WRITING SKILLS

IE University
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Academic year: 22-23
Degree course: FIRST
Semester: 1º
Category: COMPULSORY
Number of credits: 3.0
Language: English

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course.

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

Writing is a core skill for the practice of design. It is necessary for researching, promoting, communicating and analysing designs. Besides, instead of creating objects, more and more designers are producers of ideas, structures or services. Those less materialistic outcomes often involve writing as a core activity. During this course, students will learn the basics of both academic writing and the kind of writing connected to the practice of design. A wide range of texts – from academic studies to newspaper reviews – will be studied and many short texts – reports, essays, notes or introductions – will be written.

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

Through the Writing Skills course, the student will develop the ability to communicate information, ideas, problems, and solutions in writing, clearly and concisely. It is intended to prepare students so that they are fully qualified to enter the professional world in which written expression skills are required.

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Write formal, structured essays, as well as other kinds of professional texts and written communication.

- Understand the difference between editorial, corporate, creative and academic writing, and develop the ability to adapt between them.

- Learn to read critically and take notes.

- Express clear arguments, using evidence and rhetorical devices, for different contexts and audiences.

- Use credible sources of information to develop, support their topics more efficiently. - Incorporate ideas of others into their writing in a compelling and coherent way.

- Avoid plagiarism, with correctly prepared, formatted and organized references.

The key competencies resulting from the Writing Skills course are:

CB4. Transmit information, ideas, problems and solutions to both a specialized and non-specialized audience.

CG4 Understand and use the language to represent, simulate and solve problems, recognizing and evaluating the situations and problems that can be treated in the field of Design.

CE8 Expose and reason the results and work processes of one's own design objects.

CT3. Manage unforeseen situations with the ability to respond to changes in organizations.

CT5. Integrate into interdisciplinary and multicultural teams to achieve common goals in a diverse environment.

Writing Skills is part of the school's overall professional and communication skills education, through which students learn:

Strategies to design their professional careers, bringing them closer to the professional world.
How to criticaly analyse the various professional alternatives available to them.
How to apply theoretical knowledge to professional contexts.
Strategies to design and participate in high-performance teams, with emphasis on communication skills within the team.
Communication skills that might favour conflict resolution.
Different styles of leadership and management using language.
Management skills to adopt the appropriate management style for various situations, adjusted to those involved.
How to write all kinds of writings, from letters and emails to technical documents such as notes, reports, etc.

METHODOLOGY

The best way to learn to write is to write. The course is therefore centered around the practice of writing, in order to help students understand various different types of writing, for different contexts, audiences, purposes, etc.

Every week, a diferent element of writing will be covered, through a combination of lectures, discussions and practical exercises.The final project of this course consists out of a written paper in which the learned content will be applied.

Work produced in this course is not the completion of learning writing skills, but rather just the beginning - an introduction to skills and methods that students will need to apply and improve throughout their degrees and then their future careers.

Teaching methodology	Weighting	Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in
Lectures	13.33 %	10 hours
Discussions	6.67 %	5 hours
Exercises	6.67 %	5 hours
Group work	6.67 %	5 hours
Other individual studying	66.67 %	50 hours
TOTAL	100.0 %	75 hours

PROGRAM

SESSION 1 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

WHAT IS A STORY?

From the tales we were told at bedtime as children, to the books we read growing up; from the songs we listen to on Spotify, to the dramas we binge-watch on Netflix; from the reports we see on the news to the morality we take from religious texts... stories are everywhere. But how often do we stop to think about what actually goes into writing these stories? This session will give students an introduction to the art of storytelling and how it plays a part in the narrative of the world around us. Students should come prepared with a favourite book or movie in mind.

SESSION 2 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

WRITING ABOUT DESIGN

Writing is a core skill for the practice of design. It is necessary for researching, promoting, communicating and analyzing designs. Besides, instead of creating objects, more and more designers are producers of ideas, structures or services. Those less materialistic outcomes often involve writing as a core activity. During this class, we will discuss the relevance of writing for the practice of design and look at different approaches to writing about design.

SESSION 3 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

STRUCTURING IDEAS

Following from the previous class, we will look at how texts about design are structured. What are these texts really made of? What makes them effective as pieces of writing? What was the writer's process when putting it together? And what can we learn from this, for when writing and structuring our own texts?

SESSION 4 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

ACADEMIC CONVENTIONS 1

Applying the rules for academic writing is precise work.These rules do not exist to make life more difficult, but to ensure quality, originality and to provide coordination in the complex world of texts. During this class, you will learn how to master the basic conventions in academic writing in a correct and efficient way and learn about rules around things like plagiarism, sources, citations, etc. After this class, you are in the game. Professors and peers will from now on expect from you to take these rules into account for all of the texts you write during your studies.

SESSION 5 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

ACADEMIC CONVENTIONS 2
A continuation of the previous session.

SESSION 6 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

WRITING ABOUT BUILDINGS

This session will look at some inventive ways to to bring style, character and personality into writing about design and architecture.

SESSION 7 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

RESPINDING TO IMAGES

They say a picture can speak a thousand words. But how can we use words to effectively express our response to a picture? This session will focus on how to transmit a visual image to a reader who can't see it. How can we be thorough in our descriptions? Is it enough to simply describe what we see? Or do we have to find more inventive ways to convey the real sense of what we're seeing?

SESSION 8 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

DESIGN CRITICS 1

Design exists in many forms, and in areas as diverse as fashion, architecture, food and music. Central to critquing design is therefore understanding its role in different guises, and its relationship with the rest of the world. During this class, we will learn more about design-focused writing by shining a spotlight on the way critics review design.

SESSION 9 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

DESIGN CRITICS 2

A continuation of the previous session.

SESSION 10 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

INTERVIEWING

Would you rather conduct an interview? Or be interviewed? Both are tricky skills: on the one hand, asking the right questions in order to obtain the right information; on the other, providing answers that clearly and effectively convey your ideas and work.

SESSION 11 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

RHETORIC

Rhetoric was one of the esteemed arts of discourse during classical civilisation. This session will look at what rhetoric meant back then and how it might be applied now and in what contexts.

SESSION 12 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

WRITING TO SELL

The existence of every product has to be justified by its usefulness and value. As consumers, we need to be convinced of that usefulness and value in order to desire a product. How does the design industry use words to convince consumers and customers? This session looks at the language of sales, marketing and advertising in the design sector.

SESSION 13 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

FACTS

In contrast to the previous session, this session will focus on the importance of impartial, objective facts for various forms of writing, from academia to journalism. What can designers learn from journalistic writing when it comes to talking and writing about their own work? We will practice concepts like fact-checking, in order to ensure our writing is always watertight.

SESSION 14 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The English language is spoken widely across the world as a first language. However, different cultures and contexts produce different forms of speech and expression. This session will look at writings in English from various different parts of the world, in order to understand the ability of language to carry the nuances of culture, identity and history in its very words.

SESSION 15 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

FINALS

To close the term, we take a moment to focus on the final paper.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

After most classes, students will have to hand in a short written assignment related to the topic of the corresponding class.

During the term, students will also write two more substantial pieces of work, which count for more points.

At the end of the course, students will have to write a final paper that encapsulates various skills acquired during the term.

Attendance at the class is compulsory. Students present for less than 70% of sessions will be graded with a FAIL for the course.

Criteria	Percentage	Comments
Final paper	30 %	
Mid-term paper	30 %	
Short assignments	30 %	
Attendance	10 %	

SHORT WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

The smaller weekly assignments will be grades with 0, 1 or 2 points.

- 0 points: the assignment is missing or not incorrectly executed
- 1 points: the assignment is done to a satisfactory level, but contains preventable flaws
- 2 points: the assignment is done to a very high level

MID-TERM AND FINAL PAPERS

These longer written assignments will be marked according to Structure (25%), Style (25%) and Content (50%) which also includes the appropriate and correct use of sources. In each of this criteria, the following points have to be observed:

1. Structure (25%):
- the general plan of the essay evident when reading
- the connection between ideas exposed
- the proper use of paragraphs to lay out ideas and concepts
- the use of an effective introduction and conclusion

(5 = lack of cohesion or clarity, ineffective introduction or conclusion; 10 = problem with three of the above; 15 = problem with two of the above; 20 = problem with one of the above; 25 = structure totally clear)

2. Style (25%):
- the use of correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
- the proper use of academic English corresponding to university level
- the adequate use of sources and quotations

(5 = barely readable or understandable; 10 = constant errors; 15 = several key errors; 20 = few errors; 25 = no errors)

3. Content (50%):
- the originality and argumentative level of the essay
- the adequacy of the content to the question proposed
- the effecive use of relevant sources and information, beyond just summarising
- the logical connections between ideas and final conclusions
- the relevance of conclusion to the question proposed without merely repeating

(10 = contradictions, digressions, no real arguments or focus; 20 = ambiguous or unclear mission; 30 = some good ideas but not fully understood or just anecdotally explained; 40 = overall good but some parts weak or unfinished; 50 = thesis, ideas and conclusion perfectly expressed and substantiated.)

PROFESSOR BIO

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Agnish Ray is a writer, consultant and teacher from London, UK, based in Madrid. As Adjunct Professor at IE University, he teaches in programmes including the Bachelor in Design and the Bachelor in Architectural Studies. Agnish runs a strategic PR and communications consultancy service specialised in cultural fields such as art, design, architecture, literature and heritage. As a consultant, he has worked with organisations including London Design Biennale, Lisbon Architecture Triennale, Venice Architecture Biennale, Art Basel, Louvre Abu Dhabi, Fondation Louis Vuitton and Aga Khan Award for Architecture. As a journalist, he has written for media publications including The Guardian, The Times, The Telegraph, Conde Nast Traveller, Wallpaper*, The Spaces, Vogue and Esquire. Agnish holds a degree in English and Spanish from Oxford University, with a specialism in postcolonial studies.

OTHER INFORMATION

OFFICE HOURS: Availability in the hour directly after class time, or Zoom meetings available at other times, with appointments always to be requested in advance.

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