



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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TO: Students in University of Maryland Professional Writing Courses
FROM: Dr. Scott Wible, Director of the Professional Writing Program (PWP)
RE: Your Fall 2020 Professional Writing Course

Welcome to Professional Writing, the program that provides training and practice in the kinds of writing you are likely to do after college graduation. No matter which PWP course you take, you can expect to receive the attention, instruction, and guidance that will help you to become a more confident and competent writer. Surveys repeatedly show that the ability to communicate effectively in the workplace is often key to career advancement. Consequently, the time and effort you invest in your PWP class will pay off in the years to come.

To get the most out of your PWP class, remember the following:

- Learning to write well requires learning how to tailor your argument, your supporting reasons, and your evidence to accommodate the knowledge, expectations, and attitudes of your audience. Writing well is neither a matter of adding “polish” to a text nor a matter of mimicking a template, following a set of rules, or checking items off a list of requirements. Approach your PWP class with an openness to creativity and a willingness to be flexible, all while working to achieve a specific purpose for a specific audience with each writing project you create.
- Because PWP courses are “studio” courses, **attendance and active participation are required**. Of course, “attendance” and “participation” will look different this fall semester given that all PWP courses have been designed for the online environment. That said, your instructor will describe what “attendance” looks like in your PWP class, and your instructor has designed the course to give you a wide range of modes for participation, affording you regular opportunities to discuss and ask questions about assignments as well as to practice writing skills you need to compose your projects effectively. Students who are frequently absent and do not regularly participate in class discussions and activities will see their grades suffer. Read and reread your instructor’s course policies to understand exactly what is expected of you.
- All PWP classes require approximately 25 pages of original writing (approximately 6,250 words), which means that every assignment you submit must have been written specifically for your PWP class.
- **If you have any concerns about your class, you should first talk with your instructor.** If your concerns are not resolved, contact both PWP Program Coordinator Grace Crussiah and me at pwp@umd.edu.

There are several things you can do to deepen your learning in this course and improve your writing:

- Review your syllabus in advance so that you are aware of assignment due dates and can plan accordingly.
- Construct a daily schedule that includes regular blocks of time **outside of class** for working on your major writing projects, whether that involves planning, reading, researching, drafting, designing, or revising.
- Devote significant time, energy, and attention to the process of **identifying and refining the topics for your major projects**. You will move through each project at a fairly rapid pace, so it is important that you get this initial yet essential aspect addressed efficiently and effectively.
- Contact your instructor when you encounter problems or want to get feedback on ideas. Do not delay communicating with your instructor outside of class, particularly during his or her office hours.

I wish you a successful semester. I hope you will look back on your Professional Writing course as a turning point in becoming an effective, self-assured writer, well prepared for the writing that will be important in your career.

Even more importantly, please prioritize your mental and physical well-being this semester. I hope you find your time spent each week on PWP coursework to be an energizing, engaging, and even joyful release from the day-to-day stresses of living through a pandemic. But if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, unable to focus, and struggling to participate in class, please do not hesitate to reach out to your instructor, to me, or to the University Counseling Center.