ENG 231: Intro to Professional Writing

Fall 2026 | online, asynchronous

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INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

- Dr. Allison Hitt—call me Dr. Allison!
- Associate Professor of English
- ahhitt@bsu.edu
- Check "Contacting Dr. Allison" on Canvas for office hours information

COURSE DESCRIPTION

from the BSU Course Catalog

Introduction to the Professional Writing major. Familiarizes students with the genres, technologies, and practices of professional writing in everyday and workplace contexts. Prerequisite: C or higher in ENG 104 (208) or ENG 114

from Dr. Allison

ENG 231 is both an introduction to the Professional Writing major at Ball State University and an introduction to the academic discipline and professional practice of technical and professional communication (TPC), focusing specifically on workplace and organizational writing.

This course takes a rhetorical approach to professional writing, meaning you will be studying the purpose, audience, and contexts of both digital and print documents. Like professional writers, you will write and design with different technologies, work collaboratively, and create usable and accessible documents in a range of genres: a professional bio, email, memo, letter, handout, research plan, proposal report, résumé, and professional portfolio.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

ENG 231 introduces the concept of knowledge work and professional writing for knowledge work environments. In ENG 231, students will learn to do the following:

- Define core concepts of professional writing, such as genre, audience, user-centered design, technology and multimodality, usability, and accessibility
- Describe how professional writing practices function within organizations and workplace settings
- Analyze print and digital documents to better understand the rhetorical, social, cultural, and ethical implications of professional writing in everyday experience
- Use appropriate research methods to conduct research individually and in teams
- Identify and reflect on patterns in their own writing practice and in the writing practices of the organizations and communities in which they work and live
- Design a portfolio of work that showcases their writing strengths and communicates who they are as a professional

By achieving the course outcomes you will simultaneously develop numerous NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) workplace competencies:

Course Outcomes	NACE Workplace Competencies
Describe professional writing practices	Communication
Analyze print and digital documents	Communication, Critical Thinking, Equity and Inclusion
Use appropriate research methods	Teamwork
Identity and reflect on patterns	Communication, Critical Thinking
Design a portfolio of work	Career and Self-Development, Communication, Professionalism, Technology

REQUIRED MATERIALS

There are no required textbooks for this course. Instead, we will read chapters and articles from open-access business, professional, and technical communication textbooks. I will also provide PDF chapters from other books.

You will need to use Microsoft Word to complete assignments, as well as Adobe Acrobat for the final project. To install Acrobat, you must request access to Adobe Creative Cloud. As students, you all have free access to both of these programs.

You will be expected to check Canvas and your Outlook email account regularly.

ASSIGNMENTS

Major Projects

Project 1: Workplace Correspondence (100 pts)

You will read about some of the rhetorical, ethical, and technical issues that concern professional writers, as well as practice composing in different genres. You will submit four deliverables: a professional bio, email, memo, and letter. **Due 9/20**

Project 2: Professional Design (100 pts)

You will select a chapter from *Keywords in Technical and Professional Communication* to read and synthesize into a 1-page handout. Your handout should distill information clearly and concisely, cite information appropriately, and adhere to professional design principles. You will also draft a brief memo detailing your content and design choices. You will submit two deliverables: a handout and reflective memo. **Due 10/11**

Project 3: Proposal Report (200 pts)

You will work with your peer review group members to select an RFP (request for proposals) for a university micro-grant: $10,000 for student initiatives that align with the Beneficence Pledge. Your team will brainstorm what to do with the money, research the logistics, then draft an informal proposal report that outlines the project's benefits, timeline, and budget. Each team will submit two deliverables: a 1-page research plan and 4–5-page proposal report. **Due 11/15**

Project 4: Portfolio (150 pts)

For the final project, you will use Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat to create an accessible PDF portfolio that demonstrates your knowledge of professional writing and design. All portfolios must include a cover page, a bio, a résumé, three documents that represent you and your work, and a reflection. **Due 12/9**

Process Work

Rough Drafts & Peer Review (100 pts)

Writing is a process that benefits from feedback, and you will submit rough drafts for each of the four major assignments to receive feedback from me and from your peers. If you submit your drafts (4 x 15 pts) and provide feedback to your peer groups (4 x 10 pts) on time, you will receive full credit.

Homework & Discussion Board Posts (150 pts)

Throughout the semester, I will ask you to engage in low-stakes homework assignments (worth 5–10 points each) that build toward major projects and discussion board posts (10 pts each) that ask you to engage with ideas from assigned readings. Unless otherwise specified, discussion board posts should be 150–250 words, and you need to engage thoughtfully with 1–2 of your peers' posts. If you submit this work on time, you will receive full credit.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All major projects will be accompanied by assignment sheets and evaluation criteria on Canvas. All process work (drafts, peer feedback, homework, and discussion board posts) will be assessed as complete/incomplete.

Your grade in this class will be calculated according to the grading scale below.

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93–100%	90–92%	87–89%	83–86%	80–82%	77–79%	73–76%	70–72%	67–69%	63–66%	60–62%	0–59%
744–800	720–743	696–719	664–695	640–663	616–639	584–615	560–583	536–559	504–535	480–503	479–0

DR. ALLISON'S EXPECTATIONS & COURSE POLICIES

Accessibility

I am committed to creating a classroom environment that is respectful of and inclusive to different learning and writing processes—whether that is in person, through Canvas, or on Zoom. All the multimodal materials I share will be made accessible: videos will be captioned, audio will have transcripts, and images will be described. If we can work together to make the class more accessible, let me know.

When you share and compose media for this course, I ask that you be mindful of accessibility and include alt text, captions, and/or a transcript where appropriate.

Email

I expect you to check your BSU email regularly during the work week and respond to messages, just as you will expect me to do. All emails regarding this class should include an informative subject line, address me by name, and be respectful and professional. I prefer email to Canvas inbox messages, but I will check both. If you have a complex question or need help beyond 1–2 simple email exchanges, please consider scheduling a meeting!

Feedback

You will receive feedback from both me and your peers this semester. I will provide written feedback through Canvas on all homework and major projects. I read discussion board posts, but you will mainly receive feedback from your peers on those. Everyone will be assigned to a peer feedback group of 3–4 people who you will share drafts with throughout the semester.

Late Work

Assignments are due by the time specified on Canvas. However, there's a good chance that at some point throughout the semester, you will need more time. **You can request a one-week extension for any assignment by emailing me *before* the deadline.** You aren't required to provide a reason; just send a polite email letting me know, e.g., "Hello Dr. Allison, I'm using an extension on the memo due tomorrow. Thank you!"

Extensions do not apply to peer feedback or the final portfolio.

Learning Online

ENG 231 is a writing-intensive course, so you will need to make time for reading and writing each week.

I recommend choosing a regular time where you "tune into" class throughout the week: checking email and Canvas announcements, responding to discussion board posts, and completing assignments. Although there are many options, you should check in at least twice a week: once early in the week to assess the workload (I update the homepage every Monday morning with instructional content) and again later in the week to review and respond to discussion board posts.

You are expected to be an active participant in this course. Even though you may not see your classmates or instructor in person, our course is designed to include discussion and other forms of collaboration and communication. You can access more information about online learning and expectations for participating in our online class in the welcome module on Canvas.

Plagiarism, AI, & Academic Integrity

You will be held to Ball State's standards of academic integrity, which can be accessed in the Student Handbook under "Student Academic Ethics Policy." You must document all sources you use, whether quoting directly or paraphrasing.

The goal of this class is to teach you professional writing skills. There are situations where I believe generative AI (GenAI) can aid the writing process. However, GenAI is most useful when you already possess critical writing skills and can assess for yourself the truth and effectiveness of AI-generated writing.

If you use AI to write discussion board posts, extend the word count of an assignment, make your writing "sound more professional," write your section of the group project, summarize readings, or prepare peer feedback, *you are no longer doing the work of this class.* Feeding your peers' drafts into a GenAI tool like ChatGPT in order to generate peer review comments is a serious violation of privacy, and you will be given a zero on peer feedback if you do this.

Asking anyone, AI included, to do your work *for you* is a violation of academic integrity. If you are in doubt about acceptable AI use or source citation, please ask.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Disability Accommodations

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Freedom of Expression

In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State community, we treat each person with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State's Statement on Freedom of Expression, the Freedom of Expression website, and the Beneficence Pledge.

University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.