BUS 303: DEVELOPING YOUR PROFESSIONAL SKILLS – ADVANCED ELEMENTS

Course Information:
Course Title: BUS 303: Developing Your Professional Skills – Advanced Elements
Class Dates/Times: Online, Asynchronous, Virtual Group Meetings
Course Webpage: http://courses.gmu.edu

Faculty Information:
Instructor: Gretchen Hendricks
Office Hours: Virtual by appointment
Office Location: Enterprise Hall, Room 137, Fairfax Campus
Email: ghendri2@gmu.edu (preferred method of contact)

Course Description:
In this course, you will continue to develop your professional skill set. Topics covered include understanding the modern work environment, business ethics and professional responsibilities, and professional judgment. You will also continue to hone your professional writing and presentation skills, prepare for the job search process, and develop professional development plans. This is a required course in the undergraduate Business program.

Prerequisite Course:
BUS 103

Course Outcomes:
1. Students will increase self-awareness by evaluating their interpersonal skills and the ability to influence and have an impact on the decision-making processes.
2. Students will evaluate various business trends, issues, perspectives, and industries to inform their professional perspectives.
3. Students will research, analyze, and create information to assist with their career readiness.
4. Students will analyze and improve their ability to effectively organize and communicate ideas through oral and written expression.

Undergraduate Business Program Learning Goals:
Goal 1: Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the social, global, ethical, and legal contexts of business and will be able to reflect on the role of the individual in business.
Goal 2: Our students will demonstrate an understanding of and the ability to apply knowledge of professional skills necessary for success in business including effective business writing.
Goal 3: Our students will demonstrate technical and analytic skills appropriate for success in business.
Goal 4: Our students will demonstrate an understanding of and the ability to apply knowledge of core business disciplines including accounting, finance, information systems, management, marketing, and operations management.
Goal 5: Our students will demonstrate knowledge and skills appropriate for specialization in their majors.

Goal 6: Our students will demonstrate an understanding of how research in the business disciplines contributes to knowledge and how such research is conducted.

**Mason Impact Distinction:**
This course is designated as one of the Mason Impact courses, as part of George Mason’s Undergraduate Education Program, preparing “students to tackle significant global questions and challenges by investigating meaningful questions, engaging multiple perspectives, and creating new knowledge within the context of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity, Civic Engagement, Entrepreneurship, and Global Activities.”

More specifically, BUS 303: Developing Your Professional Skills – Advanced Elements has an interpersonal focus and encourages students to explore how they can impact others through use of professional skills such as persuasive oral and written communication, emotional intelligence, and teamwork. One of the major assignments has students using the business press to be aware of local and global trends and events, in order to inform their thinking and actions. In another team assignment, BUS 303 students work in teams to research a specific aspect of professional development, tailor that content to a target audience within a relevant company by way of a written persuasive training proposal, and deliver an oral training presentation with an interactive activity that educates and impacts peers.

**Instructional Methods and Materials:**
This is an asynchronous online course that uses a combination of preparation through reading, videos, and online resources as well as graded active learning assignments every week. Students will use Blackboard to access course materials (there is no required textbook), engage in weekly course activities, and complete major assignments. Students are expected to complete all pre-work prior to attempting their major graded assignments and fully participate in all class and group discussions and presentations. **Utilize the Course Calendar to stay on track.** Professional behavior is expected throughout the course as defined in course materials.

**Course Grading and Major Assignments:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1:</td>
<td>Data Visualization for Business Communication</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2:</td>
<td>Employment Package (Resume, Cover Letter, &amp; Job Posting with Analysis)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Assignment 3:</td>
<td>Informational Interview Report</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Assignment 4:</td>
<td>Professional Training Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Assignment 5:</td>
<td>Reflection and Projection</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Weekly Activities (Readings, Videos, Discussion Board, Journals)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development Activities (Career Fair, Webinar or Guest Speaker)</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**Timely Submissions:**
All assignments are due by their due date/time and should be posted to Blackboard unless otherwise specified. **Late work will be penalized at the discretion of the instructor.**

**Assignment Descriptions:**

**Assignment 1: Data Visualization for Business Communication**
This group assignment is designed to give you experience analyzing and representing information and data collected through research and from professional business sources in a visual manner. It will allow you to practice rhetorical awareness by assessing what is appropriate for different audiences, purposes, and contexts for business communication. It provides an opportunity to practice working in small groups
and to enhance professional speaking skills by leading a peer focus group as a tool to streamline your research.

**Assignment 2: Employment Package (Resume, Cover Letter, & Job Posting with Analysis)**

This *individual* assignment will teach you to critically read job/internship descriptions and demonstrate a fit with a particular position. It provides an opportunity to create an effective resume that is tailored to your career field and industry and an effective cover letter that is tailored to a specific position.

**Assignment 3: Informational Interview Report**

An informational interview is a meeting with a working professional who can give you an inside view of an occupation, organization, and/or industry that is of interest to you. For this *individual* assignment you will identify an appropriate interviewee; research their industry; schedule an interview; build a list of appropriate questions; conduct an in-person interview and take notes; send a thank you note; and write a reflective memo report about what you learned and how it applies to your professional future.

**Assignment 4: Professional Training Presentation**

This *group* assignment requires you to design and deliver training on the professional skills topic you researched for Assignment 1. You will prepare an instructive and interactive 15-minute formal training video presentation for your targeted audience: emerging professionals. The goal is to provide an engaging training experience that enhances your audience’s knowledge of the topic.

**Assignment 5: Reflection and Projection**

This *individual* assignment gives you the opportunity to both reflect on what you’ve learned this semester and project forward to envision your future self.

All major assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale.

**Career Fair Fall 2020:**

BUS 303 students should attend the University Career Services virtual career fair and complete a writing activity per their professor’s instructions. Check the course Discussion Board for assignment details.

**Grading Scale:** Note that final grades will NOT be rounded up—please don’t ask.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest</th>
<th>Lowest</th>
<th>Letter</th>
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<tr>
<td>100.00 %</td>
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**Discussion Board** posts are a part of your participation grade for the course. Your active participation online is critical for effective learning to take place. You will be required to view and reply to the discussion posts of your peers. Remember this course simulates a professional work environment and is a collaborative space. Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words.
Discussions will run from Monday to Sunday, after which discussion postings will not count. You should make a minimum of one initial response (no later than Wednesday 11:59 p.m. EST) AND then also make a minimum of two additional replies to your peers (no later than Sunday 11:59 p.m. EST). Points will be based on quality rather than quantity. Posts will be assessed according to the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>Required posts were submitted on time; postings were well distributed throughout the week. (2 points)</td>
<td>Required postings were submitted on time but were not distributed throughout the week. (1.5 points)</td>
<td>Required postings were submitted late and were not distributed throughout the week. (1 point)</td>
<td>No discussion post was submitted. (0 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial Post</td>
<td>Content was clearly understood and incorporated into the initial post to support arguments/views. (4 points)</td>
<td>Some reference to content to support arguments/views. (2.5)</td>
<td>Little or no reference to content to support arguments/views. (1 point)</td>
<td>No initial post was submitted. (0 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reply Posts</td>
<td>Two or more responses add significantly to the discussions (identified connections, perspectives, and evidence). (4 points)</td>
<td>Responses added moderately to the discussion, lacked in interpretation and examples. (2.5)</td>
<td>Responses are non-substantive and do little to move discussion forward. (1 point)</td>
<td>No reply posts were submitted. (0 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 points</td>
<td>6.5 points</td>
<td>3 points</td>
<td>0 points</td>
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Adapted from Dr. Ayesha Sadaf, UNCC

**Journal** posts are expected to be reflective and are due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. EST. They will be assessed according to the following criteria:

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Outstanding (5 points)</th>
<th>Proficient (3-4 points)</th>
<th>Basic (2-3 points)</th>
<th>Below Expectations (0-1) points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>Journal was submitted on time.</td>
<td>Journal was submitted 1 day late.</td>
<td>Journal was submitted 2-3 days after due date.</td>
<td>Journal was submitted 3 or more days after due date or not at all.</td>
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</table>
All other assignments have designated point values in Blackboard to earn towards your course participation grade.

Course Calendar on Blackboard:
To help you manage your schedule and time to complete the assignments in this course, please follow the recommended time line outlined in the course calendar found in the left hand navigation for your course. You can expect to work 8-10 hours per week on assignments for this course with weeks running Monday to Sunday. If you have a question or concern or encounter a problem with an assignment, please contact me directly by email so we can discuss and work out a resolution.

Technology Requirements:

Hardware – You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and access to a fast and reliable broadband Internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). A larger screen is recommended for better visibility of course material. You will need speakers or headphones to hear recorded content and a headset with a microphone is recommended for the best experience. For the amount of Hard Disk Space required taking a distance education course, consider and allow for: the storage amount needed to install any additional software and space to store work that you will do for the course.

Software – This course uses Blackboard as the learning management system. You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the myMason Portal. Log in to myMason to access your registered courses. Online courses typically use Acrobat Reader, Flash, Java, and Windows Media Player, QuickTime and/or Real Media Player. Your computer should be capable of running current versions of those applications. Also, make sure your computer is protected from viruses by downloading the latest version of Symantec Endpoint Protection/Anti-Virus software for free here.

Students owning Macs or Linux should be aware that some courses may use software that only runs on Windows. You can set up a Mac computer with Boot Camp or virtualization software so Windows will
also run on it. Computers running Linux can also be configured with virtualization software or configured to dual boot with Windows.

Note: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

**Course Material and Student Privacy:**
All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course related sites are private. According to federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

- Video-recordings of class meetings that include audio or visual information from other students are private and must not be shared.
- Live Video Conference Meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household.

**School of Business Standards of Behavior:**
The mission of the School of Business at George Mason University is to create and deliver high-quality educational programs and research. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni who participate in these educational programs contribute to the well being of society. High-quality educational programs require an environment of trust and mutual respect, free expression and inquiry, and a commitment to truth, excellence, and lifelong learning. Students, program participants, faculty, staff, and alumni accept these principles when they join the School of Business community. In doing so, they agree to abide by the following standards of behavior:

- Respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others
- Honesty and integrity in dealing with all members of the community
- Accountability for personal behavior

Integrity is an essential ingredient of a successful learning community. Ethical standards of behavior help promote a safe and productive community environment, and ensure every member the opportunity to pursue excellence. School of Business can and should be a living model of these behavioral standards. To this end, community members have a personal responsibility to integrate these standards into every aspect of their experience at the School of Business. Through our personal commitment to these Community Standards of Behavior, we can create an environment in which all can achieve their full potential. If these Standards of Behavior are violated, then students may be required to complete additional learning activities assigned by the instructor.

**Honor Code Statement:**
The Honor System and Code adopted by George Mason University will be enforced for this class: [https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/). Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated in the School of Business. In your work on all written assignments, keep in mind that you may not present as your own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement. You also may not borrow the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement. In this course, you are expected to use APA style citations and reference lists.
Faculty are obligated, without exception, to submit any Honor Code violations or suspected violations to the Honor Committee. See the last page of this syllabus for information about Honor Code sanctions.

**Formatting Guidelines:**
Please follow each assignment’s guidelines for formatting. Use APA style to cite and reference all sources. Specific instructions for in-text citations and referencing are found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th Edition* or at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/).

**Course Communication via Email:**
Email communication for this class is *professional correspondence*. Use this opportunity to practice professional writing, including proper grammar and tone, complete sentences, correct spelling and capitalization, salutation and closing, etc. Generally, emails will be responded to within 24-48 hours except on weekends or during travel. University rules preclude instructors from communicating with students through private email addresses; use your Mason email address for all course communication.

**Peer Reviews, Collaborative Writing, and Group Work:**
Students will engage in frequent small-group activities in this course. During peer reviews, other students may be asked to read, review, and respond to your work. In addition, you will have the opportunity to evaluate the work of others. This component of the class mirrors professional workplace situations that require giving and receiving feedback, and these evaluations will count toward your individual grade. For students who do not contribute sufficiently to their group assignment, instructors have the discretion to reduce their grades accordingly.

**Diversity and Student Rights:**
The University values diversity, as supported by the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME) [https://odime.gmu.edu/](https://odime.gmu.edu/) and seeks to create and sustain inclusive learning environments. Mason also values student privacy and FERPA rights [https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/](https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/).

**Commitment to Inclusion and Anti-Racism:**
As a member of the George Mason University community, the School of Business plays an integral role in building an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. An anti-racist approach to higher education acknowledges the ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural manifestations of racism against Black individuals and other people of color contribute to inequality and injustice in our classrooms, on our campuses, and in our communities, and it strives to provide our community members with resources to interrupt cycles of racism so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just environment for all of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends, regardless of racial background.

To be anti-racist means:

- To make constant, conscious decisions to interrupt racism and cultivate equity, inclusion, and justice for people of all racial backgrounds, and in particular those from Black communities and other communities of color, who are most likely to bear the direct and indirect costs of systems of white supremacy;
- To interrogate histories of white supremacy and white-dominant culture, and to examine the ways in which these histories have impacted our individual beliefs, our interpersonal relationships, our institutional and structural policies and processes, and our entire society;
- To make a commitment to being responsible for our own relationships to, and actions within, systems of white supremacy; and
To cultivate a practice of self-awareness and self-reflection that allows us to critically evaluate our own role in upholding white supremacy and identify the ways we can interrupt cycles of racism at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels.

We believe that the work of anti-racism starts with each individual, and that in cultivating an anti-racist approach to research, scholarship, and practice, our students will build a skillset rooted in principles of equity, inclusion, and justice that they will carry with them throughout their lives. (Commitment statement prepared by Dr. Charles Chavis, Assistant Professor in the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School of Peace and Conflict Resolution)

**Name and Pronoun Use:**
If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me and how best to address you in class and via email. I use she or her for myself and you may address me as Professor Hendricks in class and email.

**Religious Absences:**
If you will miss class for religious reasons, inform the instructor of the anticipated absence as soon as possible. The Mason University Life religious holiday calendar is available here https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/.

**Additional Resources:**

**Accessibility and Accommodations**
If you need academic accommodations for special needs, contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474 and inform the instructor of any special needs as soon as you have your paperwork. Note that accommodations are not retroactive. More information is available at https://ds.gmu.edu/.

**Library Resources**
Should you need assistance with library resources, contact Business and Economics Liaison Librarian Jo Ann J. Henson, MLIS: jhenson3@gmu.edu. Also, there is a library InfoGuide for this course: https://infoguides.gmu.edu/busfoundations.

**School of Business Office of Career Services**
Career Services is located in Suite 042 in Enterprise Hall (lower level). You can also call 703-993-2140 or email mycareer@gmu.edu to set up an appointment. Review the career events calendar at http://business.gmu.edu/career/atp/.

**University Career Services**
For University Career events, visit https://careers.gmu.edu/events.

**Counseling Services**
George Mason University’s Counseling and Psychological Services can provide assistance if you find yourself overwhelmed by life, want training in academic or life skills, or just need to talk to a professional counselor. For more information, visit https://caps.gmu.edu/, call 703-993-2380 or stop by their office in Student Union Building 1, Room 3129.

**Student Emergency Assistance Funding**
Emergency funding is available to students who experience unexpected financial situations and meet certain eligibility criteria. Visit the University Life website for more details and application information: https://ulife.gmu.edu/student-emergency-assistance-funding-2/
The Writing Center
The Writing Center provides peer-to-peer writing support. Writers at all levels benefit from sharing their work with a helpful and knowledgeable peer tutor or consultant. To schedule an appointment, visit https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/, call 703-993-1200, or stop by Robinson Hall B, Room 213. Schedule appointments in advance; the center gets booked up very quickly each semester.

Inclement Weather and Campus Emergencies
Information regarding weather-related changes in the University’s schedule (e.g., closing or late opening) will be provided on the GMU website and via Mason Alert. Students can sign up for the Mason Alert system to provide emergency information of various sorts at https://ready.gmu.edu/masonalert/. An emergency poster in each classroom explains what to do in the event of a crisis.
### Honor Code Sanctions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Violation</th>
<th>First Offense</th>
<th>Second Offense</th>
<th>Third Offense</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>An F in the class; referral to Writing Center; and relevant Academic Integrity seminar/training completion</td>
<td>An F in the class and at least one semester suspension, and relevant Academic Integrity seminar/training completion.</td>
<td>An F in the class and expulsion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Failure to cite/attribute sources</td>
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<td>2. Representing someone else’s work as the student’s own (e.g., copying and pasting)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheating</td>
<td>An F in the class; and relevant Academic Integrity seminar/training completion</td>
<td>An F in the class, Academic Integrity Seminar completion; and at least one semester suspension or expulsion, and relevant Academic Integrity seminar/training completion.</td>
<td>An F in the class and expulsion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. On a minor assignment (e.g., homework, quizzes)</td>
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<td>2. Cheating on a major assignment or exam, submitting course work from another course as original work</td>
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<td>Lying (e.g., providing fraudulent excuse documents, falsifying data)</td>
<td>An F in the class; and relevant Academic Integrity seminar/training completion, and at least one semester suspension</td>
<td>An F in the class and at least one semester suspension (and relevant Academic Integrity seminar/training completion) or expulsion.</td>
<td>An F in the class and expulsion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egregious Violation (e.g., stealing an exam; submitting coursework from another class as original work across multiple courses; lying to an employer about academic performance, false identification or posing as another, in person or online)</td>
<td>An F in the class, relevant Academic Integrity seminar/training completion; and at least one year suspension</td>
<td>An F in the class and expulsion.</td>
<td>An F in the class and expulsion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The School of Business reserves the right to initiate termination proceedings for any student found guilty of an Honor Code violation by the Office of Academic Integrity.*