ENGLISH 409  WRITING FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES

Instructor:  D. Goodwin
Office: HH 246
Office hrs:  W 2:30-4:30
            R 12:00-1:00
Extension:  2946
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Course Objectives:  After completing this course students should have:

1) a theoretical framework for understanding the reader/writer relationship
   as it pertains to professional writing, including
2) an understanding of reader-response theory, rhetorical theory, social
   semiotics, and genre theory;
3. an appreciation of the social contexts within which documents are
   produced
4) practical professional writing skills, such as the ability to revise
   and edit, as advertising and visual design.
5. the ability to function effectively as a member of a research and writing
   team.

Course Organization:  This course consists of a series of lectures, discussions, in-class
workshops, and out-of-class workshops. During the first class, students will be assigned to one
of two groups. One group will meet with the instructor on Tuesdays to develop theoretical
knowledge; the other, on Thursdays. On the days that the students do not meet with the
instructor, they meet for out-of-class assignments and workshops to develop practical professional
writing skills. The course consists of two modules: one on the rhetoric of visual/graphic design;
the other, on advertising copy writing. Each module is weighted equally (i.e., half the course
mark). Each module has three components: a workshop grade, a final assignment grade, and
a take-home examination grade.

Course Policies:  (1) Each 3 hour class in 409 is equivalent to a week’s lectures in a regular
credit course. Therefore attendance in in-class discussions/workshops and the out-of-class
workshops is mandatory. Group work depends on your contribution: students must inform their
group if they cannot attend a meeting, and any student who misses more than one such meeting
will need to explain his or her absence to the instructor.

(2) All assignments must be typed; untyped manuscripts will be returned to students ungraded.

(3) All assignments must be submitted on time. Late papers will be penalized - 10% for every
day late.
409 MODULES

MODULE A (WEEK 1-8)

VISUAL RHETORIC AND DESIGN

This module will focus on visual design, and especially, the rhetorical function of images in professional communication. Students will be introduced to rhetorical theory and social semiotics in order to analyze layout and design. Assignments will consist of 1. a take-home examination on visual rhetoric (5-6 pages, worth 25%) 2. a group project in professional design involving a makeover (e.g., logos, public relations material, direct mail, technical writing, etc.) (25%) and an individual analysis of that project (2,500-3,000 words, 50%).


MODULE B (WEEK 9-13)

ADVERTISING

This module will focus on the rhetorical structures of advertising discourse, and, especially, on the persuasive techniques of copywriting. Students will be introduced to a series of theoretical frameworks for analyzing the rhetorical/ideological structures of advertising, as well as to strategies for writing effective copy. Assignments will consist of 1. a take-home examination on the rhetoric of advertising (5-6 pages, worth 25%) 2. copy-editing four other students’ work (25%) a selection of advertising copy written by the student and an analysis of that copy (2,500-3,000 words, 50%).

Required Texts: Guy Cook, *The Discourse of Advertising*; photocopied readings.
SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODULE A
(The Thursday Group)

Week of

Jan. 

3

Chapter 1: Visual and Verbal Literacies
Visual Communication Design

10

Chapter 2: Images and Social Interaction
Visual Persuasion Design

17

Chapter 3: The Structures of Visual Communication
Typography

24

Chapter 4: Composition and its Meanings
Layout 1 (Newsletters)
****Take home due****

31

Chapter 5: Perspectives for the Semiotics of Visual Communication
Layout 2 (Advertising)

Feb. 

7

****In-Class Presentations****

14

****Final assignment due****

21
READING WEEK