



CRITICAL WRITING

ICS 139W
Summer 2018
ELH 110

Dr. Darren Denenberg
ddenenbe@uci.edu
darren.denenberg@uci.edu

Class times

T - Th
4:00 – 6:50

Office Hours:
By appointment

Course Outline

Course description

This course is the upper-division writing course for information and computer science. As we will learn, writing is of the utmost importance in all disciplines, technical ones included. Software engineers and coders spend as much time writing as they do coding, yet this aspect of the job is often overlooked. Here, it is the primary focus. Just like coding, attention must be given to such things as syntax, structure, and punctuation to ensure meaning is conveyed.

We will cover not only writing, but also language, communication, oral presentations, and structure among other topics that will form a complete understanding of writing and communication in this discipline and daily life.

The course structure is an ongoing series of writing assignments that will contribute to an overall, cohesive document as well as a collection of discrete writing assignments.

Textbook / Handouts

There is no textbook in this class; we learn writing by doing and experiencing. That notwithstanding, it is of the utmost importance that you have access to a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a style guide of which there are several.

Lecture slides and other materials can / will be found on the class website:
<http://www.ics.uci.edu/~ddenenbe/139W/>

Grading

Written assignments	20 pts. each
In-class assignments	20 pts. each
Editing assignments	10 pts. each
Journal entries	5 pts. each
Examples	2 pts. each
(Oral presentation	50 pts.)

The main written assignments, when taken together, create a product development or systems analysis project. They include Resume, cover letter, elevator pitch/executive summary, market evaluation, software/hardware evaluation, main proposal, technical manual, change proposal, user guide, and pro/con analysis.

There will be smaller in-class assignments as well, involving either evaluating and re-writing something that has already been written by another (such as messageboard comments / posts, signage, reviews, etc.), or creating something new. Each is worth five points.

Peer reviews / Critiques

When an assignment is due, it is required that it be subject to individual peer review. The class will break up into pairs, exchange assignments, and make a thoughtful critique with comments, corrections, and suggestions. This is not an ego issue nor exercise; leave that outside. This exercise benefits both parties via the critical analysis and re-write process.

Journal Entries

Every student will need to maintain a writing journal into which they record entries at least twice a week. The entries can be about absolutely anything, however they have to reflect thought and consideration regarding writing and topic.

Examples

These are not hard to find. Everyone will need to submit at least one example per week of what they believe to be poor writing in a public venue. As is the case with the examples above they can be sourced from anywhere, however they will need at least one sentence explaining why it's bad writing, and I will choose a couple from all the submissions to discuss in class.

Assumptions and Administrative Issues

I work under the assumptions that you have all passed lower-level writing and understand sentence-level writing mechanics, including punctuation, capitalization, structure and grammar.

Additionally, when it comes to things like length of assignments, word count, page count, etc., I'm more interested in the thoroughness of your submissions than specific numbers. The university requires a minimum of 4000 words total; I am of the belief that it would be impossible to complete the assignments in this class in a satisfactory manner without at least that many.

Even so, assignments must be submitted double-spaced, which equals approximately 30 typewritten lines, with 10-15 words per line that is around 300 words per page. I don't like to focus on this minutiae, however if you must, all word-processors have built-in word, character and page counters.

Technology and Conduct in Class

During lecture portions of the class, any electronic devices used for anything other than class or life support should be turned off. This includes, but is not limited to: phones, Gameboys, media players, devices used for communicating with the dead, oscilloscopes, UFO scanners, rocket powered roller skates, unmanned spy planes, sphygmomanometers, those things that beep when your fries are done, robots that serve you drinks, or anything whose use would be a distraction to the class.

During breakouts these rules are more lenient, but only during group activities. Cell phones are never allowed while videos are playing or announcements are being made. Additionally, anything that disturbs another member of the class in any way must stop.

Academic Integrity

Especially in a writing class, the risk of plagiarism runs high. This can be anything from copying another's work to having

someone else write for you. The university considers plagiarism a serious offense, and if it happens, I will give a zero for the whole assignment without appeal. If it becomes a recurring problem the student will be referred to student affairs.

I am also aware this can often be a grey area that is often misunderstood and confusing; I understand and sympathize with that. If there are any questions about what is and isn't acceptable, please be sure to ask; I am happy to work with you to clarify.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week 1, Aug. 6 / 8	Welcome / Intro / Why we're here
	Basic Writing Skills
	Writing Sample / Personal Statement
	Interpretive Writing Assignment
	More basic writing skills
	Writing Sample / Personal Statement edit
	Interpretive Writing Assignment edit
Week 2, Aug 14 / 16	Oct. 16: Writing a Resume
	Oct. 18: Completed Resume
	Oct. 20: Journal Day / Open Writing Lab
	Oct. 23: Elevator Pitch / Executive Summary
	Oct. 25: Completed Pitch / Peer Review
	Oct. 27: Journal Day / Open Writing Lab
Week 3, Aug. 21 / 23	Oct. 30: Market Evaluation
	Nov. 1: Completed Evaluation / Peer Review
	Nov. 3: Journal day / Open Writing Lab
	Nov. 6: Main Proposal
	Nov. 8: Main Proposal Completed / Peer Review
	Nov. 10: VETERAN'S DAY
Week 4, Aug. 28 / 30	Nov. 13: Technical Manual
	Nov. 15: Technical Manual Finish / Peer Review
	Nov. 17: Journal Day / Open Writing Lab
	Nov. 20: Change Proposal
	Nov. 22: Change Proposal Finish / Peer Review
	Nov. 24: THANKSGIVING
Week 9, Sept. 4 / 6	Nov. 27: User Interface
	Nov. 29: Completed user Interface / Peer Review
	Dec. 1: Journal Day / Open Writing Lab
	Dec. 4: Transitions
	Dec. 6: Work on Final Document
	Dec. 8: Wrap-up / Everything Due