

## PROFESSIONAL WRITING IN BUSINESS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

### Dr. Steven Thomas

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office hours: even days, 1:00—2:15 pm  
and by appointment

### ENGL 315—01A, spring 2011

time: odd days, 11:20 am—12:30 pm

place: SJU Quad 343

### OVERVIEW

The first objective of the course is for you to learn and practice various forms of writing for business, government, and non-governmental organizations. This includes a résumé, cover letter, formal report, professional presentation, “white paper,” grant proposal, etc. In the process, you will also have an opportunity to consider various career options and look ahead to professional life after college.

The second objective is for you to investigate the relationship of a particular career to the whole society in which you live. Over the course of the semester, you will situate that career within a social context, including professional associations, private businesses, government, and a wider social network. You will learn how to think critically about ethical norms within a professional setting as you learn about the institutions of different career paths and as you practice composing a variety of professional documents. Building on this foundation, you will then focus on a sustained research project that includes composing either a “white paper” (i.e., an official report or position paper for business, government, or non-governmental organizations) or a grant proposal.

Much of this class is an individual workshop, in which you will explore your own interests and prepare for your own career goals. Hence, you will workshop all major assignments with your peers. The due date for all assignments is the due date for your penultimate draft (a complete, finished draft), and you will bring three copies of it to class (one for me, one for you, and one for your classmates.) After the workshop, you will turn in your ultimate (final) draft to me the following class period.

### TEXTS IN BOOKSTORE AND ON-LINE

Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*

Scott McLean et al., *Social Capital*

George J. Searles, *Workplace Communications*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition

MyTechCommLab <<http://www.mytechcommmlab.com>>, course ID: **cm769789**

Individual articles, to be distributed in class or via e-mail

### MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE EVALUATION

Report on Professional Association or an NGO .....	10%
Summary Analysis of Professional Apparatus of Communication .....	12%
Archaeology of a Profession .....	13 %
Job Application Portfolio .....	5%
Major Research Paper (White Paper, Grant Proposal, etc.)	
Stage One: Summary Analysis .....	13%
Stage Two: Long Report and/or Proposal .....	17%
Stage Three: Oral Presentation .....	10%
Various in-class writing, quizzes, worksheets, presentations, etc. ....	10%
Attendance, class participation, and attitude .....	10%

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

### Report on Professional Association or an NGO (3-4 pages)

You will write a formal report about a civil society organization, either a professional association or an advocacy organization. You will research this organization, including its recent activities, its relationship to society (i.e., how journalists have written about it), and how it differs from other organizations with similar interests. Your report must be done in the business style explained in your *Workplace Communications* textbook, chapter 5.

### Summary Analysis of Apparatus of Communication (4-5 pages)

Communication is the key to any business or organization, and all professional associations and most NGOs have professional journals, websites, and newsletters. You will analyze a journal by explaining its role in the context of other apparatuses of communication and how it differs from other journals with similar interests. You will focus on one recent article as an example of what kinds of things this journal usually presents to its members. (“Recent means a recent as possible, no older than six months.) Your report must be done in the business style explained in your *Workplace Communications* textbook, chapter 6.

### Archaeology of a Profession (5-6 pages)

Imagine you are an anthropologist from another planet studying a particular profession. You will research and critically assess a profession, including its concerns, the way it is represented in the mainstream media, the ways its members professionalize themselves, its ethical standards or codes of conduct, the ways its members communicate with each other, its relationship to government, local communities, and businesses, and finally any political controversies surrounding the profession. Your paper must be done in the business style explained in your *Workplace Communications* textbook, chapter 6.

### Job Application Portfolio

You will research an actual job that you want to apply to. You will compose an application letter and résumé. In addition to the application letter and résumé, you must compose a 2-page report on that job, how you found it, and how you deliberately crafted your résumé and application letter to make yourself a competitive candidate. In addition, I expect you to bring in some of what you learned in your archaeology paper about the profession as a whole.

### Major Research Paper (10-12 pages)

You will imagine yourself writing either to or on behalf of, a real company, professional association, non-governmental organization, or governmental organization. You have your choice of writing a white paper (a position paper that makes a case for something) or a grant proposal. You must follow the guidelines for such writing as explained in *Workplace Communications*, chapters 11 and 12. This assignment is divided into four stages: first, the gathering and organizing of research in your summary analysis; second, a preliminary draft; third, an oral presentation of your argument; and fourth, the final draft.

### Various In-Class Work

To keep you on track and make sure you are reading what you’re supposed to be reading, I will occasionally give you in-class work. There are no make-ups if you are absent.

### Attendance, Class Participation, and Attitude

You are expected to come to class everyday having done all the assigned reading and prepared to discuss it. I also expect you to be generous with your classmates, because participation does not just mean talking; it also means listening respectfully and engaging in genuine conversation. If you miss more than three classes, your attendance and participation grade will be reduced by 20% for each day beyond the three that is missed.

### **POLICIES**

All students have the right of non-discriminatory access to the programs at the colleges. If you have a disability and require special consideration, you must inform me as soon as possible.

I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any time during the semester and will inform you of all changes in a timely manner.

Any act of plagiarism can result in an F for the course and can go on your permanent academic record. Please see The College of St. Benedict and St. John's University's official policy on plagiarism here:

<http://www.csbsju.edu/Academics/Academic-Catalogs/2009-2011-Catalog/Programs/Rights/Plagiarism.htm>

## CALENDAR

- Jan. 17 (Mon) Introductions  
In-class discussion: what might Martin Luther King, Jr. have to do with this class?
- Jan. 19 (Wed) *Workplace Communications*, ch. 1  
*Bowling Alone*, ch. 1  
Register for MyTechCommLab <<http://ww.mytechcommmlab.com>>, course ID: **cm769789**
- Jan. 21 (Fri) *Workplace Communications*, ch. 2  
*Bowling Alone*, ch. 2 – 4  
What is “civil society”? Look up on internet and come to class with examples.
- Jan. 25 (Tue) **Before class:** e-mail a professional memo about your career interests and other interests.  
*Bowling Alone*, ch. 5  
*Social Capital*, ch. 11
- Jan. 27 (Thu) *Bowling Alone*, ch. 6 – 7  
What are professional associations and why doesn't Putnam talk about them?  
What are professional journals and why doesn't Putnam talk about them?
- Jan. 31 (Mon) *Workplace Communications*, ch. 5  
Come to class prepared to discuss your professional association or NGO.  
How to research and critically assess professional and other civil society organizations?
- Feb. 2 (Wed) **Due: Report on Professional Association or an NGO**  
*Workplace Communications*, Appendix A  
In-class peer review workshop
- Feb. 4 (Fri) *Bowling Alone*, ch. 8 – 9  
excerpts from Su Wong's *Virtual Communities: Bowling Alone, On-line Together*  
*Workplace Communications*, ch. 6
- Feb. 8 (Tue) *Workplace Communications*, ch.3 and ch.7  
*Social Capital*, ch. 10  
Vrontis et al., “Website Design and Development as an Effective... Promotional Tool”
- Feb. 10 (Thu) *Workplace Communications*, ch. 4  
Walker, “Theoretical Foundations for Website Design Courses”  
*Bowling Alone*, ch. 10 – 12
- Feb. 14 (Mon) in-class group oral presentations evaluating a company or NGO's website
- Feb. 16 (Wed) review *Workplace Communications*, ch. 6  
*Bowling Alone*, ch. 13  
*Social Capital*, ch. 9
- Feb. 18 (Fri) **Due: Summary Analysis of Professional Apparatus of Communication**  
*Workplace Communications*, Appendix B  
In-class peer review workshop

- Feb. 22 (Tue) *Bowling Alone*, ch. 14  
*Social Capital*, ch. 6
- Feb. 24 (Thu) *Bowling Alone*, ch. 15 – 16  
*Social Capital*, ch. 12  
Introduction to Alexis de Tocqueville
- Feb. 28 (Mon) Timberlake, “Social Capital and Gender,” *Journal of Management Development* (2005)  
“Briefing: Women in the Workforce,” *The Economist* (2 January 2009)  
*Social Capital*, ch. 7
- Mar. 2 (Wed) **Due: Archaeology of a Profession**  
Peer review workshop
- Mar. 4 (Fri) *Workplace Communications*, ch. 9  
CSBSJU Career Services website
- Mar. 8 (Tue) **Due: Job Application Portfolio**
- Mar. 10 (Thu) *Social Capital*, Introduction  
*Workplace Communications*, ch. 11 – 12 (just skim)
- Spring Break, March 12—20
- Mar. 21 (Mon) *Bowling Alone*, ch. 17 – 18  
*Social Capital*, ch. 5
- Mar. 23 (Wed) *Bowling Alone*, ch. 19 – 20  
*Social Capital*, ch. 8
- Mar. 25 (Fri) *Workplace Communications*, ch. 11 – 12 (review in more detail)  
Come to class prepared to discuss your ideas for final projects
- Mar. 29 (Tue) Library Day
- Mar. 31 (Thu) *Bowling Alone*, ch. 21 -- 22  
*Social Capital*, ch. 1 – 2
- Apr. 4 (Mon) Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II, ii, 1 – 9
- Apr. 6 (Wed) **Due: Major Research Paper—Summary Analysis**  
Peer Review Workshop
- Apr. 8 (Fri) *Bowling Alone*, ch. 23  
*Social Capital*, ch. 3
- Apr. 12 (Tue) *Workplace Communications*, ch. 10  
Howell, “Take Your Presentations to the Next Level”
- Apr. 14 (Thu) Library Day

Apr. 18 (Mon) **Due: Preliminary Draft of Major Research Paper—Long Report and/or Proposal**  
Peer Review Workshop

Apr. 20 (Wed) *Bowling Alone*, ch. 24  
*Social Capital*, ch. 4

Easter Recess, March 21—25

Apr. 27 (Wed) Oral Presentations

Apr. 29 (Fri) Oral Presentations

May 3 (Tue) Oral Presentations

May 6 (Fri) **Due: Final Draft of Major Research Paper—Long Report and/or Proposal**  
Peer Review Workshop