

ENG 6813: Teaching Online in Texts and Technology

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Course Catalog Description

Theory and practice for designing electronic courses and curricula in texts and technology, strategies, theories, and best practices

Course Learning Outcomes

- Students will become reflectively aware of their current attitudes, knowledge, expertise, and values as online learners and teachers
- Students will learn about major theories and pedagogies that guide online instruction and course design
- Students will learn to apply their knowledge to research and online course design projects
- Students will demonstrate engagement and professionalism by actively and constructively participating in the course's learning community.

Communicating with your Classmates and Your Instructor

Communication is important in any class, but it is especially important in an online learning environment. Regular and meaningful interactions with your classmates and with me will be absolutely essential for your success in this course. Successful online learning experiences depend on how well all members of the online class manage to create what researchers have called "social presence." In online courses where face-to-face (f2f) contact does not exist or is very limited, participants have to develop other strategies and activities to compensate for the lack of f2f interactions and to build that sense of community and belonging, which makes learning successful or even possible. We will strive to create that sense of community and social presence through the following means:

- Interactions on the discussion forums. Please note that when you are posting on a discussion forum, you are not just talking to me, your instructor. You are also discussing the class material with your classmates, and you are helping each other learn. You will be required not only to post in response to my prompts, but also to interact with each other by commenting on each other's posts.

- Interactions on the Google Docs pages during the writing of proposal documents. You will work in small groups (3-4 members per group) to produce writing for this course.
- Interactions via e-mail. Please let me know if you have any questions about any aspect of the course at any time. However, please limit e-mailing me with question to a reasonable level. If you have a question about the course, which would be better discussed in a discussion forum, please post it in the FAQ forum. Conversely, if you see a question by a classmate on the forum, to which you know the answer, please feel free to post that answer.
- In-person interactions with the instructor. If you are on campus or in the area, you are always welcome and encouraged to see me during my office hours with questions and concerns. If you cannot come during my regularly scheduled office hours, please let me know and we will find another time to meet.

If you e-mail me, you can generally expect an answer within 24 hours, sometimes sooner, as time permits.

Course Participation Requirements

Regular and active participation in an online class is extremely important. Input from all class members is what separates a good online class from one in which students feel disengaged and abandoned.

- Regular participation in the online forums through the posting of responses to discussion questions. Your posts need to be engaging and thoughtful. They cannot simply be "going through the motions," but must be attempting to truly engage with the course readings and with my questions.
- Regular interaction with other students on the forums by posting responses and questions to their writing. **You are required to post 3-4 substantive responses to the discussion posts of other students, per week.** Please get into the habit of reading other class members' posts and responding to 1-2 of them every time you log on to the discussion boards and before posting your own responses to the assignments. Having that habit will give you the 3-4 required posts per week.
- Regular and active participation in peer review sessions. I will provide series of open-ended questions and other guidelines for the peer review sessions.

You can expect me to read all of your discussion posts and other contributions. I comment on all formal writing assignments and on select discussion forum posts. Towards the end of the first week, I will offer you a critique of some online forum posts and we will discuss directions for maintaining a high quality of our online interactions.

If you are "absent" from the course for one week or more (you do not post required assignments, answer e-mails, etc.), I will advise you to drop the class.

Late Submissions of Assignments

Late submissions are strongly discouraged! If life interferes (good reasons only, please), and you must be late on an assignment, you need to contact me before the deadline and ask for an extension. If such an extension has not been arranged and you submit a late assignment, you will be penalized as follows:

- On a high-stakes writing assignment, such as a research project or a course design project: one half of a letter grade for every 24 hours for which the assignment is late. This applies to both final drafts/versions and preliminary ones.
- On a discussion post or other low-stakes assignment, a penalty of 1 point will be imposed on tardiness of more than 24 hours.

Required and Recommended Texts

- *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why*, by Scott Warnock
- *Conquering the Content: A Step-by-Step Guide to Online Course Design*, by Robin Smith
- *The Instructional Design Knowledge Base: Theory, Research, and Practice | Edition: 11*
- *Learning Online with Games, Simulations, and Virtual Worlds: Strategies for Online Instruction (strongly recommended for those interested in teaching online with new media)*

All the books are available from the UCF bookstore or online. Three of the four books have Kindle editions available, if you prefer those.

Major Projects and Assignments

Below is a list of the course's projects and assignments. A detailed description of each of these assignments is available in the Assignments section of the website. Chronologically, the course will be divided into two large parts. The first part will provide a broad look at the historical and contemporary picture of the theory and practice of professional writing instruction. It is also designed to prepare you for the second part of the course, during which you will design your own professional writing teaching/training unit. Please check the course calendar for specific due dates.

1. Weekly Informal Writings. Most weeks, you will post up to two discussion forum posts. These posts will consist of responses to assigned readings and other, informal writing assignments designed to prepare you for the course project. During the first few weeks, I will provide entry prompts; after that, you will be expected to generate your own discussion ideas. (30%)
2. Participation in peer reviews, comments to other students, etc. (20%)
3. Annotated bibliography: (20%)

4. Online Instructional Unit Design Project (30%). The components of this project are as follows
 - Project proposal 5%
 - Alpha version 5%
 - Beta version and basic usability test 5%
 - Release version 5%
 - Collaborative white paper 10%

Grading Scales and Standards

While each assignment has a set of detailed assessment criteria, below is a list of general principles, which I will apply while grading your work.

- An "A" text is exceptional and far exceeds the minimum standards for the project. In the workplace, consistently producing such texts might lead to a promotion or some significant reward. "A" projects will demonstrate exceptional rhetorical and stylistic versatility and savvy by the writer, within the requirements of the course.
- A "B" text is better than average, but not excellent. In a workplace, a "B" text might be usable by others, but contain relatively minor deficiency, in its rhetoric, style, mechanics, or a combination of the three. It is generally free of serious mechanical errors, and its author had applied care in the preparation of the text.
- A "C" text is competent, but nothing more than that. In the workplace, it is probably going to be returned for revision. It is average, both in terms of content and form. It can contain some mechanical errors.
- A "low C" or "D" text is weak; it is below average. In the workplace, the author of such a text would be placed in a bad situation with the management and colleagues. It does not solve a problem or address a rhetorical situation. It may contain serious and/or numerous mechanical errors.
- An "F" text fails in all or most major categories. It is incomplete and/or exhibits very little or no care for its preparation and presentation on the part of the author.

Statement on Academic Integrity

As you, no doubt, know, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are very serious offenses. While I am confident that we will not have to deal with this in this class, we must have a procedure to address such situations should they arise. Below is the description of this policy:

1. Plagiarists and other academic offenders will, at a minimum, fail the assignment or the class.

2. Although I do not routinely submit assignments to Turnitin.com, I reserve the right to do so, if I have a reasonable suspicion of plagiarism.

ADA Statement

If you require special ADA accommodations, please provide appropriate documentation by the end of the first week of the course.