ENGL 210F: Authentic Experiences in a Simulated Environment

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The Authenticity Principle

“...knowledge, skills, and attitudes should be embedded in tasks and settings that reflect the uses of these competencies in the world...the authenticity of the learning environment ensures that the knowledge gained will be readily available in the kinds of situations they will face in their work.”

Course Description and Objectives

Description
ENGL 210F is designed to provide you with communications skills for your professional life. To encourage you to think about applying these skills, the course environment has been designed around a simulated business, Living4Learning (L4L), and as a student in the course you will inhabit the role of an employee at L4L.

Within this role, you will be part of a team that has been assigned a major project to be completed by the end of the term; you will be expected to communicate in a professional manner with your teammates as you work on completing this challenge. You will have to learn to work collaboratively using technologies to communicate with team members who may be geographically dispersed—a condition increasingly common in the business world.

Assignments in ENGL 210F will introduce you to the major genres of business writing, and help you develop the critical thinking skills necessary to define your purpose and audience—why and for whom you are writing. You will also develop your ability to write persuasively using key rhetorical principles and appeals to ethos, logic, and emotion. You will learn how to present an argument for common real world scenarios such as recommending a course of action or maintaining trust and goodwill with your client.

But most importantly, English 210F will help develop your ability to communicate in a professional, concise, and appropriate style for the business world.

Objectives
After you have completed your term with English 210F/Living4Learning, you will have practiced or mastered the following skills:

▷ Rhetorical analysis for communication (i.e., identifying context, audience, purpose, scope, etc.)
▷ Writing as process: planning, drafting, and revision
▷ Giving, getting, and using constructive feedback
▷ Communicating using clear and concise language, adapting tone and structure appropriately according to circumstances
▷ Collaborative teamwork, including communicating synchronously and asynchronously with colleagues
▷ Reading instructions and carefully following procedures
▷ Meeting deadlines and working within time constraints
▷ Producing a variety of communications in different genres, forms, and for different audiences
Simulated Environment: Living4Learning
COMPANY MISSION STATEMENT

Living4Learning recognizes that learning is a lifelong process. We create professional development websites, courses, and tutorials with the following key qualities: accessibility, reliability, and flexibility. More importantly, we create a living world in which students shape their own educational futures. We are a continental and global leader in cloud-based educational environments, and we provide open platforms and launchpads for nearly 3 million post-secondary students in collaboration with the healthcare, government, and corporate sectors. We change the way people learn through our innovative educational systems and solutions by reinventing online learning.

CORE VALUES

INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS

Living4Learning’s state-of-the-art user interface closely monitors each and every learner while providing helpful instruction, enhancing the learning process and enabling a comprehensive, well-rounded learner experience. Our system closely analyzes learners on a case-by-case basis, mapping out their development and producing highly detailed, fully customizable learning plans that provide helpful tips and instruction during the learning process, and ultimately pave the way for learner success.

INNOVATION

Living4Learning’s collaborative approach to online learning, along with our dynamic and feedback-oriented user interface, allows for maximum creativity. We innovate online learning by making it seamless, easy-to-use, and highly interactive in scope. Each and every learner experiences a fully customized learning plan tailored to their own specific needs and goals. Ultimately, the Living4Learning paves the way for each and every user not only to meet their learning requirements, but to realize their goals.

DEDICATION

The students of today shape the world of tomorrow. Living4Learning understands the importance of a comprehensive education. Our staff are always looking for new ways to enhance the learning experience, create new and advanced learning technologies, and improving existing technologies.

SIMULATION

Living4Learning incorporates gaming, and gamification into its learning systems. Our highly dynamic, state-of-the-art user interfaces create real-time online environments in which learners can interact with and manipulate complex systems, which serve as highly immersive environments that make the learning experience much more memorable and more effective.

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Living4Learning's corporate functions are organized into 6 departments, each department is headed by a Corporate Director who sits on the L4L Board of Directors, with co-founder and CEO, Dr. Jayne Whitefield. The following org chart outlines the department structure at Living4Learning:

- CEO and Co-founder
  - Dr. Jayne Whitefield

- Product R&D
  - Gideon Gluck

- User Experience (UX)
  - Omar Azz

- Marketing
  - Andrea Huff

- Customer Relations (CR)
  - Franco Botha

- Human Resources (HR)
  - Devlin Curtiss

- Operations
  - Douglas Schwartz

Click on any of the department names below for more information on the department and the department blog:

- Customer Relations
- Human Resources
- Marketing
- Operations
- Product R&D
- User Experience
WORKING AT LIVING4LEARNING

Living4Learning is devoted to changing the way people through our innovative educational solutions. We provide course and learning management systems to enhance the situations of higher education in 15 countries.

USER EXPERIENCE

Job Reference #: UXPI946

Do you look at current software and think: "I could make that better"? Are you fascinated by the human side of technology, and how we interact with our digital world? Can you translate user feedback into clear reports and action plans? If so, you might be just the kind of person Living4Learning's User Experience department is looking for.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Become familiar with functions and documentation of LAL's product suite
- Facilitate communications between users and product developers
- Organize and conduct events that engage users in product testing and feedback
- Request information efficiently and make persuasive recommendations
- Provide support and information to other departments as needed

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE WILL:

- Work effectively in a dynamic team environment
- Communicate clearly and concisely, particularly in writing
- Adapt to the ever-changing needs of LAL
- Contribute meaningfully to group meetings, brainstorming sessions, and projects
- Manage multiple deadlines and deliver results

Interested in joining the UX team? Fill out our Employment Application Form quoting Job Reference # UXPI946, and submit a PDF copy to the “Employment Application” dropbox by the deadline specified in the Course Schedule. You will find the dropbox by clicking Assessments and then Dropbox on the course navigation bar in the ENGL 210F LEARN site.
Goal-based Scenarios, Thick (Ill-Structured) Problems

Your major project for this term is to work collaboratively with your departmental colleagues on drafting a proposal for a User Conference. We used to host an annual User Conference but we discontinued it... The board thinks we are just fine without going to all that effort and expense anymore, but I believe we are losing touch with who our users are and what they want. Your proposal needs to convince our CEO and the other directors that we can host a User Conference within the next year without compromising core development and support activities.
Request prompts

Andrea Huff, Corporate Director, Marketing [email: andhuff@l4l.dot.sim]:
The Marketing department sources the kinds of specialty promotional materials, giveaways, etc. that you usually find at these kinds of events. Ask them to recommend a “swag strategy” suitable for the type and size of event you are planning.

Franco Botha, Corporate Director, Customer Relations [email: fbotha@l4l.dot.sim]:
A big part of user conferences is having demonstrations and workshops. CR has data on which features our learning partners want or are having trouble with. Ask them to recommend an appropriate selection of topics based on the number and format of sessions you plan to include.

Gordon Gluck, Corporate Director, Product R&D [email: ggluck@l4l.dot.sim]:
One of the highlights for users at a user conference is hearing from the people who actually build the products and know what innovations are in the works, but the learning creatives in Product R&D are already overworked and definitely won’t want to take time out for a user conference! You must ask them to recommend some options for how they would be willing to take part.

Doug Schwartz, Director of Corporate Operations [email: dschwartz@l4l.dot.sim]:
The Ops department looks after space planning and rental venues. They will know what kind of space we have available at L4L HQ for events, and what other venues are available to rent locally and farther away. Ask them to recommend a venue suitable for the type and size of event you are planning.

Devin Curtois, Corporate Director, Human Resources [email: dcurtois@l4l.dot.sim]:
An event like a user conference usually requires some dedicated staff during planning, as well as staffing at the event. Let HR know what kind of skills and time commitment (full-time, part-time, short-term, long-term) we need for the event team, and ask them to recommend whether to manage it in-house, hire, or outsource it.
## Prewriting Analysis: Rhetorical Context

Use this worksheet to help you assess the rhetorical context and plan your communication strategy. Explain your analysis and choices in the assignment submission memo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose(s) of communication</th>
<th>Desired outcome(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify Audience(s)</td>
<td>Implications for tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is primary audience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary audience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who am I in relation to them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge base of audience(s)</td>
<td>Implications for content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does audience already know?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still need to know?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely reaction to communication</td>
<td>Implications for approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the audience be open, hostile, or indifferent to my message and desired outcome?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience size and location(s)</td>
<td>Implications for medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other considerations:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A more authentic experience: Writing towards Transactionality

- Transactional writing: seeks to bring about an action or effect some kind of change.

- Pseudotransactional writing: does not have to result in real actions or change; just appears to have that potentiality in the teacher's opinion.

Conventional Assignment: Pseudotransactional
Simulation Assignment: Authentic Transactional elements
Does it work? Benefits

- Structuring the course as if it were we were working in a real business setting. It really helped to understand the types of documents and collaboration that will be expected in some companies.

- Provides a realistic simulation that allows students to work as if they are actually in a business setting.

- Great way to set up a business communication course with a business setting. Gives some similar situations that one may face in the workplace.

- The professionalism and conciseness of messages written by students and instructors in the course. Simulating a work place department helped in this regard.
Does it work? Challenges

Group Work

- Too much group work. I understand that that is what the real world is like, but when your group doesn't contribute to most of the group work and then gets the same mark as those that do it all, it gets to be really unfair.

Clarity

- Overall I felt the instructions left for assignments, discussions were very vague. The assignments themselves were not extremely difficult, but my group and I often spent more time trying to figure out what we were suppose to do than us actually doing the work.

Simulation

- The L4L website use was silly, as the internal and external websites for such a company would normally be separate.

- Some more info about the products would have been nice, like some mockups of the apps.