

Writing for New Media

ARTX 3600 Section 090, 3 credits, and ARX 360 Section 090, non-credit

Instructor: Sylvia Ramachandran Skeen, M.F.A

Email: s.ramachandran@utah.edu or Canvas email

Required Text: William Strunk, *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition. It's important to have the correct edition, as I will be using the numbering in the book to communicate with you when I comment on your papers. All other required readings will be available on course [e-reserve](#), Canvas, or on the World-Wide Web.

Optional Text: Patricia T. O'Conner, *Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*, 2003. While I won't be assigning reading from this book, it contains some thoughtful information about how new media forms have affected standard English grammar and usage, and it provides entertainingly written explanations for those of you who want to reinforce and refine your application of essential grammar principles.

Course Fee Explanation: \$45 goes to the Department of Art & Art History to cover costs for maintaining a digital database and for replacing and repairing equipment. The University levies an additional \$60 per course to cover the costs associated with operating online courses.

Overview

Prerequisite

Writing 2010 or equivalent. This course assumes you have mastered the fundamentals of college writing and are prepared for an advanced class. You will be accountable for having a working knowledge of basic research practices, how to define and support an argument, and how to craft the organization, mechanics, and style of a piece of writing.

Course Description

This course provides a theoretical basis and practical approaches for writing interactive, non-linear documents for the World-Wide Web and other multimedia environments. Through readings, writings, and discussions, class members explore how interactive digital media are shaping public discourse and creative possibilities. Students complete projects applicable to business, communications, education, the arts, entertainment, and personal interests. Topics include the relationship between medium and message, the history of hypertext, blogging, storyboards, web-specific organizing strategies, evaluating and choosing information sources, persuasive writing techniques, and developing multimedia scripts for video games or hyperfiction.

Objectives

By the end of the course, you will have developed your ability to:

- Define and write for a specific audience and purpose, effectively using the planning, drafting, and revision process.
- Organize and present your writing for clarity and impact in a variety of interactive, multimedia environments, and think about the limitations and the potential of various new media tools.
- Think critically about the theoretical implications of new media communication—What impact are these tools having on how we construct knowledge and conduct conversations? How does the medium influence the message and vice versa?

Teaching & Learning Methods

Activities will include short- and long-term writing assignments in electronic, interactive, and more traditional formats. Some projects may be collaborative. Other activities will include readings, participation in discussion boards, and peer and instructor critiques.

Accommodations

Some of the presentations, discussions, and student projects you are asked to review in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. This is a workshop-style course involving the production of writing and art with instructor and peer feedback given to each student producer. Since much of the writing will be new to the audience and the instructor, there will be no practical way

for the instructor or fellow students to predict which pieces or discussions about them may be a problem for you. Consider carefully the nature of this course before committing to taking it. If you do have any concerns, please let me know right away.

Additional Help

I strongly encourage you to use the University Writing Center, which provides free tutoring services both online and in person if you would like more help with any stage of the writing process, including generating ideas, developing content, and proofreading. See <http://www.writingcenter.utah.edu/> for more information.

Requirements

Reading and Discussion Assignments

Due Monday (initial post) and Wednesday (replies to classmates) each week, these assignments will receive credit based on whether you complete the required number of posts and how well you demonstrate having read and thought about the material in the lesson. Occasionally, I will substitute a Peer Review assignment for the Discussion Assignment, asking you to comment on classmates' work in progress. For more specifics, see the [Discussion Guidelines](#).

Project Checkpoints

These assignments will receive credit based on completeness. You will earn points for meeting prewriting, drafting, and revising deadlines throughout the semester and for participating in peer reviews. Project Checkpoints may not receive credit if submitted less than two full weekdays before the final version of the project, since the point of these assignments is to receive instructor comments and revise accordingly.

Graded Assignments & Projects

You will complete a number of short, graded writing and multimedia assignments as well as two longer projects:

1. Multimedia Research Essay
2. Interactive Narrative

Grading

Breakdown

- 15% Discussions (10 points each)
- 10% Project checkpoints (10 points each)
- 75% Graded assignments and projects (variable points: 25-100)

Criteria for Graded Assignments

I will provide specific criteria in the instructions and rubric for each project, but keep the following in mind:

- Thoroughly address the question or objectives described in the written instructions for each assignment.
- Give attention to developing and defining your own purpose and audience, and look for creative ways to use the assignment tools and principles to solve your particular problem.
- Present your ideas with a level of professionalism appropriate to your purpose and medium. For example, expectations in a discussion group would be less formal than for a finished paper or website, which should reflect care with revising, proofreading, and consistency issues.

Revising to Improve Your Grade

Many graded projects involve ungraded preliminary steps such as proposals and drafts. The final version should show evidence of a sincere effort to revise based on comments received on earlier steps.

I will also designate some graded assignments and projects that you may choose to revise and resubmit after receiving your initial grade, ***provided you originally submitted them on time or before the end of the grace period***. Your rewrite should reflect significant changes and should be accompanied by a brief but specific explanation of how you have improved the piece. Depending on the thoroughness of your revisions, you can improve your score on the assignment by up to one letter grade (10%).

While this final revision is optional, it tends to make a big difference in both the quality of the work and in the grade. Be aware that, when I am determining grades at the end of the semester, if your average is on the borderline between two grades, in

order to help me decide whether to award the higher grade, I look at whether you've taken advantage of revision opportunities .

Grading Scale

A	94–100	B+	87–89	C+	77–79	D	60–69
A-	90–93	B	84–86	C	74–76	E	below 60
		B-	80–83	C-	70–73		

Materials

You will need the following:

- Access to word-processing software (capable of producing a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file), PowerPoint, and the Internet. See the [Orientation](#) page for more detail regarding recommended software. We will be using an online website builder to set up some assignments. Arrange your schedule to use one of the on-campus computer labs if necessary.
- A backup storage device, separate from Canvas, such as a thumb drive, portable hard drive or cloud storage (2 GB of space should be more than sufficient). For all your electronic work in progress and finished work, keep **backup copies** in more than one location.
- A digital camera (optional).

Class Policies

Communication

You are responsible for doing the following:

- Maintaining an individual email address at which you may receive confidential communications regarding your coursework. Update this address on your Student Profile in the Campus Information System, and check your messages regularly.
- Checking for announcements whenever you log into Canvas. (Click on Announcements on the menu at left.)
- Asking promptly when you need clarification of a concept, help with an assignment, or have a concern you'd like to discuss with me.

Submitting Assignments/Late Work

For full-credit, you must submit work by the deadline and in the format requested, including the required file type and naming convention. Note that **.pages documents, .ai files, and raw camera files are not compatible with Canvas**. Carefully review the "What to Submit" section at the end of each project checkpoint and graded writing assignment to be sure you're including all required parts of the assignment.

Note that equipment failures or losses are not an acceptable excuse for late or incomplete assignments. It is your responsibility to keep back-up copies of your work, including your Canvas discussion posts, and to maintain your computer and related equipment—or make alternate arrangements when necessary. Double check your discussion posts to make sure they are appearing in the right thread and that any attachments are working.

Grace Period

To allow greater flexibility, on most Wednesday and Friday assignments (discussion replies, project checkpoints, and graded assignments), there is a one-week grace period beyond the posted Canvas deadline. Assignments submitted before the end of the grace period are not penalized.

EXCEPTIONS to the grace period policy include:

- All Monday assignments (initial discussion posts).
- All Peer Reviews
- Project 2 (due at the end of the semester), all of which need to be submitted by the posted deadline to avoid a late penalty. Monday assignments (initial discussion posts) must be submitted on time in order to receive full credit. To stay caught up, make a habit of meeting the posted deadlines whenever

possible. I reserve the right to revoke the grace period policy if too many students are regularly waiting to the end of the grace periods to submit assignments.

If you want to submit work after the grace period, please remember the following:

- I do not accept discussion postings submitted later than one week after the published weekly Wednesday deadline.
- Project checkpoints submitted after the grace period may receive partial credit if submitted in time to receive feedback before the final version of the project is due.
- I will accept graded assignments and projects after the grace period for a full letter grade reduction, but these may not be reworked for a higher grade.

Extenuating Circumstances

In some special situations, I may be able to make additional accommodations. Please remember:

- If you have a rare event, such as the death of a close family member or an illness requiring hospitalization, contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements for completing work.
- If a physical or mental health challenge arises that you think might affect your work over a large portion of the semester, promptly contact the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and your instructors to arrange appropriate accommodations. Don't wait too long!

Plagiarism

Representing anyone else's words or ideas as your own (by failing to cite sources clearly or use quotation marks appropriately) is illegal. Whether in a discussion board or a formal writing assignment, plagiarism may result in serious consequences such as a failing grade or even dismissal from the University. I strongly recommend that you review the Student Handbook definitions and policies regarding plagiarism and other academic misconduct, detailed in sections I and V of the [Student Code](#).

One way I screen assignments for potential plagiarism is by using the program Turnitin. If I see that your document has more than 5% plagiarized material, I may ask you to redo the project by a specific date and time. You will then receive late

credit (a letter-grade reduction) for the assignment. If you do not adequately correct the errors, I am obligated to report your violation to the University.

Remember that while you may support your writing with brief, properly cited quotations from other writers (such quotations should include an in-line citation or footnote number directly after the quoted text), the bulk of what you submit for any assignment should be your own thoughts in your own voice. Your goal is to read information from different sources and to synthesize it into your own, original response. However easy it may be to copy and paste, never use text directly from a source unless you clearly indicate what and from where you are quoting. For a refresher on how to document sources, explore the Citation Styles and Citation Machine links under "Writing Helps" on the [Class Links](#) page.

On-line Classroom Equivalency

Discussion threads, e-mails, and chat rooms are all considered to be equivalent to classrooms, and your behavior within those environments must conform to the Student Code. Specifically:

- Off-color language and photos are never appropriate.
- Using angry or abusive language is called "flaming," is not acceptable, and will be dealt with according to the Student Code.
- Using ALL CAPS, except for titles, is the equivalent of shouting online, as is overuse of certain punctuation marks such as exclamation points !!!! and question marks ??????. Avoid these habits.
- Course e-mails, e-journals, and other online course communications are part of the classroom and as such, are University property and subject to GRAMA (Government Records Access Management Act) regulations and the Student Code. Privacy regarding these communications between correspondents must not be assumed and should be mutually agreed upon in advance, in writing.

Adding/Dropping

It is the responsibility of the student to enroll in the class by the add deadline. Late slips will not be signed by the Department. It is also the responsibility of the student to make sure that dropping or withdrawing from the class has been officially completed in the Registrar's office.

Resources

ADA Accommodations

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in the course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Learners of English as an Additional Language

If you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language development and writing. These resources include the Department of Linguistics English for Academic Success Program (<http://linguistics.utah.edu/eas-program/>); the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>); the Writing Program (<http://writing-program.utah.edu/>); and the English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli/>). Please let me know if there is any additional support you would like to discuss for this class.

Center for Wellness and University Counseling Center

Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness - www.wellness.utah.edu; 801-581-7776; and the University Counseling Center: <http://counselingcenter.utah.edu>, 801-581-6826.

Safety

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

Addressing Sexual Misconduct

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status, or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

Schedule

The schedule below is tentative; assignments and deadlines may change depending on the class's progress. Note that I revise lessons and assignments every semester, and so you may want to check with me before completing work more than two weeks ahead.

Date	Lesson/Assignment
Week 1 M/W	Lesson 1 - Medium and Message
Week 1 F	Response Paper - Identity and Technology
Week 2 M/W	Lesson 2 - Visual Rhetoric
Week 2 F	Visual Identity Webpage Plan
Week 3 M/W	Lesson 3 - The Inverted Pyramid Principle
Week 3 F	Response Paper - Bush's "As We May Think"
Week 4 M/W	Lesson 4 - Writing for Multimedia: Time as a Design Element
Week 4 F	Visual Identity Webpage
Week 5 M/W	Lesson 5 - Revising for Clarity/Peer Review
Week 5 F	Multimedia Slideshow Script
Week 6 M/W	Lesson 6 - Finding and Evaluating Research Sources
Week 6 F	Multimedia Slideshow
Week 7 M/W	Lesson 7 - Organizing Web Content
Week 7 F	Project 1 Proposal & Storyboard

Week 8 M/W	Lesson 8 - Choosing Persuasive Writing Techniques, Graphic Design Principles for Web Pages
Week 8 F	Project 1 Draft of Text & Preliminary Homepage Layout
Week 9 M/W	Lesson 9 - Peer Review of Project 1 in Progress
Week 9 F	Project 1 Draft of Complete Text
	SPRING BREAK
Week 10 M/W	Lesson 10 - Peer Review of Project 1 Completed Draft
Week 10 F	Project 1 Multimedia Research Essay
Week 11 M/W	Lesson 11 - Games and Interactive Stories
Week 11 F	Project 2 Proposal
Week 12 M/W	Lesson 12 - Storyboarding & Script Writing for Interactive Narratives
Week 12 F	Project 2 Storyboard
Week 13 M/W	Lesson 13 - Developing Your Story's Objective and Interactivity/Peer Review
Week 13 F	Project 2 Draft of Complete Script
Week 14 M/W	Lesson 14 - Revising and Finishing Your Game Script, Peer Critique
Week 14 F	Project 2 Interactive Narrative
Mon., April 20	Final revision and late submission deadline