

To: Members of Fall 2006 21w.732 Course
From: Rob Doherty
Re: Suggested Memo Format
Date: October 16, 2006

I. Purpose of Using Memos

- To provide quick internal communication.
- To maintain a “paper trail” for institutional memory.

II. Style

- Use headings for quick scanning (by the reader).
- Use bullets and lists for ease of reading.
- Use straightforward, simple prose; avoid wordiness.
- Prefer the active voice.

III. Sections

Memos are generally divided into sections labeled with headings. Choose headings that will make it easy for your reader to follow the logic and purpose of your memo. If you are writing a memo in which you are reporting about a research project, you may want to divide it into the following sections:

- Short history of project
- Goals of project
- Specific area you are working on currently

Or, you may choose to analyze it another way:

- Strengths and weaknesses of the research
- Areas for further work (beyond the scope of the project)

These are only a few suggestions. If you have another idea for organization, feel free to make use of it—as long as it is clearly understood.

It is quite acceptable to use paragraph form in memos, though it is helpful if you set these off with headings that make them easy to scan. **One should be able to pick up the memo, immediately know its purpose, and be able to follow it easily to receive the desired communication.**