



Professional Writing FAQs

1. What is Professional Writing?

Professional Writing is a career. As a professional writer, your work consists of making complex ideas, processes, or procedures understandable. The Woodbury Professional Writing (WRIT) degree prepares students to be imaginative and ethical writers ready to work individually and collaboratively in a variety of exciting media- and information-driven workplace environments.

2. What kind of classes will I take if pursue a major in Professional Writing?”

Here is a sample of the courses that will be available to you when you study Professional Writing:

- Introduction to Professional Writing
- Rhetorical Theory and Practice
- Technical Writing
- Digital Composition
- Legal and Policy Writing
- Proposal and Grant Writing
- Periodical Writing
- Writing in the Health Sciences
- Writing and Civic Engagement
- Professional Blogging and Social Media
- Web Authoring: Theory and Practice
- Writing across Cultures
- Digital Publication
- Freelance Writing
- Information and Interactive Design
- Textuality and Inter-Textuality
- Collaboration and Editing
- Contemporary Journalism
- Online Journalism
- The Rhetoric of Science
- The Rhetoric of Economics
- Ethics in Technical and Professional Writing
- Nature, Environment, and Travel Writing
- Advanced Visual Rhetoric
- Writing Center Theory and Practice
- Writing LA: Place and Mobilities
- Internship
- Senior Project

3. What kind of jobs can I get with a degree in Professional Writing?

- Technical Writer
- Technical Illustrator
- Web Designer
- User Experience Designer
- Document Designer
- Instructional Designer
- Translator/Localization Specialist
- Business Writer
- Speech Writer
- Medical/Science Writer
- Grant Writer
- Journalist/Editor/Publisher

4. In what Industries do professional writers work?

- aerospace manufacturing
- advertising and public relations
- insurance agencies and brokerages
- architectural and engineering
- business organizations
- colleges, universities, and schools

- communications in manufacturing
- computer systems design
- employment services
- government institutions
- health science professions
- independent writers and artists
- information services
- management of technical services
- motion picture and video industries
- news, book, and magazine publishers
- non-profit organizations
- radio and television broadcasting
- software publishers
- wireless telecommunications

5. What do professional writers do?

Professional writers do projects like these:

- write news articles for online business, technology, medical, and other webzines
- design websites for charities and small businesses
- create technical reports and documents for those in manufacturing and technology industries
- put together eBooks for publishing companies
- develop their own writing projects for freelancing

Professional writers make specific audiences aware about the issues that matter to them. Professional writers make a difference by helping people understand how to do something as simple as use an app or unlock a secret level in a video game to something more complex such as crafting ethical, policy, and legal documents to help guide the ethics and culture of a Fortune 500 company.

6. How likely is it I can get a job in California or in LA as a professional writer?

You are very likely to get a job in LA. All of our Professional Writing internships are situated here in LA. They connect you with people, organizations, and business entities here in the metro area. LA is perhaps the most exciting market for professional writers interested in working in the entertainment industry. There are indications that the demand for professional writers here is increasing.

7. What do professional writers earn?

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data suggests mean annual salaries in the three job areas of (1) “technical writer,” (2) “writer/author,” and (3) “editor” are as follows (May 2014 figures; updated 10.2.15):

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|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| • Technical writer: | \$71,950 (mean) | \$108,460 (90 percentile) |
| • Writer/author: | \$67,870 (mean) | \$114,820 (90 percentile) |
| • Editor: | \$64,140 (mean) | \$109,940 (90 percentile) |

BLS salary national ranking data for Los Angeles and California:

- California ranks 1st for the number of working technical writers (annual mean pay \$84,960)
- Los Angeles ranks 3rd for the number of working technical writers (annual mean pay \$76,800)
- California ranks 1st for the number of working writers and authors (annual mean pay \$83,630)
- Los Angeles ranks 2nd for the number of working writers and authors nationally (annual mean pay N/A)
- California ranks 2nd for the number of working editors (annual mean pay \$69,250)
- Los Angeles ranks 4th nationally for employing editors (annual mean salary 73,780)

8. Is the Professional Writing degree a good track to be on if I think I want to go to graduate school?

Yes. For example, you might consider the highly regarded graduate programs in professional writing and rhetoric and composition at:

- Penn State University
- Ohio State University
- Purdue University
- Michigan State University
- University of Texas
- University of Wisconsin
- University of Minnesota
- North Carolina State University
- University of Arizona
- Arizona State University
- University of Illinois
- University of Massachusetts-Amherst
- Virginia Tech University
- Clemson University
- Miami University (Ohio)
- Bowling Green State University

In addition, your degree in professional writing will be an outstanding platform to enter a graduate program in such fields as management, communication, and creative writing, for example. Professional Writing is a good major to take if you plan to go to law school.

The fact of the matter is that all graduate programs are now looking for prospective students who know how to write, who know how to communicate—who wants a doctor who can't get across an idea? These graduate programs include those in the sciences, the health sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. A degree in Professional Writing—if you are good at what you do—can be a great calling card to grad school.

9. Will I need any kind of required license to work as a professional writer?

No. No license is required to work as a professional writer.

10. Are there any alumni of the Professional Writing Program I can talk to?

The Professional Writing degree is brand new at Woodbury. You will be a pioneer. You will have a lot of opportunity to shape the new degree and have a huge impact on the directions it takes. You will soon be one of those alumni who new students turn to for advice. If you would like to speak with Woodbury alumni who have graduated in other majors, please let Admissions know, and they will help to arrange that.

11. Where can I do my internship working as a professional writer?

You will have many internship opportunities right here in the Los Angeles metro area. In addition to several internship opportunities right here at Woodbury, specific internships will be available at the following organizations or businesses:

- Pasadena Magazine
- Fiesta Publishing
- Flaunt Magazine
- Malibu Magazine
- City of Glendale
- Walt Disney
- Dun & Bradstreet Credibility Corp
- Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
- Clear TV Media

12. Who are the Professional Writing faculty? What are their specializations and interests?

Professional Writing currently has four full-time faculty members who teach courses in the major and serve as academic advisors:

Matthew Bridgewater, PhD, Bowling Green State University

Matt came to Woodbury in 2014. What attracted him to professional writing as a student was how it allowed him to take his interest in software and technology and combine it with his interest in language and rhetoric to make a difference in people's lives. He enjoys sharing his passion for this subject with his future students. His scholarship can be seen in *Computers & Composition Online*, *Computers and Composition*. He regularly presents papers at meetings of the Rhetoric Society of America, Computers & Writing, the Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference, and the Conference on College Composition and Communication. He also volunteers as a technical writer and front end web developer.

Reuben Ellis, Ph.D., University of Colorado at Boulder

Reuben is Associate Professor of Writing and Chair of the Writing Department. He came to Woodbury in 2010. He teaches courses in the Professional Writing degree, the department's first year composition program, and the College of Transdisciplinarity's Interdisciplinary Studies program. His teaching interests include periodical writing, newspaper journalism, creative non-fiction, travel writing, sustainability, fiction, and literature. His books include *Vertical Margins: Mountaineering and the Landscapes of Neo-Imperialism*; *Stories and Stone: Writing the Ancestral Pueblo Homeland*; and *Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin*, as well as many published essays on literature and writing and works of fiction and creative non-fiction.

Richard N. Matzen, Jr., Ph.D., Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Rich founded the Writing Department at Woodbury in 2005. In Rich's Professional Writing courses, students—both international and domestic—practice collaborative, freelance, technical, and web-based writing by engaging in a variety of community projects. In addition to his work as a poet, novelist, and editor, Rich has published numerous academic essays, articles, and chapters, and has made presentations at a variety of conferences. He co-edited the book, *Reformation: The Teaching and Learning of English in Electronic Environments*, and his essay "A Case for Earning an Undergraduate Degree in Writing," appears in *Writing for the Curious: Why Study Writing*. Rich helped create the "Ethnographic Project: Curating the Stories of WPA Workers," a digital archive of interviews that highlight work patterns of writing program administrators.

13. Is there a student association or club for Professional Writing students?

Yes. The groundwork has been laid for a student organization for Professional Writing majors through Woodbury's robust Campus Life program. Our new student organization has been tentatively named the Professional Student Writing Association (PSWA). Draft bylaws are in place. We are waiting for you to take an active role in forming and shaping the life of the PSWA.

14. Are any awards given to Professional Writing students?

Yes. The Professional Writing program offers the following award competitions:

- The First Year Professional Writing Award
- The Second Year Professional Writing Award
- The Third Year Professional Writing Award
- The Professional Writing Senior Project Award
- The Professional Writing Clarity and Ethics Award
- The Professional Writing Creativity Award
- The Professional Writing Overall Award

15. What kinds of events and meetings does the Professional Writing program sponsor?

Students and faculty in Professional Writing meet regularly for informational and social gatherings. Professional Writing and the Professional Student Writing Association (PSWA) also sponsor a reading series as well as occasional readings and talks by working professional writers, open mics, and other writing-related events. Students and faculty also participate in various events sponsored by organizations in the Los Angeles-area writing community.

16. Are there any professional writing conferences I can go to or organizations I can join outside of Woodbury?

All students majoring in Professional Writing are encouraged to join the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and to present their work at professional conferences. Collaborative mentorship by faculty members will help you prepare your work for submission.

17. Is creative writing part of Professional Writing?

We think that all professional writing is creative—that idea is a cornerstone of our department. We value the creative work of our students and faculty. The Professional Writing program does offer some dedicated creative writing courses, however, a foundations course and courses in fiction, poetry, script writing, and periodical writing.

We should say this, however--the academic world has historically made a distinction between “professional writing” and “creative writing.” “Professional writing” is usually understood to mean writing that is used in workplaces that allows professionals to understand each other and make informed decisions. “Creative writing,” on the other hand, is usually understood to mean writing that is fundamentally expressive or entertaining in purpose and takes shape in such genres and fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry, play writing, and screen play writing.

The Professional Writing program at Woodbury understands all writing as creative. Come join us and see how exciting that can be.

18. Is there a class in grant writing?

Yes. Our grant writing course is WRIT 221: Proposal and Grant Writing (3 units). Here’s a description of the course:

“An exploration of the theory of proposition in the specific context of the mechanics, audience-orientation, and research considerations of grant writing. (Prerequisite: LSCI 105, Information Theory and Practice; WRIT 112, Academic Writing II or WRIT 212, Rhetoric and Design; WRIT 120, Introduction to Professional Writing; WRIT 201, Digital Composition)”

19. Can I minor in Professional Writing?

Sure. A minor in Professional Writing consists of a total of 15 units (5 courses) and includes the required courses WRIT 120: Introduction to Professional Writing and WRIT 201: Digital Composition, as well as three other WRIT courses. The Professional Writing minor is a great complement to other majors.

20. Will I have time to take elective courses if I major in Professional Writing?

Yes you will. We have intentionally designed the Professional Writing major to consist of a relatively small number of required courses. These courses will give you the professional preparation you need but will also leave you the time to pursue other academic interests. We want you to take courses in other fields. To be a good writer, you need to know other things. Your future employers will agree with us.

21. Can I finish a Professional Writing degree in four years?

Yes. Professional Writing is a four year degree. Both freshman and transfer students will finish in four years as long as they make satisfactory progress toward completing their course work. The department is committed to helping you finish in a timely fashion.

22. Will any of my courses from my community college transfer into the Professional Writing degree?

Your transfer transcript will be carefully read by both the Woodbury Registrar and faculty in the Professional Writing program. Some of your course work may transfer—some may not. We hope that as much as possible of your general education courses at your community college will transfer to count as general education courses here at Woodbury. If you have taken professional writing courses at your community college—like Technical Writing, for example—we will evaluate them for transfer.

23. Is the Professional Writing Program Accredited?

Yes. The Professional Writing program at Woodbury is accredited through Woodbury's general accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). In addition, the Writing Department went through an internal Woodbury program review in 2013 and an external program review by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) during the same year.

The department and individual faculty members maintain active memberships in such organizations as:

- Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW)
- Society for Technical Communication (STC)
- Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA),
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP)
- Modern Language Association (MLA)
- Rhetoric Society of America (RSA)
- American Society for Aesthetics (ASA)

In addition, the Writing Department founded and sponsored the Critical Transitions Consortium (CTC), an organization dedicated to fostering excellence in the teaching of writing between the community college and university levels.

24. What are the Industry and Employment Trends for Professional Writing?

This is an exciting time for Professional Writing. Check it out:

The *Intuit 2020 Report* predicts that:

- Freelance workers will comprise 40 percent of the entire labor force in the United States, and 40 percent of all freelancers are writers, editors or copywriters.
- Web and mobile platforms will increase the use of forums and digital communities.
- Web content will increasingly promote “cultural fusion,” the introduction of global traditions to local behaviors.
- The role of non-traditional marketing influencers, such as bloggers and social network writers will expand in its influence.

Similarly, other indicators point toward the market feasibility of Professional Writing:

- Bowker, a ProQuest affiliate and a leading provider of bibliographic information, reports that the volume of self-published material has increased 300 percent since 2006 and predicts that the trend will continue.
- *WriterAccess* notes that developments in search engine optimization (SEO) will increasingly require the integration of blogs with social media and that content will increasingly drive SEO over keywords.
- *B2B Content Marketing 2014* reports that 73 percent of business-to-business content marketers said that they are using more content now than in 2013 and that the use of content is trending upward.
- *Skilledup* predicts that the demand for social media writers, which increased in 2014, will continue to increase.
- The *Scripted* blog, a professional writing industry publication, predicts increased demand for specialists in the content writing industry.
- *B2C: Business 2 Community* observes, “the outlook for writers and authors – especially freelance writers and independent self-publishers/authors – has never been better.”

All the data suggest that the field of professional Writing will continue to grow and develop. The Writing Department is committed to maintaining the Professional Writing degree as the most current program in the country.

For more information contact

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