

Technical Writing

English 305-W01

G06 Colson Hall

T/TH 8:30–9:45 a.m.

Instructor: Jill Higgins

Office: 209 Colson

Office Phone: 304-293-9727

Office Hours: T: 1–3 p.m., TH: 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

E-mail: Jill.Higgins@mail.wvu.edu

(and by appointment)

NOTE: Follow these two instructions when writing emails to me:

- (1) Begin the subject line with “ENGL 305-W01”; and
- (2) Complete the subject line with a concise phrase describing your question or concern.

Required Text

Gerson, Sharon J., and Steven M. Gerson. *Technical Communication: Process and Product*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008.

Description

Welcome to English 305! This course introduces you to strategies for translating between discipline-specific knowledge and interested outsiders. While this may include topics traditionally understood as “technical,” such as those in engineering, architecture and computer science, technical writing encompasses any topic that must be explained to an involved, but not expert, audience.

You will explore the forms of technical writing that are common in the professions, including memos, instructions, reports, and technical descriptions. Drawing on the expertise developed in your major, you will explore technical writing through topics and issues important to the work you plan to do. Because a primary assumption of this course is that all writing emerges from and responds to a particular problem, audience, and purpose, the course focuses on helping you develop multiple strategies for accomplishing your communication goals.

Primary Course Objectives

- That you master the practices and principles of technical communication with particular emphasis on planning, audience analysis, persuasion, clear and effective writing style, organization, graphics and information design.
- That you refine a writing process that will enable you to communicate well, meet deadlines, and work as part of a team.
- That you attend and participate in classroom discussions and peer-review sessions. *Class participation will be a significant portion of your grade.*
- That you design and execute several forms of technical communication including a memo, résumé, instructions, literature review and technical description.
- That you produce a significant (20+ pages), professional report related to your field of study, which has been revised and refined for clarity and effectiveness.
- That you demonstrate the ability to speak persuasively in a professional setting, including the ability to select and design effective presentation graphics.

Course Requirements

You will be evaluated on written documents, oral presentations, class participation, and your final writing project. You will receive a detailed assignment sheet for each task. Assignments that will be graded on content, technique and style will pass through a drafting stage before you turn in your “final” version.

Assignments

30 “Minor” Writing Assignments & Quizzes – 40%

Resume – 5%

Technical Description – 5%

Literature Review – 5%

Report Presentation – 10%

Final Report & Reflection – 25%

Participation – 10%

The more writers write, reflect and revise, the better their writing becomes. For this reason, you will receive full credit (A), partial credit (B/C/D) or no credit (F) for all draft and “minor” writing assignments, depending on how well the work you turn in meets the criteria set forth for that assignment. More important, you will also receive extensive comments (from me and your peers) that will help you in the revision process.

As you turn in your assignments, I will hold you to professional standards. For example, your employer will take for granted qualities such as promptness, neat appearance, and correct mechanics (grammar, spelling, and punctuation). ***Final assignments must be printed out before you arrive at class.***

USB Drive & Drafts

Please obtain a USB drive that you will dedicate to collecting the writing, designing, editing and revising done in this course. Please bring this drive to each class. As you work on your assignments both in and out of class, keep (within reason) progressive versions of all your notes, drafts, outlines, peer reviews, and research materials (both hard copy and electronic). Organize and label the documents as you go because you will regularly review these materials in order to learn how your discovery, drafting, and research processes evolve throughout the course.

Tip for naming digital documents: It’s useful to use a consistent naming format for your documents since you will be writing multiple drafts and will want to see your progress (as well as not lose original work that you may need to come back to later). For instance, I might name my drafts like so (note my initials):

First draft – BadNewsLetterJH1.doc

Second draft – BadNewsLetterJH2.doc

Peer-reviewed draft – BadNewsLetterJH2_JWedits.doc

Final draft – BadNewsLetterJH.doc

Also, back up your files in a second location (another USB drive, a CD, your home computer, an external hard drive, etc.) regularly. USB drives have been known to get lost or corrupted!

Attendance

You are expected to attend class every day and bring your USB drive and reading materials. If you amass more than **two** unexcused absences, your grade for the course will be lowered **one** full letter grade. For each unexcused absence after two, I reserve the right to lower your final grade by an additional letter grade.

It's particularly important for you to attend—and be prepared for—in-class peer reviews on drafts of your documents. The more you have written before peer-review sessions, the more you will benefit from them. Although your drafts need not be “polished,” they should be complete enough for you to receive substantial help from your peers. Under no circumstances will I accept a “final” version of a document without its peer-reviewed rough draft.

NOTE: An absence on the day a draft is due counts as two absences. If you show up to class on the day a draft is due without your draft work (or with draft work that is incomplete), you will be given two absences for the day.

Professional Expectations & Conduct

In addition to the requirements in this syllabus, you are expected to work until the class period has ended; to complete all reading assignments on time; to help your classmates learn by your responses to their writing; to choose projects that require significant research and analysis; to spend at least six hours per week out of class for writing and class preparation; and to be courteous and considerate. Please turn all cell phones and pagers off (no ringing, vibrating or text messaging) during class. Our classroom computers are for class use only – no Facebook, MySpace, etc, please. All are very detrimental to your class participation grade. Finally, please respect the request for no food or drink in the lab.

Plagiarism Policy

West Virginia University defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity; respect other students' dignity, rights and property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students *are* expected to be familiar with the sections on Academic Honesty in the University Student Conduct Code, Policy Bulletin 31, which is online at <http://www.arc.wvu.edu/rightsa.html>.

Talking over your ideas and getting comments on your writing from friends are NOT acts of plagiarism. Taking someone else's published or unpublished words and calling them your own IS plagiarism: a synonym is academic dishonesty. When plagiarism amounts to an attempt to deceive, it has dire consequences, which can include failure of an assignment, failure of the course and a permanent blemish on your University transcript.

Non-Discrimination & Disability Policies

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (293-6700).

Undergraduate Writing Center

Please consider taking your ideas and your written work to the WVU Writing Center, where trained peer tutors will consult with writers about any piece of writing at any stage of the writing process. The Writing Center is located in G02 Colson Hall. To schedule appointments or to ask questions, call 293-5788. For more information about Writing Center programs as well as for materials to help you negotiate various stages of the writing process, visit http://english.wvu.edu/centers_and_projects/wcenter.

Grading

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| Superior ~ A (100-90) | Strong ~ B (89-80) | Satisfactory ~ C (79-70) | Poor ~ D (69-60) | Failing ~ F (<60) |
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If at any time course requirements, assignments and expectations are unclear, please do not hesitate to ask!

Course Schedule

(Like all writing...this schedule is open to revision!)

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| Week 1 | Introduction & Memo |
| Tuesday 8/23 | Intro to course and colleagues Assigned: Memo |
| Thursday 8/25 | Due: Memo (hard copy) Reading: Gerson Ch. 1 (pp. 2-18), Ch. 2 (pp. 22-44) Assigned: Email Report (short, informal) |
| Week 2 | Writing Process & Instructions |
| Tuesday 8/30 | Due: Email (electronic) Due: Revised In-Class Instructions (by the end of class) Reading: Gerson Ch. 3 (pp. 48-76) & Ch. 12 (346-380) Assigned: Instructions |
| Thursday 9/1 | Due: Draft Instructions (electronic) |
| Week 3 | Writing Process & Business Correspondence |
| Tuesday 9/6 | Due: Instructions (hard copies of BOTH final and draft w/tracked changes) Reading: Gerson Ch. 4 (pp. 84-119) & Ch. 6 (154-198) Assigned: Letter |
| Thursday 9/8 | Due: Draft Letter (electronic) |

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| Week 4 | Business Correspondence & Résumé |
| Tuesday 9/13 | Due: Final Letter (hard copies of BOTH final and draft w/tracked changes) Reading: Gerson Ch. 7 (pp. 201-230) Assigned: Résumé (& Reflection Memo) and 2-3 job prospects |
| Thursday 9/15 | Due: Job Prospects and Draft Résumé (hard copy) Reading: Gerson Ch. 8 (pp. 236-254) |
| Week 5 | Résumé & Career Fair |
| Tuesday 9/20 | Due: Résumé and Reflection Memo (hard copy) Assigned w/variable due date: Career Fair Report (<i>Including reading:</i> Gerson Ch. 15 (pp. 432-477)) |
| Tuesday 9/22 | WVU Career Fair: Mountainlair Blue & Gold Ballrooms 10 a.m.-3 p.m. <i>No Class (but have read Ch. 15 to better write a professional, informal report)</i> |
| Week 6 | Technical Description/Process Analysis (Group Project) |
| Tuesday 9/27 | Due: Career Fair Report (hard copy) Reading: Gerson Ch. 9 (pp. 262-286) & Ch. 11 (pp. 322-342) Assigned: Technical Description/Process Analysis (& Individual Reflections) |
| Thursday 9/29 | Due: Defined process and potential graphics for in-class workshop (hard copy) |
| Week 7 | Technical Description/Process Analysis (Group Project) |
| Tuesday 10/4 | Due: Draft Technical Description/Process Analysis for peer review (electronic) |
| Thursday 10/6 | Due: Technical Description/Process Analysis, Individual Reflections, & Peer Reviewed Copies (hard copy) Reading: UNC Handout (eCampus) Assigned: Literature Review (& Topic Brainstorming) |
| Week 8 | Mini Literature Review |
| Tuesday 10/11 | Reading: Gerson Ch. 5 (pp. 128-150) & Gerson Ch. 14 (pp. 420-430) & UNC Handout Due: Topic Brainstorming and list of possible sources (hard copy) <i>Midterm grades</i> |
| Thursday 10/13 | No Class Reading: Your periodicals/resources |
| Week 9 | Mini Literature Review & Reports/Proposals |
| Tuesday 10/18 | Due: Draft Literature Review for peer review (electronic) |
| Thursday 10/20 | Due: Final Literature Review (hard copy) Reading: Ch. 16 (pp. 484-519) Assigned: Final Report (& Brainstorming) |

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| Week 10 | Reports/Proposals & Individual Conferences |
| Tuesday 10/25 | Due: Report Brainstorming (hard copy) Reading: Ch. 17 (pp. 525-558) |
| Thursday 10/27 | No Class: Individual Conferences Due at your conference: PACCSO Worksheet (hard copy) |
| Week 11 | Individual Conferences & Report (pre-writing) |
| Tuesday 11/1 | No Class: Individual Conferences Due at your conference: PACCSO Worksheet (hard copy) |
| Thursday 11/3 | Due: Draft References/TOC for peer review (electronic) Assigned: Draft Introduction (approx. 500 words) |
| Week 12 | Report (pre-writing/writing/graphics) |
| Tuesday 11/8 | Due: Draft Introduction (electronic) Reading: Supplementary graphics text on eCampus Assigned: Draft Discussion and Graphics (minimum 2,000 words) |
| Thursday 11/10 | Due: Draft Discussion and Graphics (electronic) Reading: Supplementary front/back matter text on eCampus Assigned: One Other Draft Front/Back Matter Element |
| Week 13 | Final Report (writing) & Presentations |
| Tuesday 11/15 | Due: Draft Front/Back Matter Element (e.g., cover letter, abstract, executive summary, glossary, etc.) (electronic) |
| Thursday 11/17 | Reading: Gerson Ch. 18 (pp. 562-588) Workshop and progress reports |
| Week 14 | Thanksgiving Recess – No class |
| Tuesday 11/22 | No class |
| Thursday 11/24 | No class |
| Week 15 | Presentations & Report Revision |
| Tuesday 11/29 | Report Presentations |
| Thursday 12/1 | Report Presentations Due: Draft Final Report for peer review (electronic) |
| Week 16 | Presentations, Report Revision, Final Report Due & Evaluations |
| Tuesday 12/6 | Report Presentations |
| Thursday 12/8 | Due: Final Report (hard copy) Report Presentations Course Evaluations & Closing |