



WHCP 6240: Persuasive Writing for Business Leaders Syllabus, Spring 2023

Course Learning Objective: Students in WHCP 6240 will learn advanced techniques for persuasive writing in a business context.

Course Description: WHCP 6240 will build on what students learned about persuasion in their fall speaking class by introducing them to advanced persuasive writing skills that can be adapted to a range of business contexts. Students will leave the course more confident, more effective business writers.

The major components of this course include:

Class 1: Persuasion, Part I—Business Writing as Reader-Centered Design
Class 2: Persuasion, Part II—How Modern Research Can Teach Us to Be More Persuasive
Class 3: Making Your Argument Stick, Part I—How to Distill & Frame Your Message
Class 4: Making Your Argument Stick, Part II—How to Write Memorable Sentences
Class 5: Engaging Your Reader Through Story, Part I—The Fundamentals of Story
Class 6: Engaging Your Reader Through Story, Part II—Challenge Stories (responding to an organizational challenge through specialized story structures)

Assignment and Grading Overview: Due dates vary so please read each assignment carefully.

Required Assignments:

Your final grade will be out of 100 points. **To pass the course, you must receive a minimum of 65 points.** Your final grade will be determined by your performance on the following required assignments and your participation score:

<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Graded Assignments</u>	<u>Points</u>
Due by Start of Class 1	Attentiveness & Focus Assignment	10
Due 4 days after Class 1	Audience Analysis Assignment	10
Due 4 days after of Class 4	Sentence & Framing Assignment	20
Due by end of Class 5	In-Class Story Assignment	5
Due 4 days Class 6	Challenge Story Assignment	25
	Total Points for Graded Assignments	70
	Total Points for Participation:	30

Your participation grade will be determined holistically by your:

- Attendance (attend class, arrive on time, etc.)
- Level of engagement during class discussions and exercises
- Quality and timely submission of ungraded assignments and exercises

Note: For each graded assignment, you will receive:

- A scoring rubric with a breakdown of the points you earned
- Detailed feedback from your instructor

Please also note the following details about the course policies:

- **You must complete all graded assignments to pass this course**, and do so on time to receive full credit.
- Attendance at each session is very important. Any unexcused absence will have a negative impact on your grade. **Note: students with more than 2 absences (for any reason, excused or unexcused) cannot pass the course.**
- **Late submissions:**
 - Graded assignments that are submitted up to a week late will be receive a 20% markdown.
 - That means that the assignment will be graded, and then 20% of the total assignment points will be subtracted from the grade. So a 10-point assignment that received an initial grade of 8.9 would have 2 points subtracted for lateness (20% of 10 points), for a final grade of 6.9.
 - All graded assignments submitted more than 1 week late will receive 0 points. You must still complete all graded assignments to have a chance to pass the course.
- All assignments will be scanned by TurnItIn, a software program that identifies possible instances of plagiarism. Additional information about TurnItIn, along with guidance on how to avoid plagiarism, is available on the course's Canvas site. More broadly, students are responsible for compliance with the [Ethics Matrix](#). Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to Wharton's Ethics Committee and could result in expulsion.

Electronic Device Policy:

All students are expected to be fully engaged with the instructor, class content, and one another throughout the entirety of the class session. The use of electronic devices—including phones—is prohibited in the classroom. Before class begins, place all devices out of sight. Failing to do so will negatively affect your participation grade. If an in-class assignment requires you to bring a device to class, your instructor will inform you in advance.

Mask Policy:

In accordance with university policy, masks may be required in the classroom based on instructor prerogative. Your instructor will communicate their classroom mask policy prior to the first day of class via an email and Canvas announcement.

Access to Class Recordings:

Access to class recordings will not be granted to students with unexcused absences.

Required Reading:

You'll find a list of each week's required readings under that week's class overview page (Class 1 Overview, Class 2 Overview, etc.) under 'Modules' on the 6240 Canvas site. You can access all required readings through the Study.net tab in the left margin of the 6240 Canvas site.

WHCP 6240 Required Assignments

Class	Focus	Assignments	Points
1	Persuasion, Part I: Business Writing as Reader-Centered Design	Attentiveness & Focus Assignment: Due By the Start of Class 1	10
		Audience Analysis Assignment: Due 4 Days After Class 1	10
2	Persuasion, Part II: How Modern Research Can Teach Us to Be More Persuasive	No Assignment Due	N/A
3	Making Your Argument Stick, Part I: How to Distill & Frame Your Message	No Assignment Due	N/A
4	Making Your Argument Stick, Part II: How to Write Memorable Sentences	Sentence & Framing Assignment: Due 4 Days After Class 4	20
5	Engaging Your Reader Through Story, Part I: The Fundamentals of Story	In-Class Story Assignment: Due by the End of Class 5	5
6	Engaging Your Reader Through Story, Part II: Challenge Stories	Challenge Story Assignment: Due 4 Days After Class 6	25
ALL	Attend Class, Engage in Class Discussions and Exercises, and Submit Ungraded Assignments on Time	Attendance & Participation	30
		Total Points	100

Course Overview

Full assignment details may be found in Canvas

Class 1 Overview

Persuasion, Part I: Business Writing as Reader-Centered Design

Topics Covered:

- Introduction to the course
- Business writing as design thinking
- Some frameworks for audience analysis

Assignments:

- **Watch:**
 - The pre-recorded Class 1 lecture.
- **Read:**
 - The course syllabus in Canvas
 - Discussion reading (in Study.net):
 - Announcement of Layoffs by David Westin, President of ABC News
 - “Zappos and Amazon,” by Tony Hsieh
- **Submit:**
 - **Attentiveness & Focus Assignment (Due by the Start of Class 1, 10 points):**
 - This assignment introduces students to some of the skills they will need to think deliberately about writing. Full assignment details in Canvas.
 - **Audience Analysis Assignment (Due 4 Days After Class 1, 10 Points):**
 - Students will apply the audience analysis skills learned in Class 1 to their previous work experience. Full assignment details in Canvas.

Class 2 Overview

Persuasion, Part II: How Modern Research Can Teach Us to Be More Persuasive

Topics Covered:

- How modern research in behavioral psychology and behavioral economics can teach us to be more persuasive

Assignments:

- **Watch:**
 - The pre-recorded class 2 lecture
- **Read:**
 - Discussion reading (in Study.net):
 - “Progress for Women Isn’t Just Slow—It’s Stalled,” by Sheryl Sandberg and Rachel Thomas.

- “America Needs Tax Reform to Spur Competition and Growth,” by Jamie Dimon
- **Submit:**
 - **No Assignment Due**

Class 3 Overview

Making Your Argument Stick, Part I: How to Distill & Frame Your Message

Topics Covered:

- Distilling Your Message:
 - Identify the fundamental elements of a complex message or data set, and communicate them concisely
- Framing Your Message:
 - Make your argument stick using metaphor, image, analogy, or simile

Assignments:

- **Watch:**
 - The pre-recorded Class 3 lecture
- **Read:**
 - Discussion reading (in Study.net):
 - "A Message to Our Customers," by Tim Cook
- **Submit:**
 - **No assignment Due**

Class 4 Overview

Making Your Arguments Stick, Part II: How to Write Memorable Sentences

Topics Covered:

- How the creation of pattern and the subversion of pattern can be used to write memorable sentences

Assignments:

- **Watch:**
 - The pre-recorded class 4 lecture
- **Read:**
 - Discussion reading (in Study.net):
 - “Berkshire Hathaway INC: An Owner’s Manual,” by Warren Buffett
- **Submit:**
 - **Sentence & Framing Assignment (Due 4 Days After Class 4, 20 Points)**
 - Students will be asked to write a short memo that frames an argument and incorporates several of the sentence types covered in Class 4. Full assignment details in Canvas.

Class 5 Overview

Engaging Your Reader Through Story, Part I: The Fundamentals of Story

Topics Covered:

- Introduction to the three-act story structure
- How to apply the three-act story structure to:
 - Yourself
 - Your organization
 - Your data

Assignments:

- **Watch:**
 - The pre-recorded Class 5 lecture
- **Read:**
 - Discussion reading (in Study.net):
 - “2014 Letter to Amazon’s Shareholders,” by Jeff Bezos
- **Submit:**
 - **In-Class Story Assignment (Due by the End of Class 5, 5 Points):**
 - In this in-class assignment, students will work with a partner to turn a visual representation of data into a three-act story. Full assignment details in Canvas.

Class 6 Overview

Engaging Your Reader Through Story, Part II: Challenge Stories

Topics Covered:

- Frameworks for responding to organizational challenges through story
- Fostering a culture of writing in your organization
- Course Recap

Assignments:

- **Watch:**
 - The pre-recorded Class 6 lecture
- **Read:**
 - Discussion reading (in Study.net):
 - “Our Respectful Request,” by Howard Schultz
 - “An Open Letter to Customers: Our Weapons Policy,” by Chip Bergh
- **Submit:**
 - **Challenge Story Assignment (Due 4 Days After Class 6, 25 Points)**
 - Using one of the templates discussed in Class 6, students will write a Challenge Story of approximately 500 words. Full assignment details in Canvas.