

## Course Syllabus \_\_\_\_\_ Web writing \_\_\_\_\_

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'Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication'  
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Designed by	Ekaterina Kolesnikova, Cand. Ed. Sc. (PhD), <a href="mailto:e.kolesnikova@inbox.ru">e.kolesnikova@inbox.ru</a> ; Elena Zyryanova <a href="mailto:elena.s.kabanova13@gmail.com">elena.s.kabanova13@gmail.com</a> and Anastasia Kushik <a href="mailto:anastasia.kushick@gmail.com">anastasia.kushick@gmail.com</a>
Department of	Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication
Credits	6
Contact hours	52
Self-study hours	106
Year	4
Study mode	Without online course

### 1. Course Description

a. Course title: Web Writing

b. Pre-requisites:

- Students' level of proficiency in English is to be no lower than CEFR C1 (IELTS 7,0-7,5/ C1 Advanced Grades A, B, C) so that they can apply their foreign language competence for collection, critical evaluation and analysis of information, research, educational and self-educational purposes.
- Students are to demonstrate project development and research skills.
- Before taking the course, students are expected to have completed the following courses and/or activities: practical course of Foreign Language 1, linguistics, intercultural business communication, communication management techniques studies, linguocultural analysis, research seminar, course paper, internship (work experience).

c. Course type: elective.

d. Abstract

The course "Web Writing" is designed to help students approach their web content in a better, more structured and objective way. It covers five main areas:

- Planning web content
- Writing web content (blog, article/newsletter, product description/brochure and other formats)
- Case-studies
- Measuring web content

This course version is designed for senior undergraduate students majoring in foreign languages and cross culture communication.

The course syllabus is designed according to the modern requirements of higher education, HSE education standards (<https://www.hse.ru/standards/standard>) and HSE competences classifier (<http://www.hse.ru/studyspravka/ekk>).

## **2. Learning Objectives**

The course aims to develop students' expertise in the sphere of professional communication in EFL (CEFR C1 and higher) as well as to foster the writing skills required for their future occupation, research work, post-graduate studies etc. Specifically, students are taught to write web content in English.

Upon completing the course students are fully prepared for launching their own website in English using a website builder or writing for a company's website.

## **3. Learning Outcomes**

The first and foremost aim of the discipline is acquiring universal professional competences mentioned in HSE Educational Standards of Linguistics field of studies, namely:

Linguistic competence (knowledge of lexical units and grammar rules);

Socio-linguistic competence (skill and ability to employ and interpret language forms in accordance with the context/situation to achieve best website visitors attendance and communication);

Discursive competence (ability to understand and logically organize certain phrases in order to perform sensible communication);

Strategic competence (ability to employ non-verbal means of communication to compensate lack of knowledge, that web users and visitors may have);

Sociocultural competence (awareness of sociocultural context of web world);

Social competence (desire and readiness to creating meaningful and proper contents in terms of cooperation and ability to help).

This course designed in a form of seminars is to help a student approach web content in a better, more structured and objective way. It covers five main areas:

- Planning web content: a student will acquire the skill of planning out the content he/she needs and thinking about its purpose, objectives, trustworthiness and tone.
- Writing web content: a student will learn how to write for a web audience (such web contents as web page/site planning, blog, article/newsletter, product description/brochure)
- Case-studies: The students will learn how to analyze case-studies for making necessary tips and notes.
- Creating and measuring web content: students will learn how to make sure website is working properly.

So, upon completion of the course, students are expected to:

- know specific features of writing for the web;
- produce written texts of different web genres/formats;
- analyze, evaluate and edit web copy.

#### 4. Course Plan (may be subject to change on an as-needed basis)

##### 1. What Writers Do.

- The practice of web writing and why it matters
- The web writer's role
- Principles of good content
- How the writing process works

##### 2. Get Your Bearings.

- Audiences research (discuss how and why they are done). Do high-level research to get a sense of history. Conduct interviews with colleagues, clients, and readers. Understand your audiences and cover meaningful topics for them
- Mission statement (discuss examples). Write a mission statement
- Editorial copy. Writing a Web Profile
- Modular way of organizing content on your web page

##### 3. Writing Basics.

- Clarify and summarize your project goals
- Get everyone on the same page before you start writing
- Write a project brief or communication plan. Case studies/exercises
- Pick content types to help your readers
- Approach writing in a modular way
- Improving your writing. Basic guidelines
- How to create a catchy **Headline**
- Web Contents: How to write an **Opinion ed**

##### 4. Find Your Voice.

- Find your voice and translate it to the page. Watch Your Tone. Adapt your tone to different situations
- Pick a few useful brand attributes
- Choose the right words to talk about your company
- Show empathy in your writing. Map your content types to your readers' feelings. Be sensitive when it comes to humor
- Web Contents: How to write a **tutorial**

##### 5. Build a Community.

- Building a community is about much more than tweeting, posting, and pinning
- Find and nurture your community. Write blog posts, email newsletters, and social media posts
- Stay close to your readers through growth and change
- What it means to be community-minded, and why it's important to let readers connect with each other on their own terms

## **6. Sell It without Selling Out.**

- Principles of effective marketing copy
- How to write marketing messages for your company. Developing bios, taglines, landing pages, product and event descriptions, and more
- CopyRight and copyWrite
- Web Contents: How to write a Product description and a Review

## **7. Make It Flow.**

- Types and elements of flows: signup, payment, and subscription flows. Forms and prompts. Product and feature tours
- Navigation links and search filters. Survey. Ratings. Comments. How to develop a structure of a flow
- The little details: error, messages, emails, or notifications
- Audit the words. Practice and correction.

## **8. Touchy Subjects.**

- Apologizing with grace: writing error messages, alerts, and help documents
- Working with lawyers on terms and policies These are important moments to show readers that you care about their feelings

## **9. Legal issues.**

- Rights under copyright law
- Responsibilities towards preventing plagiarism
- Website legal requirements under information security and cyber law

## **10. Style Guides. Share what you've learned.**

- Develop and maintain a useful style guide
- Give people the tools they need to write well
- Workshop copy ideas as a group
- Evolve your house style as your company grows

## **11. The Revision Process.**

- Share drafts in a courteous, efficient manner
- Incorporate feedback and revise your own writing
- Approach peer editing from a teaching perspective

## **5. Reading List**

Core coursebook:

Required:

Redish, Janice. Letting go of the words : writing web content that works / Janice (Ginny) Redish. – 2nd ed. Redish and Associates, Published by Elsevier, Inc. All rights reserved. 2012.  
<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/pfi/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=4fb765fe-8fe1-4d60-9fcd-c204e5d93e3e%40sessionmgr120&bdata=JnNpdGU9cGZpLWxpdmU%3d#AN=edp350650&db=edspub>

### Secondary coursebook:

Optional

**Writing for Multimedia and the Web**; Second Edition:

<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/pfi/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=a2212124-11ec-4048-bee3-a2d572997009%40sessionmgr102&bdata=JnNpdGU9cGZpLWxpdmU%3d#AN=edp369208&db=edspub>

**Web Copy That Sells** : The Revolutionary Formula for Creating Killer Copy That Grabs Their Attention and Compels Them to Buy Ed. 3:

<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/pfi/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=1e942772-6337-446e-b783-2cdd9a07b7f6%40sessionmgr120&bdata=JnNpdGU9cGZpLWxpdmU%3d#AN=edp1841383&db=edspub>

### Additional sources:

- Cambridge Dictionary. <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/ru/>
- Oxford Online Collocation Dictionary. <http://oxforddictionary.so8848.com/>
- The Free Dictionary by Farlex.
- <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Oxford+English+Dictionary+Online>
- Thesaurus. <http://www.thesaurus.com/>

## **6. Grading System**

Grades are given on a 10-point scale.

The current course grade is calculated in the following manner:

If the **current course grade** is an eight, nine, or ten, it becomes one's **examination grade** automatically.

Website project is presented at the end of Module 3.

The exam is oral and is based on the theory presented in the core coursebook.

The final grade is calculated in the following manner:

$$G_{\text{final}} = G_{\text{web writing}} * 0,25 + G_{\text{self-study}} * 0,25 + O_{\text{final project}} * 0,2 + O_{\text{exam}} * 0,3$$

Class participation covers in-class talks, and participation in discussions and debates. The grade is calculated as a mean of all the grades given throughout the course.

One test is conducted at the end of each module. The grade for the tests is calculated as an average of all the three tests.

Each web format assigned throughout the course is evaluated separately, and then the average grade for all the formats is calculated.

### **Exam retake procedure:**

#### 1. First retake:

First retake during the retake period is conducted by the teacher who assigned the current/continuous assessment grade.

First Exam retake procedure on this discipline presupposes full compliance with the usual Exam procedure. Only exam grade must be subject to retake procedure. Continuous assessment grade can not be changed. First retake is held in compliance with special Testing Measurement Materials designed for retake procedure by a responsible teacher.

#### 2. Second retake:

First retake during the retake period is conducted by a special Exam board which consists of not fewer than 3 members.

Second retake is held in compliance with special Testing Measurement Materials designed for the Second retake procedure under the supervision of the Exam board Chairperson.

### **Exam card example:**

1. What is web writing? Provide examples of different web genres/formats. In what spheres is web writing used?
- 2.. What is a privacy policy? What clauses can be included in a privacy policy?
3. Comment on the following web text. Define the format, its characteristic features/elements and say whether the copy is overall successful and why (not). Give specific arguments for your answer.

Every exam card consists of two theoretical questions and one practice tasks.

Examples of web copies assessed:

- Mission statement. Project brief.
- Headlines.
- Articles.
- Opinion ed.
- News report.
- Tutorial (“how to...” writing)
- Blog posts. Newsletters.
- Products description. Reviews. Copywrite.
- Surveys. (Ratings. Comments)

## Example of module test:

Name, last name \_\_\_\_\_

Module test 1. Variant 1.

1. Enumerate at least 5 spheres/enterprises where web writing can be useful for attracting people/clients:

2. Complete the sentence:  
Put your goals in terms of what

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should do at your website and what you want them to find at your website.

3. Understanding your site visitors and their needs is critical to deciding:  
(enumerate at least 4 meaningful aspects of your website that is determined by your audience)

4. Comment with 2-3 sentences on the following statement:

**“We are not our users.”**

5. In your opinion does the creation of Mission statement matter in web writing?  
Why?/Why not? Provide 2-3 arguments.

6. What is a project brief?

7. How is it possible to promote visitor’s further reading? Make a list of content organization techniques/strategies (write at least 10 tips).

8. Comment on the strategies that can make your web site language more reader-friendly:

### **GUIDELINES FOR TUNING UP YOUR SENTENCES**

1. Talk to your site visitors – use “you” and “we”.

2. Write in the active voice.

3. Write short, simple sentences/paragraphs.
4. Give extra information its own place.
5. Start with the context.
6. Put the action in the verb.
7. Use your site visitors' words.
9. What would you change in the following websites? Write your comments and make any possible notes or marks on the picture.  
(a landing page is presented for analysis)

## 7. Examination type

The web-formats created by the students are evaluated according to the following criteria:

	SUCCINCT (brief). Language (grammar, vocabulary, content)	SCANNABLE. Structure/ communicative achievement	PERSONABLE. Style/tone/voice	ACTIONABLE
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your primary information (the main piece of information or message that you are trying to convey to your user) should be the first thing the user sees. Plain English that is accurate, consistent and concise.</li> <li>• Pages should contain no more information that a user can absorb at once.</li> <li>• Don't state the obvious but do explain.</li> <li>• Each page is self explanatory (if</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The text is scannable and easy to pick out keywords, sentences, and paragraphs of interest while skipping over those parts of the text the reader cares less about.</li> <li>• Shortest variants of paragraphs/information organisation (or even lists) are used and helpful sub-headings to give users an accurate at-a-glance</li> </ul>		

	concerns the web site)	impression of the page's content are introduced. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The structure contributes to easy scanning.</li> </ul>		
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The topic/primary information of the piece of writing is unclear from the first view.</li> <li>Pages are a bit complex for navigating and understanding.</li> <li>There is some additional/repetitive/obvious information.</li> <li>Pages are overload.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is hard to pick out keywords, sentences, and paragraphs of interest at a glance.</li> <li>Paragraphs (or lists) are a bit overload. Sub-headings give users an inaccurate impression of the page's/text content.</li> <li>The structure contributes to general scanning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revealing your personality to the visitor in a subtle way.</li> <li>Third person is avoided, "we" or "us" are more preferable. The text is welcoming and friendly.</li> <li>Adopt an active tone when writing (use active verbs).</li> <li>The audience is well examined, the writing considers the user's/readers's interests and feelings.</li> </ul> <p>Define your tone and voice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content of your page allows the user to achieve what they set out to achieve quickly and easily.</li> <li>Your content has a set aim and speaks it out fully.</li> </ul> <p>Texts (web page) has a system of describing/instructing/informing etc. so that the reader gets the info he/she needs.</p>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The topic/primary information of the piece of writing is unclear.</li> <li>Pages are complex for navigating and understanding.</li> <li>Too much additional/repetitive/obvious information.</li> <li>Pages are overload.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is hard to pick out keywords, sentences, and paragraphs of interest.</li> <li>Paragraphs (or lists) are overload with odd information. Sub-headings give users a wrong impression of the page's/text content.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your personality to the visitor is revealed in a too direct way.</li> <li>Third person is used, the writing is detached. The text is rather neutral, cold and indifferent.</li> <li>Passive voice prevails.</li> <li>The audience is unclear, the writing is indifferent to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content of your page does not instruct the user to achieve what they set out to achieve quickly and easily.</li> <li>Your content has a set aim, but does not and speak it out fully.</li> <li>Texts (web page) does not have a system of describing/instructing/informing etc. so that the reader</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The structure prevents from scanning properly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>user's/readers's interests and feelings.</li> <li>• Tone and voice of writing is not defined/does not correspond to the aim of the project.</li> </ul>	loses his/her way/track.
0	Text that is poorly written or long-winded will deter readers	Scanning is impossible	Style, tone and voice are neglected	The writing does not provide necessary instruction or guidelines for the reader to find necessary information.

## 8. Methods of instruction

The course involves both standard classroom instruction along with regular multimedia support via utilizing websites.

Standard classroom instruction consists in delivering seminars, or practical classes, and employs the following techniques:

- whole class work;
- individual work;
- pair- and group work;
- debates and discussions;
- in- and out-of-class writing;
- brainstorming;
- role-plays;
- presentations of research articles;
- presentations of parts of students' own web-texts;
- self- and peer assessment

## 9 Special equipment and software support

In terms of equipment, the course is taught in a standard way, i.e. in classrooms equipped with screens and overhead projectors. Some classes are taught in computer classrooms. Access to the Internet is required.