Writing in Labor and Employment Relations
The Future of Work: Challenges, Opportunities & Impact
Course Syllabus - Fall 2019

Instructor: Shawn Randy Fisher
Email: sf623@scarletmail.rutgers.edu
Course: 37:575:300
Duration: 13 weeks over 14 weeks; NO CLASS THANKSGIVING WEEK (Dec. 1)
Day Sundays, 1 pm - 3:50 pm
Dates: Sept. 8, 15, 22, 29; Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27; Nov. 3, 10, 17, 24; Dec. 8.
Location: Labor Education Center, (LEC 133) - Cook Campus
Office Hours: By Appointment - Phone / Skype / Online

Course Description
Writing in Labor and Employment Relations offers students a unique opportunity to practice writing for a business, labor or professional audience as they develop, research and revise documents focused on relevant, 21st century labor themes and the future of work. The purpose of the class is to prepare students to develop their writing and critical thinking skills in analyzing practical labor and employment issues. Students receive timely and regular feedback to help them develop their writing skills and assignments.

Learning Outcomes
The course learning outcomes are to:

- Communicate complex ideas effectively and transition from academic to professional writing for labor and employment contexts
- Demonstrate mastery of standard grammar and writing mechanics
- Utilize various strategies and organizational techniques in the writing process
- Significantly improve students' ability to write effective professional communication
- Analyze, evaluate and synthesize information and ideas from from multiple sources (i.e., audiences, purposes, situations, primary and secondary data) to generate new insights.
- Respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, and/or supervisors through successive drafts and revision.
- Develop strategies to research and facilitate communication across diverse cultures
- Recognize and avoid plagiarism
- Demonstrate visual display, user experience and presentation skills
- Develop collaborative group communication and writing skills

Required Textbook

Alred, Brusaw, and Oliu, The Business Writer’s Companion, 8th edition (2017), Bedford/St. Martin’s (online format, not the Kindle version)

Available at Amazon as an E-Book or Rental. Make sure to get the 8th edition, readings correspond to page numbers in the syllabus.

Articles & Resources

- Rutgers SMLR E-List Archives (search by month) - https://email.rutgers.edu/pipermail/smlr_net/
- Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center - https://smlr.rutgers.edu/content/education-employment-research-center-eerc
- Source for Open Education Resources - https://www.oercommons.org/search?f.search=opennow
- Education and Employment / Workforce Research Center, Others - see Google Search Keywords / Phrases

Instructor Bio

Shawn "Randy" Fisher is a communications and digital marketing specialist with an interest in helping people write well, ace their interviews and get ahead in their careers. (http://www.digiwisecareerservices.com). He has taught in three departments at Rutgers University and has consulted with organizations in the private and public sectors and nonprofits, 501c3s and social entrepreneurs. He began his career as a journalist in Canada with the Globe and Mail, Financial Post and CBC Radio. He is also an executive mentor with the Global Good Fund in Washington, DC. When he's not working or preparing for class, he enjoys taking his doggie - a lab-pointer-mix "Maggie" to Colonial Park.

Teaching Approach

- I believe that when learners are motivated, they are more likely to learn. I consider you to be adults - LEARNING IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.
- I prefer short lectures, and actively facilitated, guided and experiential discussions and 2-way, interactive activities.
  - ACTIVE AND SUBSTANTIVE PARTICIPATION IS ESSENTIAL.
- Students EARN good grades by doing the work and learning required. (I do notice improvement throughout the term.)
I am aware that juggling school, work, family, friends and relationships is stressful. Organizational skills and time management are as important, as ensuring that students adjust their expectations of themselves and their performance - and take time to adapt - to new situations, contexts, systems and processes. It will come, over time.

I try to use visuals (i.e., images, videos) when / wherever possible.

As an Adult Learner, DO NOT WAIT until you receive a "C", "D", or even an "F" on a paper, and go into high-stress, panic-mode. And yes, we certainly don't want you to fail the course. Reach out to me when you need assistance.

Course Requirements

Computers, Tablets, Phones & Electronic Devices Not Permitted In Class - 1st Class is an Exception

- **ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES** - i.e., LAPTOPS, NOTEBOOKS, TABLETS, PHONE AND ANY OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES ARE NOT PERMITTED IN CLASS UNLESS AUTHORIZED BY INSTRUCTOR. IN THIS CLASS, THE LID MUST BE CLOSED / DEVICE TURNED OFF.
- Phones are to be turned off for the duration of the class. Texting is NOT permitted. (You may use your phone during the break.)
- If a student chooses to ignore this policy, s/he will be marked as absent, and lose any points for class attendance / participation.
- Texting is not permitted.
- **Bring a Pen / Pencil and Paper to Class to take notes.**

Attendance

- Prompt attendance is required and expected for every class. We meet one (1) day a week; a second (2nd) absence may result in failure of the course.
- Absences affect the learning experience for you and your colleagues. **If you are 15 MINUTES LATE = 1 ABSENCE.** This is STRICTLY ENFORCED.
- STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE for the information presented in class, regardless of the reason for your absence. THE INSTRUCTOR WILL NOT REVIEW THE CLASS WITH YOU - YOU WILL NEED TO GET INFORMATION FROM ONE OF YOUR CLASSMATES; REVIEW THE SYLLABUS; AND CANVAS LMS.
- **Absence is NOT an excuse for late or missing work** — if you know you are going to be absent, YOU MUST SUBMIT ALL WORK BY THE DUE DATE / TIME. If you are going to be absent, it is your responsibility to let me know via email, and the reason why. For legitimate reasons, (i.e., religious holiday, medical appointment, condition), report it at: https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/}

Assignments & Deadlines
● All assignments must be submitted ONLINE to Canvas. NO HARD / PRINT COPIES accepted.
● All assignments are DUE THE NIGHT OF THE DAY WE MEET IN CLASS, the latest by 11:59 PM.
● Late papers (i.e., timestamped or received 12:00 PM) will be subject to the Late Assignment Policy
● All required assignments must be submitted to pass the course.

Special Needs / Disability & Accommodations
If you are a qualified student with special needs / disability seeking accommodations for your learning activities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to self-identify with the Office of Disability Services. (https://ods.rutgers.edu/). No accommodations will be granted without documentation from the Office of Disability Services. Should you require my assistance in facilitating the process, I will be happy to do so. Just let me know.

Students are not to bring family members or pets for day care or babysitting.

Below is the full contact information for the office of disability services:
● Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Suite A145, Piscataway, NJ 08854-8045.
● E-mail Address: dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu
● Phone: (848) 445-6800 • Fax: (732) 445-3388
● https://ods.rutgers.edu

Communications & Notifications
Canvas will be frequently used as a means of communication. Every student is responsible for any information conveyed via Canvas. Be sure that you are able to receive announcements through this platform. Check your email inbox to ensure you are receiving emails.

Readings
The majority of class time is for experiential learning and peer review. The Instructor DOES NOT REVIEW PRIOR CLASSES. Instructor may/may not cover the assigned articles, texts and resources. It is up to students to stay up-to-date - you can see which content is required by reviewing the Syllabus and the Course on the Canvas Learning Management System.

Homework
Homework is required in this course. Plan your time and activities to meet the requirements and deadlines specified in the course. Get to know your classmates and SHARE PHONE NUMBERS & EMAIL ADDRESSES. If you miss (part of) a class, you can SPEAK WITH YOUR PEERS and catch up.
Tutoring Assistance

Tutoring assistance for this course is free and available at Rutgers Writing Centers. If you need writing assistance - grammar, phrasing, clarity - Rutgers has Learning Centers - HIGHLY-RECOMMENDED! - on the different campuses that can help. You can make an appointment, send in a copy of your paper, and then get assistance. [https://rlc.rutgers.edu/home](https://rlc.rutgers.edu/home) (Links to an external site.)

You will be able to make an appointment and meet in-person with a writing coach, and possibly online - you will have to check. Visit: [https://rlc.rutgers.edu/services/academic-coaching/schedule-appointment](https://rlc.rutgers.edu/services/academic-coaching/schedule-appointment)

Classroom behavior

It is the University policy that free discussion, inquiry, and expression are encouraged in class. However, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class; or (b) the ability of students to benefit from the instruction is not acceptable. Examples may include routinely entering class late or departing early; use of beepers, cellular telephones, or other electronic devices; repeatedly talking in class without being recognized; talking while others are speaking; or arguing in a way that is perceived as “crossing the civility line.” In the event of a situation where a student legitimately needs to carry a beeper/cellular telephone to class, prior notice and approval of the instructor is required. Classroom behavior which is deemed inappropriate and cannot be resolved by the student and the faculty member may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct ([http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/](http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/)) for administrative or disciplinary review as per the Code of Student Conduct which may be found at [https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/studentconduct/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2017/05/UCSC2016.pdf](https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/studentconduct/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2017/05/UCSC2016.pdf)

Final Grades (breakdown)

- Class Participation & Discussions - Posts and Substantive Replies - 10%
- Resume + Cover Letter - 20%
- Memo / Progress Report - 40%
- Background Note / Recommendations - 20%
- Reflection: Course Learnings & Real-World Application - 10%

- See: [Assignment Instructions](#)

IMPORTANT NOTES

- All Assignments MUST be submitted to pass course
Assignments are graded A-F (A, B+, B, C+, C, F)

Grading Criteria (Equivalency)

- A 93-100
- B+ 87-89
- B 83-86
- C+ 77-79
- C 73-76
- D+ 67-60
- D 63-66
- F less than 60

Pre-Course: Preparation & Guidance

Required Text
Amazon (Blue-Cover) 1. Buy OR Rent the E-Textbook Version -

Readings (Throughout Semester)

- Alred, Chapter 11 - Grammar
  - "Dangling Modifiers, p. 349
  - "Person", p. 360
  - "Sentence Construction to Sentence Fragments", pp. 370-377
  - "Tense, Verbs and Active Voice", pp. 377-385
- Alred, Chapter 12 - Punctuation and Mechanics, pp. 388-423
- Alred, Chapter 10 - Style and Clarity
  - "Business Writing to Loaded Arguments", pp. 306-319;
  - "Tone to You", pp. 328-334.

Week 1: Course Intro / Review Syllabus

Activities (in class)

- Course / Assignment Review
- Writing IS a Craft
- Mini-Intros
- 3Ps activity
- Complete Email Address & Contact Info (Google Sheet)

Readings (Throughout Semester)
See Pre-Course Preparation & Guidance (before Week 1)

Writing Guidelines: Grammar (G), Sentence Construction (SC) & Punctuation (P)
See Pre-Course Preparation & Guidance (before Week 1)

Watch / Listen

Allan Little - BBC Journalism Skills: Principles of Good Writing for News (0:01-3:04; (14:45)
Black Panther-Inspired Urban Farming video

Homework

Weekly Discussions
Add Your Current Resume Version V1.0 to Canvas
1. For Week 1, DO NOT UPDATE / REVISE YOUR RESUME
2. When you name your document, add the Version Number - V1.0 - For example, "Shawn_Fisher_Resume_V1.0"
3. Bring four (4) printed copies to class - Resume
4. Bring four (4) printed copies of the Job Description too!

Bring to Next Class
Transferable Skills document (completed)
Original / Current Resume AND Advertised Job in Your Profession / Field - PRINT four (4) COPIES OF EACH DOCUMENT
1. DO NOT UPDATE / REVISE YOUR RESUME. You will receive feedback in class to help you do that.
2. The Job Description should be for a role you want to apply for, after graduation
3. Save a copy of the Job Description (as a PDF - because the ad may not always be available).
4. You will need to submit the Job Description for Assignment 1

Week 2: Effective Writing for Job Applications I (CAR Stories + Resumes)

Activities (in class)
Transferable Skills
CAR Stories Make Compelling Reading / Resumes
   CAR Stories & Feedback (call and response)
Resume Review + Job Ad (Remember to bring four (4) copies of each)
   See Writing Guidelines & Formatting Rules

Readings
- Alred, Chapter 9, Job Search and Applications - Resumes, pp. 282-300.

Watch / Listen
- TED TALK: Highlight Your Ability not Your Experience, Jason Shem (6:30)
- Funny Video about Resumes
- Prof. Fisher - Video Review of Job Description, Cover Letter & Resume

Homework
- Weekly Discussions - Three (3) CAR Stories (DRAFT)
- Add Revised Resume V2.0 to Canvas
  1. Aligned to your desired job / Job Description
  2. Based on what we learned / covered in class
  3. Based on your Partner’s / Table feedback / suggestions
  4. Name it with your First Name and Last Name and Assignment Name (i.e., Shawn Fisher_Resume Version 2).

Week 3: Effective Writing for Job Applications II (CAR Stories, Research + Cover Letters)

Activities (in class)
- Learning Review
- Review Resumes + CAR Stories (DRAFT)
- Research Job Ad, Company, etc.
- Following Directions / Instructions - HR / Govt Forms

Readings
- Application and Cover Letters, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Homework
- Weekly Discussions
- Revise Cover Letter - with feedback received
- Assignment 1 - Resume, Cover Letter & Job Ad DUE Next Class (Week 4)

Week 4: Labor Themes - Changing Nature of Work & Universal Basic Income

Activities (in-class)
- Resume Assignment Review - Highlight Changes to Revised Resume (V4.0)
- Cover Letter - write Cover Letter (DRAFTS) - aligned to Job Description & Industry
  - (Professor to provide Cover Letter example / template)
Bullets (bullet points) & Big Words - Kickstart Your Writing!

Peer GROUP Worksheet

Readings

- Alred, *Outlining and Paragraphs*, pp. 23-29
- Subscribe to: SMLR E-List Archives
- Visit website: Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center - [https://smlr.rutgers.edu/content/education-employment-research-center-eerc](https://smlr.rutgers.edu/content/education-employment-research-center-eerc)
- Anthony Goldbloom: The jobs we’ll lose to machines — and the ones we won’t TED 2016 (4:36) - [https://www.ted.com/talks/anthony_goldbloom_the_jobs_we_ll_lose_to_machines_and_the_ones_we_won_t](https://www.ted.com/talks/anthony_goldbloom_the_jobs_we_ll_lose_to_machines_and_the_ones_we_won_t)

Watch / Listen

2. Erik Brynjolfsson: The key to growth? Race with the machines TED 2013 (11:53) - [https://www.ted.com/talks/erik_brynjolfsson_the_key_to_growth_race_em_with_em_the_machines](https://www.ted.com/talks/erik_brynjolfsson_the_key_to_growth_race_em_with_em_the_machines)

Universal Basic Income

- Universal Basic Income, Waking Up with Sam Harris, Podcast Episode #130 (Start at 4:00 minutes)
  - Sam Harris interviews Andrew Yang - 2020 Presidential candidate and entrepreneur - . (Sam Harris is a neuroscientist, philosopher, and best-selling author Sam Harris as he explores important and controversial questions about the human mind, society, and current events.
- Rainer Strack: The Workforce Crisis of 2030 — and how to start solving it now (12:47) -
- Google futurist and director of engineering: Basic income will spread worldwide by the 2030s, Business Insider, April 14, 2018

The Importance of Unions & the Union Movement (according to Bernie Sanders)

- Bernie Sanders Explains Unions to Young People, YouTube, (9:10)

Homework

- Weekly Discussions
Week 5: Labor Themes: Labor Standards, Risks & Research

Activities (in-class)

- Peer GROUP Review

Readings

- The Disposable Plight of Adjunct Professors, Washington Post, February 2019
- Are you an employee or a contractor? Carpenters, strippers and dog walkers now face that question, in LA Times, by Margot Roosevelt, February 23, 2019 (assigned by Prof. Naomi Williams)

Watch

- TBD

Labor Readings & Resources

Labor law, standards, regulations - for employment information, unemployment numbers, and updated legal information

2. New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development - https://nj.gov/labor/

Historical overviews:

- Philip Dray, There is Power in a Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America
- Priscilla Murolo & A. B. Chitty, From the Folks Who Brought You the Weekend

Economic & Labor Policy & Implications:

- Economic Policy Institute, https://www.epi.org/about/ - good source for ideas on how to think about projects' broader implications
- New Labor Forum – https://newlaborforum.cuny.edu/ - A labor journal of the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies that deals with new research and debates on working-class issues

Watch / Listen

- Prof. Fisher - Video - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoOMJDDAsrs - Using RefCheck & Rutgers Library / Databases

Homework

- Weekly Discussions
Activities (in-class)

- Assignment 1 - Cover Letter & Resume Review
- Grammar, Sentence Construction, Punctuation
- Guest Speaker - Heads-Up
- Memo Assignment / Template, Due Date
  - Memo Template Example - Peer GROUP Review

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Write Context / Organization Type, Products / Services - Name of Company, What is Changing / Proposed / For Whom? Why? When? How?
- Write 3-5 bullet points for Each Group BELOW
  - Employees / Labour; Customers; Suppliers; Investors; Government/Regulatory; Community; Other Impacts
  2. Who is responsible? What will you be asking of him / her to help you make decisions
  3. What is their likely response / challenges / resistance / motivations

Readings

- Alred, Memos, pp. 99-102
- Alred, Chapter 11 - Grammar
  - "Dangling Modifiers, p. 349
  - "Person", p. 360
  - "Sentence Construction to Sentence Fragments", pp. 370-377
  - "Tense, Verbs and Active Voice", pp. 377-385
- Alred, Chapter 12 - Punctuation and Mechanics, pp. 388-423

Changing Nature of Work

- Watch Out Workers, Algorithms Are Coming to Replace You — Maybe, by David Kaufman, NYT, October 18, 2018 (Summary: Mr. Harari recently spoke about the benefits and dangers of A.I. and its potential to upend the ways we live, learn and work. The conversation has been edited and condensed. [https://nyti.ms/2EwVcQd](https://nyti.ms/2EwVcQd))
- 50 Employee Relations Issues You Should Be Documenting, by Debbie Miller, HR Acuity blog, 2012
- 7 Compliance Issues Every HR Leader Should Know, HRDive, January 29, 2019
- 6 Books on the Future of Work that Every HR Professional Should Read, SHRM, Sept. 2018 -
Questions to Consider

1. What impact will automation have on work?
2. What are possible scenarios for employment growth?
3. Will there be enough work in the future?
4. What will automation mean for skills and wages?
5. How will automation affect Labor and Employment Relations?

Watch


Homework

- Write and Submit MEMO (Draft / Version 1) - 5 Bullet Points for each Stakeholder Group on the Template: Employees / Labour; Customers; Suppliers; Investors; Government / Regulatory; Community; Other Impacts
- Weekly Discussions

Week 7 - Amazon, NYC Pushback and the Media

- Instructions for next draft / version of Memo Assignment - Write one (1) paragraph for each stakeholder group: Employees/Labour; Customers; Suppliers; Investors; Government/Regulatory; Community; Other Impacts

Activities (in-class)

- Guest Speaker - Jon Sarlin, CNN Producer

(ﯷJon Sarlin is a producer with CNN Digital covering big tech. Sarlin’s coverage has included reporting on antitrust, misinformation on digital platforms, and Amazon’s HQ2 search. Prior to working at CNN, Sarlin worked for HLN, Al Jazeera and BBC America. He is a graduate of Kenyon College in Ohio and a New York City native. )

- Peer GROUP Review (for content the speaker presents)

Readings

- Amazon Patented System to Put Workers in a Cage on Top of a Robot, Sept. 7, 2018 in Seattle Times


Amazon’s Aggressive Anti-Union Tactics Revealed in Leaked 45-Minute Video, by Bryan Menegus, Gizmodo, Sept 25, 2018

Summary: Amazon, the country’s second-largest employer, has so far remained immune to any attempts by U.S. workers to form a union. With rumblings of employee organization at Whole Foods — which Amazon bought for $13.7B in 2017 — a 45-minute union-busting training video produced by the company was sent to Team Leaders of the grocery chain last week, according to sources with knowledge of the store’s activities. Recordings of that video, obtained by Gizmodo, provide valuable insight into the company’s thinking and tactics.

Amazon has patented a system that would put workers in a cage on top of a robot - https://www.seattletimes.com/business/amazon/amazon-has-patented-a-system-that-would-put-workers-in-a-cage-on-top-of-a-robot/, in Seattle Times, Seattle Times, September 7, 2018

Uber Drivers Lose Big Class Certification Case, Sept 26, 2018

Summary: The Ninth Circuit issued its decision in O’Conner v. Uber, a class action that centered on drivers’ claim that they should be classified as employees. The Ninth Circuit reversed the district court’s order to certify the class action, holding that the drivers must arbitrate their claims individually because arbitration agreements they signed with Uber prevented class claims.

The Race to Replace Farmworkers with Robots, Washington Post, February 17, 2019

How Amazon Blew Its Chance in New York, by Lydia DePillis, CNN Business

Watch


Homework

1. Arrange the five (5) Bullet Points into a logical sequence and write concisely including all of the points in a single paragraph. 1 paragraph per Stakeholder group: Employees / Labor; Customers; Suppliers; Investors; Government / Regulatory; Community; Other Impacts

2. PRINT FOUR (4) COPIES OF YOUR ASSIGNMENT - AND BRING TO NEXT CLASS. Make sure your first name, last name, phone number and Rutgers email address are at the top of the document.
### Weekly Discussions

#### Week 8: Assignment Review & Feedback

- Assignment Feedback
  1. Primary Research - Interviewing (1-1)
  2. Secondary / Literature Research (Library, Internet)

#### Activities (in-class)

- Peer Group Review
- TBD

#### Readings

- Alred, Chapter 4 - *Progress and Activity Reports*, p. 117-119
- Alred, Chapter 4 - *Proposals to Quotation Marks*, p. 120-136
- Alred, Chapter 10 - *Style and Clarity*
  - "Business Writing to Loaded Arguments", pp. 306-319;
  - Tone to You", pp. 328-334.
- [Student Debt is Dragging an Entire Generation Down: Here's Why So Many Americans Feel Cheated By Their Student Loans](https://www.buzzfeed.com/annehelen/peteron/student-debt-is-dragging-an-entire) by Anne Helen Peteron, BuzzFeed News, February 9, 2019

#### Watch / Listen

- TBD

#### Homework

- TBD
- *Weekly Discussions*

#### Week 9: TBD

### Activities (in-class)

- TBD

### Readings

- TBD

### Watch / Listen

- TBD

### Homework
● FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT DRAFT - PRINT FOUR (4) COPIES & BRING TO CLASS. Make sure your first name, last name, phone number and Rutgers email address are at the top of the document.

● Weekly Discussions - NONE THIS WEEK

Week 10-11: TBD

● Weekly Discussions - NONE THIS WEEK

Week 12: Assignment Review & Feedback

● Weekly Discussions - NONE THIS WEEK

Week 13: Review Assignment (DRAFT) + Course / Instructor Evaluation

●