

ENGL 417: Writing for the Web

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001: TR 8am-9:15am
LA 4101
002: TR 9:30am-10:45am
LA 4101
Towson University
Course Syllabus

Course Description and Prereqs

ENGL 417 is a Topics in Writing course. Specialized topics for writers of non-fiction, fiction and poetry. Content varies. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 units.
Prerequisite: two ENGL courses.

Why We're Here: The Course's Purpose

In ENGL 417, Writing for the Web, you will learn about the conventions, theories, and ethics of online discourse, and you will write for virtual environments using industry-standard technology, such as WordPress. With this technology, you will create content-rich, visually dynamic media that conveys clear messages to a complex global audience. You will conduct usability testing on your digital documents to help ensure that your information is accessible.

What We'll Learn: Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

You will develop a basic understanding of web writing and design through rhetorically informed theory and empirically informed practice. To achieve these goals, we will read a variety of web writing texts, and you will develop and test online portfolios. These portfolios will be populated with a range of writing that will showcase your talents and interests.

After successfully completing the course, you will be able to do the following:

Write in Context

- Analyze an audience to determine audience's needs, values, and attitudes and compose effective documents that help an audience act.
- Write to the different levels of technical expertise of a range of audiences and stakeholders to foster technical understanding.
- Understand the ethical implications of online communication.

Manage Projects

- Understand, develop, and deploy various strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents both individually and collaboratively.
- Select and use appropriate technologies that effectively and ethically address professional situations and audiences.
- Build professional ethos through documentation and accountability.

Design Effective Documents

Make rhetorical design decisions about technical documents, including

- understanding and adapting to genre conventions and expectations of a range of audiences;
- understanding and implementing design principles of format and layout;
- interpreting and arguing with design;
- drafting, researching, testing, revising visual design and information architecture; and
- ensuring the technical accuracy of visual content.

Collaborate with Others

Learn and apply strategies for successful teamwork, such as

- responding constructively to peers' work, and
- soliciting and using peer feedback effectively.

Conduct Research

Understand and use the research methods and strategies necessary to the production of professional documents, including

- working ethically with research participants, subject matter experts, and technical experts;
- locating, evaluating, and using print and online information selectively for particular audiences and purposes;
- triangulating sources of evidence;
- selecting appropriate primary research methods such as interviews, observations, focus groups, and surveys to collect data; and
- applying concepts of user experience research.

Use Technology

Use and evaluate the writing technologies frequently used in the workplace, such as emailing, image editing, presentation design and delivery, basic HTML editing, Web browsing, content management, and desktop publishing technologies.

You also will meet the English Department's Learning Goals:

Read. Interpret written materials flexibly: understand that although multiple meanings are possible, textual evidence needs to support individual interpretations of the literature being read as well as the implications drawn from it.

Write. Write in a variety of forms (e.g. expository, argumentative, imaginative, business/technical) as appropriate to audience, purpose, and occasion, using evidence to support interpretations.

Research. Use research skills that include understanding of methods, technology, and conventions.

Reflect. Be reflective and lifelong learners.

Information Literacy and Technological Competence. Use software as appropriate to writing and research.

Global Awareness. Engaging intellectually in the experiences and views of people with different cultural backgrounds and beliefs.

What You Need: Books, Office Supplies, and Technology Responsibilities

Required Book

Redish, J. (2012). *Letting go of the words: Writing web content that works* (2nd ed.). New York: Morgan Kaufmann.

I will post additional readings on Blackboard, either as hyperlinks or as downloadable electronic files (PDFs, PPTs,).

Office Supplies

- Highlighters, tabs, or other supplies to mark the readings
- A notebook or a way to take notes in class
- A pen or pencil
- Printing paper

Technology Responsibilities

- Check your Towson email daily
- Create a folder for this course and save messages. Saving emails ensures you have proof of sending emails, submitting work, etc.
- Be open to learning new technology, like Wordpress and Google Docs
- Use Microsoft Office
- Use Blackboard to post assignments; read and download documents
- Print documents as needed
- Ensure your printer works and has ink and paper. Check the amount of money on your printing account and adjust accordingly.

Put in the Time: Required Time Commitment

Over the 16 weeks of the semester, you will need **6 to 8 hours a week** on average to complete the assigned work—including class time. The workload is steady throughout the semester, and you will be completing readings and assignments for every class.

How We'll Achieve Course Goals and Learning Outcomes: Coursework

You will complete a variety of formal assignments, which I'll describe in more detail throughout the semester. The final course grade consists of 300 course-grade points:

<i>Course Component</i>	<i>Points Possible</i>	<i>Your Points</i>	<i>% of Final Grade</i>
Online Portfolio	50		16.7%
New Summaries, Bio	30		10%
Interview	30		10%
Usability Report	30		10%
Writing Showcase	30		10%
Presentation	20		6.7%
Informal assignments	40		13.3%
Prof. / partic. / attend.	30		10%
Quizzes (5)	30		10%
Minutes	10		3.3%
<i>Total</i>	<i>300</i>		<i>100%</i>

I follow Towson's policy for undergraduate grading:

<i>Point Range</i>	<i>% Range</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Grade Points</i>
279-300	93-100%	A	4.00
270-278	90-92%	A-	3.67
261-269	87-89%	B+	3.33
249-260	83-86%	B	3.00
240-248	80-82%	B-	2.67
228-239	76-79%	C+	2.33
210-227	70-75%	C	2.00
204-209	68-69%	D+	1.33
180-203	60-67%	D	1.00
0-179	0-59%	F	0.00

I am happy to discuss grades 24 hours after you receive the graded assignment.

Formal Projects (170 points total)

Proper MLA, APA, or CMS documentation must be used. You must complete all projects to pass the class. The formal projects for this class are as follows:

1. *The Online Portfolio* (50 points, variable word length): Create a visually dynamic, user-centered online portfolio. Your portfolio will receive a mid-term grade and a final grade after you have revised it. The final grade will be the average of the mid-term and end-of-term grade. The online portfolio includes Projects 2-5.
2. *The News Summary and Short Bio* (30 points, 550 words): Write five 100-word news articles and post them to your portfolio. Compose a 50-word bio to accompany your articles.

3. *The Interview* (30 points, 500 words): Interview a professional in your field (who you find). Write up the information you gathered to share with your audience on your portfolio. You must receive your interviewee's permission to post the interview.
4. *The Usability Report* (30 points, 750 words): Run basic usability testing on your portfolio with three-five participants. Write a report that you will reference to revise the site for the end of the term. Post the document to your portfolio.
5. *The Writing Showcase* (30 points) – The Showcase includes two pieces of writing that you believe best showcases your writing. You might want to choose pieces that best reflect the kinds of writing future employers will expect from you. Choose *two* of the following options and post them to your portfolio:
 - a. The review (500 words): write a review of a movie, restaurant, social/artistic event, etc.
 - b. The travel experience (500 words): write about your experiences traveling to a destination in Baltimore
 - c. The informative guide (500 words): write a guide to something that interests you but something that your readers may not know about; make "it" interesting
 - d. The theme-based creative non-fiction piece (500 words): write a piece of creative non-fiction about Baltimore or an experience you have had as a student at Towson
 - e. The how-to guide (variable word length): write a set of instructions using text and visuals that will help users complete a task. See [Instructables](http://www.instructables.com/) for examples (<http://www.instructables.com/>).
6. *Presentation* (20 points) – In place of a final exam, you will complete a four-minute, PechaKucha-style presentation. You will explain your online portfolio and its design. Your portfolio and its content must be completed by our final exam date.

Class Minutes (10 points)

During one class this semester, you will be responsible for taking class notes and posting them to our class Google doc. Please see the Class Minutes Guidelines PDF for more information.

Quizzes (30 points)

You will take a syllabus reading quiz (5 points), three reading quizzes (15 points total), and a grammar pre- and post-test (10 points total). You will take them at the beginning of class. No make-ups are given unless you schedule it in advance. If you come to class after the quiz is over, you cannot make it up unless you have made previous arrangements with me.

Professionalism, Participation, and Attendance (30 points)

Our classroom is a professional environment. Professionalism encompasses all of the intangible aspects of the course: courtesy, leadership, collaboration, teamwork, participation, and following directions. You are expected to govern your face-to-face

and online communication and interaction in a courteous and respectful manner. I will caution and counsel violators of these norms in private.

The following actions will lower your final grade (see chart below):

- Missing class, arriving late, or leaving early
- Rarely speaking up or routinely participating in a passive, pro-forma way
- Consistently not following directions and /or coming to class unprepared
- Completing other work during class
- Checking email and social media, texting during class
- Failing to complete or doing rushed, unprofessional work
- Failing to complete assignments for participation credit

Grading Scheme for Formal Projects, Professionalism, Participation, and Attendance

<i>Letter Grade Ranges</i>	<i>Work Quality</i>	<i>Prof./Participation/Attendance (any combination of the following characteristics)</i>
A = exceptional work; exceeds expectations	Work needs little to no revision. The document would be completely acceptable for its intended rhetorical situation.	Student attended most or all classes; arrived on time and did not leave early. Actively, appropriately participated all semester. Demonstrated high level of professionalism as outlined above. Actions, attitude are acceptable in professional contexts.
B = above average work; above expectations	Work needs minor revision but is generally acceptable. The document would be mostly acceptable for its intended rhetorical situation.	Student attended most classes; may have arrived late or left early. Participated most of the semester. Demonstrated basic components of professionalism. Actions, attitude are acceptable in professional contexts but may need some improvement.
C = average work; meets expectations	Work meets requirements but needs revision. The document may or may not be acceptable for its intended rhetorical situation.	Student missed classes; arrived late or left early consistently. Did not participate or participated in a pro forma way. Demonstrates some aspects of professionalism but needs improvement.
D = below average work; does not meet expectations	Work needs significant revision to be acceptable for its intended rhetorical situation.	Student missed many classes; arrived late or left early consistently. Did not participate all semester. Lacked professionalism.

F = unacceptable work	Work lacks basic required components.	Student did not attend enough classes to pass the class. Did not participate all semester and/or contributed negatively. Lacked professionalism consistently.
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Informal Assignments (40 points)

Informal assignments earn scores according to completion level and idea development.

- L = late in the process
- M = middle of the process
- E = early in the process

For many of you, the assignments this semester will require you to learn new skills. As such, you should not be punished by earning a low grade for trying out these new skills. Informal assignments and this assessment scale ask you to focus on the process of learning rather than the product and grade. I'll offer feedback on these assignments that will help you develop your writing skills. Each informal assignment will have a scale that tells you what constitutes an L, M, or E.

For the final grade, your informal assignments will count as follows:

- All, mostly Ls earn 36-40 points (9-10%) of final grade
- Mix of Ms and Ls earn 32-35.9 points (8-9%) of final grade
- Mostly Ms earn 28-31.9 points (7-8%) of final grade
- Mostly Es earn 0-27.9 points (0-7%) of final grade

Deadlines are Important: Late-work Policy

Assignments are due on the due date at the beginning of class. They must adhere to the assignment requirements to be accepted (i.e., printed, stapled, etc.). I will post deadlines and guidelines for all assignments well in advance. In-class activities, quizzes, and informal assignments cannot be made up or submitted late.

Formal projects that are turned in late will be reduced three points for each day it is late—including weekends. For example, an assignment turned in three days late earning 40/50 points will receive 31/50. You can turn in work up to one week after the original deadline, including weekends. After a week, the work will earn zero points. If you turn in an assignment the same day it is due after class, the grade will be reduced by two points.

If an unavoidable problem arises, email me before the deadline.

Follow the Course Email Policy

All emails you send must conform to the following seven guidelines:

- Appropriate subject heading that includes your section number, e.g., "English 417-001" or "English 417-002," and a brief phrase describing the email's content, e.g., English 417-001: Question on Reading
- Appropriate address line, e.g., Dear Dr. Angeli,

- Appropriate closing line, e.g., Sincerely, Regards, etc.
- Awareness of appropriate level of formality
- Clear language and a lack of glaring grammatical/spelling problems
- If an attachment is included, clearly refer to and indicate the attachment's relationship to the email message
- Next steps indication, i.e., what the email recipient is to do with the information

If your email doesn't conform to this guideline, I will reply with a blank email. This blank email is your notice that your original email lacked the above features. Upon receiving this email, please check this list and re-send me your email.

The aim of this email policy is not to punish you for certain writing behaviors. Rather, it is intended to help you develop professional writing practices that you will employ in a professional workplace.

My Responsibilities as the Professor

Throughout the course, I will do the following:

- Prepare you to meet course objectives and learning outcomes
- Establish, explain course objectives, assignments, evaluation criteria, schedule
- Reply to emails within 24 hours Monday through Friday (I do not check email on weekends. Please plan accordingly.)
- Maintain a regular schedule of office hours
- Review and offer directive advice on assignments
- Return graded evaluations of assignments within a reasonable time and, in all cases, before the evaluative feedback would be needed to improve performance on a subsequent assignment

Your Responsibilities as a Student

To earn a satisfactory grade in this course, you are expected to do the following:

- Complete all readings and work before class
- Participate actively and cooperatively in class discussions and group work
- Ask questions respectfully
- Abide by the course policies outlined in the syllabus
- Follow directions; ask questions if directions are unclear
- Hand in complete, carefully written and edited assignments on or before the deadlines for them; print and staple assignments before submitting them
- Demonstrate professional standards for reliability, communication, pro-active problem solving, critical analysis, and cooperation

You will be reading a lot this semester. Your success depends on your ability to complete and engage with the readings and come prepared to class.

Be Present: The Attendance Policy

To be considered present in a class, you must do the following:

- Sign your name on the attendance sheet. You may not have another student sign your name or ask another student sign in for you (doing so violates the Student Academic Integrity Policy and will be handled accordingly)
- Keep your cell phone off; do not text
- Arrive to class on time and stay until class is over
- Refrain from being online unless instructed (see “Laptop, Tablet Policy”)

Long story short: Don’t miss class unless you have no choice. Missing class will affect your course grade.

Excused Absences

Here is Towson’s policy on excused absences (from the student handbook):

“Students are expected to adhere to all university attendance policies. Students who are absent from class are responsible for any missed work.

Absences due to illness, bereavement, or athletic events require documentation in order to be considered for an excused absence. Absences due to religious holidays are excused on the holiday date(s). Absences due to travel associated with observance of religious holidays are unexcused.”

In short: contact me ASAP if you need to be absent. Following university guidelines, you must provide me written documentation for illness, bereavement, athletic events, and religious holidays. If you do not provide documentation in the given timeframe, the absence will be unexcused.

<i>Reason for Absence</i>	<i>Required Documentation</i>
Illness:	an email as soon as you know that you cannot make it to class; a doctor’s note upon your return to class
Bereavement:	an email (in advance if possible)
Athletic events:	an email from your athletic director / advisor at least a week before the event—an email only from you is not acceptable
Religious holidays:	an email a week in advance

Penalties for Unexcused Absences and Arriving Late

- 1-2 absences = no grade deduction (missed assignments will be counted late)
- 3 absences = final grade drops 15 course grade points
- 4 absences = final grade drops 20 course grade points
- 5+ absences = an F in the course
- 4 “lates” = 1 absence

If you arrive late to class or leave early (more than 15 minutes) from class without an acceptable reason / documentation, you will be marked late.

Be Professional: Classroom Etiquette

Computer Lab Behavior

You are expected to use the computers appropriately. I will ask you to turn off the screens when we are not using them. When we use the computers, do not check Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, news sites, email, etc. during class. You should only be on the sites and programs that we are using that class.

Cell Phone Policy

Cell phones must be on silent—not vibrate—during class. Texting stops as soon as you enter the classroom and class begins. If you text during class, you will be marked absent for the day. If you have an emergency and need to access your phone during class, answer your phone in the hall.

Laptop, Tablet Policy

You may bring your laptop or tablet to class, but you are expected to use them for class purposes. Do not check social media, news sites, email, etc. or work on other homework during class. Doing so will affect your professionalism grade.

Academic Integrity

You will be held to the traditional standards for academic honesty, which are codified in the [Student Academic Integrity Policy](http://tinyurl.com/pq4bxfx) (<http://tinyurl.com/pq4bxfx>). Violating this policy is likely to have grave consequences for your grade in the course and could even lead, in severe cases, to dismissal from the university. Students caught cheating will immediately receive a grade of F on the assignment and may result in a grade of F in the course. I will report the incident to the Division of Student Affairs.

To ensure you do not plagiarize, you must follow APA, MLA, or CMS citation style. You can find all these rules online: the [Purdue OWL](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/) (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>), [APA Style Blog](http://blog.apastyle.org/) (<http://blog.apastyle.org/>), or buy the manuals at the bookstore.

Students Needing Accommodation for a Disability

Students needing accommodation due to a disability should see me during office hours. Please bring with you a statement from Disability Support Services authorizing your accommodation. You may contact [Towson's Disability Support Services](http://wwwnew.towson.edu/dss/welcome.html) (<http://wwwnew.towson.edu/dss/welcome.html>) at 410-704-2638.

Additional Writing Assistance

If you would like to improve your writing skills, make an appointment at Towson's Writing Center (LA 5330, 410-704-3426). You also can visit the [Purdue OWL](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/) (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>). You can come to office hours, too.

Counseling Center

If you are experiencing academic, interpersonal, or behavioral challenges, please contact the [Counseling Center](http://towson.edu/counseling) (<http://towson.edu/counseling>) at 410-704-2512. You may also contact me to seek assistance.

Course Schedule*

Use this schedule for long-range planning. The schedule for the second half of the semester will change based on when we can schedule eye tracking usability tests in the EyeLink lab. I will post a more detailed weekly schedule on Blackboard every Monday by 9am. Check Blackboard weekly to ensure you are up-to-date.

Week Topic	Readings (read before class)	Major Deadlines** (print, staple before class)	Tests/Quizzes
<i>Week 1 Intro to the Course</i>			
T 1/26	Snow day, class canceled		
R 1/28	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Syllabus In class: The Ultimate LinkedIn Cheat Sheet (http://tinyurl.com/h8hgdge) 	In class: Create LinkedIn profiles	
<i>Week 2 Rhetoric, Personas</i>			
T 2/2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Project 1 Description Redish: Ch. 1 & 2 Purdue OWL: Rhetorical Situation (website and PowerPoint; http://tinyurl.com/owlrhetsit) 		
R 2/4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Purdue OWL vidcasts: Ethos (http://tinyurl.com/ox7m6ud) Logos (http://tinyurl.com/ndbkx5u) Pathos (http://tinyurl.com/p7yzw5e) User Experience Basics (http://tinyurl.com/la37xlq) For fun (<a href="http://www.wonder-
tonic.com/geocitiesizer/">http://www.wonder- tonic.com/geocitiesizer/) 	IA: Submit three user personas	Grammar pre-test Last day to add/drop is 2/5
<i>Week 3 Project 2, WordPress</i>			
T 2/9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Project 2 Description Excerpt from Johnson-Sheehan: Professional Bios Newser (http://tinyurl.com/newser-snape), Independent (http://tinyurl.com/indepensnape) 		Reading Q #1

	4. Redish: Ch. 8		
R 2/11	In-class: WordPress Demo	IA: Submit bio, one news story	
<i>Week 4 User Experience</i>			
T 2/16	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Redish: Ch. 3 2. 10 Principles of Effective Web Design (http://tinyurl.com/j9gzqsy) 3. 10 Useful Usability Findings and Guidelines (http://tinyurl.com/gw4omyz) 	IA: Submit draft of bio, one news story	
R 2/18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Redish: Ch. 7 2. HTML Tags Cheat Sheet (http://tinyurl.com/d4paq) 		Reading Q #2
<i>Week 5 Project 3, Organization</i>			
T 2/23 Dr. Angeli at SCCI; Dr. Brizee guest lecture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project 3 Description 2. Redish: Ch. 4 		
R 2/25	1. Redish: Ch. 5 and 6		
<i>Week 6 Usability Testing</i>			
T 3/1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Redish: Ch. 15 2. Planning a Usability Test (http://tinyurl.com/hp6qftv) 		
R 3/3	1. Running a Usability Test (http://tinyurl.com/hwd5uxk)		
<i>Week 7 Project 4, Editing</i>			
T 3/8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project 4 Description 2. Purdue OWL: Paramedic Method (http://tinyurl.com/hkxj9h3) 3. Purdue OWL: Five Principles of Readability (http://tinyurl.com/hnm9q5f) 4. Writing Style for Print vs. Web (http://tinyurl.com/jazoat7) 		

R 3/10	1. Find, analyze three examples of your showcase genre	IA: Analyze three examples of your showcase genre you can find	
<i>Week 8</i>	<i>Spring Break</i>		
T 3/15	Spring Break		
R 3/17	Spring Break		
<i>Week 9</i> <i>Project 5,</i> <i>Interviews</i>			
T 3/22	1. Project 5 Description 2. Johnson-Sheehan: Interviewing People (http://tinyurl.com/zzjesh3)	IA: Usability testing plan	
R 3/24	1. Find, analyze interviews posted online that you find	Post all website documents you have	Reading Q #3
<i>Week 10</i> <i>Usability</i> <i>Reports</i>			
T 3/29	1. Coding Usability Data (http://tinyurl.com/z7eeqw6)		
R 3/31	1. Reporting Usability Results (http://tinyurl.com/jny6z7b) 2. Rachel Sargent's Usability Report (http://tinyurl.com/gt2spls)		Last day to withdraw or change pass/audit options is 4/4
<i>Week 11</i> <i>Complete</i> <i>Usability</i> <i>Tests</i>			
T 4/5	1. Eye Tracking (http://tinyurl.com/gun5f2q) 2. Eye-tracking Reading Example (http://tinyurl.com/zun6dn4) 3. EyeLink II Demonstration (http://tinyurl.com/j4rrd4n)		
R 4/7 Dr. Angeli at ATTW, CCCC; class on Blackboard			

<i>Week 12</i>			
<i>Eye tracking</i>			
T 4/12	TBD		
R 4/14	TBD		4/10 last day to withdraw, p/f
<i>Week 13</i>			
<i>Eye tracking</i>			
T 4/19	TBD		
R 4/21	TBD	FA: Nearly finished website due	
<i>Week 14</i>			
<i>Peer Review</i>			
T 4/26	1. Read, offer feedback on two peers' websites before class		
R 4/28	1. Setting up WordPress on LiquidWeb (http://tinyurl.com/jxaq7g7)		
<i>Week 15</i>			
<i>Developing Presentations</i>			
T 5/3	1. Familiarize yourself with PechaKucha genre (http://www.pechakucha.org/) 2. Illustrated TEDx Speaker Guide ; focus on points 3-5 (http://tinyurl.com/lk5jo8d)		Reading Q #4
R 5/5	1. De-coding: Dress Codes 101 (http://tinyurl.com/gpxb32s)		
<i>Week 16</i>			
T 5/10	TBD		Grammar post-test
<i>Finals Week</i>			
Wednesday, 5/11	Section 002 12:15-2:15pm	FA: Presentation	
Friday, 5/16	Section 001 10:15am-12:15pm	FA: Presentation	

*Subject to change. I will notify you via class, email, and Blackboard.

**You will submit more work throughout the semester. See the weekly schedule on Blackboard for more information. IA = "Informal Assignment"; FA = "Formal Assignment"