

**Class Days**: Mondays

**Class Times**: 4:00-6:40

**Class Location**: SH 213

**Section**: 6

**Office Hours**: M 3-4, T & W 2-3:30, & by appt.   
**Location**: SH 120B

**Email Contact**: jsheppard@mail.sdsu.edu

Course Overview  
In today's workplace, **strong communication abilities are often cited as the number one priority for employers, regardless of field**. The ability to communicate clearly, competently, ethically, and persuasively with co-workers, clients, and other stakeholders is essential to your success and to that of the organization for which you work. In professional environments, you will often be called upon to propose ideas, solve problems, and collaborate with co-workers. At their core, all of these practices are rhetorical, requiring you to choose the most appropriate genre and approach for your audience.

RWS 290 builds on the rhetorical thinking and practices developed in earlier 100- and 200-level courses, such as attention to audience, purpose, context, evidence, research strategies, and language choice. As an intermediate writing course dedicated to business majors, RWS 290 offers you the opportunity to extend and broaden your communication practices specifically for the genres and expectations you will encounter as a professional (i.e., memos, proposals, presentations, reports, etc.). Through our work in researching, composing, and evaluating a variety of business-related communications, you will strengthen your abilities as both a student and as a working professional once you graduate.

## Course Materials

* Rentz, Kathryn, and Paula Lentz. *M: Business Communication* (3rd Ed.)*.* New York, NY: 2015. ISBN: 978-0-07-340322-9

## Course Goals

RWS 290 is designed specifically to help students explore, construct and critique professional communication, through developing rhetorical strategies for writing and presentations, genre conventions, and collaborative practices relevant to business and professional contexts. RWS 290 will provide students with skills to:

* Craft effective business messages for specific audiences and purposes;
* Place professional communication within generic and cultural contexts;
* Demonstrate the ability to link business communication to problem solving and decision making;
* Analyze the ethical dilemmas associated with professional writing;
* Assess business communication for quality of content, usability, and design.

## Course Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

* Produce letters, reports, proposals, and other business documents that are organized, communicate clearly, use appropriate technology, and address appropriately the audiences, purposes and contexts for which they are intended;
* Craft and deliver professional presentations using appropriate technology;
* Collaborate in a team setting using effective interpersonal communication skills;
* Use a clear, concise, and appropriate writing style to summarize issues and support decision-making by others;
* Collect, evaluate, organize, interpret, and present data in written and oral messages;
* Edit to eliminate errors in punctuation, spelling and grammar, in order to avoid misunderstanding and create professional ethos in communications.

## Rhetoric and Business

Because business professionals communicate information to non-business audiences as well as others in their fields, they MUST understand how to adjust for the communication requirements for different groups. For example:

* What does an accountant understand in an audit that an executive might not?
* Why do managers and marketing professionals look at proposals differently?
* Why is it important to understand the role of technical content in formal and informal business presentations?

These questions suggest that your audience for business communication will likely have its own motivation, goals, and level of expertise. The better you understand this, the better your chances of communicating important ideas successfully. Throughout the semester, we will address the “rhetorical situation”—the concepts of audience, purpose and context—as a way of improving all of the business documents and presentations you create and evaluate.

## Verbal Communication

We will also emphasize verbal communication. In job postings and performance reviews, managers always stress the importance of a candidate’s ability to speak well in varied situations. Your “verbal confidence” can be your career’s catalyst—or its hindrance. Throughout this course we will incorporate verbal communication strategies into exercises, short presentations and group work. By the end of the course you should be more comfortable speaking to individuals and groups.

## Collaboration

This course assumes that professionals never work alone. They refer to precedents, seek help from other business professionals, and lead design teams. They explain complicated information to executives, technical writers, financial advisors and interested members of the public who often have no background in the communicator’s field of expertise. You will discover very quickly—during our first project, in fact—that the most highly valued managers, financial analysts, real estate brokers, and information systems administrators are adaptable to new situations and work effectively in varied team and interpersonal settings. The course will provide strategies for collaborative and interpersonal communications, as well as significant experience working in teams.

## Helpful Resources:

1. **SDSU Writing Center**, located in LLA 1103 in the Love Library (Appointments available at the [Writing Center Online](https://writingcenter.sdsu.edu/)). The Writing Center is **a free resource** where you can find support for the writing assigned for this course. Tutors can help you with your assignments at any stage of the writing process--from brainstorming to revision of in-process drafts. You can expect your session to be collaborative: consider your tutor a writing coach who can offer insight into the specific project you are working on, as well as strategies to help you develop your writing skills overall.
2. The [Purdue Online Writing Lab](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/) (OWL)

A Note about Office Hours- Use Them  
No really, I hold office hours for **you** and I encourage you to talk with me if you need help or have questions or concerns related to class. You’ll be required to conference with me about one of your project draft during the semester, but feel free to stop by in between.

## Attendance, Participation, and Professional Etiquette

This is not a lecture class. I **take attendance at the beginning of every meeting; it is imperative that you attend our sessions**. We also begin on time, often by taking a quiz, so excessive tardiness counts toward absences. Moreover, please **do not get up and leave** while I am presenting material; this distracts me and other students. Visit the restroom, check your email, or look at your phone before you come to class or during our break. Finally, please come to each meeting prepared to discuss the day’s work as indicated on the calendar and readings. This is a case of mutual preparedness and respect, not only for me, but for your colleagues. In general *no class meeting work can be made up.*

To do well in this course, you will need to **read all assigned material prior to class** and engage in thoughtful discussion with your classmates, in additional to completing your major projects. Although this does not mean speaking up and contributing insights during every class session, it does mean arriving on time, being prepared, asking questions, and being attentive to the activities at hand. Participation will also make up 10% of your final grade.   
  
You can miss up to two classes, for whatever reason, without penalty. **More than three absences may lead to failure of the course**. **Being here is key to your success!**  
  
Course Culture  
My goal is to create a comfortable, inviting environment for all students so learning can take place. To this end, **I expect** **professional and respectful behavior in class**. Please be mindful of your behavior, language, and tone in all interactions with classmates and me. Behavior that detracts from the culture of respect and professionalism a class such as this requires will not be tolerated here nor in your future workplace. **Please do not text or use your computer/tablet/phone for reasons other than classwork during our time or engage in any other behavior that distracts from our work or I will ask you to leave.**

Since this is a rhetoric class, I ask that you are **purposeful** in what you say and how you say it in all forms of communication. When contacting each other or me through email, please use an appropriate subject line, greeting, and closing. Also, please be respectful (consider your *ethos*) when asking a question, making a request, or addressing a concern. That is, I ask that you use appropriate rhetorical strategies when communicating.

**IF YOU ARE ABSENT** you are still responsible for knowing what was covered in class, what the homework is, and when it is due. **Please exchange phone numbers and/or emails with at least two of your classmates**.

Problems  
Please get in touch with me immediately if you experience unforeseen circumstances that will affect your performance in the course. My goal is to help you succeed, but we need to communicate to make that happen.  
  
  
Late Work  
Professionals (at least those who want to keep their jobs) do not miss deadlines without making arrangements with supervisors. For this class, you need to submit all deliverables on time and in the conventions of the assigned genre. However, you can receive an extension for good cause if you **(a)** contact me before the project is due by means of a formal memo in which you explain the reason for the delay and **(b)** propose a reasonable deadline in the memo (less than one week), which you then keep. The memo is a contract. Failure to keep the new deadline breaks the contract, and I won’t accept your work. You can use this option no more than once in a semester. Only in exceptional circumstances will I accept work more than two weeks past the original due date. Note: If you are taking RWS 290 for C/NC, you must complete all projects for credit.

Assignments and Grades  
You will complete **three projects**, including two team-based assignments. These projects are grounded in research conducted about workplace writing and are designed to help you develop the rhetorical and communicative practices you will need as a business professional. Additionally, 25% of your grade will be determined by your success on reading quizzes, so be sure to complete all assigned readings before coming to class.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assignments | % |
| Resume, Cover Letter, Job Posting | 20 |
| Report (group) | 20 |
| Proposal (group) | 25 |
| Reading Quizzes | 25 |
| Collaboration/Participation | 10 |
| Total | 100 |

Evaluating Your Work  
I make every effort to evaluate formal written assignments quickly, but **I will review your resumes and cover letters especially carefully**. I may take extra time assessing those documents for reasons I will discuss during an early meeting; I grade resumes very thoroughly. Also, as the semester progresses, please place a copy of all group projects in your group’s file share folder on Blackboard.

I will evaluate your performance in the class according to:

* the quality of your written and work (appropriateness to rhetorical conventions, correct use of conventions, attention to document usability)
* class presentations (quality of preparation and delivery, evidence of comprehension of key concepts)
* participation in class discussions and activities
* participation and contributions in team-based work

I will determine your final grade based on points accumulated as listed above and using the standard grade   
scale below:

| Grade Scale | % |
| --- | --- |
| A | 93-100% |
| A- | 90-92 |
| B+ | 87-89% |
| B | 83-86% |
| B- | 80-82% |
| C+ | 77-79% |
| C | 73-76% |
| C- | 70-72% |
| D+ | 67-69% |
| D | 60-66% |
| F | Below 60% |

## Course Readings

Complete all reading assignments before our meeting. Even though we may not discuss the readings directly, **you are responsible for understanding information in the Rentz/Lentz text**.

## Quizzes

You will take several quizzes this semester. All quizzes will be given at the **beginning of class** and will cover reading in the *Business Communication* text for that week. Near the end of the semester, you will be allowed to take/retake one quiz. You may either (a) retake one quiz that you have taken before, or (b) take one quiz that you missed earlier in the semester. The score you earn on these makeup quizzes becomes the final, definitive score for that quiz. See the calendar for the quiz retake date. Quizzes will **only** be given during our meetings.

## Writing Assignment/Project Requirements

We will review specific requirements for case studies, assignments and projects in class, and you’ll find project descriptions, handouts, samples and other supplemental material for each deliverable on Blackboard when they are assigned. Submit written work on the date indicated on the schedule. All documents (resumes, memos, reports, proposals) must be prepared with appropriate software and must conform to the conventions of the genre. In particular, I may ask you to resubmit any project that varies significantly from the specified format.

## Group Work

Around the fifth week of class, I will place you in groups of three. Group work constitutes a significant portion of your final grade. **If you are not prepared to devote time outside of our meetings to group work, you should not attempt this course**. I have reserved meeting time later in the semester for your group to work on the final project, and I will be available for consultation during that time. If you have any problems within your group that, after attempts to work them out on your own, you cannot resolve, please see me. Developing strategies for navigating the challenges of collaboration is an important asset and helps you become a better professional communicator.

## Students with Disabilities

Every attempt will be made to offer reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in this course. Students with disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor privately and to contact Student Disability Services (SDS) as soon as possible. SDS staff are available in the Capulli Center in Suite 3101 or by phone at (619) 594-6473 (voice) or (619) 594-2929 (TTD/TTY). If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services.

## Counseling

There are many events and situations that put additional stress on being a student. SDSU has an excellent center for Counseling & Psychological Services that is open to students Monday through Friday from 8am-4:30pm. To set up an initial consultation, call (619) 594-5220. For immediate or emergency help, you are welcome to use San Diego’s free 24-hour counseling access line at (800) 479-3339. C&PS on campus also has a “Center for Well-Being” with multiple stations for relaxation if you are feeling stressed during the semester. C&PS is located in the Capulli Center, Room 4401.

## Academic Honesty

All work in this course must be original. Plagiarism will result in serious consequences ranging from grade reduction to failure in the class to expulsion from the college. For more information on the university cheating and plagiarism policy, please visit: [http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/senate/ policy/pfacademics.html](http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/senate/%20policy/pfacademics.html). SDSU’s library also has an excellent tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism.

## Discrimination and Harassment

SDSU complies with all federal and state laws regarding discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, medical status, veteran status, and disability. Further, the expectation for our classroom is that it is a safe, collegial space where differences of background and perspective are treated with consideration and respect. Disagreement on some issues is expected as part of the learning process, but should always be expressed within a framework of collegiality.

***Note:*** *As the instructor, I reserve the right to examine and reconsider individual grades in terms of attendance, collaborative effort, and punctuality.*

## Course Schedule

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| The California Faculty Association is in the midst of a difficult contract dispute with management. It is possible that the faculty union will call a strike or other work stoppage this term. I will inform the class as soon as possible of any disruption to our class meeting schedule.  **This schedule is subject to change based on student needs and other circumstances**. Please check it regularly to stay up-to-date. | | |
| **WEEK 1** | **Introductions** | | |
| M 1/25 | * Syllabus * Overview of course * Introductions |
| **WEEK 2** | **Rhetoric and Résumés** | | |
| M 2/1 | * **READ:**  Ch. 1: Communicating in the Workplace * *Quiz: Ch.1* * Discuss Ch. 1 reading * In-class activity * Introduce Résumés as Arguments * Beginning the Internship or Job Search process | | |
| **WEEK 3** | **Résumés, Cover Letters, and the Job Search** | | |
| M 2/8 | * READ: Ch. 11: Communicating in the Job Search * Quiz: Ch. 11 * Discuss Ch. 11 * Look at sample cover letters * Finish search for internship/job posting for use in first assignment * Begin drafting résumés and cover letters | | |
| **WEEK 4** | **Academic vs. Professional Writing** | | |
| M 2/15 | * **READ**: Ch. 2: Understanding the Writing Process and the Main Forms of Business Messages * **DUE**: Draft of résumé and cover letter for peer review * *Quiz: Ch. 2* * Discuss Ch. 2 * Considerations of Business Communication Genres and Audiences | | |
| **WEEK 5** | **Business Communication Styles** | | |
| M 2/22 | * **DUE**: Final revised résumé and cover letter * **READ**: Ch. 4: Using an Appropriate Style * *Quiz: Ch. 4* * Discuss reading, rhetoric, and professional communication | | |
| **WEEK 6** | **Writing Reports** | | |
| M 2/29 | * **READ:**  Ch. 9: Writing Short Reports * *Quiz: Ch. 9* * Discuss Reading * Discuss Elements of Usable Analysis * Directions for Team Report Project * Form Teams | | |
| **WEEK 7** | **Conducting Effective Business Research** | | |
| M 3/7 | * **READ**: Ch. 8: Researching and Writing Reports * *Quiz: Ch. 8* * Discuss reading * Discuss Writing Project Management and Team Planning | | |
| **WEEK 8** | **Visual Communication and Information Design** | | |
| M 3/14 | * **READ**: Ch. 3: Communicating Effectively with Visuals * *Quiz: Ch. 3* * Five Principles of Information Design * Robin Williams’ CRAP Principles for Design * Look at Piktochart as Tool for Infographics and Visual Reports * In-class Time to Work with Project Team on Report | | |
| **WEEK 9** | **Crafting and Delivering Business Presentations** | | |
| M 3/21 | * **DUE**: Draft of Team Report Project * **READ**: Ch. 10: Communicating Orally * *Quiz: Ch. 10* * Discuss Lifecycle of a Professional Presentation * Peer Review of Report Drafts | | |
| **SPRING BREAK** | | | |
| **M 3/28-F 4/1** | **Class Cancelled- Enjoy your break!** | | |
| **WEEK 11** | **Writing Proposals I** | | |
| M 4/4 | * **READ**: Ch. 7: Writing Persuasive Messages and Proposals * **DUE**: Final Version of Team Report Project * *Quiz: Ch. 7* * Discuss Rhetorical Appeals: Ethos, Pathos, Logos in Business Contexts * Directions for Team Proposal Project | | |
| **WEEK 12** | **Writing Proposals II** | | |
| M 4/11 | * **READ**: Ch. 6: Writing Bad-News Messages * *Quiz: Ch. 6* * DiscussCommunicating Bad News | | |
| **WEEK 13** | **Proposal Group Consultations** | | |
| M 4/18 | * **DUE**: Draft Proposal Project * Class Sessions Cancelled * Teams Will Schedule and meet for 20 Minute Consultations with Instructor for Proposal Drafts-in-Progress | | |
| **WEEK 14** | **Review** | | |
| M 4/25 | * Review Presentation Strategies * Review Integration of Visuals into Documents and Presentations * In-class Time to Work with Project Team on Final Proposal * Quiz Retakes | | |
| **WEEK 15** | **Presentations** | | |
| M 5/2 | * **Team Presentations of Final Proposal Projects** | | |
| **FINALS WEEK** |  | | |
| M 5/9 4:00-6:00 | * **All final work due by Monday, May 9th at 4:00** | | |