RHET 305 Writing Grant Proposals Spring 2015

Course Description

Instructor Jan Cooper
Office King 139A
Office hours The times I'm available may vary from week to week. First check the sign up on our class Blackboard site, then email me if you can't find a time that works for you. Please, never hesitate to make an appointment with me.
Email jan.cooper@oberlin.edu
Phone 440/537-4828 Twitter wtg2participate

Class meeting time and place 10-10:50am Mondays, Wednesdays, and most Fridays in King 335

Course Description
Writing grant proposals is not in and of itself difficult. But it can be daunting because it requires a writer to understand a specific need in detail and within its context. Good proposal writing also depends on knowledge of the world of grant makers and what they value. It demands patient research skills to identify likely funders. It is rooted in a writer’s ability to make personal contacts and nurture relationships beyond writing. You can read all the books about these things, but until you’ve tried to do this work, you won’t understand it.

Therefore this course will operate differently than many of your other classes. It will require more doing in the subject and less explanatory reading or lecturing or note taking about it. Rather than requiring you to read a long list of academic articles, I will ask you to read a few professional essays and explore a number of online sites and tools. Your main task for the semester is to write a grant proposal for an organization of your choosing. In the process you will learn budget preparation and project planning, as well as develop skills in researching potential funders and determining their specific proposal requirements. By the end of the semester you should be able to submit at least one finished grant proposal along with a list of potential grant makers for it. The measure of your success in this course will be your understanding of the processes and interpersonal skills required in grant proposing, as well as your success in assisting an organization to apply for a grant by the end of the semester.

The class will be conducted as a workshop and many class meetings will be discussions of class members’ work. Individual appointments with the instructor will replace some classes. The success of the course will depend on your willingness to carry out tasks quickly but thoroughly, and share what you learn generously with your classmates. To make that process manageable, the coursework will be broken down into small, cumulative tasks that will gradually lead you to a finished product. Assignments may be adjusted, in consultation with the instructor, according to each class member’s project.

Course Objectives
1. Learning how to write the basic elements of a grant proposal and adapt them to the specific requirements of real grant makers.
2. Developing the communications skills that usually accompany grant proposal writing, such as communicating with the organization proposing a grant application, making donor organization contacts, networking, and seeking, offering and accepting criticism with grace.
3. Learning useful research methods for documenting need and finding potential grant makers.
4. Becoming aware of the societal costs of philanthropy in the US and critiques of philanthropy that promote other ways of creating funds.
5. Writing at least one grant proposal that for an organization that is ready for submission.
Course Grading
Because I believe that writing does not easily fit the commodified letter grade system, I will grade your work using the Pass/No Pass system. Instead of letter grades on individual assignments you’ll receive extensive feedback from your classmates and from me. Feedback is usually how writing is adjusted and judged in the world beyond the classroom, especially in grant proposal writing; it is thus fitting that a course in proposal writing depends on its members’ skills in giving and receiving detailed feedback to measure success. If at any time you’re worried about how well you are doing, please talk to me about it during an individual appointment.

Not carrying out and submitting any assignments or more than 2 unexcused absences from class meetings or appointments will be grounds for not passing the course. If you miss more than 2 classes, you will need to give me a note from your class dean to rejoin the course.

Course Readings
Jane C. Geever’s *The Foundation Center’s Guide to Proposal Writing* is the main textbook we’ll be using. I will post chapters we read in it online, so it will not be necessary to purchase it, but I do recommend buying it if you are planning to do a lot of grant proposal writing for organizations in the future.

Throughout the course I will also post handouts and links to other useful readings online that you can download from our Blackboard course website.

Course Tools
Please be sure to bring a laptop or tablet computer to every class and appointment. We will be using as little paper as possible, so it will be vital to have a computer available to access readings, assignments, websites, etc. Smart phones will NOT be sufficient for much of our use, so be sure to check out a laptop or tablet at Mudd if you do not have access to a portable computer.

Course Assignments Assignment instructions will be posted in the Assignments section of our Blackboard course site. Note that you are required to submit assignments on Blackboard. Please use Times or Times Roman 12-point font and 1 inch margins all around for any documents you upload and save them as Word documents (.rtf files work best if you do not have .docx).

Honor Code considerations Because this course is so collaborative in nature, you are welcome to seek other opinions on your submitted course work, except when explicitly forbidden in assignment instructions. Keep in mind that in addition to your classmates, there are Writing Associates in the Writing Center in the Academic Commons in Mudd Learning Resource Center who can be very helpful whenever you get stuck or just need a fresh pair of eyes to look at what you’re doing. The one Honor Code requirement to remember when you submit any assignment for this course, however, is adding the Honor Code statement with your e-signature at the end.

A Word About Writing Proficiency If you have not yet completed your writing proficiency requirements, this course may be a way of working toward that, depending on the degree(s) you’re pursuing and your previous work. If passing a writing requirement is a major concern for you, please be sure to discuss that with me in our first individual appointment.