotions by meeting expectations and doing what's required – you have to do more! Advancement requires initiative. This contract is meant to mirror that sentiment.

Background: Traditional grading systems encourage students to work for "points," where learning can become a game with a goal to get a certain grade. The default grade in this class will be a "B". For each assignment, you'll receive either a "Complete" or "Incomplete" with some notes that are aimed in encouraging your growth and professional development.

About grades lower than C: Missing any of the four projects will result in a grade below a C.

Note: You do not have the option to just turn in all late work at the end of the semester. If you fall behind in the work, please communicate with me early to discuss your opportunity to succeed in the class.

Breakdown

PROGRESS REPORT: Are you getting a B?

Projects (need all four, plus email series)	Complete/Incomplete/Missing
3 Three Things	
User-Centered Design	
Group Project: Check Points 1-5 + Presentation	
✂Applying for Professional Jobs, including Career Mapping	
Research & Report Deck	
Email Series – 5 total	
User-Centered #1	
Persuasive Letter #2	
“Bad News” Letter #3	
Report on Workplace Culture #4	
Resume/Cover Letter #5	
Assignments (need 10 out of 13)	Complete/Incomplete/Missing
Persuasive Letter (3/1)	
“Bad News” Letter (3/8)	
Performance Review (3/8)	

Report on Workplace Culture (3/15)	
LinkedIn Memo (4/5)	
"Tell Me About Yourself" (4/12)	
Interview Practice with Big Interview (4/12)	
In-Class Mock Interview (4/13)	
Thank You Note (4/19)	
Salary Expectations Practice (4/19)	
R&R Check Point 3: In-Class Update (4/29)	
R&R Check Point 6: Mini Presentations (5/6)	
In-Class Final (5/11)	
Discussions (85% or 10 out of 12 completed)	Complete/Incomplete/Missing
"Your Colleagues Don't Read..."	
Find Examples of Document Design	
The Power of Vision & Mission	
Accessibility & Design	
Creating User-Centered Design - feedback	
Editing & Style Guides	

Career Exploration	
Resume	
Cover letter	
R&R Deck Check Point 1	
R&R Deck Check Point 2	
R&R Deck Check Point 3	

Engagement/Absences (up to 4 allowed)	Total absences:
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Do you want an A? Complete Project A, in addition to meeting requirements for a B as outlined above.

Work to be Completed for A:	Done?
Meeting at Career Center	
Attend Professional Development Activity	
Solicit one LinkedIn Recommendation	
Submit Memo re: Project A	

OR Project A, Option 2 –

Work to be Completed for A:	Done?
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Apply to Three Internships or Entry-Level Jobs	
Report on Experience	

△Contact me if you'd like to propose a different project (needs to take a minimum of 3 hours time) OR if you absolutely cannot do the above.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Tentative Class Schedule

NOTE: All discussions and assignments are due Sunday evening to prepare for Monday's class. Submissions will be accepted through end of day Monday if you need a little extra time, but the expectation is that it be done Sunday evening, so I may review it prior to class to best utilize our time in class.

Date	Topic	Discussions & Assignments	Projects
Week 1 1/26 – 2/1	Reflecting & Connecting	Welcome Survey "Your Colleagues Don't Read..."	Prepare for First Team Meeting Business Plan Check Point 1: Kickoff + Team Setup Prepare for Second Team Meeting

Week 2 2/2 – 2/8	Formatting Documents Business Plans	Find Examples of Document Design The Power of Vision & Mission Accessibility & Design	Business Plan Check Point: Section Planning & Genre Research
Week 3 2/9 – 2/15	User-Centered Design	Editing & Style Guides READ: Email Series Assignments	Creating User-Centered Design [for feedback] Business Plan Check Point 3: First Draft
Week 4 2/16 – 2/22	Applying Feedback and Revising Emailing <i>No Class Meeting</i>	Creating User-Centered Design Peer Review Async: Class Activity	Creating User-Centered Design Revision & Cover Reply to Email #1 re: User-Centered Design Business Plan Check Point 4: Plan Revisions & Finalization
Week 5 2/23 – 3/1	Public Speaking Persuasive Writing	Persuasive Letter	Business Plan Check Point 4: Pitch Deck & Script Prepare for in-class Presentation
Week 6 3/2 – 3/8	Pitches	Performance Review “Bad News” Letter	Pitch Reply to Email #2 re: Persuasive Letter
Week 7 3/9 – 3/15	Job Search	Career Exploration Prompt Report on Workplace Culture	Career Mapping & Future Proofing Reply to Email #3 re: “Bad News” Letter

Week 8 3/16 – 3/22	Resume	Progress Report	Resume Email Response #4 re: Report on Workplace Culture
Week 9 3/23 – 3/29	<i>Spring Break – No Classes</i>		
Week 10 3/30 – 4/5	Cover Letter; LinkedIn; Professionalism	LinkedIn Memo	Cover Letter
Week 11 4/6 – 4/12	Interviewing	Tell Me About Yourself Interview Practice: Hiration	Applying for Jobs [Revised Resume & Cover Letter] Email Response #5 re: Resume & Cover Letter
Week 12 4/13 – 4/19	Mock Interviews Report Decks	Choosing a Topic In-Class Mock Interviews Thank You Note Salary Expectations Practice	R&R Deck Check Point 1: Choosing a Topic
Week 13 4/20 – 4/26	Research & Drafting	Research Strategies & Planning	R&R Deck Check Point 2: Research Summary & Early Slide Draft
Week 14 4/27 – 5/3	Status Update		R&R Deck Check Point 3: In-Class Status Update R&R Deck Check Point 4: Full Draft

Week 15 5/4 – 5/10	Giving Feedback & Finalizing		R&R Deck Check Point 5: Final Submission Project A
WEEK 15 5/11 – 5/17	Reflecting & Connecting	In-Class Final	R&R Check Point 6: Mini-Presentations; R&R Check Point 7: Manager Update Memo
FINALS 5/18	<i>Monday, May 18</i> <i>End of Term/All items due</i>		