SENIOR SEMINAR (IST 499w)
SYLLABUS

Purpose

A senior seminar provides an opportunity for Information Science majors to use the knowledge they have accumulated in the program and, especially, to demonstrate that knowledge by exhibiting a combination of professional tools. These latter include PowerPoint presentations as well as the traditional "term" paper. In addition, students will develop (or improve) resumes and explore job acquisition techniques to prepare for entry into the workplace.

Key Topics

In order to provide focus for presentations and papers, a number of themes that are essential to professional life will be explored. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ethics & Professional Responsibility

- Internet Opportunities & Problems

- Privacy, Security & Other Risks of Computing

- Copyright & Fair Use

- Government's Role in Computing

Students are polled early in the semester to determine additional topics of interest and—given adequate time and research—the topic list can be expanded from the above cluster.

Books

Clifford Stoll, The Cuckoo's Egg (Pocket Books, paper) Also see *New York Times* Book Review. Required reading.

Strunk & White, *Elements of Style* (Macmillan, paper, any edition) Recommended reading.

These books are available at the Campus bookstore and may be available at Mary Jane's bookstore.

Writing Across the Curriculum

As a "Writing Intensive" course, this class seeks to meet yet additional requirements beyond those noted in the course description. Specifically, it is also designed to fulfill the Writing Intensive requirements noted in the *2006-07 Undergraduate Bulletin*:

Written Discourse: Students must satisfactorily complete with grades of C or higher or S a lower division Writing Intensive course, which is expected to be completed within the freshman or sophomore year, and a Writing Intensive course at or above the 300 level, normally completed within the student's major. These courses use writing as an important tool in the discipline studied and are not designed primarily to teach the technical aspects of writing. The emphasis is on using writing as a means of sharpening critical thinking in and understanding of the subject.

Approved courses must meet each of the following four criteria:

- *A Substantial Body of Finished Work:* This is generally expected to be a total of 20+ double-spaced pages in at least two, preferably more, submissions. It may be in a variety of forms—journal, reports, essays, research papers, etc.—not all of which need to be graded.
- *Opportunity for Students to Receive Assistance in Progress*: Such assistance may take several forms, from visits to the Writing Center (HU-140) to conferences with the instructor.
- *Opportunity to Revise Some Pieces:* As revision is an essential characteristic of good writing, students should be able to revise some portion of their work.
- *Response to Student Writing:* Such response may take several forms— from extended comments from the instructor to peer evaluation in student groups. It is expected, however, that the instructor will respond in detail to some extended work of the student.

Oral Discourse: Approved courses provide opportunities for students to develop the oral communication skills they need to participate more effectively in public and academic debates and discussions. Courses offer opportunities to participate in a variety of communication contexts and to reflect on the principles and theory relevant to specific oral communication activities. Approved courses include instruction on presentation, as well as feedback and evaluation of oral performance. Feedback can occur in various forms, including peer evaluation in student groups, but it is expected that the instructor will also provide feedback to students on their performance. To fulfill both the spirit and the letter of this requirement, wherever possible courses should have no more than 25 students enrolled.

Approved courses generally have a minimum of two exercises in which oral performance is required and graded. An oral performance exercise can be accomplished in any of the following activities, either live or in a crafted recording:

- A discussion within a group, where each member will be required to make 3-5 "paragraph-length" contributions in the course of the discussion
- A question and answer dialogic process where the student fields a succession of questions or asks a succession of questions that build on and comment upon prior answers
- A rehearsal theatrical presentation or interpretive reading
- A stand-up monologue presentation of a minimum of 3-5 minutes|
- A debate where each participant speaks for a minimum of 3-5 minutes
- Students will be made aware of the criteria that will be used for evaluation of their oral performances Examples of criteria that may be used include persuasiveness, organization, presentation of evidence, validity of argument, contact with the audience, vocal punctuation and expressiveness, oral language style suited to the exercise, appropriate

volume and pace of speech, poise and comfort, vocal fluency, eye
contact, and active listening. The final grade in oral intensive courses
will include the grade for oral performance as a key component.

Writing Assignments

Students will submit a number of papers of varying length, typically (but not always)
including

- Class Expectations (1-2 pages) / Ungraded
- Resume portfolio variations (5-7 pages)
- Topical "paper": PowerPoint (5-7 pages)
- Final Assignment (8-12 pages)

Students are expected to use Microsoft PowerPoint in at least one or more assignments.

See class schedule for due dates. Actual assignments will be handed out in class and/or
posted on the class website.

Peer Reviews

Selected papers will be reviewed twice: first, by a "peer reviewer" and, after revision, by the
instructor. I want to emphasize that most professional writing is "peer reviewed" and creates
reciprocal responsibilities for both parties. I hope to show that editing someone else's text
also makes us more conscious of our own writing strengths and weaknesses. See Editing
Guidelines for doing a peer review.

Verbal Skills

Practitioners in technical fields are sometimes criticized for not sufficiently demostrating oral
communication skills. To correct this, students will give several oral reports, some short and
"spontaneous," others formal, including a five-ten minute presentation (supported by
Microsoft PowerPoint slides and handouts).

Grades

Grades are derived from the sum of work (and commitment) that a student exhibits via the
following outlets: primarily writing assignments and quizzes, but also verbal presentations,
classroom participation, peer reviews, and even attendance.

Writing Assignments. Much of the final grade results from writing assignments. The exact
amount varies semester by semester.

Assignments submitted after the assigned date are subject to a late penalty. Papers submitted within two class dates of the due date are penalized by a "marginal" letter grade; for example, a B+ would be reduced to a B. Papers submitted after two class dates are penalized by a full letter grade; for example, a B+ would be reduced to a C+.

Oral Assignments. As a general rule, there will be at least one oral report to be delivered. In most cases, oral assignments are graded.

Quizzes (announced and unannounced) are used on occasion

- to ensure learning by providing visible "feedback" on comprehension of class materials;
- to ensure attentiveness (and taking notes) during discussions;
- to ensure that readings are actually read; and
- to counter balance reliance on written assignments.

Exams. Since this is a writing intensive class, I emphasize the production of texts as a formal exercise that requires a set regimen, starting with brainstorming, outlining, multiple drafting, and final / finished copy. Mid term and final exams, in this context, do not promote this regimen since they are hurried, stressful exercises resulting in unpolished first drafts. Given this, a "comprehensive" writing assignment will serve as "final" exam equivalent.

Other Grade Factors

Attendance. Attendance is expected at every class.

On occasion, absences occur for any number of reasons (some acceptable, most not). Since there are fifteen classes this term, missing four classes without sufficient cause or warning will mean that you have missed too much class time to merit a passing grade. Similarly, missing three classes will result in a full letter grade penalty. I do not want to apply either rule, but have.

Class Discussion. Only a segment of class time is reserved for formal lectures, most class time is planned to foster discussion and participation from all attendees. Please contribute here.

Peer Reviews. Professional writing (as distinct from student writing) involves writing and editing for colleagues (as well as supervisors or subordinates). Providing encouraging "feedback" to colleagues is appreciated and, like participating in class discussions, contributes to the overall grade.

Academic Integrity

Students are responsible for planning and completing their assignments. They are encouraged to invite peer review and comments; they should not collaborate on writing papers. In addition, the availability of relevant texts on the Web should not tempt students to "cut and paste" without attribution. Both of these practices are wrong-headed in any context and especially troublesome in a class that attempts to foster professional responsibility.

Any student caught violating these norms will receive a failing grade for the course.

Logistics

Class sessions:
Fall: Monday, 4:15-7:05 p.m.

Classroom: See the University Schedule of Classes each term

Contact Hours: after class or by appointment

Phone Numbers:

DG (Home): 489-5674
IST Dept.: xxx-xxxx (contact?)

E-Mail: goodall@cs.albany.edu

IST 499w Home Page: http://www.albany.edu/~goodall