

Assignment Descriptions

Following you will find descriptions of the assignments due this quarter. I have listed the directions and the values for each assignment. You will find detailed information on grading procedures on my website.

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☛ class participation

Part of your grade will come from class participation and attendance. Arrive in class ready to contribute to the discussion. You may miss one class, no questions asked. After that a doctor’s note will prevent the loss of 5 points per day missed. If you arrive late, check at the end of class to make sure I marked you present. I will excuse occasional lateness, but frequent lateness will affect your participation grade. We will also do occasional in-class assignments and quizzes. In-class work cannot be made up, but missing it will not result in an automatic fail.

VALUE: 50 points ☛☛

☛ diagnostic essay (GWR)

I will assess the writing capabilities of the class through this exam. I don't count this essay toward your grade, but it is my first impression of you—so do your best. You may consider this essay as the first GWR attempt. Note: I don’t return these essays unless you pick them up a year after the quarter ends. If the essay passes for GWR certification, I will send it to the Writing Skills Office.

VALUE: Credit ☛☛

☛ Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR)

In order to graduate from Cal Poly, you need to successfully complete the GWR. You may do that in this class if you satisfy all of the following conditions:

- You have junior standing (90 or more units completed)
- You get a C (upper-division level) or better on one of the GWR-designated in-class essays
- You pass the class with a C or better ☛☛

✎ GWR essays

If you do not pass the GWR on the diagnostic essay, you will have two other opportunities. See the dates listed on the class schedule. You only have to write these essays if you are still trying to satisfy the GWR requirement. ✎

✎ communication improvement letter and presentation

Each student will find an example of faulty communication dated no earlier than 8/08 and write a letter to the author (or corporate author) who is responsible for it. You will also present the faulty communication to the class. Faulty communication includes any type of business, education, or technological communication that confuses the reader, doesn't work, doesn't make sense, could harm the reader, and so on. You will sign up for a category in class; however, if you find a better example, come ask me if you can use that instead.

- **Format:** standard business letter format, flush left, 1 page maximum, single spaced within paragraphs, double spaced between, subject line naming the problem
- **Message:** Direct your message to the writer or owner of the faulty example, you will include the following sections and headings after the standard letter format headings:
 - **Introduction (NO heading):** introduce the example, tell us how you found it, name the source, and state the purpose of the memo
 - **Problem (heading):** describe **3 specific faults** and explain how they are hurting communication (bullets make this section easier to read)
 - **Solution (heading):** explain specifically how you would fix each problem (often involves rewriting portions of the example) (bullets make this section easier to read)
 - **Conclusion (heading):** reiterate the importance of your suggested changes and ask for a specific action from the reader
- **Required Attachment:** paperclip an **overhead transparency copy** of the example to the back
- **Oral Requirement:** In a three-minute oral presentation (practice for time), you will
 - explain the problem
 - offer a solution
 - display the transparency for the class—some students choose to make transparencies of both the problem and the solution (Don't make a transparency of the letter.)

IMPORTANT: Avoid on-line examples from faulty writing contests, joke sites, and so on. You need to recognize the problem on your own.

VALUE: Credit (You may choose this assignment for your final rewrite.) ✎

✎ quizzes

I will give quizzes during the quarter. Check your syllabus for dates. The quizzes will consist of short answers and sentence revision. They primarily cover lecture notes and readings for the previous week or two (up to and including that day's reading), but expect to see items from any previous lecture or reading on style or mechanics.

VALUE: 25 points each ✎

✎ goals and planning memo

Write a memo, limited to 1 page, introducing yourself to me. Using specific examples/details and the following headings, answer these questions:

Introduction to My Goals in _____ [field of study]

What is your major and how did you choose it? What type of training/education/experience do you already have for your chosen field? What type of training/education/experience do you still need, and how do you think you might get it?

Relevant Writing Skills

What types of writing (document types and levels of formality) are most common in your field? You will have to do a little research to answer this question—be sure to cite your sources.

Future Plans

What is the job outlook (number of jobs expected in the next 5 to 10 years) in your field?—you will need to do some research to answer this question also; remember to cite sources. (Hint: check out www.bls.gov.)

What are your short term plans and long term goals in terms of employment, location, lifestyle?

Use complete sentences, flush left format, single space within paragraphs, double space between paragraphs, and bold up the headings to make them easier to see.

VALUE: Credit (You may choose this assignment for the final rewrite.) ✨

✎ résumé

Submit a résumé with your contact information, education, and experience. Make this a general and inclusive document that you can use to cull information from when you tailor a résumé for a particular position. The more information you include, the better I can help you to put together an effective résumé. Check out my website for tips.

VALUE: Credit (not eligible for the final rewrite) ✨

✎ improvement plan topic proposal and group charter (group memo)

Your group will be presenting a solution to a problem found in a real workplace situation. (See “Improvement Plan” description.) In a 3-page maximum memo, describe your group’s plans for the quarter. Discuss the following and use these headings:

Topic: In this section you will introduce your plans to me. At minimum, answer the following questions:

- What company will you be focusing on? How long has this company been around? Where are they located? What type of service/product do they provide? How big are they? How did your group chose this company?
- Who is/would be the primary reader of this document?
- What problem will you solve for them?

Production Strategy: This section will describe your plans for getting the presentation finished. At minimum, answer these questions:

- What is the name of your group? (Be sure to use your group logo on all correspondence from the group, including this memo.)
- Who is going to cover what aspects of the research?
- What is your timetable for completing the task?—use a list or table; include meeting schedule.
- Who will be responsible for the following (make another table or list): bringing the electronic copy of the presentation, checking the presentation slides ahead of time, scheduling the practice times, bringing a slide printout for Mary Forte for the presentation day, reviewing the slides beforehand, bringing the laptop with correct cords, and anything else you can think of.

Group Charter: In this section, describe how you plan to run the group. Cover at least these questions:

- What strategy will you use for decision making?
- What is your plan for resolving conflicts?
- What are the performance expectations for the group members (handing in work on time, showing up to X% of the meetings, etc.)?
- Under what circumstances can a group member expect to be “fired”?

VALUE: Credit (not eligible for the final rewrite) ✨

✎ workplace interview memo (first required, second optional)

For this assignment you will interview an employee or employer. This person must currently be working in a career position in the field you are going into. (You may not use an educator unless you are a liberal studies major.) For the interview, you will write a memo, no longer than 1½ pages, describing the information you obtained. Summarize the interviewee's answers using complete sentences and third person. You may use a maximum of **one** direct quote for a particularly well-put statement.

Use the following headings (bold) and cover at least the following information:

Introduction to _____ (name of interviewee and field)

- interviewee's name
- position and duties
- length of employment
- company's name and type of product/service it offers)

Job Preparation

- how the employee found this job
- what type of training, qualifications, and education the employee needed

Job Description (make subheadings for the following sections)

- what the employee likes best about this job
- what the employee likes least about this job
- what the employee wishes he or she had known before starting this job

Communication Skills

- types of writing this job uses (including e-mail, instant messaging, texting)
- when it its best to use which types of communication—email vs. face-to-face vs. paper, etc.

One More Question (use an appropriate heading here)

Think of one more question to ask this employee. (You may ask more if you have room in the memo.)

NOTE: You are only required to do one of these interviews, but in order to be eligible for an A or B in the class, you need to do two. The second must be turned in on the date listed in the class schedule.

VALUE: Credit (You may use this assignment for the final rewrite.) ✎

✎ announcement email and paper copy

Write an email announcing a meeting or event that you wish the class members to attend. Be sure to think carefully about tone, needed information, incentives, your medium, and so on. Send me the email before class on the day listed on the class schedule and submit a paper copy in class.

VALUE: Credit (eligible for rewrite if you also revise your marketing slides printout) ✎

✎ in-class essays (not GWR)

You will take essay exams in this class on the dates specified in the class schedule. The exam will last 50 minutes. I recommend that you concentrate your study on the following:

- Style and grammar notes from the lectures and text
- The Paramedic Method
- Formats and strategies of effective business communications

You may also bring and use

- your notes
- your textbook

VALUE: In-class essay 1: Credit. In-class essay 2: 100 points 🌿

👉 progress report on improvement plan (group email and paper copy)

Write a chronological style progress report (p. 504) covering the following:

- which company you have chosen and what problem you are trying to solve for them
- what you have done for the improvement plan presentation up to now (include research: print sources and interviews).
- what you are planning to do and target dates (slide creation and research)
- what challenges you have encountered or may encounter and solutions you have used or will use for overcoming them

Refer to the text for advice in writing effective progress reports. Use complete sentences. Avoid telegraphic style and the passive voice; you want to sound like you are working hard. Remember, however, to respect email guidelines. You will email this assignment before the start of class on the date indicated on the class schedule, and bring a paper copy of this email to class. (Don't forget to include your group logo.)

VALUE: Credit (not eligible for the final rewrite.) 🌿

👉 marketing slides printout

Each student will put together a short slide presentation of his or her favorite game/toy/sport. Your goal is to convince your friends to buy/try it too. Make the presentation between 6 and 8 slides. If you have included any fancy details that won't show on the printout, you can explain them to me as neatly written notes in the margins.

The printout should have two or three slides per page.

VALUE: Credit. (You may use this assignment as your final rewrite if you also submit a revised announcement email.)

👉 job application letter

Choose a classified ad listing, dated no earlier than 6/01/09, from a periodical or the Internet. Copy it and submit it along with a job application letter tailored for that position. Limit it to one page (for the purposes of this class).

VALUE: Credit (You may choose to rewrite this assignment for the final rewrite.) 🌿

👉 final rewrite

You will rewrite **one** of the following assignments for grade points. Be sure to make all of the indicated changes from the original. Submit the original and my comment sheet with the rewrite stapled on top.

Eligible assignments:

- Communication improvement letter
- Goals and planning memo
- Interview 1 or 2
- Announcement email plus marketing slides printout
- Job application letter

REMINDER: Use the assignment correction sheet to help you decode the grading symbols.

VALUE: 100 points 🌿

✎improvement plan presentation, printouts of slides, and bibliographies

For this assignment, you will find a company **in your field** that has a problem (most do) and present a plan for improvement. Make sure you choose a relatively small problem (new copy machines, change of parking priorities, schedule changes, etc.—NOT a new marketing plan for the 21st century or an overhaul of the accounting department). You may use the company where one of you did your workplace interview; however, you will need more interviews and other research to make an effective plan.

Choose one area in which the company needs improvement. Describe the problem in detail, making sure to discuss causes and effects. Then offer a detailed plan for solving the problem. The plan should include a suggested schedule and budget. The plan, in a 15 minute presentation, should be addressed to the company president. Your audience will be the class, but we will sit in as representatives for the president. The presentation will include the following:

- title slide
- an introduction to the problem, causes/history
- a suggested solution
- suggested schedule
- projected budget
- your conclusion/recommendation
- a printout of the slides for me, along with an annotated bibliography in APA format (the annotation for each source tells me the author's credentials and summarizes the findings)

VALUE: 100 points ✎

✎group evaluations

Fill out an evaluation form for each of your group members. You do not need to fill one out for yourself. You can find the forms on my website.

VALUE: Credit (not eligible for the final rewrite.) ✎