



**UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHWESTERN**
— ST. PAUL —

OFFICE OF ADULT
& GRADUATE STUDIES

BSM4007

Professional Skills in Business

SPRING 2022

SYLLABUS

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University of Northwestern – St. Paul
Office of Adult & Graduate Studies
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BSM4007 Professional Skills in Business

University of Northwestern – St. Paul

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students study professional skills with a strong emphasis on written and oral communication used in the business setting.

Credits: 2

Prerequisites: None

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Please see “Contacting the Instructor” on the course site.

COURSE OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, a successful student will be able to

- CO-1. Integrate oral and written communication concepts into a professional career
- CO-2. Create and present a professional quality business presentation integrating digital visual aid technology
- CO-3. Compose and format professional quality business memos, e-mails, resume, and cover letter
- CO-4. Demonstrate professional quality job interview skills

MATERIALS

Required Textbooks and Materials

Writing for Success: University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing edition, 2015. This edition adapted from a work originally produced in 2010 by a publisher who has requested that it not receive attribution. Minneapolis, MN

Business Communication for Success: University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing edition, 2015. This edition adapted from a work originally produced in 2010 by a publisher who has requested that it not receive attribution. Minneapolis, MN

Required Tools

For this course, students will need access to Microsoft Office (available at no cost to students through the University of Northwestern-St. Paul), a PDF reader, and a standard internet browser. Please refer to the Tech Requirements found in the Technology Help section at the top of the course site for the full requirements.

In addition, students will need a video recording device (no sophisticated equipment is required: a smartphone, mobile device, point-and shoot camera or a basic webcam should suffice).

GRADING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Course Grade Explanation

Assignments	Grade Weight
Self-Introduction Video Sharing	2
Grammar Quiz	10
Email Simulation Responses (2)	5
<i>Professional Memos</i>	
Memo 1: Status Report	5
Memo 2: TED Talk Summary	5
Memo 3: Informational Interview Self-Assessment	5
Resume	10
Cover Letter	6
Job Interview Practice	8
<i>Final Project</i>	
Informational Interview (Interview Summary)	3
Presentation Outline	3
Presentation Digital Visuals	8
Presentation Practice Recordings (2 x 5%)	10
<u>Final Oral Presentation</u>	<u>20</u>
Total	100

Grading Scale Percentages

A	≥ 93	B	≥ 83	C	≥ 73	D	≥ 63
A-	≥ 90	B-	≥ 80	C-	≥ 70	D-	≥ 60
B+	≥ 87	C+	≥ 77	D+	≥ 67	F	< 60

Late Work

All assignments are due as described in the course syllabus. Students are responsible for meeting assignment deadlines. Late assignments will be deducted one full letter grade (e.g., A to B) per day; late assignments will not be accepted for a grade beyond 3 calendar days past the original deadline. Forum discussion activities must be completed on time; late forum posts will not receive any credit. Students should contact the instructor via e-mail if an extenuating circumstance exists.

Feedback Expectations

Students should expect feedback for their submitted assignments within 5 days of the assignment due date or the time of their submission, whichever is later.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES AND SERVICES

Guidelines and Information

Students are responsible for policies and procedures found in the Office of Adult & Graduate Studies Catalog located on theROCK. These policies include the following:

- Deadlines for dropping or withdrawing
- Attendance
- Class cancellations
- Plagiarism and cheating
- Grading System
- Complaints, exceptions, and appeals

Instructors may have course-related expectations that further detail the policies and procedures outlined in the catalog. Any such expectations must be provided to students in writing (e.g., handout, course site posting) prior to or at the beginning of the class.

Traditional undergraduate students enrolled in A&GS courses are subject to the traditional undergraduate student handbook for all non-course-specific policies and procedures.

Academic Integrity

Members of the Northwestern community mutually commit to personal integrity and honesty. Students submitting work are expected to convey their own thoughts unless the source is cited appropriately. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty violate ethical and intellectual principles.

In every course, students are required to view the Understanding Plagiarism video and complete the Understanding Plagiarism Quiz prior to completing any of the course content. These items are part of the course orientation.

Academic Achievement

UNW students requesting academic accommodations in association with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are directed to notify [Disability Services](#) to begin the application process. Academic Achievement also provides the following: [Writing and Subject Tutoring](#), advocating, transitional skill building, [Academic Coaching](#) (organization, time management, test taking, etc.).

Contact Academic Achievement for more information: AcademicAchievement@unwsp.edu • 651-628-3316 • N4012 (Revised 06/20)

Support Services

Links to support services are available found in the Student Services section at the top of the course site.

COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Email and Announcements

Students are responsible to regularly check their Northwestern student email and the announcements in the course site in order to receive updates and information.

Attendance

Students are expected to participate in all course activities. Students must contact the faculty member in advance or as soon as possible if unable to participate in all or part of the course activities for a given week because of a medical (which includes having to quarantine or isolate due to COVID-19 exposure or confirmed illness), family, or work-related emergency. Students should refer to their course syllabus and/or faculty member for specific requirements. Students who do not participate in course activities and fail to withdraw from the course will receive a failing “F” grade.

Attendance

Due to the accelerated nature of the online curriculum, students are expected to participate in all course activities. Students must contact their instructor in advance or as soon as possible if unable to participate in all or part of the course activities for a given week because of a medical, family, or work-related emergency. Students should refer to their course syllabus and/or instructor for specific requirements. Students who do not participate in course activities and fail to withdraw from the course will receive a failing "F" grade.

Submission Standards

The APA Style Manual is the writing standard to be used for all written assignments (unless otherwise indicated). All assignments, unless otherwise stated, must be submitted on the course site in Microsoft Word document format (.doc or .docx). For all assignments, use a standard readable font, double-spaced, etc.

Critical Response to Alternate Viewpoints

When students are reading or viewing course materials, they may encounter viewpoints, words, or images that their instructors would not use or endorse. Students should know that materials are chosen for their value in learning to read, write, and view critically, not because the materials are necessarily Christian.

Scholarly Research

Quality participation in this course requires contribution of scholarly research to class interactions. Students can engage in external research via the Berntsen Library website by performing a search of the 60+ databases available to students. Also available on the library site are multiple tutorials to educate learners in effective search techniques. Other credible journals/articles are options as well.

ASSIGNMENTS

See the course site for complete details on the assignments.

Online Learning Activities

This course relies heavily on self-directed learning and practice of professional skills. The self-directed activities designed to prepare you for the written and oral assignments consist of short media clips, some of which are followed by opportunities to interact with the concepts and skills discussed.

You are encouraged to complete the activities in order since the concepts and skills build upon one another; however, you are ultimately free to complete each activity in the order and pace you choose, provided all submissions are complete by their respective due dates. Consult the appropriate Rubrics on the course site for grading expectations specific to each assignment.

Self-Introduction Video Sharing

After viewing the video "The Importance of Business Writing" (4:29) embedded in the forum description, record a self-introduction for your online classmates in the **Class Introductions Forum** on the course site. Introduce yourself to the class using Kaltura software (further explained on the course site as a tutorial and briefly in the Introduction forum description).

Explain how strong business communication skills apply to your relevance personally and professionally by answering two questions:

1. How will excellent communication skills enable you to serve Christ as His ambassador? Present at least two Bible verses in support of your position. Don't just quote the verses, explain how they support your views.
2. How will excellent communication skills enable you to serve and excel in your current or desired profession? Orally cite at least two references back to "The Importance of Business Writing" viewing assignment.

Grammar Quiz

Proofreading and editing are crucial skills for all professional communication. In reference to the first week's assigned viewing and reading, take the online grammar quiz on the course site. The quiz has a time limit of 15 minutes per attempt, but you may take the open-book, open-reference quiz as many times as you wish until you achieve a score you desire or the course close date.

In each attempt, a total of thirty random questions will be drawn from larger pools of possible questions representing each of five major grammatical categories: five questions each regarding commas, apostrophes, colons/semicolons, fragments/run-ons, and ten questions regarding word choice. Therefore, each quiz attempt includes 30 questions, for 30 possible points.

Email Simulation Responses

Effective email communication is an inescapable requirement in modern business communication. For both of the email simulation responses, imagine you are an employee writing an email response to a coworker as directed in each situation. In both emails, be sure to include an appropriate Subject Line in your submission.

Consult the Email Rubric to ensure your email reflects all the required criteria.

Email 1: Persuasion

In reference to the information presented in the Week 1's viewing and reading assignments including "6 Steps to get your e-mail read," imagine you are the manager of a sales department comprised of six employees and you have just surpassed your annual sales goal. Write an email to your supervisor asking if you can take your department out to celebrate—at the company's expense.

Email 2: Refusal

In reference to the information presented in the Week 1 video "Writing Negative Messages," write an email explaining to a coworker that you will not provide him or her a reference letter for an internal company position that would mean a promotion for that employee. Provide reasons why you are declining. Use the **indirect approach** as described in the video.

Professional Memos

For all three memo assignments in this course, use the Professional Memo Template provided on the course site in Week 1. Focus especially on correct format, organization, thoroughness, and correct grammar/punctuation.

While crafting each memo, consult the Professional Memo Rubric to ensure your memo reflects all the required criteria.

Memo 1: Status Report

Applying the business writing concepts you have learned this week, write a memo to your instructor (2 page minimum). Cover the following:

- Your plans for your final Informational Interview and Oral Presentation. Provide all relevant information and explain your rationale and approach. For example:
 - a. Discuss who you plan to interview - when and why you chose him or her.
 - b. Discuss how you plan to organize your time for the next three weeks in order to meet the final project requirements.
 - c. What are your next steps?
- Use the direct approach.

Memo 2: TED Talk - Summary

Drawing from concepts you have learned from the Amy Cuddy TED Talk, write a memo to your fictional boss that achieves the following goal:

- Overview the information from the TED Talk so that your boss can benefit from what was presented without having to actually view the talk.

Memo 3: Informational Interview Self-Assessment

Write a professional memo overviewing the informational interview you conducted for your final project. Address the following points:

- What went well in the interview process?
- What didn't go as well as you wished in the interview process? Why?
- What did you learn about the job/position?
- How can you improve for next time you do something similar?

Resume

A well-written, effective resume is critical for standing out among job applicants and provides the interviewer reference material from which to ask you questions during the interview. A good resume may even help you get a better job than the one you interview for! Keep in mind that for every job opening, there will be many, many applicants. As one resume in a stack of resumes, do not provide the interviewer with a reason to dismiss you as a candidate: sloppy materials, poor grammar, misspellings, etc.

After watching the assigned videos and reading the assigned articles, create your own professional quality resume that uniquely showcases your skills and experiences.

- Choose and use a template and format provided on the UNWSP Center for Calling and Career site.
- Focus on correct format, organization, thoroughness, and correct grammar/punctuation.
- Use parallel structure for bullet points and lists.

Consult the Professional Resume Rubric to ensure your resume reflects all the required criteria.

Cover Letter

A cover letter is basically a written sales pitch convincing the hiring manager to interview you for a position. It is not a cut and paste of your resume! A good cover letter showcases your written and persuasive communication skills. After watching the assigned videos and reading the assigned articles, create your own professional quality cover letter convincing a hiring manager to interview you for a position. If you don't have a real position in mind, pretend you are writing a cover letter for your dream job.

- Integrate correct business letter format as taught in the video, “The Key Forms of Business Writing: Basic Letter.”
- Focus on correct format, organization, thoroughness, & correct grammar/punctuation.

Consult the Professional Cover Letter Rubric to ensure your cover letter reflects all the required criteria.

Job Interview Practice

One of the best ways to prepare for an interview is to anticipate and prepare for commonly asked interview questions. The University Career Development center offers students access to tools that allow you to record yourself answering various job interview questions. You can review your performance and try again as you wish. Only you and the instructor will be able to observe and analyze the quality of what you say and how you say it. Of course you are encouraged to practice additional questions at your leisure, but they won’t count for this assignment.

- Using the access information provided on the course site, practice answering typical interview questions. You are encouraged to practice answering questions a few times to improve.
- Submit all 10 of your final recorded responses with a sharing link on the course site for grading and feedback.

Consult the Job Interview Practice Rubric to ensure your responses reflect all the required criteria.

Final Project

Ultimately, each assignment for the course is designed to hone your skills in achieving, keeping, and advancing your desired career. To that end, the final project enables you to integrate the communication concepts you’ve studied. The final project is comprised of the following components:

1. Informational Interview (Interview Summary)
2. Presentation Outline
3. Presentation Digital Visuals
4. Presentation Practice Recordings
5. Final Oral Presentation

Informational Interview (Interview Summary)

The Informational interview provides the content for your oral presentation. *As soon as possible*, schedule an Informational Interview with someone in a position, organization, or field you are interested in or would just like to know more about. When you schedule the appointment, be very clear you are *not* requesting a job interview. You are responsible for leading the interview and asking the questions. Be respectful of your interviewee’s time. Be prepared and professional. Many students have forged professional relationships and opportunities as a result of an informational interview such as this.

You are strongly recommended to conduct the interview *during* Week 2 *after* completing the viewing and reading assignments. Many assignments depend upon what you learn in this activity, however, so do not delay your interview beyond Week 2 if at all possible.

In a total of one or two pages, submit a summary bulleted outline of the content of the interview followed by a paragraph or two of your initial reflections about the mood and tone of the experience. If possible, include in this summary a picture of yourself either with the interviewee or featuring the building where the interview took place. This image might serve well as a visual for your presentation.

NOTE:

- **A completed Informational Interview is required in order to be eligible to submit your Final Oral Presentation.** Failure to complete the Informational Interview or the Final Oral Presentation by the due date and time will automatically result in failure of the course.
- It is of the utmost importance that you write a thank-you note to your interviewee as soon as possible! Show appreciation for their willingness to meet with you.

Presentation Outline

The purpose of this element of the final project is for you to demonstrate the ability to intentionally organize, prepare, and execute a presentation. Watch “Giving Presentations Worth Listening To” and download the Presentation Outline Template. Replace the content in the template with your own details for your final oral presentation and submit your filled-in outline on the course site. You are strongly encouraged to complete your informational interview before you complete this outline since you will be evaluated on how well your final presentation follows this submitted outline.

Keep in mind the following requirements:

- Use parallel language for your sub-points. Use correct grammar and spelling.
- Organize the flow of your speech logically. The instructor will check your outline against your final presentation to assure you followed your outline in your final presentation.

Consult the Presentation Outline Rubric on the course site for specific, detailed grading expectations.

Presentation Digital Visuals

The selective, limited, and appropriate use of relevant visual aids can strengthen your message, add clarity, and save explanation time. Effective visual aids are well designed and not merely notes for the speaker to read to the audience. Based upon what was taught in your viewing and reading assignments, construct professional quality digital slides to reinforce your Oral Presentation.

You may use any software to produce the slides, such as PowerPoint, Prezi, Keynote, etc., but to ensure that your instructor can view your slides, export the slides as a PDF and submit the PDF version of your slides on the course site. If a PDF is not possible, you are responsible to share a format that your instructor can view.

A *minimum* of 5 slides is required:

1. Introductory title slide with name, date, and title of the presentation
2. Minimum of at least one slide for your first main idea
3. Minimum of at least one slide for your second main idea
4. Minimum of at least one slide for your third main idea
5. Polished, effective closing slide re-emphasizing key points and thesis statement. Do not fade to a blank screen. Do not include a slide saying, “Thank You”, “The End”, or “Questions”.

Consult the Presentation Digital Visuals Rubric to ensure your slides reflect all the required criteria.

Presentation Practice Recordings

As part of your preparation for your final presentation, produce and submit a **minimum of two video recordings** of yourself practicing your presentation from start to finish. These practice recordings only need to be from the waist up. You do not need to have the digital slides visible for these practice

recordings. Focus your practice on verbal and nonverbal presentation skills, and especially practice your timing. Consult the Oral Presentation Rubric to assure you are fulfilling all the requirements.

Oral Presentation

Prepare and record a 5- to 6-minute oral video presentation with digital slides as visual aids using the Kultura software available on the course site. Your presentation should reflect professional setting, attire, and demeanor. Record yourself from the waist up, and do not try to get the digital visual slides into view. The instructor will refer separately to your slides which you will have already posted to the course site.

The topic of your Oral Presentation is a review of your Informational Interview and the presentation must follow the presentation outline that you submitted to the course site. Cover the following topics:

- **Background:** Who is the interviewee and why did you chose him or her? Where and when did the interview take place?
- **Learning:** What did you learn about the job? Are you still interested in the job/organization?
- **Evaluation:** What went well with how you conducted the interview and what did not go well, and why?
- **Improvement:** How you could have conducted the interview better?
- **Helpful Takeaways:** How did or how will this experience help you?

NOTE:

- **A completed Informational Interview is required** in order to be eligible to submit your Final Oral Presentation. Failure to complete the Informational Interview or the Final Oral Presentation by the due date and time will automatically result in failure of the course.

Consult the Oral Presentation Rubric on the course site for specific, detailed grading expectations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Format

This course is delivered in an online format that provides all learning activities online. The day the course starts is considered Day 1 of Week 1 for the course. For example, if a course begins on a Monday, then Day 1 is Monday, Day 4 is Thursday, and Day 7 is the following Sunday.

This course is an accelerated course. As a rule of thumb, students should expect to spend on average 17.5 hours on course work each week.

Due Dates

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be submitted on the course site by class time or 11:59 p.m. CT on Day 7 of each week. Please see the following schedule for details on when an assignment is due.

For any questions regarding these assignments, contact the instructor.

Orientation

- Read the Getting Started Page
- View and Complete Understanding Plagiarism Presentation and Quiz
- Complete Student Responsibilities Exercise

Week 1: Essential Professional Skills

Due Day 4

- View Course Greeting and Introduction (2:00)
- Familiarize yourself with the course site and assignments. It is critical that you familiarize yourself with the final presentation assignment so that you can make necessary arrangements.
- Post **Self-Introduction Video Sharing assignment** in the Class Introductions Forum
 - View the video embedded in the Class Introductions Forum: “The Importance of Business Writing.” (4:29)
 - After viewing the video, introduce yourself to the class through a short video introduction that answers the questions in the forum prompt.

Due Day 7

- Read the following sections in *Writing for Success* along with the relevant assignments and videos
 - Chapter 3: Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8 (22 pages)
 - Chapter 4: Sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 (25 pages)
- Read the following sections in *Business Communication for Success*
 - Chapter 7: Section 7.5 (3 pages)
 - Chapter 9: Section 9.1 (6 pages)
- View videos on the course site and complete related assignments
 - If needed review the video from the Welcome: Understanding Plagiarism.
 - Writing Concise Sentences (2:44)
 - Conciseness (2:00)
 - Concrete Language (3:52)
 - How To Write the Perfect Memo (12:44)
 - Active vs. Passive Voice (and Zombies) (1:57)
 - Writing an Effective Good-News Message (1:22)
 - Parallel Structure or Parallelism (3:35)
 - Getting Your Email Read (2:34)
 - Submit **Email 1: Persuasion**
 - Bad News Message (5:21)
 - Submit **Email 2: Refusal**
 - The Informational Interview (4:18)
 - Get started as soon as possible scheduling an informational interview with a professional in a career field in which you are interested. Your informational interview should be conducted no later than Week 3 since it is the basis of your final oral presentation which is due at the end of Week 4.
- Submit **Memo 1: Status Report**
- Complete **Grammar Quiz** online on course site

Week 2: Job Search/Interview Preparation

Due Day 7

- Read the following sections in *Business Communication for Success*
 - Section 9.5 in Chapter 9 (8 pages)
- View videos and read the articles on the course site

- How to ace an interview: 5 tips from a Harvard career advisor (5:12)
 - (Article) 5 Reasons to Write a Resume
 - The Key Forms of Business Writing: Basic Letter (6:35)
 - Correct Way to Fold and Stuff a Business Letter (2:22)
- View UNW Career Development web resources (linked on the course site), especially the following:
 - Résumé Writing Guides and Checklist: Résumés, Cover Letters
 - Interview Guidelines
- Complete **Job Interview Practice** (instructions and access link on the course site)
- Submit **Résumé**
- Submit **Cover Letter**
- Conduct **Informational Interview** (Ideally by Week 2, or Week 3 if absolutely necessary)
 - Keep in mind that this is NOT a job interview

Week 3: Professional Presentations

Due Day 7

- View videos on the course site
 - Amy Cuddy TEDTalk—Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are (21:03)
 - How to Write a Speech Outline (2:34)
 - 5 Steps to a Killer Opener (7:34)
 - The Importance of Body Language in Presentations (12:34)
 - The Importance of Vocal Variety in Presentations (11:15)
 - Effective Ways to End a Speech (2:20)
 - Working with Your Audience and Handling Q&A (4:47)
 - #1 Way to Improve Your Speaking (6:29)
 - On Public Speaking (16:24)
 - Gordon Kangas TEDTalk—Giving Presentations Worth Listening To (9:30)
- Submit **Memo 2: Amy Cuddy TEDTalk Summary**
 - Overview the information from the TED Talk so that your boss can benefit from what was presented without having to actually view the talk.
- Conduct **Informational Interview** (if you have not already, Two Week 2 or 3)
- Submit **Interview Summary**
- Submit **Memo 3: Interview Self-Assessment**
- Submit **Presentation Outline**
 - Download the Presentation Outline Template and use it together with the information in the video “Gordon Kangas TEDTalk—Giving Presentations Worth Listening To” complete the Presentation Outline

Week 4: Putting it All Together

Due Day 7

- Read the following sections in *Business Communication for Success*
 - Sections 10.1, 10.4, and 10.5 in Chapter 10 (11 pages total)
 - Sections 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 11.5 in Chapter 11 (26 pages total)
 - Section 9.4 in Chapter 9 (Optional reading assignment. Reference material if you ever need to write a formal business report - 7 pages total)
- View videos on the course site

- PowerPoint Tutorial (optional viewing assignment if you are unfamiliar with using PowerPoint) (17:16)
 - The Most Effective Use of PowerPoint (4:03)
- Submit **Presentation Digital Visuals**
- Submit link to at least two **Presentation Practice Recordings**
- Submit link to recording of your **Final Oral Presentation**
 - Remember to keep it to 5–6 minutes. Practice enables you to meet the time limit.
- Final opportunity to take the **Grammar Quiz**