Southern Polytechnic State University  
Department of English, Technical Communication, and Media Arts  

COMM 2000: Business Communication  
Spring 2012 Course Syllabus  

Section 001: MW 9:30-10:45a, J133

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFO
Kelsey Harr-Lagin  
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Phone: 678-915-3642  
Office: J318  
Skype: KelseyHL  
Office Hours: Monday: 1-5pm, Tuesday: 2-5:30pm, Wednesday: 3:30-5:30pm (online), Wednesday: 8-10pm (online), and by appointment.

IMPORTANT DATES AT SPSU
- Last day to Drop/Add a course: January 12  
- Last day to withdraw with a grade of W: February 28  
- Spring Break: March 5-9  
- Final Exams: May 2-8 (Note: This course WILL meet during the scheduled final exam time. The university has yet to determine the specific final exam schedule but I will make an announcement in class when it becomes available via Banner Web.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Introduction to the communication skills needed in the business world, learned through exposure to mock business situations. The job search is covered, and emphasis is placed on writing business correspondence and delivering business-related oral presentations. (Prerequisites to this course are ENGL 1102 and COMM 2400. Please see me immediately if you have not completed both of these courses.)

COURSE OUTCOMES
Upon successful completion of this course, students will  
- demonstrate an understanding of how to write a variety of business letters;  
- have the experience of participating in at least one oral presentation targeted to a professional audience; and  
- be able to edit a variety of short business documents.

REQUIRED MATERIALS
- Reliable access to an internet-enabled computer with speakers, a printer, SPSU email, and GeorgiaVIEW Vista 8  
- Folder or notebook for saving coursework  
- 3x5 Index cards

GENERAL COURSE EXPECTATIONS
1) Read and understand the course syllabus and calendar.
2) Keep track of your grade using the provided form. See me with questions or concerns; however, I generally do not discuss specific grades inside the classroom. To discuss your personal grades please schedule a meeting with me.
3) Ask for help. Asking for help is the only way I know you are confused, lost, or in need of assistance. I am happy to provide a substantial amount of help if you ask.
4) Bring your book and notes to each class meeting.
5) The use of phones, mp3 players, and similar devices is prohibited. Please silence (the vibrate setting is not silent) all devices prior to the beginning of class.

6) Laptops and tablets for the purpose of taking notes are permitted only on days other students are not giving presentations. You should take special care to avoid distracting other class members with your computer. Should it become a distraction, you will be asked to put it away and refrain from bringing it to class in the future.

7) Wait until class has ended to pack up your belongings.

8) Never enter the classroom while another student is giving a speech or presentation.

9) Refrain from sexist, racist, homophobic speech and/or behaviors as well as other violent actions that discourage full class participation and create a hostile atmosphere.

10) Occasionally, changes to this syllabus or the course schedule will become necessary. In the event changes are made, students will be notified via email and/or GeorgiaVIEW Vista.

ASSIGNMENTS
In this course, you may earn up to 100 points total. Although a 100-point grading scale may be unfamiliar to you, I find it preferable for a variety of reasons. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me. You will find a form for tracking your grade throughout the semester on GeorgiaVIEW Vista. Below I have listed the general types of assignments you will complete as part of this class. The grade tracking form will allow you to see how many points each assignment is worth and detailed assignment descriptions will be posted throughout the semester.

- **READING**
  Reading assignments listed on the course schedule should be completed prior to class. Please note that although you are responsible for any information in the assigned reading, I do not cover all of it in class. Additionally, I often discuss topics in class that are not included in the textbook. Completing the reading assignments before class will enable you to ask questions over the reading and fully participate in class discussions and activities.

- **ONLINE DISCUSSION**
  Throughout the semester we will use the discussion area of GeorgiaVIEW Vista. You will be asked to post regularly and respond to others to discuss and apply course concepts.

- **WRITTEN WORK**
  There will be several short written assignments that ask you to demonstrate your understanding of specific business documents. Additionally, you will assemble a packet of documents related to the job application process.

- **PRESENTATIONS**
  You will complete two formal presentations: one individually and a second with others as part of a group project.

- **QUIZZES AND IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES**
  Throughout the course of the semester there will be five of unannounced quizzes and in-class activities. These assignments will test your comprehension of the assigned reading or focus on applying the course concept to examples. In the event that you miss class the day of one of these assignments, you will be permitted to complete an alternative assignment. Unless your absence was for a university-sponsored activity, however, a 50% penalty will be imposed on the alternative assignment. It is the student’s responsibility to determine when they have missed one of these assignments and contact me regarding an alternative assignment.

COURSE POLICIES
Students are expected to be read, understand, and be familiar with the following policies specific to this course. Failure to know or understand these policies is not a valid excuse for failing to follow them.
• COMMUNICATION
I will communicate with you regularly through your campus email and GeorgiaVIEW Vista. I expect students to check their campus email and Vista accounts regularly to avoid missing important announcements and updates. I strongly encourage students to visit with me about the course, questions regarding assignments and materials, concerns, and/or grades.

Any time you contact me via writing, you should provide your first and last name as well as the course and section number in which you are enrolled. You may contact me at any time via email or my office phone. You also are welcome to stop by my office at any time to see if I am available. My office hours are times I regularly have available to meet with students. Speak to me if you would like to meet with me at an alternate time. If you plan to come to my office hours, please let me know ahead of time so I can reserve that appointment time for you. If you have an appointment with me, during my office hours or otherwise, you will be given preference over students without appointments.

This semester I am trying something new and scheduling online office hours. I am hoping that this will allow a greater number of students to communicate with me about the course. Online office hours will be held via Skype. Information about Skype, as well as how to create an account, is available on their website, www.skype.com. You can create a totally free Skype account that will allow you to communicate with people who you add to your list. If you are not familiar with it or want help setting it up, please let me know. Although Skype is a popular way to video chat with people, I will only use the instant messaging feature for online office hours.

Feel free to add me as a contact on your Skype account (my username is: KelseyHL) but please let me know who you are (if that is not obvious from your Skype name) as well as what course and section of mine you are in. Using Skype to hold online office hours is something I have not done before so we will see how it goes and adjust accordingly as needed. I will do my best to log into Skype during other times as well, including my regular office hours. Do know I might be meeting with another student and unable to reply immediately in those cases. Please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions about online office hours.

• ATTENDANCE
Attending class regularly is essential in order to succeed in this course. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the duration of each class. In order to be considered present for any given class period you must be awake, alert, and not involved in other activities (ie. reading the paper, other coursework, side conversations, text messaging, nose picking, etc.) I reserve the right to count you absent for any class period in which you were a distraction to others and will notify you of this action if it occurs. Attendance will be taken using a sign-in sheet at the very beginning of class. If you are late it is your responsibility to remember to sign in AFTER class has ended. If you do not sign the sheet before leaving class, you will be counted absent for that day. Do not, under any circumstances, sign in another student. You are all allowed to miss two (2) classes without penalty. Each additional absence will result in a one (1) point deduction from your final grade. Absences on days where students (any student, not just you) are scheduled to give speeches or presentations will be counted as TWO (2) absences. These penalty free absences are to be used in the event you are ill or have a professional scheduling conflict and, therefore, I discourage students from using them in order to sleep in or miss class for other non-essential reasons. I will not impose a penalty for being late or leaving early so long as it does not occur often. If it becomes a consistent problem during the semester, a penalty may be implemented. In this event, students will be notified via email and/or GeorgiaVIEW Vista of the new policy regarding arriving late and leaving early.

You are responsible for attaining any information you missed while absent from class. You should first contact a classmate to discuss what you missed and get a copy of any notes. Once you have done this, you are welcome to make an appointment with me to discuss any questions or concerns over the missed material.

The ONLY absences that are excused are those due to university-sponsored activities and severe health/family-related concerns. I define “severe health/family-related concerns” as something that requires a visit to a hospital or is an immediate crisis situation and I require documentation as proof of such. In order to request that an absence be excused, you must complete the “Request for Excused Absence” form found...
on GeorgiaVIEW Vista. The form should be downloaded, completed electronically, printed, and turned in. Like all other work, unless given prior authorization, email is not an appropriate way to turn in this form. For absences due to university-sponsored activities, this form must be turned in PRIOR to your absence and missed work is expected to be completed either before leaving or by the assigned due date. For absences due to severe health/family-related concerns, you should contact me regarding any missed assignments and a plan to complete that work as soon as possible and turn in the form requesting an excused absence within two class meetings of your return.

- **WRITTEN WORK**
  All written work should be typed, edited, stapled. It should also have a header containing your name, the course and section number, and the name of the assignment. Unless otherwise specified, you should not submit work in a folder or presentation cover or include a title page. I reserve the right to lower the grade on work that does not meet these requirements. If the assignment exceeds one page, please put your last name and the page number on subsequent pages.

- **TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS**
  In order to be counted as on time and considered for full credit, assignments must be ready to be turned in at the beginning of class. Working on an assignment during class means that it was not completed at the beginning of class and is therefore considered late. Late assignments may be handed in either during a following class period or to my departmental mailbox in J333. If you deliver work to my departmental mailbox, please ask someone in the office to write the current date and time, along with their initials, on the top of your assignment. Putting work under my office door and/or emailing it to me are unacceptable ways of handing in any work and will not be accepted without explicit and prior permission.

- **LATE WORK**
  Any written work not handed in during the class period in which it is due will be subject to a 50% penalty. There are two “lock-down days” during the semester. The first occurs approximately half way through the course and is the day by which any outstanding assignments must be handed in to receive any credit. The second lock-down day occurs on the day of the final exam meeting. Any outstanding late work from the second half of the semester must be handed in by that time in order to receive any credit.

  In-class presentations are difficult to schedule and make up and therefore the penalties for missing your assigned presentation time are strict and harsh. In the event that you are absent the day you are scheduled to present, your name will be moved to the bottom of the speaking order and you take the risk not having time to present in class. If there is time left after everyone else has presented, you will be allowed to present for a 30% penalty. If there is not time left after everyone else has gone, you will need to make an appointment to present outside of class. Presenting outside of class will result in a 50% penalty. This policy also applies if you are in class but are not ready/willing to present at your assigned time.

- **GRADE GRABBING**
  I have borrowed this valuable explanation and policy on grade grabbing from a former colleague. I should add, however, that grade grabbing is discouraged at any point in the semester, not just at the end.

  “Grade grabbing is the practice of asking for a grade near the end of the semester. You or someone you know may have successfully talked a professor into bumping a grade up in a past course. It would be unwise to attempt grade grabbing in any of my courses. Not only will it absolutely not work, but asking to be given a grade you did not earn is unfair to all of your peers who operate under the same grading expectations as you. As such it will almost certainly damage my opinion of you, thus impairing my ability to do the favors I routinely do for former students, such as writing letters of recommendation or adding into future courses. Be sure to avoid alternate grade grabbing strategies such as the impending doom scenario: ‘if I don’t get an ‘A’ in your class, my GPA will fall below _____, I will lose my scholarship, be forced to drop out of school, and inevitably turn to a life of crime and drugs.’ Obviously I do not want you to turn to a life of crime, thus I work hard to ensure my grading criteria are clear. As such, if you need an ‘A’, it is up to you to do the work to earn it.”
• REQUESTING EXTENSIONS
Occasionally, it is necessary for students to request an assignment deadline be extended. Keep in mind that requests for extensions are just that, requests, and therefore may not be granted. To request an extension on an assignment you must complete the "Request for Extension" form found on GeorgiaVIEW Vista. The form should be downloaded, completed electronically, printed, and turned in. Like all other work, unless given prior authorization, email is not an appropriate way to turn in this form. I must receive any request for extensions prior to the class period in which the assignment is due.

• VISUAL AIDS AND TECHNOLOGY
Visual aids can be an important aspect of public speaking and may be required for some assignments. Flash drives and online storage technologies are the best methods for transporting electronic visual aids. You are encouraged to bring a backup visual aid in the event technology should fail you. Note that technical difficulties will NOT excuse you from any visual aid requirement in an assignment. I recommend that you practice using the classroom technology required for your presentation BEFORE using it during an in-class presentation. Talk to me to schedule a time to practice using the technology.

RELEVANT UNIVERSITY POLICIES
Although you are held accountable for all university policies, there are a number of university policies that are particularly pertinent to this course. Please familiarize yourself with these policies. Failure to know or understand these policies is not a valid excuse for failing to follow them.

• HONOR CODE, ACADEMIC DISHONESTY, AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR
“SPSU has an Honor Code and a new procedure relating to when academic misconduct is alleged. All students should be aware of them. Information about the Honor Code and the misconduct procedure may be found at http://spsu.edu/honorcode/.” (http://www.spsu.edu/honorcode/syllabus.htm)

“Collaboration with your classmates in studying and understanding the material is part of the collegiate experience, and is strongly encouraged. Collaboration on written assignments is permitted and encouraged, but each student must turn in work written in his or her own words. Copying another's work will be considered cheating; all students involved will receive a grade of zero, a reduction in the course grade, and possibly other penalties including failure of the course and dismissal from the University.” (http://www.spsu.edu/honorcode/syllabus.htm)

Two SPSU faculty members, Bob Brown and Bob Harbort, prepared an excellent, concise explanation of academic honesty in writing. Keep in mind that standards for ethical and honest writing also apply to speaking assignments. This document is located at: http://fac-web.spsu.edu/cs/faculty/bbrown/papers/conduct.html

“A faculty member reserves the right to remove any student from his or her course if the student’s behavior is of a disruptive nature…” (Student Handbook, http://www.spsu.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/Studenthandbook.pdf)

• POLICY ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
“Southern Polytechnic State University is committed to making all of its programs and services available to all qualified students regardless of their race, age, sex, national origin, ethnicity, religion, marital status, Vietnam era veteran status, handicap, or other non-relevant criteria.” (Student Handbook, http://www.spsu.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/Studenthandbook.pdf)

• DISABILITY SERVICES
Students with disabilities are encouraged to visit the ATTIC (Student Center, Building A, Suite 160, 678-915-7361) to speak with a staff member in Disability Services regarding attaining accommodations in this course.

“It is the policy of Southern Polytechnic State University to seek to make all of its programs and facilities available to all qualified students, including students with disabilities. In an effort to fully comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, any student who because of a disability encounters any barrier to his/her full utilization of Southern Polytechnic programs or facilities is encouraged to contact the disability services
The University will, insofar as possible, assist the student in seeking solutions to disability barriers.” (P&P Number 460.0, http://www.spsu.edu/pandp/400/460_0.pdf)

- **POLICY ON WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASSES**
  “Students desiring to withdraw from one or more classes before the end of the midpoint of the semester may withdraw on-line via Banner Web or secure a Request to Withdraw form from the Office of Student Records…Students who withdraw after the midpoint of the semester are not eligible for a grade of "W" except in cases of hardship as approved by the faculty. Normally, students withdrawing after the withdrawal deadline date receive a grade of 'WF' for the course(s).” (Student Handbook, http://www.spsu.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/Studenthandbook.pdf)

“A student may be administratively withdrawn from the University when in the judgment of the Dean of Students, in consultation with the involved faculty member(s), and, when appropriate, other professional medical and psychological resources and the parents of the students, it is determined that the student suffers from a physical, mental, emotional or psychological health condition…” (Student Handbook, http://www.spsu.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/Studenthandbook.pdf)

- **GRADE APPEALS FOR COURSES**
  “Although grade disagreements often can be handled informally, a formal procedure is needed when a student wants to appeal a grade officially. Students should only pursue an appeal if they believe they can present clear evidence in writing that a grade was based on criteria other than a fair and impartial evaluation of academic performance.” (P&P Number 304.5, http://www.spsu.edu/pandp/300/304_5.pdf)