

Professional Writing, B.A.

The B.A. in Professional Writing

Professional Writing (PW) is grounded in rigorous study of rhetoric, argument, and genre, preparing students to create clear and effective communication for diverse audiences and real-world contexts — skills that remain foundational as communication platforms and professional contexts continue to evolve.

The major is deliberately structured as a flexible degree, allowing students to tailor their coursework to their own interests and goals. Students build professional experience and develop their portfolios through campus publications, internships, and writing-related work on and off campus. The combination of applied experience and rigorous rhetorical training prepares graduates for diverse careers in writing and communication, including corporate communication, public and media relations, marketing, editing and publishing, journalism, and advocacy writing. The degree also prepares graduates for advanced study in fields such as law, medicine, and rhetoric and writing.

Program Learning Outcomes

- **Professional Writing Proficiency:** Produce professional documents across standard genres (correspondence, reports, instructions, proposals) and platforms (print and digital media) that demonstrate mastery of writing conventions, including grammar, clarity, concision, and organization.
- **Rhetorical Knowledge and Analysis:** Apply rhetorical theory and principles to analyze communication as a complex rhetorical process; evaluate existing documents, identify strengths and weaknesses, and adapt information for different audiences, purposes, and contexts.
- **Professional and Ethical Practice:** Apply professional writing ethics, particularly the responsible use of information; and demonstrate professional workplace behaviors including collaborating effectively, meeting deadlines, and addressing organizational concerns in communications

Curriculum

In addition to fulfilling all of the Dietrich College of the Humanities & Social Sciences degree requirements for B.A. candidates, Professional Writing majors must fulfill **13 courses** for a **minimum of 111 units**.

Professional Writing Core (10 courses) 84 units

Departmental Core Requirement (1 course) 9 units

Introductory Genre Writing Course		Units
76-212	Introduction to TV Writing	9
76-260	Introduction to Writing Fiction	9
76-261	Intro to Writing Creative Nonfiction	9
76-265	Introduction to Writing Poetry	9
76-269	Introduction to Screenwriting	9

Professional Writing Core Requirements (4 courses) 30 units

Professional Writing Core Courses		
76-271	Introduction to Professional and Technical Writing	9
76-300	Professional Seminar	3
76-373	Argument	9
76-390	Style	9

Rhetoric Requirement (1 course) 9 units

Complete one course from a set of varied offerings in Rhetoric. These courses focus explicitly on language and discourse as objects of study and emphasize the relationships of language, text structure, and meaning within specific contexts. Courses include but are not limited to the following:

Rhetoric Courses		
76-219	Law & Blame	9
76-318	Communicating in the Global Marketplace	9
76-325	Intertextuality	9

76-327	Equity & Communication: Strategies for Institutional Change	9
76-384	Race, Nation, and the Enemy	9
76-389	Rhetorical Grammar	9
76-393	Narrative & Argument	9
76-415	Mediated Power and Propaganda	9
76-416	Rhetorics of Race & Empire	9
76-425	Rhetoric, Science, and the Public Sphere	9
76-427	Topics in Rhetoric: Audience	9
76-473	Rhetoric & the Construction of Race	9
76-475	Law, Performance, and Identity	9
76-476	Rhetoric of Science	9
76-479	Model Minorities? Race, Rhetoric, & Identity in Asian America	9
76-490	Digital Rhetorics	9
76-492	Rhetoric of Public Policy	9

Advanced Writing/Rhetoric Courses (4 courses) 36-42 units

Complete four courses from a set of varied offerings in Advanced Writing/Rhetoric offered by the Department of English. Options include all courses that fulfill the Rhetoric requirement above, plus additional courses in specialized areas of professional writing listed directly below. Students should select courses in consultation with their Department of English academic advisor or the Director of Professional & Technical Writing. Courses include but are not limited to the following:

76-301	Internship Please see the Department of English policy on Internship for Credit under "Other Programs/ Opportunities."	var.
76-306	Editing and Publishing (instructor permission required)	Var.
76-307	Advanced Editing & Publishing (instructor permission required)	Var.
76-314	Data Stories	9
76-354	Watchdog Journalism	9
76-366	Grant and Proposal Writing	9
76-368	Role Playing Game Writing Workshop	12
76-372	News Writing	9
76-375	Emerging Technologies in Writing	9
76-380	Methods in Humanities Analytics	9
76-388	Coding for Humanists	9
76-389	Rhetorical Grammar	9
76-391	Document & Information Design	9
76-393	Narrative & Argument	9
76-395	Science Writing	9
76-455	The Pittsburgh Review of Books (PRoB)	9
76-464	Creative Nonfiction Workshop	9
76-474	Software Documentation	9
76-481	Introduction to Multimedia Design	12
76-483	Research Methods in Technical & Professional Communication	9
76-487	Information Architecture & Content Strategy Co-requisite course: 76-488 Information Architecture & Content Strategy Lab (3.0 units)	9
76-488	Information Architecture & Content Strategy Lab Co-requisite course: 76-487 Information Architecture & Content Strategy (9.0 units)	3
76-494	Healthcare Communications	9

English Electives (3 courses) 27 units

Complete three courses for a minimum of 27 units from any of the English Department's offerings (with the exception of 76-270 Writing for the Professions, which is designed for non-majors), while adhering to the following specifics:

- One of the three English Electives may be at the 200-level; the remaining two English Electives must be at the 300- or 400-level.

- Two of the three English Electives must be courses designated as **Text/Context Electives**, which focus on the relationship between texts and their cultural and historical contexts.

Text/Context Electives

Text/Context Electives		
76-203	Literature & Culture in the 18th Century	9
76-207	Special Topics in Literature & Culture	9
76-210	Banned Books	9
76-211	Model Minorities?: Introduction to Asian American Studies	9
76-217	Literature & Culture of the 20th and 21st Century	9
76-219	Law & Blame	9
76-221	Books You Should Have Read By Now	9
76-220	Mystery! From Detective Fiction to True Crime	9
76-230	Literature & Culture in the 19th Century	9
76-236	CMU Prison Education Project:	12
76-239	Introduction to Film Studies	9
76-241	Introduction to Gender Studies	9
76-242	American Woman Writers	9
76-244	Immigrant Fictions	9
76-245	Shakespeare: Tragedies & Histories	9
76-247	Shakespeare: Comedies and Romances	9
76-259	Film History	9
76-268	Comic Books & Pop Culture	9
76-278	Japanese Film and Literature: The Art of Storytelling	9
76-295	Russian Cinema: From the Bolshevik Revolution to Putin's Russia	9
76-296	20th Century Russian Masterpieces	9
76-299	19th Century Russian Masterpieces	9
76-312	Crime and Justice in American Film	9
76-314	Data Stories	9
76-317	Contemporary American Fiction	9
76-326	Contemporary Global Fiction	9
76-329	Performing Race in Early Modern Drama	9
76-337	Intersectional Feminism	9
76-339	Topics in Film and Media	9
76-341	The Age of Jane Austen	9
76-342	Love: A Cultural History	9
76-343	Rise of the American Novel	9
76-347	Major Fiction	9
76-348	Adaptation: Fiction to Film	9
76-350	Critical Theories about Literature	9
76-353	Transnational Feminisms: Fiction and Film	9
76-362	Reading in Forms: Nonfiction	9
76-363	Reading in Forms: Poetry	9
76-364	Reading in Forms: Fiction	9
76-367	Fact Into Film: Translating History into Cinema	9
76-370	Independent Study in Literary and Cultural Studies (instructor permission required)	Var.
76-376	Crafting Race in 19th-Century Britain	9
76-382	Media: Past, Present, and Future	9
76-392	Special Topics in Literature & Culture	9
76-401	Hollywood vs. the World	9
76-407	Topics in Literary & Cultural Studies	9
76-409	History of German Film	9
76-410	The Long Eighteenth Century	9
76-414	Decolonial Imaginaries	9
76-423	Transnational Feminisms	9
76-424	Theories of Social Class	9
76-429	Introduction to Computational Humanities	9
76-431	Gender Play in Early Modern Drama	9
76-434	Literature & Social Change in the 19th Century	9
76-439	Seminar in Film and Media Studies	9
76-442	Black Lives in Pre-1900 Britain	9
76-445	Milton	9
76-446	Revenge Tragedy	9

76-450	Law, Culture, and the Humanities	9
76-452	Generations and Culture	9
76-453	Literature of Empire	9
76-454	Rise of the Blockbuster	9
76-461	Refugee Stories: Literature, Art and Film	9
76-467	Crime Fiction and Film	9
76-468	Space and Mobilities	9
76-482	Rise of the Art Film	9
76-495	Other People's Words: The History, Theory, and Practice of Interviews	9

Double Counting

Students may double count up to two advisor-approved courses with other programs outside of the Department of English. **Note:** courses being used for the **Dietrich General Education** requirements do not have a double-counting limit.

Transfer Courses

Students may transfer up to two advisor-approved courses from other non-CMU programs/institutions toward the primary major in Professional Writing, **with the exception of the Departmental Core Requirement course and the Professional Writing Core Requirement courses.** If the two-course maximum is met, other related transfer courses will be considered for general education requirements and free electives for graduation. Please see the **Dietrich College Advanced Standing and Transfer Credit Policy** (<https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/advisory-center/scheduling-classes/ap-and-transfer-credit.html>) for more information.

Recommended Curriculum Pathway: B.A. in Professional Writing

This plan is the recommended pathway for completing the B.A. in Professional Writing in four years. While it is not required for students to follow this pathway precisely, it is highly recommended for students to do so, and we recommend students begin the major's courses as early as possible. Students in Dietrich College may declare their primary major as early as their second semester. Students who have not declared their major in the Department of English may still take courses with us.

Students may also view the pathway for the B.A. in Professional Writing via the **Stellic Degree Audit Application** (<https://www.cmu.edu/es/stellic/>).

First-Year		Second-Year	
Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
GEN ED: Foundations: Communication	GEN ED: Foundations: Contextual Thinking	GEN ED: Foundations: Computational Thinking	GEN ED: Disciplinary Perspectives: Logic/Mathematical Reasoning
GEN ED: Disciplinary Perspectives: The Arts / PW: Introductory Genre Writing Course (double-count)	GEN ED: Foundations: Scientific Inquiry	GEN ED: Foundations: Intercultural & Global Inquiry	76-390 Style
GEN ED: Disciplinary Perspectives: Humanities	GEN ED: Disciplinary Perspectives: Social Sciences	GEN ED: Perspective on Justice & Injustice	PW: Text/Context English Elective #1
GEN ED: Grand Challenge Seminar	76-271 Introduction to Professional and Technical Writing	76-300 Professional Seminar	Free Elective
GEN ED: Foundations: Data Analysis	Free Elective	Free Elective	Free Elective
		Free Elective	

Third-Year		
Fall	Spring	Summer
76-373 Argument	Open for course exploration, requirements for other majors/minors, study abroad, etc.	GEN ED: Experiential Learning
PW: Rhetoric Course	Open for course exploration, requirements for other majors/minors, study abroad, etc.	
PW: Advanced Writing/Rhetoric Course #1	Open for course exploration, requirements for other majors/minors, study abroad, etc.	
PW: Text/Context English Elective #2	Open for course exploration, requirements for other majors/minors, study abroad, etc.	
Free Elective	Open for course exploration, requirements for other majors/minors, study abroad, etc.	

Fourth-Year	
Fall	Spring
GEN ED: Disciplinary Perspectives: Additional Disciplines	PW: Advanced Writing/Rhetoric Course #4
PW: Advanced Writing/Rhetoric Course #2	PW: English Elective #4
PW: Advanced Writing/Rhetoric Course #3	Free Elective
PW: English Elective #3	Free Elective
Free Elective	Free Elective