Southern Polytechnic State University
COMM 2000: Business Communication

Spring 2015 Course Syllabus
Section 002: Mondays/Wednesdays 3:30-4:45am, J152

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IMPORTANT DATES

- Start of classes: January 5
- End of add/drop: January 8
- University holiday: January 19
- Engagement reports due: January 26
- Midterm grades due: February 19
- Withdrawal deadline: February 25
- Spring Break: March 2-6
- Last day of classes: April 27
- Final exams: April 29 - May 5

*** Please note that we WILL meet during our scheduled final exam time and your attendance at that class meeting is mandatory. The university registrar will post the date and time of our final exam meeting on BannerWeb after the semester begins.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- Reliable and consistent access to an internet-enabled computer with speakers and a printer
- Reliable and consistent access to your SPSU email and D2L accounts. This course relies heavily on D2L. If you do not have prior experience using D2L or experience problems you need to request assistance in a timely fashion.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

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. Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. demonstrate an understanding of how to write a variety of business letters;
2. have the experience of participating in at least one oral presentation targeted to a professional audience; and
3. be able to edit a variety of short business documents.
GENERAL COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. Read and understand the syllabus, schedule, and materials posted on the course D2L page.

2. Make an effort. I will provide a significant amount of help to students who demonstrate evidence of doing so.

3. Ask for help. It is difficult for me to know you need assistance unless you ask for help.

4. Any phones, laptops, tablets or similar devices should not create noise (vibrate is not silent) or other distractions. If these devices become a distraction, to you or others, you will be prohibited from bringing them to class in the future.

5. Please wait until class has ended to begin packing up your belongings.

6. Keep all graded work until your final grade is available on Banner Web. You will need these documents in the event of an error or discrepancy regarding your final grade.

7. Avoid sexist, racist, homophobic speech and/or behaviors as well as other violent actions that discourage full class participation and create a hostile environment.

8. Occasionally, changes to this syllabus and/or the course schedule will become necessary. In the event changes are made, you will be notified via SPSU email and/or D2L.

COURSE POLICIES

Students are expected to 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 SPSU email and D2L. I expect students to check their SPSU email and D2L accounts regularly to avoid missing important announcements and updates.

Please remember that our relationship is of a professional nature and therefore, you should communicate with me in a professional manner. 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 are welcome to contact me at any time via email, D2L, or my office phone. I will reply to these messages as quickly as possible, Monday through Friday. In general, email is the best and quickest way to reach me.

You also are welcome to stop by my office at any time to see if I am available. My office hours are times I am regularly available to meet with students. If you plan to come to my office hours, please let me know ahead of time so I can reserve that 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. If coming to campus to meet is not possible, you may also request an appointment to speak with me via phone, Skype, or the D2L Pager tool.
ATTENDANCE
Attending class regularly is essential in order to succeed in this course. Furthermore, students who regularly attend class continually earn significantly higher grades than those who do not. You are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the duration of each class meeting. In order to be considered present for any given class period you must be awake, alert, and not involved in other activities (i.e. reading the paper, completing other coursework, having side conversations, texting, picking your nose, 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 should it occur).

Attendance will be taken using a sign-in sheet at the beginning of each class. If you are late it is your responsibility to remember to sign in AFTER class has ended. If you do not sign the attendance sheet before leaving class, you will be counted absent for that day. Do not, under any circumstances, sign in another student.

You are allowed to miss two classes, on non-presentation days, without any penalty to your grade. Each additional absence on non-presentation days will result in a one-point deduction from your final grade. Presentation days are those days any student is scheduled to deliver a speech. Each absence on a presentation day will result in a two-point deduction from your final grade.

Given there are only 100 points possible in the course, a deduction of two points is equivalent to a two percentage point deduction in your overall course grade. I will not impose a penalty for being late or leaving early so long as it does not occur regularly. If it becomes a consistent problem during the semester, a penalty for arriving late and/or leaving early may be implemented. In this event, students will be notified via email and/or D2L of the new policy.

In the event you miss class, you are responsible for attaining any information you missed. I do not provide copies of my notes to students therefore you will need to contact a classmate to discuss what you missed and get a copy of her or his notes. I suggest you try to notice which classmates appear to regularly take notes during class so that if you are absent you can ask to borrow notes from someone who is likely to have a complete set of notes. Additionally, you might ask two people for notes to make sure you have all the information covered during class. After you have gotten notes from a classmate, you may 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 a sudden and immediate crisis situation and I require documentation as proof of such. Keep in mind that requests are just that, and therefore may not be granted. For absences due to university-sponsored activities, you must speak to me 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 as soon as is reasonably possible to discuss any missed assignments.
WRITTEN WORK
The majority of written assignments in this course will be submitted electronically via the D2L dropbox. All written work should be carefully proofread and contain your name, the course and section number, the semester (i.e. Spring 2015), and the name of the assignment. Work submitted electronically should be saved as a PDF. Any written work that you are asked to turn in as a hard/paper copy must also be typed and stapled. If the assignment exceeds one page you should put your last name and the page number on all subsequent pages. I reserve the right to lower the grade for any work not meeting these guidelines.

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS
I will not accept hard/paper copies of assignments that are to be submitted electronically via the D2L dropbox. Assignments for which you are asked to submit a hard/paper copy must be completed and turned in by the beginning of the class during which it is due. Working on an assignment during class means that it was not completed by the due date. Putting work under my office door and/or emailing it to me are unacceptable ways of handing in any work and thus will receive no credit. **I do not accept any late written work without prior approval.**

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. I must receive any request for extensions prior to the class period in which the assignment is due.

GRADE GRABBING
I have borrowed my policy on grade grabbing from a friend and former colleague, Dr. Ryan McGeough:

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.

IMPORTANT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO SPSU STUDENTS

HORNET ALERT
I strongly encourage students to sign up for SPSU’s emergency notification system, Hornet Alert, at www.spsu.edu/emergency/emergency_notification/hornetalert.htm
SPSU CAREER AND COUNSELING CENTER
The SPSU Career and Counseling Center provides essential assistance to students regarding personal, career, or academic issues. These services are free to current students and allow students to meet privately and confidentially with a trained counselor. The Career and Counseling Center is located on the lower level of the student center. They can be reached from 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday, at 678-915-7391. If you, or someone you know, is experiencing a mental health emergency after normal business hours please contact SPSU Campus Police (678-915-5555) to be connected with an on-call counselor. Additional information regarding services and appointments can be found online at: http://www.spsu.edu/counselingservices/.

DISABILITY SERVICES
Students with disabilities are encouraged to visit the ATTIC (Student Center/Building A, Suite 160) to speak with a staff member regarding attaining accommodations in this course. Current university policies and procedures relating to accommodations for disabilities can be found in section 460.0 of the University Policies and Procedures (http://www.spsu.edu/pandp). Additional information can also be found online at: http://www.spsu.edu/attic/disabilities/index.htm

SPSU WRITING CENTER
The Writing Center provides opportunities for individualized tutorial assistance to all Southern Polytechnic students. Academic consultants help students through the processes of invention, organization, writing, revising, and editing of essays and research papers. The Writing Center is not a proofreading service but a collaborative effort to improve student writing. The SPSU Writing Center Website (http://www.spsu.edu/writingcenter) contains information on policies, hours and scheduling.

SELECTED UNIVERSITY POLICIES
You are responsible for knowing and following all university policies; failure to understand university policies is not a valid excuse for failing to follow them.

HONOR CODE
“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)

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

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)
POLICY ON WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASSES
Current policies regarding the ability to withdraw from a course and the ability of the university to administratively withdraw a student from her or his courses can be found in the student handbook (http://www.spsu.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/Studenthandbook.pdf)

GRADE APPEALS FOR COURSES
In the event any SPSU student believes her or his final course grade was based on criteria that were not “a fair and impartial evaluation of academic performance,” that student may formally appeal a course grade. Detailed information about this policy is available in section 304.5 of the University Policies and Procedures (http://www.spsu.edu/pandp).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
In this course there are a total of 100 points possible. If you have concerns regarding a 100-point grading scale please visit with me so we can discuss it in more detail. However, everyone should be mindful of not only the points possible for each assignment, but also their relative worth to other assignments. A 2-point assignment might not seem particularly important in another class but in this class that assignment is worth two percent of your final grade. Below is a list of the general types of assignments you will complete in this course. Specific information, including instructions and grading criteria, for each assignment will be posted on D2L throughout the semester.

PRESENTATIONS
You are required to complete three oral presentations during this class. Two of these presentations will be completed individually and the third will be done in small groups.

PROFESSIONAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
Throughout the semester you will complete a number of short writing assignments. These assignments will allow you to demonstrate your understanding of course concepts by producing sample business documents.

PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES
Throughout the semester there will be a number of participation activities completed in class and on D2L. These activities will test your understanding of the course material, require you to apply the material to specific examples, and provide you with opportunities to practice specific skills. Participation activities will not be announced in advance. Students are only allowed to make up missed participation activities if their absence was due to participation in a university-sponsored activity or a severe health/family-related concern.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY PACKET
Throughout the course we will discuss the development of your professional identity. At the end of the semester you will compile and review materials from the semester to reflect on multiple aspects of your professional identity.