CSE/ISE300 Communications S12

- Time: Tue/Thur 5:20-6:40PM
- Location: Room E4315 Melville Library, 4th floor, east wing
- Required Book: The Elements of Style, 4th edition (Sep 1999), by Strunk & White, 978-0205313426, $10 new (or $5 bookstore rental)
- Recommended Text: Pocket Guide to Technical Communication, 5th ed. (2010), by Pfeiffer, 978-0135063965 $43 SBU new, $22 rent; $29 Amazon new
- Instructor: Professor Larry Wittie  TA: Eric Papenhausen
- Office: CS Building, Room 1308  TA Help: 12-1:30pm Wed, 2110 cs
- Phone: 631-632-8750  (not 2-8456)
- Email: lw@ic.sunysb.edu
- Office Hours: 4-5pm + 7-7:30pm Tue/Thu or by appointment
- Course Homepage: http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~lw/teaching/cse300

First paper on favorite shoes due at start of class today, Thurs 2/16.
Read Science of Scientific Writing by Tues, 2/21. In class editing today.
Personally  *Personally* is often unnecessary.
Personally, I thought it was  I thought it was a good book.
a good book.  It was a good book.

Possess  Avoid using *possess* simply because it sounds more impressive than *have* or *own*.
She possessed great courage.  She had great courage.
He was the fortunate possessor  He was lucky enough to own of

Presently  *Presently* has two meanings: “soon” and “currently.” To avoid ambiguity, use it only when it means “soon.”
She will be here presently.  We are reviewing your resume now.
We are presently reviewing your resume.
CSE/ISE 300
Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Prestigious  \textit{Prestigious} is another vague adjective to avoid.

Regretful  \textit{Regretful} means “full of regret”, but is carelessly used as a substitute for \textit{regrettable}, meaning “must be regretted.”

The mixup was due to a regretful failure in planning.  The mixup was due to a regrettable failure in planning.

Relate  \textit{Relate} should not use intransitively to suggest rapport.

I relate well to Janet.  Janet and I agree a lot.

Respective/Respectively  These words usually should be omitted.

Works of fiction are listed under the names of their respective authors.  Works of fiction are listed under the names of their authors.

The mile run and the two-mile run were won by Jones and Cummings respectively.  The mile run was won by Jones, the two-mile run by Cummings.
Secondly/Thirdly … Do not prettify numbers with -ly. Use first, second, third, and so on.

Shall/Will The future tense normally is expressed by I shall, you will, she will. To express determination or emphatic consent, the uses of shall and will are reversed - I will, you shall, he shall.

So Avoid the use of so as an intensifier: “so good”; “so warm.”

Split infinitive Avoid placing an adverb between a to and its verb infinitive, unless you want to place unusual stress on the adverb.

to diligently inquire to inquire diligently

We hope to soundly defeat our opponents in tonight’s game.

State State should not be used as a mere substitute for say or remark. Restrict state to mean “express fully and completely.”

What did he state at the party? What did he say at the party?

She refused to state her objections.
Stationary/Stationery  
Stationary means “motionless”; stationery means “paper and envelopes to write letters.” Think e for envelope.

Student body  
Almost always replace student body by students.

Than  
To avoid ambiguity, examine any sentence using than (to express comparison) to see if any essential words are missing.

Thanking you in advance  
Avoid this phrase. It just says that you will not bother to write again, even if common courtesy suggests that you send an acknowledgement.
That/Which  

*That* is the defining, or restrictive pronoun; *which* is the non-defining pronoun. Avoid reversing the two words.  

*The lawn mower that is broken is in the garage.*  (which one)  

*The lawn mower, which is broken, is in the garage.*  (extra fact)  

The foreseeable future  

Avoid this fuzzy cliché.  

The truth is …/The fact is …  

Avoid these bad starts to a sentence. If you have the truth, just state it without advance billing.  

They/He or she  

Do not use the plural pronoun *they* when the antecedent is a singular noun, *anybody*, *somebody*, *someone*, or a distributive expression such as *each*, *each one*, *everybody*, *every one*, or *many a man*. Use the singular pronoun *he*, *she*, or *he or she*.  

*Every one of us knows they are fallible.*  

*Every one of us knows he is fallible.*
They/He or she (continued) Consider these strategies to avoid awkward overuse of *he or she* or unintentional emphasis on the masculine.

Use the plural rather than the singular forms of words throughout. The writer must address his readers’ concerns. Writers must address their readers’ concerns.

Eliminate the singular pronoun altogether. The writer must address his readers’ concerns. The writer must address readers’ concerns.

Substitute the second person for the third person. The writer must address his readers’ concerns. As a writer, you must address your readers’ concerns.
The pronoun *this*, when used to refer to the sense of the complete preceding sentence or clause, may seem to refer to just the last part, making the meaning ambiguous. Reword to correct.

Visiting dignitaries watched yesterday as ground was broken for the new high-energy physics laboratory with a blowout safety wall. This is the first visible evidence of the university’s plans for modernization and expansion.

Visiting dignitaries watched yesterday as ground was broken for the new high-energy physics laboratory with a blowout safety wall. The ceremony afforded the first visible evidence of the university’s plans for modernization and expansion.
Thrust

This showy noun, with its suggestion of power and hint of sex, is much abused by executives and politicians. Use it sparingly and in its specific technical meanings.

The thrust of his letter was that he was working more hours than he had bargained for.

The piston has a five-inch thrust.

Tortuous/Torturous

A winding road is tortuous; a painful ordeal is torturous. Both words derive from Latin for “twist.”

With its many turns, the mountain road was torturous.

Transpire

Use transpire only to mean “become known” or “leak out.” Do not use it to mean simply “happen” or “come to pass.”

What transpired yesterday? What happened yesterday?

Eventually, the account of his villainy transpired.
Try and/Try to

Try and mend it, please.

Try to mend it, please.

Type

Type is not a synonym for kind of.

that type employee
I dislike that type publicity.
small, home-type hotels
a new type plane

that kind of employee
I dislike that kind of publicity.
small, homelike hotels
a plane of a new design

Unique

Unique means “without like or equal.” There are no degrees of uniqueness.

It is the most unique coffee maker on the market.
The balancing act was very unique.
The most unique spider lives under water in a bubble.

It is a unique coffee maker.
The balancing act was unique.
A unique spider lives under water in a bubble.
Utilize/Use
Prefer simple use to the -ize word utilize.
I utilized the facilities. I used the toilet.
He utilized the dishwasher. He used the dishwasher.

Verbal/Oral
Verbal means “of words” and may refer to expressions in writing or in speech. Oral means “of mouth” and limits words to those that are spoken. Oral agreement and written agreement are very precise phrases; verbal agreement is less clear.
We reached verbal agreement. We reached oral agreement. We reached written agreement.

Very
Use the word very only sparingly. Where emphasis is needed, use words strong in themselves.
While Avoid using while as a substitute for although, and, or but. Prefer while in its literal sense: “during the time that.” Where while is used for and or but, it often can be replaced by a semicolon.

The offices and salesrooms are on the ground floor, while the rest of the building is used for manufacturing.

While temperatures reach 90 or 95 degrees in the daytime, nights in the high desert are often cold.

The offices and salesrooms are on the ground floor; the rest of the building is used for manufacturing.

Although temperatures reach 90 or 95 degrees in the daytime, nights in the high desert are often cold.

-wise The pseudosuffix -wise can wrongly be added to any noun, usually with distasteful results: taxwise, pricewise, poemwise, taffywise. It is chiefly useful to mean: “in the manner of”: clockwise. Avoid the temptation to coin new words by adding -wise.
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Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Worth while/Worthwhile  
*Not worth while* is overworked as a phrase for vague disapproval. Avoid using it. *Worth while* is correctly applied only to actions. The one-word adjective *worthwhile* is weak and should be avoided.

- His books are not worth while.
- His books are not worth reading.
- His books are not worth one’s while to read.

- a worthwhile project
- a promising project
- an exciting project

Would  
*Would* is commonly used to express habitual or repeated action. When repetition is indicated by such phrases as *once a year*, *every day*, *each Sunday*, the past tense without *would* is better.

- He would get up early and prepare his own breakfast before he went to work.
- Once a year he would visit the old mansion.

- Once a year he visited the old mansion.
CSE/ISE 300

First Paper - My Favorite Shoes

Your printed completed paper was due at start of class today, Thursday 2/16/12.

Exchange your paper across the aisle, as I will explain. Near the upper right corner of page 1, print the two initials of your name followed by the last four digits of your SBU identification number (for example, Leo Wilson 100123456 should print LW3456).

Check the paper you are editing for writing errors and formatting mistakes. Write your corrections and comments in the margins and between the lines. Do not overwrite the printed text.

Email *doc for your 16Feb paper to lw@ic.sunysb.edu with the Subject: 300 paper 1 - My Favorite Shoes.
CSE/ISE 300
First Paper - My Favorite Shoes

Your printed completed paper was due at start of class today, Thursday 2/16/12. Center the title, your name, and the date at the top. The paper should be 1.0 page (30+ lines and at least 450 words) to 1.3 pages (~40 lines, about 600 words) in length, with lines spaced 1.5 (between single- and double-spaced), text lines 6 inches wide, and about 15 words per line. Use font 12 (or larger). The title, your name, the date, and blank lines do not count in the required 30+ lines. Aim for 36 lines (540 words) of text to be safe. Number the pages of all three papers in ‘300.

Avoid common writing errors (see lect02, slides 2 – 6; lect04, slides 5 – 6; and rules from Strunk & White text).

Email *doc for your 16Feb paper to lw@ic.sunysb.edu with the Subject: 300 paper 1 - My Favorite Shoes.
CSE/ISE 300

The Next Paper Is a Two-Page Memo2

Memo2 is an English essay due Thursday, 8 March 2012 as one printed copy in class & a .doc file emailed to lw@ic.sunysb.edu Subject: 300 memo2 Why I Need a New Work Computer.

Put a title, your name and the paper’s last print date centered on a cover page for your “2.2-page” memo. Use 1.5 lines spacing. Make memo lines 6 inches long with 30 lines per page of text. Make the text of your memo from 60 to 75 lines (2 to 2.5 pages, 850 to 1150 words). Address your boss politely. Number your pages.

Assume the reader is your computer-savvy, but non-expert boss in a company with 20 or fewer employees. The boss has announced that the firm will buy new computers for some employees, those most needing one for their jobs. Justify why the firm will benefit from buying you (or your team) new computer(s). Be specific on why you need a new machine, what computer model with what features, and what price from what source. After the 2.2 pages of memo text list all web and printed references used for your paper.
Write a technical essay in English on the topic: Why I Need a New Work Computer

Explain why you need a new computer, what type, and how it will increase your value to the firm. (In doing so, let me know what is the business of your company, but in a way that will not bore your boss, who knows about the business, but not why you need a new machine for your own job.) Describe the key features of the new computer and why they are critical. Tell what brand, model, cost, and vendor precisely. (List websites with these details in a References section at the end.) Convince your boss to spend a little money.

(Cover page, salutation, and final References list do not count in the 2 to 2.5 pages. Just memo paragraphs count as text; feature lists, quoted material, and images do not.)
The Writing Center in located in 2009 Humanities Building. Their telephone number is (631) 632-7405. It is a service of the Program in Writing & Rhetoric. They will give you free help with writing papers and reports, but you must make an appointment before you go to them for help. There may be a delay of several days.

See the http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/writrhet/writing_center/writing.html web pages to start the process of getting help. To make an appointment for help, see http://sunysb.mywconline.com/.