Melanie Van der Tuin, Instructor

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Office hours:  Monday – 10:30 to 11:00 a.m., 12:45 to 1:15 p.m., and by appointment
             Tuesday – 11:00 to 11:30 a.m., and by appointment
             Wednesday – 10:30 to 11:00 a.m., 3:00 to 3:30 p.m., and by appointment
             Thursday – 10:30 to 11:00 a.m., 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., and by appointment
             Fridays – by appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Excellence in Business Communication (Fifth Edition), by John Thill and Courtland Bovée
A Writer’s Reference (Fourth Edition), by Diana Hacker
Notebook (10” x 7 7/8” black and white, college-ruled “Comp. Book,” sold at bookstore)
Handy loose-leaf paper, and several file folders
Many pens
A sturdy two-pocket folder and/or a three-ring binder with dividers
Two 3.5” floppy disks (DS/HD, IBM-formatted), and a protective case
A good dictionary
An easily accessed E-mail account (hotmail or yahoo recommended)

COURSE DESCRIPTION / GOALS

English 209 is designed to help students develop the skills necessary for effective written communication in the business world. Individually and in groups, you will strive to write clear, precise correspondence, including memos, letters, résumés, and reports. Emphasis will be placed on creating, editing, and proofreading persuasive, well-structured documents appropriate for specific purposes and audiences. An in-depth review of standard English grammar, punctuation, and word usage will also be a focus. As this course is a designated writing-intensive course, you are expected to demonstrate a strong commitment to becoming a competent, insightful, adaptable writer, through the studying and critiquing of texts, as well as much practice writing, both in and out of class. It is this instructor’s wish that you will come to view writing as a valuable tool in helping you find, shape, and express your thoughts and ideas effectively. I hope, furthermore, that writing will become an ally and “friend” for you in your studies, in your professional life, and even in your personal life; and that you may even—(gasp!)—come to ENJOY writing if you don’t already.

PREREQUISITES

Completion of ENG 100, with a grade of C or better
Access to, and familiarity with, computers (specifically with Microsoft Word and with sending and receiving E-mail), and a genuine commitment to getting “up to speed” on your PC skills
Respect for, and positive attitude toward learning and working together with, your colleagues
Effective handling of responsibility

FORMAL ASSIGNMENTS

Over the course of the semester, you will be given various in-class and homework assignments, some of which you will revise for your final portfolio. (See below.) These formal assignments (each worth two homework grades) will include memos, letters, résumés, and reports. Your written work will be assessed on the basis of its

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content, organization, clarity, and adherence to stylistic and mechanical (grammar, punctuation, etc.)
conventions discussed in class. Unless directed otherwise, expect that all assignments are to be edited and
proofread meticulously prior to being turned in; typed neatly in a 10- or 12-point, legible font; single-spaced
within paragraphs and double-spaced between paragraphs; and submitted on time.

PLEASE NOTE: any document not meeting these basic criteria (for example, a paper that has obviously not
been passed through a spelling check) may be returned to you, unread, with a grade of “0.” Grades on
assignments submitted late will be lowered one grade per day late.

Formal assignments and documents included in your final portfolio will be graded on a four-point scale:

4.0 = Document is excellent in terms of content, organization, and sentence-level editing.
3.5 = Document is successful in terms of content and structure but may contain some
sentence-level errors or stylistic “glitches.”
3.0 = Document fulfills the basic assignment requirements but is being hindered by some
structural or content-related problems, or excessive mechanical errors.
2.5 = Document is lacking or flawed in content or structure; thoughtful revision will be
necessary.
2.0 = Document barely meets the basic requirements of the assignment—a conference
with me, to identify problem areas (and possibly to arrange for assistance at The
Learning Center), is highly recommended.
< 2.0 = Work does not meet the basic requirements of the assignment given—please
consult with me immediately, to define an appropriate course of action.

NOTEBOOKS / HOMEWORK

In addition to submitting completed homework assignments, you will be expected to keep a notebook of in-
class notes and writing exercises, notes from textbook chapters, and various homework exercises not collected
in class. Your notebook will be collected for grading approximately three times during the course of the
semester. It will be important for you to keep up with assigned readings and review your class notes frequently,
as occasional quizzes on these materials will be given, in addition to a mid-term exam and a final exam.

Homework exercises and notebooks will be graded as follows:

✓+ = “check plus”: superior (4.0)
✓ = “check”: average (3.0)
✓- = “check minus”: below average (2.0)
0 = no credit

FINAL PORTFOLIO

Your final portfolio will contain your revised versions of the semester’s major assignments; this portion of your
final grade will, therefore, reflect the level of writing “prowess” you have achieved over the course of the
semester. You are encouraged to consult with me as many times as you like, during my office hours, to go over
your work and revisions and ensure a strong, impressive portfolio. We will discuss portfolios further in class.

OFFICE HOURS

You may meet with me during my office hours on a drop-in basis, or you may secure a time in advance by
making an appointment with me. To schedule an appointment with me, simply sign up for a meeting time on
the Office Hours Sign-Up sheet distributed during class, or contact me by phone or e-mail to consult about
available times, particularly if you wish to schedule an appointment outside of my normal office hours. Also

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feel free to drop by my office (C01) any time—I am usually there before and beyond my officially scheduled office hours. Come to your scheduled appointment prepared with all drafts of the document we will be discussing, along with your list of questions about your document and any areas of concern regarding your writing.

PLEASE NOTE: it is important that you meet with me as soon as possible after having your assignment returned to you—while it is still fresh in our minds—to begin work on its revision. When scheduling a meeting with me to go over your work, do not wait beyond a week or two after the document is returned to you, and certainly do not procrastinate until late in the semester, when my office-hour appointment times fill up extremely quickly. It is your job to take the initiative in polishing your writing and in earning a strong grade in this course. I am here to help you and will always give you my full support, but I expect you to take responsibility for your timely effort and ultimate success.

FINAL GRADE

The breakdown of your final grade for this course is as follows:

- Homework, notebooks, and in-class assignments: 30%
- Final portfolio: 30%
- Exams (quizzes + midterm + final): 25%
- Effort / participation / attendance: 15%

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else’s words or ideas as your own, whether intentional or unintentional. It is a serious offense in academic and professional realms and may result in a failing grade in this course. Whenever using ideas from another source, you must be sure to acknowledge that source appropriately. During the semester, we will discuss the proper conventions for documenting sources, but if you have any questions about whether you have provided adequate documentation for sources you have consulted, you should refer to the MLA documentation section of the Hacker text (pp. 324-359), or meet with me to clear up any doubts you may have.

ATTENDANCE / PROFESSIONALISM

Because this course involves much “hands on” writing practice, as well as a great deal of group work and peer feedback, your consistent attendance in class is necessary and expected. Each absence in excess of two will result in the lowering of the effort / participation portion of your grade by one point (out of 4 possible). I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences—in short, I consider you an adult capable of making responsible decisions—so please use your two “freebies” wisely. Remember that illness and emergencies tend to creep up toward the end of the semester, and please note:

An absence is NEVER an excuse for incomplete or unsubmitted work—you are responsible for all work assigned during the semester, regardless of any absences. In other words, in the case of an absence, it is your responsibility to make the necessary arrangements to submit to me any work due that day, and to secure the day’s notes and assignments from a trustworthy classmate. Any further questions you may have about missed material or special arrangements should be addressed with me immediately by phone or e-mail, or during my office hours. You should return to class caught up and ready to “hit the ground running” with us.

In short, this course is all about professional communication and protocol—please embrace it, and demonstrate it. Arrive on time for class (focused, and with any pagers or cell phones turned off), contribute your wisdom and energy generously, and refrain from distracting or disruptive behavior (e.g., eating, chatting, or packing up your materials before the instructor has ended the class session). With everyone’s respect and cooperation, our class meetings can be positive, productive, interesting . . . and even inspiring!

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SERVICE LEARNING

If you are interested in applying your communication skills in the “real” world in order to fulfill some of this course’s requirements, you might consider the Service Learning option. Students who select this option participate in a community service project with a local organization of their choice, performing a total of approximately 20 hours of service over the course of the semester (in other words, two hours a week for ten weeks). This is your opportunity to put your new skills to good use making a valuable contribution to your community. If you select the Service Learning option, you will be expected to keep a journal of your community service experiences—your journal will replace the end-of-semester research project assigned to all students not participating in Service Learning. A more formal presentation on Service Learning will be given during the first couple of weeks of class, so prepare a list of any questions you may have about this option.

STUDY “BUDDIES” / CLASS ROSTER

At the beginning of the semester, I will ask you to connect with at least two “study buddies,” classmates who will be available to fill you in should you miss class or have any questions about class assignments, and for whom you will be willing to do the same. You and your “buddies” should swap phone numbers and e-mail addresses, putting them in a safe location, so that you will have no trouble keeping in touch. In addition, I will compile and distribute a roster of phone numbers and e-mail addresses for all students in the class so that it will be easy for you contact each other.

SCHEDULES / IMPORTANT DATES

Each month, I will provide you with a schedule of reading assignments and homework due dates. This calendar is designed to help you plan your time; however, it is not set in stone, nor does it contain specific information about all homework assignments. I may occasionally make revisions to it, so please check your e-mail inbox frequently (at least twice a week) for updates, and listen carefully in class for specifics about individual assignments and for adjustments to the schedule. Your January schedule is attached to this syllabus.

Some important dates to remember for the semester are the following:

- **Jan. 21** – Martin Luther King Jr. holiday (no class)
- **Feb. 4** – last day to drop a course without its appearing on your transcript
- **Feb. 18** – Presidents’ day (no class)
- **March 25-30** – Spring Break (no class)
- **April 8** – last day to withdraw from a course and have a “W” appear on your transcript
- **May 8** – last day of class meetings
- **May 15 (Wednesday)** – FINAL EXAM: 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. (Please mark your calendar!)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

MCC offers a wealth of resources designed to help you succeed in your academic career. We will explore and make frequent use of several of them, including the campus computer labs, the library, and The Learning Center. Please familiarize yourself with the locations and business hours of these resources, and share this information with your classmates. Also review your MCC General Catalog and your Spring 2002 Class Schedule bulletin for valuable information about the many programs and services available to you through the college, and for important reminders about special dates (i.e., for holidays, class drops, exams, etc.). Remember that you, too, are a valuable resource to your colleagues, and them to you. Help each other, support each other, and learn from each other. (And treat each other to coffee once in a while!) You may be—and I certainly hope you will be—wonderfully supportive friends to each other throughout the semester and long after you have finished this course. . . maybe even after graduation.

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A FINAL NOTE

Please remember that I am here for you and want to see you succeed. If ever you have any concerns or questions about your progress, or if you have thoughts you would like to share with me, please do not hesitate to come visit me during my office hours, or contact me via phone or E-mail. Getting to know you is the most rewarding part of my job, and I always look forward to hearing from students.

HERE’S WISHING YOU AN OUTSTANDING, INSPIRING SEMESTER!

NOTES:

(January calendar on reverse . . .)