Course Syllabus  
English 427: Writing for Nonprofits (Online)  
Instructor: Dr. Sally Stanton  
stanton@uwm.edu

Office: Curtin 288  
Office Hours: Online and by appointment  
Phone: 414-364-4984

What is this course about? (Overview)
This fully online, asynchronous writing course explores the theory, practices, lore, and forms of written communication used by professional writers in nonprofit (social sector) workplaces such as theaters, museums, schools, universities, libraries, social service agencies, art centers, humane societies, and many other charitable community organizations.

Please read this syllabus carefully. If you have any questions or need further elaboration, please email me or I can speak or meet with you individually via phone to discuss your concerns. If you will need accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact me as soon as possible.

What can I expect to learn in this course? (Objectives)
The aim of Professional Writing for Nonprofits is to help you develop a reader-centered approach to researching, drafting, and producing effective writing for clients or employers in the nonprofit sector (sometimes called the social sector or community benefit sector).

More specifically, the course is designed to help you:
- Build your knowledge of the purpose and defining characteristics of the nonprofit sector.
- Understand the writer’s role in communicating social sector values and results to various audiences.
- Explore persuasive writing strategies used by nonprofits (such as case statements, donor and constituent messages, and proposal-related communications).
- Adapt business communication theories and strategies to the nonprofit sector.
- Apply sector-specific theory and approaches to producing effective written communications for nonprofit organizations.
- Incorporate constructive comments from others to effectively revise multiple document drafts.
- Evaluate and offer constructive feedback on the writing of others.
- Advance your collaborative writing skills by participating in a team service-learning writing project.

Students who complete this course will be prepared to write:
- Effective donor communications, such as gift acknowledgment and annual appeal letters
- Nonprofit annual reports
- Persuasive fundraising letters or short proposals
- Copy for nonprofit websites and social media such as Facebook and Twitter
You will work on a series of writing tasks during the semester, including a team (service-learning) writing project. In each case, I will provide you with guidelines, concepts, and strategies for accomplishing the task and you will receive feedback on the writing you produce, including peer review.

**What technologies do I need?**

All course materials, other than the two required textbooks, are available on or are linked from our Desire2Learn course website. You may use any computer available to you, as the course is web-based and can be accessed through any computer browser. Log in to D2L at [https://uwm.courses.wisconsin.edu/](https://uwm.courses.wisconsin.edu/) and look for our course when classes begin.

To successfully participate in an online course, students should have basic keyboarding skills (or access to adaptive technology that facilitates this), the ability to upload, download, rename, and save documents/files in commonly accepted formats, and basic knowledge of and familiarity with Internet search engines.

**ONLINE ACTIVITIES:** The D2L course site, including the News tab and Discussions, will constitute our primary mode of communication and interaction. Students may also email the instructor with individual questions; however, an online forum that is the equivalent of raising your hand in a physical classroom is provided and monitored by the instructor and you are encouraged to use this, as others often have the same question. Writing assignments, however, must be submitted through D2L. **E-mailed assignments are not accepted.**

In order to participate fully in the course, you MUST HAVE access to the following computer technologies:

- Microsoft Word 2010 or later (for basic word processing, document design)
  - Please note, documents **must** be submitted in MS Word or compatible format. **PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOUR DOCUMENTS ARE COMPATIBLE WITH MS WORD BEFORE SUBMITTING THEM.**
  - **If I can’t open it, I can’t grade it. If I can’t grade it, you receive a zero.**
- Microsoft PowerPoint (proficiency not required)
- Microsoft Excel (proficiency not required)
- Web browser and Internet connection (for research and for accessing D2L site)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (download latest version free at [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com))
- An audio/media file player (on your computer or mobile device) for listening/viewing recorded lectures, demonstrations, and/or homework feedback

**Office365/Outlook/Saving Files to ONE DRIVE**

All UWM students have an Office365 email account. *This is your official university email account, which you must use for this class.* All UWM students now also have access to Web space for saving their work via Office365 ONE DRIVE. This is an ideal place for you to save your files in case your computer crashes, you lose your flash drive, or your external media fails to work. You can access this storage space from any computer with a browser and Internet connection.

**IF YOU NEED HELP WITH D2L or other technology issues, you have the following options:**

- **Call the UWM Help Desk** at (414) 229-4040 or toll-free (877) 381-3459, 7 a.m.–midnight 7 days a week
- Email help@uwm.edu anytime
- Visit [gettechhelp.uwm.edu](http://gettechhelp.uwm.edu)
- Walk-in Help Desk, Bolton 225 and Library Learning Commons, Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Which books and other materials do I need?

Required for all students | Available through UWM E-Campus or online retailer of your choice
- *Grant Writing Made Simple: 87 Tips for Great Grants*, Stanton, Sally and Laurie Risch, 2009 [Retail price new $16.00]
- Readings and electronic resources/documents on D2L course site as assigned

What topics will be covered in this course?
- Basic structure and philosophy of nonprofit organizations
- Applying audience analysis (tone, style, etc.) to the nonprofit sector
- Researching and analyzing print and online resources for nonprofit communications
- Rhetorical strategies commonly used in writing for the nonprofit sector
- Document design basics
- Communicating social sector values and results
- Fundraising communications, which can include letters and brief grant proposals
- Annual reports and other public communications
- Social media and Web 2.0 tools in the nonprofit sector

Assignments
*This is NOT a self-paced course.* Other students in the course will depend upon your participation just as they do in a physical classroom. You will have regular assignments that require you to:
- read assigned chapters in one or more textbooks
- take quizzes
- read articles, visit websites, and watch videos on our course D2L site
- prepare reflections and other writings to post to one or more discussion forums

Refer frequently to the attached Unit Schedule document for readings, assignments, and assignment deadlines.

How will my work in this course be graded?

Your final grade will be derived from the writing you produce during the semester and from your participation in online activities, including online discussions and peer reviews, according to the percentages noted below. The formal writing assignments assess your ability to understand and synthesize the course texts/reading and to apply your learning in a practical context. The written reflections require you to further examine the implications of your readings as well as your writing, and to demonstrate how these implications might play out for a technical writer in the nonprofit workplace. Six unit quizzes briefly assess your acquisition of knowledge, including theory and strategy. The collaborative writing project serves as a final assessment (in lieu of an exam) of your ability to apply what you have learned during the semester. How you approach your writing projects and how actively you participate in online group discussion and writing activities (professionalism) will also play a role in determining your grade for the course.

Grading will be based on the following scale:

100% - 93% = A; 92 - 90% = A-; 89 - 88% = B+; 87 - 83% = B; 82 - 80% = B-; 79 - 78% = C+; 77 - 73 = C; 72 - 70% = C-; 69 - 68% = D+; 67 - 63% = D; 62 - 60% = D-; below 60% = F
Which assignments are required for undergraduate students?

**Formal Writing Assignments = 40% of final grade**

- Writing Assignment #1 – Communications Critique – 100 points
- Writing Assignment #2 – Donor Acknowledgement Letter – 100 points
- Writing Assignment #3 – Persuasive Donor Letter – 100 points

All three assignments require peer review and extensive annotations that demonstrate your understanding of sector-specific theories that drive content and strategy choices in written communications.

**Collaborative Service-Learning Writing Project = 25% of final grade**

Teams of students will research, write, and deliver a high-quality draft of an annual report for a designated community nonprofit organization. Several collaboratively written documents will be submitted for grading as part of the project:

- **Design Choice Memo** – 50 points
- **Content Outline** – 50 points
- **Rough Draft** – 100 points
- **Final Project Document** – 300 points

All students will earn a group grade for this project. In addition, each student will write a short reflection paper on the project experience and provide evidence of their written contributions to the project. This grade will be averaged with the group project grade to produce a final project grade for each student. Graduate students will, in their reflection papers, provide an in-depth analysis of the collaborative writing experience, demonstrating their learning by evaluating both the process and the outcome, and offering insights for future collaborative writing projects.

A required D2L discussion forum designated for discussion and collaboration around this project as well as the option to create a group D2L chatroom for group meetings will be available. Groups may in addition choose to use third-party collaboration applications (such as Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.) to facilitate collaboration.

**Discussions and Class Activities – 35% of final grade**

These activities include:

- **Writing and Research**: completing assigned quizzes (if any), worksheets, and other written work (for graduate students, this includes an individual research and writing project)
- **Reflections**: posting in-depth, timely, and well-written reflections and responses (4 written content unit reflections worth 50 points each)
- **Peer Review**: providing useful feedback to colleagues through peer review of their written drafts (3 peer reviews worth 25 points each)
- **Professionalism**: participating actively in online discussions with timely replies (due dates for responses will be provided) to other students’ reflections and comments, raising questions and topics for additional discussion, returning peer reviews to peers in a timely manner, etc. (from 0-25 additional points)
What assignments/coursework are required for graduate students?
Graduate students will complete similar assignments as undergraduates; however, graduate students will be expected to submit written work of substantially higher quality than that of undergraduates in terms of synthesis, analysis, and/or application of information, and additionally, to lead online discussions or manage team projects as assigned, and to participate actively in a graduate students’ discussion forum.

Graduate students must complete an individual writing project that requires critical analysis of current literature in the field of technical writing as it applies to nonprofit sector communications. Furthermore, the project must involve a practical application of that analysis to create an online presentation/virtual resource (a Pecha Kucha, video, website, blog, wiki, white paper, etc. – format is open-ended and will be determined jointly by the student and instructor) on a chosen area of interest within the field. This project will be evaluated on depth of content, application of appropriate writing theory and strategies, organization, and usability.

A higher standard is expected of graduate students in the course in terms of professionalism. This encompasses a range of possible actions: managing a collaborative writing project team OR leading a discussion; frequently being one of the first to post to a discussion; when appropriate, making multiple responses to other students’ postings; raising additional topics of discussion; and routinely including outside references and links to more information in discussion posts.

Altogether, coursework activities, including reading, discussions, professionalism, and writing assignments required of graduate students only will comprise at least one-third of the final grade for graduate students.

What else do I need to know about this course?

Important Information for All Students

Regular participation in structured online activities is a requirement of this class. Research shows that learners who participate actively learn more, are more satisfied with their experience, and receive vital, helpful feedback to improve their writing and to develop related skills. No later than the end of the first week of class, each student must log on to D2L and make a required initial introductory posting in order to be identified as an actively “attending” the course. The English Department reserves the right to administratively drop students who have not attended the first week of classes.

You must complete all the assigned writing work to pass the course. You will be given a schedule indicating when each assignment is due and will be expected to submit it on time through D2L. Do not wait until the last minute to submit your work, to allow for unforeseen computer and Internet problems. If you do experience problems, e-mail me immediately. I will grant extensions only under extreme circumstances, and only if you contact me before the due date. Even if you are granted an extension, 10% of the value of the assignment will be deducted for each day that it is late. Submit assignments on time, even if incomplete.

As would be expected in a professional setting, all written work must be carefully proofread and spell-checked before it is handed in. If you submit work that contains numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling, it will be returned to you for corrections before it is graded.

This course is a work-in-progress and therefore, this syllabus is subject to change during the semester. Please check the D2L course site regularly for any changes or additions to the syllabus or schedule.
What additional resources are available to supplement my learning?

Be sure to visit the Links page on the course D2L site. Feel free, as well, to suggest links to be added.

Selected Bibliography:


Syllabus Addendum:

Policy Links¹

1. **Students with disabilities.** [http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf)

2. **Religious observances.** Accommodations for absences due to religious observance are available on request. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm)

3. **Students called to active military duty.** Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty are available on request. [http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm)

4. **Incompletes.** A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf)

5. **Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment).** Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S47.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S47.pdf)

6. **Academic misconduct.** Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University. [http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm)

¹ Supplement to UWM FACULTY DOCUMENT NO. 1895, October 21, 1993; Revised March 16, 2006; Revised January 24, 2008; Editorially Revised, 8/26/11.
7. **Complaint procedures.** Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the head of the department or academic unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S49.7.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S49.7.htm)

8. **Grade appeal procedures.** A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S28.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S28.htm)

9. **Other** The final exam requirement, the final exam date requirement, etc. [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm)

**Syllabus Addendum:**

**Credit Hours**

The university has asked departments to break down for students how much time they will spend working on various aspects of their classes.

As the UW System assumes “that study leading to one semester credit represents an investment of time by the average student of not fewer than 48 hours” (UWS ACPS 4), a 3-credit course such as this one will require a minimum of 144 (3 x 48) hours of your time. You may find it necessary to spend additional time on a course; the numbers below only indicate that the course will not require any less of your time.

If this is a **traditional, or face-to-face** course, you will spend a minimum of

- **37.5** hours in the classroom
- **75** hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, completing minor exercises and assignments, and discussing course topics with classmates and the instructor in structured settings
- **31.5** hours preparing for and writing major papers and/or exams.

If this is an **online** course, you will spend a minimum of

- **37.5** hours reviewing instructional materials prepared by your instructor and placed online
- **75** hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, completing minor exercises and assignments, and discussing course topics with classmates and the instructor in structured settings
- **31.5** hours preparing for and writing major papers and/or exams.

If this is a **hybrid** course, you will spend a minimum of

- **18.75** hours in the classroom
- **18.75** hours reviewing instructional materials prepared by your instructor and placed online
• 75 hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, completing minor exercises and assignments, and discussing course topics with classmates and the instructor in structured settings
• 31.5 hours preparing for and writing major papers and/or exams.

Notes
• The breakdown above is for a standard 15-week semester. In a 16-week semester, the numbers breakdown above changes as follows. Traditional: 40 hours in classroom, 80 for preparation, 24 for papers and exams; online: 40 hours of online instruction, 80 for preparation, 24 for papers and exams; hybrid: 20 hours in classroom, 20 for online instruction, 80 hours for preparation, 24 for papers and exams. Again, these are minimums.
• UWM Credit Hour Policy, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Faculty Document No. 2838, can be found at https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/faculty/2838_Credit_Hour_Policy.pdf.
• UWS ACPS 4, the University Of Wisconsin System Policy On Academic Year Definition And Assorted Derivatives, can be found at http://www.uwsa.edu/acss/acps/acps4.pdf.
English 427: Writing for Nonprofits - Reading List

**Required textbooks:**


**Required selected readings, provided on D2L or through library reserve:**


