New England College
School of Graduate and Professional Studies

Courses for the Master of Arts in Professional Writing

PW 5000: Professional Writing and Rhetoric:
This foundational course is designed to introduce students to the MA in Professional Writing program, and specifically to the historical and rhetorical background of professional writing. Students will explore professional writing's emergence as a distinct field of scholarship that is firmly grounded in a rhetorically-centered approach to understanding communication. Throughout this inquiry students will study the theories, history, and concepts of professional writing in relation to professional writing practices and situations. Students will also start the process of maintaining a working electronic portfolio they will keep throughout the program in preparation for the final portfolio course.

PW 5010: Research Methods:
This course introduces students to the theory, methods and ethics of conducting research in professional writing contexts. Students learn to conduct and evaluate research that may include user-centered design, rhetorical and discourse analysis, historical methods, ethnography, and document and usability testing. The course will conclude with an individual research proposal that includes the creation of professional writing documents for a specific intended audience in preparation for the capstone.

PW 5020: Editing in the Professions:
The course is designed to introduce students to the concepts and methods of editing professional-quality documents. Students will be exposed to the writing and editing standards and etiquette found in a variety of disciplines, including editing for business and organizations. Comprehensive editing processes will be developed and students will gain the skills needed to work in copyediting

PW 5400: Writing for the Media and Public Relations:
This course focuses on understanding the basic concepts, skills, and practices of writing for the media and public relations. Communication protocols that involve the media and specific writing tasks such as writing for television, print, and radio are covered. Specific writing assignments may include articles, press releases, and scripts, media kits, personality profiles, speeches, and writing for public relation campaigns and media conferences.

PW 5500: The New Media:
This course will introduce students to critical concepts and practical skills related to writing for those new media that have developed out of the use of digital computers, such as writing for the internet (online publications, blogs, email, chat, social networks, text messaging, etc.) and computer games. Image manipulation, software developments, desktop publishing tools, and instructional design concepts will also be covered in relation to actual professional writing tasks and opportunities.

PW 5600: Business and Technical Communication:
The course is designed to cover the purposes and styles of business and technical writing and to offer students a variety of focused writing exercises structured around scenarios or actual work situations. Within the course students will learn how to write a wide assortment of business and technical documents ethically such as letters, memorandums, reports, proposals, cover letters, resumes, questionnaires, brochures, technical reports, FAQs, presentations, and/or manuals and technical documents that require technical explanations.

PW 6950: Portfolios in Professional Writing
All students maintain a digital Working Portfolio throughout the course of the Professional Writing Program. In this course students will conceptualize, arrange, and realize their Working Portfolio into a final Academic Portfolio, as well as into a quality online Professional (Marketing) Portfolio targeted at a specific employer or professional writing specialty. Student portfolios will include writing from an assortment of genres and should demonstrate versatility as well as depth.

PW 7100 (1-4): Capstone in Professional Writing: (Pass/Fail)
The culminating project for the Master of Arts in Professional Writing program will be the completion of a Master's thesis or Capstone project. This will be an original document that involves research based upon methodologies learned in the Research Methods course and may take a variety of forms such as a major research paper that contributes to the scholarship within the field of Professional Writing, or an experiential writing project on a subject that reflects audience-centered design principles in any relevant form (websites, blogs, trade articles, etc.). Students may focus their Capstone on a specific rhetorical issue related to the discipline of Professional Writing, or the project itself may be reflective of other interests as long as the project demonstrates the student's ability to carry out independent research, reflect upon that research, and articulate new knowledge through skills learned throughout the Professional Writing program. The process of working on the Capstone is broken into four one-credit sequences. Capstone projects must be approved by the MA in Professional Writing Program Director, must demonstrate excellence in writing, and must display mastery of skills learned throughout the MA in Professional Writing program.