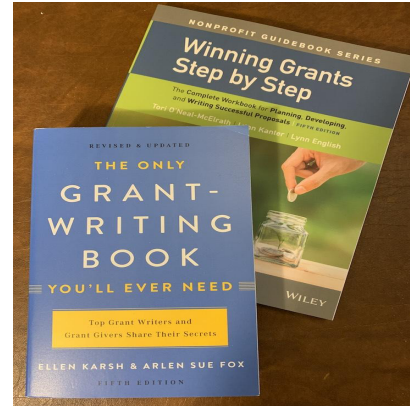# TCOM 5350
Writing Grants and Proposals

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Virtual Office Hours: T/TH 10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. & by appointment

Fall 2023 | CRN 84886 | Section 01 | 3.0 credits | Online

Course Description

Writing Grants and Proposals is one of the most challenging types of technical writing, almost always performed by teams working on tight deadlines and with limited direct contact with their audiences. Most proposals go unfunded, and sometimes decision-makers provide little or no rationale for their decisions. For these and other reasons, proposal writing can be frustrating and intimidating — even terrifying. Therefore, we will focus on learning the processes of developing proposals and grants, from writing small, internal requests to generating large documents based on external requests for proposals.

Effective proposal writers just shrug their shoulders, dive in, and do the best they can, adapting by being reflective about their work, being systematic and structural, and seeking ways to measure their effectiveness over time. I've been fairly successful writing proposals and grants myself— though I was just rejected by a funder I thought was a very good fit—and I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to teach this course. I hope to help you develop skills, experiences, and knowledge that can be very useful in many writing contexts, and I'm eager to learn more as you all share your approaches and experiences with me.

Such work is essential as demand for extramural funding increases, especially in the humanities and social sciences. The old model—"Here's your money"—has been replaced by "Show me you deserve some money." That's true at a variety of levels. And of course, **proposal writing is, like all writing, discipline, and context-specific:** so, the processes, rhetorics, genres, and content of grants vary widely. With that in mind, we'll talk about ways proposal writers have to approach working in disciplines outside their own.

As in all of my classes, **I am eager to shape the content, teaching methods, and day-to-day work of the course to meet your needs.** Hence my request for you to complete this survey about your grant and proposal writing experience and overall goals. I further invite you to continue offering feedback throughout the semester, targeting issues large and small.

Course Outcomes

With a tight focus on writing grants and proposals, we are able to develop focused goals and objectives:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the elements of typical grants and proposals.
- Learn to read requests for proposals and prepare checklists and planning documents based on them.
- Generate proposals based on unsolicited scenarios.
- Construct work plans based on understanding the large and external proposal process.
- Respond to formal requests for proposals (RFPs).
- Develop professional, technical, persuasive, and clear writing skills.

Required Materials

You can find the following textbooks at Amazon, Von's, Follett's, or University Book Store.

1) Johnson-Sheehan, R. (2023). *Writing proposals*, 3rd edition. (Don't buy this book. I have a free copy for you.)
2) Karsh, E. and Fox, A. S. (2019). *The only grant-writing book you'll ever need*, 5th ed. New York, NY: Carroll & Graf Publishers. ISBN: 9781541617810
3) O'Neal-McElrath, T. et al. (2019). *Winning grants step by step*, 5th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley/Blackwell. ISBN 9781119547341

Grading Plan

- Your final grade will be calculated according to the following scale. The percentage refers to the worth of each activity category as a component of the final course grade. Unless otherwise indicated, each assigned activity within the activity categories is graded on a 100 scale. The assignments include a variety of activities designed to help you master the final deliverables.
- No assignment/activity should be considered optional, as each activity builds on prior knowledge designed to move your learning ahead.
- Note there are no exams in this class. The activities are designed to test your application of the course materials.
- There is no extra credit.

Assignments

In this course, you will write two major proposals. The first will be an "internal" proposal that pitches a solution to a campus-based or local problem. The external proposal will be written for a real client or for a project of your own. Here is the weight on each assignment, adding up to the final grade:

Proposal Analysis………………………………………………………………………….100
(Content, Organization, Style, Design)

Unsolicited Proposal Project………………………………………………………...300
(Background Section, Project Plan Section, Full Proposal, peer workshop, reflective memo)

External Proposal Project…………………………………………………………....380
(Pre-Proposal Letter, Finding and Annotating an RFP, Full Proposal, Elevator Pitch, peer workshop Reflective Memo)

Discussion Posts (10) ..…………………………………………………………...……...120
Final Reflection…………………………………………………………….……………100

Your documents should look professional, usually single-spaced with 12-point font, 1-inch margins, and headings. Your proposals should not look like double-spaced college papers unless the client or funding source asks for that format.

Grading

Here's the meaning behind the numbers I put on your work (you can use these statements as clues about how you might work toward a higher grade):

Quality of Work	Point Range	Grade
Excellent work – exceeds all requirements with minimal or no errors.	1000–900	A
Very-good/good work – exceeds/meets most requirements with few significant errors.	899–800	B
Fair/adequate work – meets most/some requirements, but with fundamental errors.	799–700	C
Flawed work – meets few requirements; has excessive errors.	699–600	D
Does not meet the assignment's requirements. In the workplace, your supervisor would assume that you don't care about your job.	Below 600	F

*You must complete all four projects to pass the class. **No rounding up. All grades are final.

If you think I have misjudged or misinterpreted your work, don't get angry. Join my virtual office hours and talk to me about it. If you want or need a particular grade in this course, start working toward that grade right now. Don't wait until the end (or even the middle) of the semester to decide that you need a B or an A.

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

In an online class, the term attendance might seem like an oxymoron; however, the importance of regular access and engagement with class materials is imperative to your learning and to the satisfactory completion of this course. This graduate-level course presupposes that you will be responsible for all of the activities assigned within the context of the course. That means that in some instances you will create preliminary components of the major assignments for comment and review. These preliminary assignments are an integral part of your learning and of the collaborative nature of this course and are not optional. However, they will not receive a separate grade from the larger project. All components must be completed in order for a project to be graded. This is how I use the concept of online attendance and track participation.

Virtual Office Forum

This space within Blackboard serves as a repository for questions and answers. I ask that you check in the virtual office space first to see if a question you have may have already been answered. I will check

this space often and respond as quickly as possible; however, if you need an immediate response please contact me directly by e-mail or phone. I also encourage you to converse with one another in this space, if you're able to answer a question for another student.

I also hold virtual office hours (when you can drop in and out of Blackboard Collaborate) Mondays and Fridays from 10 am-11 am (Central Time). If you'd like to visit IRL (in real life) or one-on-one digitally, schedule an office visit with me. Simply send an e-mail or call me and we will find a mutually convenient time to visit.

What If I Get Stuck?

If you're struggling with course content, projects, or deadlines, please reach out to me before the deadline passes. I won't be able to address project-related discussions after the deadline. Feel free to send me an email to ask questions or schedule an appointment.

Grammar and Punctuation

Let's hope you have mastered grammar and punctuation by now. If you know you have a grammar problem or are weak in some area of punctuation (like commas) look it up on the Purdue OWL. Typically, funding agencies and potential clients won't turn down a proposal merely because they found a couple of grammar mistakes. However, if they find several grammar mistakes, they begin to question whether you and your organization understand the importance of quality. Just as grammar mistakes will significantly lower the chances that your proposal will be accepted, they will also lower the grade you earn on written work. We will be reviewing grammar and punctuation rules throughout the semester.

Student with Disabilities

If you are eligible for academic accommodations because you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please schedule an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your needs. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Disability Resource Center for an impairment/condition that may require accommodations and/or classroom modifications.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Integrity is especially important in professional writing because you need to learn how to do your own work, and you don't want to run afoul of copyright laws. You will be responsible for producing original work in this course. If you hand in work that is not your own, you will be failed for the assignment and/or the course and reported to the Dean of Students. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in their academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Please be aware that plagiarized work and any form of academic dishonesty will result in an "F" on the assignment. SHSU Academic Policy Statement 810213 outlines the definition of academic honesty and the related disciplinary procedures.

You should also familiarize yourself with Academic Policy Statement 900823, which outlines the procedures for students to file an academic grievance should you wish to appeal your grade for reasons other than academic dishonesty. Please read over these policies.

Absences on Religious Holy Days, Students with Disabilities, and other information about your rights and responsibilities as a member of this class can be found at: http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus. Additionally, you will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

As artificial intelligence, primarily in the form of chatbots, has further evolved, we must address the use of AI-assisted writing in a writing classroom. As a technical communicator, I recognize that professional writers will increasingly collaborate with AI especially in grant and proposal writing to produce documentation. Originality remains a core value in higher education and professional contexts. To that end, I do allow and at times even encourage students to use technological resources at their disposal, including AI, to assist them with developing their original work. When using AI, students should:

- Use AI to assist in short inquiries, to offer guidance on formatting or structure, or for inspiration (as you might use other digital tools when seeking assistance)
- Disclose the assistance of AI when you use the technology to create an image or draft specific language that gets included in your work.
- Offer enough detail regarding disclosure so that I am clear on which information was taken from AI and where your own thoughts, knowledge, and practice intersect.

Submitting work entirely or substantially generated through AI is unethical and a mix of plagiarism, collusion, and abuse of academic resources. **Doing so will result in a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.**