CSE/ISE 300 Writing  

- Time: Tue 12:50-1:45PM
- Location: Room 154 Light Engineering
- Required Books: The Elements of Style, 4th edition (2000), Authors: Strunk and White $10 (or $4 2007 reprint by Coyote)
- Online Technical Writing, Author: David A. McMurrey  
  http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/
- Instructor: Professor Larry Wittie
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- Office Hours: 2:00-3:30PM Tue & Thu or by appointment
- Course Homepage: http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~cse300

- Today, paper 3 Code Update Documentation due.
- Graded memo2 back in 2 weeks, Tuesday 9 Dec, New Computer.
- Expect in-class quiz on Strunk & White text (+ lectures) Tuesday 9 Dec.
Facility  *Facility* is overused for hospitals, jails, and prisons. He has been appointed warden of the new facility. He has been appointed warden of the new prison.

Factor  *Factor* is a hackneyed word; its expressions usually can be replaced by wording that is shorter and clearer. Her superior training was the great factor in her winning. She won by being better trained.

Farther/Further  Although commonly interchanged, there is a subtle distinction between *farther* and *further*. *Farther* serves best for physical distances; *further* is best for quantities or time. You can chase a ball farther than another player; you pursue a subject further.
Finalize     Avoid *finalize*, which is a pompous and ambiguous business verb. Does it mean “terminate” or “put in final form”?

Fix      *Fix* is well established in America as colloquial for *arrange, prepare,* and *mend*. However, its preferred meanings are derived from its Latin root *figere*, “to make firm” or “to place definitely.”

Flammable     The common word *inflammable* means “combustable.” Lest some people think it means “not combustable,” safety signs on the backs of trucks say “Flammable Liquid.” Write *inflammable.*

Folk      The collective noun *folk* is equivalent to *people* and always properly used only in the singular form. The colloquial *folks* meaning “parents,” “family,” or “those present” should be avoided.

A mixture of oil and gasoline is highly flammable.

A mixture of oil and gasoline is highly inflammable.

Your folks are here!

Your parents are here!
Fortuitous  *Fortuitous* means “happened by chance.” It does not mean *fortunate* or *lucky.*
He was fortuitous to fill a royal flush.  
*He was lucky to fill a royal flush.*

Get  The colloquial *have got* for *have* should be avoided in writing. The preferrable form of the participle is *got,* not *gotten.*
He has not got any sense.  
*He has no sense.*
They returned without having gotten any fish.  
*They returned without having got any fish.*

Gratuitous  *Gratuitous* means “unearned” or “undeserved.”
*The insult was gratuitous.*
He is a man who Avoid redundant phrases of this common type. He is a man who is very ambitious. He is very ambitious. Vermont is a state that attracts Vermont attracts winter visitors for skiing. winter visitors for skiing.

Hopefully Hopefully was formerly a useful adverb meaning “with hope” or “full of hope”. It is now widely used to mean “I hope” or “it is to be hoped.” Avoid hopefully in your writing. It offends the ear of educated readers and sounds silly to them. Hopefully I will leave on the I hope to leave on the noon plane. plane.

However Used first in a sentence, however means “in whatever way” or “to whatever extent.” Not first, it can mean “nevertheless.” The road was bearly passible. The road was bearly passible. However, at last we got home. At last, however, we got home. However discouraging the prospect, they never lost heart.
**Imply/Infer**  
The words *imply* and *infer* are not the same. Something implied is suggested or indicated, but not expressed directly. Something inferred is deduced from evidence at hand.  
**Farming implies early rising.**  
Since she was a farmer, we inferred that she got up early.

**Importantly**  
Avoid *importantly.*

More importantly, he paid for the damages.  
More important, he paid for the damages.

What’s more, he paid for the damages.

**In regard to**  
*In regard to* is wrongly written *in regards to.* On the other hand, *as regards to* is correct and the same as *in regard to.*

**In the last analysis**  
Avoid this overused, bankrupt expression.
inside of/inside

Inside of/Inside  *Inside of* is correct to mean “in less than.” For other meanings, avoid *of* after *inside*; *inside* is correct alone.  
Inside of five minutes, I shall be inside the bank.

insightful

Insightful  *Insightful* should be used only for instances of remarkably penetrating vision. *Perceptive* is almost always better. 
Your remark was insightful.  Your remark was perceptive.

in terms of

In terms of  *In terms of* is padding that is usually best omitted.  
The job was unattractive in terms of salary.  The salary made the job unattractive.

interesting/funny

Interesting/Funny  These unconvincing words should be avoided in introductions. Say something funny, not that it will be funny.  
In connection with the forthcoming visit of Mr. B. to America, it is interesting to recall that he …  Mr. B., who will soon visit America, …
Irregardless  *Irregardless* is not a word. *Regardless* is the correct spelling. The negative *ir*- is suggested by the words *irregular*, *irresponsible*, and *irrespective*, which lack the negative *-less*.

-ize  Never tack *-ize* onto a noun to form a new verb. Be wary of existing *-ize* verbs. *Fertilize*, *harmonize*, and *summarize* are useful; *containerize*, *prioritize*, and *finalize* are not. Prefer *use* over *utilize*.

Kind of/Sort of  These phrases should not be used to mean “rather” or “something like”. Restrict them to their literal senses: “Amber is a kind of fossil resin”; “I dislike that sort of publicity.”  
Her brother is kind of handsome. **Her brother is rather handsome.**

Lay/Lie  *Lay* is a transitive verb and must have an object. *Lie* must not. The forms are *lay, laid, laid, laying; lie, lay, lain, lying.*  
A hen lays an egg; a llama lies down. After his new play laid an egg, the playwright went home and lay down.
Leave/Let  
*Leave* is misused as a substitute for *let*.
Leave go of that rope!  
Let go of that rope!

Less/Fewer  
*Less* should not be misused for *fewer*. *Less* refers to quantity; *fewer* refers to number. Occasionally, either word may be used, but with different meanings. “His troubles are less than mine” means “His troubles are not so great as mine.” “His troubles are fewer than mine” says “His troubles are not so numerous as mine.”
They had less workers than in the previous campaign. 
They had fewer workers than in the previous campaign.

Like/As  
*Like* should not be used for the conjunction *as*. *Like* precedes a noun or pronoun; *as* comes before phrases or clauses.
We spent the evening like in the old days. 
We spent the evening as in the old days.
June smells good, like a baby should. 
June smells good, as a baby should.
Line/Along these lines  
*Line* meaning “course of thought or conduct” is allowable but overworked in phrases like “along these lines”. Writers should avoid continued use of *line* in this sense.

Mr. Jones also spoke along the same lines.  
Mr. Jones also spoke to the same effect.

She is studying along the line of French literature.  
She is studying French literature.

Literal/Literally  
*Literal* is often incorrectly used in exaggeration.

A literal flood of abuse  
A flood of abuse

literally dead with fatigue  
almost dead with fatigue

Loan/Lend  
*Loan* is a noun. The corresponding verb is *lend*.

Lend me your eyes.  
Please give me a five dollar loan.

Please loan me five dollars.  
Please lend me five dollars.
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Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Meaningful
Avoid the bankrupt adjective *meaningful*.

His was a meaningful contribution.
We are instituting many meaningful changes in the curriculum.

His contribution counted heavily.
We are improving the curriculum in many ways.

Memento
*Memento* is incorrectly spelled as *momento*.

Most/Almost
*Most* is not to be used to replace *almost*.

most everybody
almost everybody

most all the time
almost all the time

Nature
If used like *character*, *nature* is almost always redundant. Also avoid vague phrases like “a student of nature.”

acts of a hostile nature
hostile acts
The final and major paper for this course will be due 25 Nov. It counts for 55% of the cumulative grade, which will determine the final course grade of A, B, C, or F. A passing grade is mandatory for graduation. (Talk to me about alternatives to a code paper.)

Your paper 3 must be five to six prose text pages of effective final documentation for a significantly large program that you have written. The code should be 100 to 600 lines that you personally have written and must be included as an appendix to your paper. All the rules for what counts as text in the first two papers apply for paper 3. The code in the appendix and any code quoted in the body of your paper do not count in the minimum of five pages.

Your prose must be interesting to read but must explain your code carefully enough that another professional can take responsibility for it and easily make changes to maintain and improve it.
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Suggestions for Paper 3 Contents

In grading paper 3, I expect to see a number of factual details that will help whatever programmer has to modify your code:

What are the code’s major function, its inputs, and its results?

Who wrote the code, for what initial purpose, and when?

How thoroughly was the code tested and with what input data (an appendix should list one or more complete test sets)?

Tersely, what are the major algorithms and data structures? (Do not enumerate every module, like every tree in a forest.)

What are the major limitations of the code, its internal data structures, and any data structures assumed for its inputs?

What code parts do not yet work? What is needed to fix them?

What portions of the code are particularly tricky and may cause undesired side effects if changed hastily?

What changes would you have made to the code if you had had more time to work on it? Why would they have improved it?

What special advice do you give anyone changing the code?