**English 4322 W01, Writing for Nonprofits**

**Instructor contact information:**
Daniel Riechers  
Senior Research Development Officer and Instructor in the Department of English  
Email: [daniel.riechers@tamucc.edu](mailto:daniel.riechers@tamucc.edu)  
Phone: (361) 825-2823  
Office: Faculty Center 179  
Office Hours: Tue. 10-12, Wed. 10-12, Thurs. 10-12

**Texts and supplies:**

**Catalog description:** Tailored for individual students’ writing and publishing projects in their disciplines such as article writing, instructional manuals, grant writing, and feasibility studies.

**Long Description:** Working for a nonprofit agency requires the ability to complete a wide variety of writing tasks. English 4322 will teach students the basics of many kinds of writing found in the nonprofit world, connect those tasks to a larger strategic communication plan, and provide practice at writing for nonprofit organizations in the community. Students will learn to identify and analyze audiences, develop content for those audiences, help nonprofits interact with the media, the role writing plays in the interaction between a nonprofit agency and its board, and the basics of using writing for development purposes (grant writing). At the end of this course, the student will have a portfolio of work that shows experience with many of the writing tasks necessary for success in nonprofit and similar settings.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

Through active engagement in the course activities, students will learn to
1. identify a need or problem by describing the factors involved
2. generate a viable solution to the need or problem
3. create a document that reflects an effective interweaving of purpose and audience.

**Writing Workshop:**
This class is designed as a hands-on writing workshop. You will have an active role as you work on the phases of each project and interact with your classmates. This interaction will include the offering of comments and having others comment on your work. This is the way
writing usually works in professional environments—you write something, you get feedback, you revise, and you meet your deadline. Writing is iterative.

Much like in professional settings, you will decide what tasks to do, when, with which resources to meet deadlines. The instructor and your fellow students will be there to support you. This class will require regular communication between you, me, your classmates, and university and community sources.

To be successful, you might treat this class as a regular commitment, working on your assignments regularly and independently. Writing is an active process, and the more you actively participate, the better results you will see in your writing. Missed deadlines are the equivalent to missed commitments.

Attendance:
Although we do not have formal class meetings, things must be done on time, as they are found in the class schedule. I mention this because some students "forget" they have an online course, and try to do the work sporadically, trying to "load up" and trying to attempt the work in a few "bursts of activity." I recommend that you log into this class and complete work 3-4 times per week. For better or worse, Blackboard, our course management software, monitors how many times you log in per week, how long you were on, and what you are doing.

An online course is just as much work as a regular class. Keep up and ask questions of your professor if you need a course concept clarified. There will be writing workshops and group work. Your classmates will be relying on your posting work and commenting on their writing each week. Reading and responding to the writing of others an integral part of this course. Class discussion in an online course is "posting" in discussion forums. Your work needs to appear in these discussion forums regularly.

This is NOT a correspondence course, or a "Work at Your Own Pace" course. An online course gives you the freedom to work at your own convenience, but, like any other course, it has real deadlines, with real due dates. I mention this because, in the past, some students have confused online courses with correspondence courses or other "do it when I can courses" and have tried to pack all the assignments into a few days at the end of the course. These students did not pass.

Office Hours:
I offer several ways that you can contact me for assistance: Call during my office hours if you want to speak to me directly. If I don’t answer, leave a voicemail. Please leave a callback number. I will keep online office hours, which means I will on Skype and Google Hangouts
during my online office hours; you can contact me via either medium. My Skype ID is Dan.Riechers. Google ID is danieljriechers@gmail.com.

You can e-mail me at daniel.riechers@tamucc.edu. I will respond to your email within two business days. If you email me on Friday, I might not respond until Monday. I am also available for in person meetings. Outside of office hours, I do accept appointments. Email me to set a meeting.

**The Nonprofit Writing Process:**
In this class, you will examine and practice the process through which grant proposals are researched and written. Elements of this process include learning how to:

- analyze existing communication practices at an organization
- help an organization identify and assess its needs
- create clear goals and objectives
- analyze audiences and develop messages targeted to them
- create a variety of templates and documents that will help a nonprofit meet its goals
- develop a communication plan that will promote consistency, continuity, and professionalism in the messaging by the organization
- measure and evaluate communication practices and use those measures to modify the plan

**Grades:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections, Discussion Posts, Weekly Assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Evaluation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio 1</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Plan</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio 2</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Class Structure:**
This is a project-based course. This means that, in lieu of class time, you will be doing things (reading, writing, and researching). Expect to spend the same amount of time you spend on a regular class on this class.
The class is structured into two units:

1. **Evaluation and Analysis**—your group will evaluate and analyze your nonprofit’s communication practices and develop some recommendations for change.

2. **Communication Planning**—your group will develop a communication plan and templates to implement the changes you agree on with your client. You will also develop an evaluation plan that the client can use to monitor the success of their communication.

Each week you will
- **Watch** videos of interviews with working nonprofit professionals and of me that contain info about the class.
- **Read** work by professionals and your classmates.
- **Write** to learn, meaning you will do "in class" writings designed to demonstrate that you understand the material—and to ask questions that you have, as well as turning things in that will be graded.
- **Track** the schedule and deadlines careful. Generally, there will be deadlines on Wednesday and Saturday.

**Responsibility:**
This class is a writing workshop, so the single most important thing you will do all semester is to show up prepared and ready to work. Your classmates will depend on you as well as the client in the community. You need to contribute regularly to the business of the class.

**Reflections, Discussion Posts, Weekly Assignments:**
Each week, we’ll complete readings, writing assignments, discussion posts, and other activities. You will be provided with instructions for each week’s assignments.

**Communication Evaluation:**
In small groups, you will evaluate the writing practices of a nonprofit in the community. That nonprofit agency will be your client. You may not work on each portion of the evaluation, but you will work with your group to share the labor. You will be graded on the quality of your individual work and on the group’s work as a whole. In your portfolio you will provide a reflective essay in which you write about what you learned from the process.

**Communication Plan:**
After evaluating the client’s writing practices and methods, each group will develop a communication plan with templates, a communication calendar, and other documents negotiated with your instructor and the client. Again, you will provide portions of this work in a final portfolio and complete a reflection on what you learned.
Portfolios:
Twice during the semester, you will submit a portfolio of work with a reflective memo. The memo should tell the instructor what it is you learned. The documents in the portfolio provide evidence of that learning. You can include drafts, invention exercises, polished work, and any other piece of evidence you wish. Please be sure to only include what you discuss in the memo. Finally, with each portfolio you will complete an evaluation of your fellow group members. The evaluation will be confidential. It offers you space to talk about group dynamics, contributions of each member, obstacles, successes, and how you solved any issues.

Course Policies

Disabilities Accommodations
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Academic Advising
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Dropping a Class
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. November 8 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.
Grade Appeals
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_app eals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

Late Assignments
Late assignments are not accepted without prior arrangement. Please let me know in advance if you need more time.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism
Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is a violation of academic expectations, but it is sometimes difficult to know when you are plagiarizing. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:
- Using the work of another as your own,
- Downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,
- Using resource materials without correct documentation,
- Using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation.
- Turning in a researched project without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

When you are confused about citation of quotes or ideas, please visit the Writing Center or me to get help. Information on MLA documentation rules and APA documentation rules is available at Purdue University’s OWL: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/, and from our local Writing Center at CASA.
Statement of Academic Continuity
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, this course would continue using Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

Classroom/professional behavior
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Resources
The Writing Center, part of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi’s Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA), provides free help for students at any stage in the writing process. Writing center consultants are trained to work with writers one-on-one to help them find ideas, organize their thoughts, cite sources, and succeed at all aspects of the writing task. The writing center works closely with faculty across campus to understand the writing projects they assign and to help students meet the expectations of those assignments. The writing center is in the Glasscock building. Both drop-in and scheduled appointments are available. More information, including hours of operation, is available at http://casa.tamucc.edu/wc.php.

Reminder to English Majors
As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of your work (including pre-writing exercises, working drafts, and submitted drafts) so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.
A Note on Reading Assignments
Readings must be completed by the date noted. Some of the readings are lengthy. To avoid falling behind, you will need to determine how much time you require to get the reading done and build that time into your schedule.

In Conclusion
This should be a worthwhile and even enjoyable class. You can count on me to make class as interesting and as stimulating as possible. Finally, I am here to help you, but I cannot do so unless you let me know when you need help. Communicate.

Schedule
Note: This schedule is tentative and is subject to change. The full, current schedule is only available in Blackboard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Major Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Unit 1**  
Rhetorical Situation; Writing and Communication Assessment | • Research the situation  
• Meet with your client  
• Complete an evaluation of the writing practices of the nonprofit  
• Peer review your classmates’ work  
• Submit a portfolio of your work |
| **Unit 2**  
Writing and Communication Plan Development and Assessment | • Using the information gathered in the first half of the semester, develop a plan for your client  
• Develop templates  
• Develop a communication calendar  
• Peer review your classmates’ work  
• Submit a portfolio of your work |