

Syllabus Excerpts from:
SOM 301: Business Models: A Communications Approach¹
Fall 2015
George Mason University

Course Description and Overview

SOM 301 is the business communications course for the School of Business, as well as the writing intensive (WI) course for all business majors. The fundamentals of business models are introduced, communication skills are developed, and writing as a learning tool is emphasized. Students will write at least 3,500 words in total throughout the semester covering a range of writing genres.

Course Learning Objectives

After completing SOM 301, students will be able to:

- Communicate orally and in writing in a business context.
- Present ideas in writing in an organized, logical, concise, grammatically correct, and professional manner.
- Communicate and solve problems in a business context.
- Demonstrate the ability to use the library and other resources for research purposes.
- Identify the key aspects of each functional business area.
- Explain how the functional areas are integrated together as part of the business model.
- Demonstrate comprehension and critical thinking skills.

School of Business Undergraduate Programs Learning Goals

- Our students will be aware of the uses of technology in business.
- Our students will be effective communicators (both written and oral).
- Our students will have an interdisciplinary perspective.
- Our students will be knowledgeable about global business and trade.
- Our students will recognize the importance of ethical decisions.
- Our students will be knowledgeable about team dynamics and the characteristics of effective teams.
- Our students will understand the value of diversity and the importance of managing diversity in the context of business.
- Our students will be critical thinkers.

Course Assignments

1. Cover Letter Draft = Complete in order to receive full credit on your final. Written outside of class; submitted in lab.
2. Cover Letter Final = 100 points. Written outside of class; submitted in lab.
3. Elevator Pitch = 15 points. Written outside of class; presented in lab.
4. In-Class Writing 1 = 150 points. Completed in lab.
5. In-Class Writing 2 = 150 points. Completed in lab.
6. Individual & Group Activities & Homework = 50 points.

¹ Retrieved from: <http://wac.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/SOM-301-Fall-2015-annotated.pdf>

7. Lab Participation = 75 points. This includes your group's Reading Review and Handout, participation in class, and attendance.
8. Lecture Participation & Quizzes = 75 points.
9. Persuasive Final Reflection = 50 points. Written outside of class; submitted in lab.
10. Persuasive Memo Abstract & Company Profile= Complete in order to receive credit on your final. Written and submitted outside of class.
11. Persuasive Memo Draft 1 = Complete in order to receive credit on your final. Written outside of class.
12. Persuasive Memo Draft 2 = Complete in order to receive credit on your final. Written outside of class; submitted in lab.
13. Persuasive Memo Final = 250 points. Written outside of class; submitted in lab.
14. Persuasive Memo Presentation = 50 points. Presentation given during lab.
15. Plagiarism Quiz = 25 points. Students must bring their own Scantron and pencil to class on day of quiz. Completed in lab.
16. Writing Assessment = 10 points. Completed in lab

PERSUASIVE MEMO ASSIGNMENT

The ability to persuade is an important skill you will need in the business world. Persuasion is particularly important for any business or organization that sells goods or services. The effectiveness of a persuasive argument depends largely on the reasonableness of the idea and the credibility of your research.

Corporate Social Responsibility

While various businesses may define Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in different ways, a generally agreed upon definition is that CSR is the act of conducting business in a way that considers the welfare of society. On a micro-level, CSR allows a business to contribute to the wellness of the community in which it resides. This could include donation of services or goods, partnership with a charitable organization, adjustment of policies out of concern for the local environment, and implementation of procedures that create an ethically aware workforce. Being active in the local community has the potential to greatly benefit the reputation of a company if the practice is implemented properly. However, involvement with a controversial issue or group may severely harm the company. In a weak economy, CSR is still important, though companies will likely prefer low and no cost CSR programs. The website <http://www.csrwire.com/> may be useful in providing you with additional information on CSR.

Assignment Scenario

Assume you work for a for-profit company of your choice (do not use a non-profit for this assignment). As an employee of your selected company, you have been tasked with proposing a new low or no cost CSR program. This must be a new program at the company. You have been told this program needs to address an issue occurring in the local area and have a logical connection to your company. You need to justify why this issue is worthy of the company's involvement, show how this issue has a logical connection to your company, and thoroughly explain how the program will operate, be implemented, and how it will benefit both the community and your company (more emphasis on the company's benefits).

Persuasive Memo Abstract & Company Profile

Abstract:

In one paragraph, inform your lab professor of the following:

- o Your selected for-profit company (must be the company headquarters)
- o A community issue that is logically connected to the company's product, service, or mission (make sure the community issue is local to the company's headquarters)
- o Your proposed program and what makes it low or no cost

This deliverable exists to encourage you to start the assignment early in the semester. You may change your topic later, if need be; however, make sure to share any topic changes with your professor.

Company Profile:

Identify what for-profit company you have selected, including (use bullets for this portion):

- o Company's website (include URL)
- o Company's mission statement
- o What the company does exactly
- o Where the company is located
- o Does the company offer any similar programs to the one you are proposing, and if so, what?
- o The name of the person(s) in charge of any CSR programs at the company
- o Any other relevant information (e.g., are they publicly or privately held, etc.)

Persuasive Memo Drafts 1 & 2

The Memo Drafts are required of all students so that you will receive feedback on your paper during the writing process.

Draft 1: This draft should be at least the first three paragraphs of your paper (introduction and first two body paragraphs); however, the more you offer at this stage, the more feedback you will be able to receive. To make sure you are on the right track this draft will be reviewed by your peers.

Draft 2: This should be a substantial and revised draft; be sure you have addressed the comments from the peer reviews on Draft 1. This is an opportunity for your lab professor to ensure that you are on the right track and to offer you feedback and recommendations. This second draft should be a polished draft; do not ask your lab professor to read and respond to a draft that has not been proofread and edited at least twice. Although you are encouraged to use memo format and incorporate research at this stage, you will not be graded on format or research for this draft. Instead, your instructor will comment on the content you have provided for the assignment. Again, the more you offer at this stage, the more feedback you will receive.

Persuasive Memo Final: You will need to justify why this issue is worthy of the company's involvement, show how this issue has a logical connection to your company, and thoroughly explain how the program will operate, be implemented, and how it will benefit both the community and your company (more emphasis on the company's benefits). A logical approach to this assignment is to devote approximately a third of your paper content to each of these areas: 1) Community issue 2) Connection to company 3) Program specifics

Content Requirements:

- Select a for-profit company's headquarters.

- Select an issue local to the company’s location (headquarters) that will logically connect to your chosen organization in some way.
- Find the name of the person(s) responsible for CSR policies at your chosen organization. This is your memo audience/recipient, and you should consider this person your boss for this assignment.
- Describe the proposed CSR program.
 - o How will the program operate?
 - o How will the program be implemented?
 - o What will make it low or no cost? Use research.
 - o How will the program address the community issue?
 - o How will the program benefit the company?

Format Requirements:

- Use standard business memo format (refer to format sample on Blackboard).
- Include a strong opening that grabs the reader's attention and states the purpose of the memo, as well as a closing paragraph with an action statement that clearly identifies logical next steps in the process.
- Use first person sparingly. This memo is not about you.
- Meet the page requirement of 2.5-3 single-spaced typed pages; the required reference list does not count toward this page length requirement. Use Times New Roman, 12-point font, and make sure to have standard one-inch margins.
- Include descriptive (more than one word) headings and structure throughout the memo to create a logical flow and make your document easy for a skimmer to scan the document. The opening paragraph should either have “Executive Summary” as the heading or no heading at all (this is the only section that could go without a heading; all other sections must have headings).

Research Requirements:

- Find at least four sources that will provide support or data for your proposal. Your textbook, class materials, and the selected company’s website do not count toward the required sources. However, these sources would still need to be cited if you use any of these as additional research.
- Cite sources in the actual memo (use signal phrases and internal citations) and include a reference list in APA format. It must be clear where your research begins and ends. Please review the “citation sandwich” slide posted on Blackboard. Persuasive Memo Presentation See separate directions and rubric posted to Blackboard