

2011 Fall - ENGL 305: Technical Writing

This course is designed to introduce 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 which must be explained to an involved, but not expert, audience. This course explores the forms of technical writing that are common in the professions, including object and process descriptions, instructions, persuasive analysis, and science popularizations. 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 your writing toolbox.

Policy Statement

General Information

Course number: English 305

Course name: Technical Writing

Term and year: Fall 2011

CRN/Section: 82520 / W03

Location: Colson Hall (CLN-D), G06

Times: TTh 11:30–12:45

Instructor: [John Jones](#), Assistant Professor

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Office: Colson 231

Office hours: office hours: T 1-2, W 11-12:30, or [by appointment](#)

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will:

- 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.
- Refine a writing process that will allow you to communicate well, meet deadlines, and work as part of a team.
- Attend and participate in the classroom discussions and peer review sessions.
- Produce a significant (20+ pages), professional, online portfolio in which you revise and reflect on your written work.
- Demonstrate the ability to speak persuasively in a professional setting.

Texts

Required:

- Gerson & Gerson (2012). *Technical Communication: Process and Product*. 7th edition. Boston: Prentice Hall. ISBN:0-13-137734-5

Recommended:

- Alred, Brusaw, & Oliu (2009). *Handbook of Technical Writing*. 9th Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. ISBN: 0-312-47707-4

Additional readings will be made available via [eCampus](#).

Additional course requirements

- Regular access to a computer,
- A [Google Docs](#) account, and
- A [MIX email account](#) which is checked daily. All official communication from the instructor will be sent to students' MIX email accounts.

Evaluation

Course evaluations will be determined using the [Learning Record](#) portfolio system. Students will record regular observations of their learning behavior and submit midterm and final Learning Records consisting of these observations, samples of their work, and analyses of this data keyed to the **course strands** and the [Five Dimensions of Learning](#).

Course activities will center around the following **course strands**. Students will:

Writing & Rhetoric

- demonstrate familiarity with the principles of rhetorical communication, including:
 - analyzing and setting goals for writing before writing begins
 - using appropriate expression and professional style in workplace documents
 - meeting the needs of different readers in different contexts
 - developing practical arguments for the workplace
- show a clear understanding of the process of revision, including the ability to re-conceptualize written material as it moves from draft to draft
- complete all writing exercises and assignments on time and in good faith

Collaboration

- engage classmates in constructive debate during class discussion
- turn in materials to be workshopped on time
- edit and proofread their own and others' work
- provide constructive criticism of classmates' work in peer-revision workshops
- demonstrate sensitivity to audience concerns by responding to peer feedback of their own work

- work effectively with classmates on group projects, equitably sharing work loads and fully participating in all parts of the group-work process

Research / Technology

- demonstrate familiarity with the research resources provided by the WVU Library System, including print materials, scholarly databases, and online resources
- discover outside sources relevant to particular writing assignments and effectively integrate that material into those assignments
- demonstrate effective techniques for presenting sources as evidence
- correctly cite outside research in a manner appropriate to different genres of technical writing
- Students will effectively master classroom technology for submitting assignments, conducting electronic workshops, sending and receiving course-related communication, and any other necessary classroom applications

Grade scale

Course grades will be based on the grade scale below (adapted from [this scale](#)).

- A. Represents outstanding participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with very high quality in all course work. Evidence of significant development across the five dimensions of learning. The Learning Record at this level demonstrates that the minimum requirements for all course strands have been met, while providing evidence for activity that goes significantly beyond these requirements in one or more course strands.
- B. Represents excellent participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with consistently high quality in course work. Evidence of marked development across the five dimensions of learning. The Learning Record demonstrates that the minimum requirements for all course strands have been met, while providing evidence for activity that goes somewhat beyond these requirements in one or more course strands.
- C. Represents good participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with generally good quality overall in course work. Evidence of some development across the five dimensions of learning. The Learning Record demonstrates that the minimum requirements for all course strands have been met.
- D. Represents uneven participation in course activities; some gaps in assigned work completed, with inconsistent quality in course work. Evidence of development across the five dimensions of learning is partial or unclear. The Learning Record does not provide evidence that the minimum requirements for all course strands have been met.
- F. Represents minimal participation in course activities; serious gaps in assigned work completed, or very low quality in course work. Evidence of development is not available.

Attendance

In this class students will be learning a skill—writing—that they will be expected to develop over the course of the semester. For that reason, it is important that they attend class, arrive on time, bring any assigned work, and participate in all in-class writing, editing, revising, and discussion sessions. **Each student will be allowed four (4) absences without it affecting his or her grade.**

For each absence over four (4), the student's grade will be lowered by one letter grade. This includes absences for illnesses and other emergencies. For this reason, students should reserve their absences for truly unavoidable emergencies.

Because we have a limited number of class meetings, it is important that students be in class on time and stay for the entire period. **If a student arrives at class more than 5 minutes late or leaves class more than 5 minutes before it is dismissed, he or she will be counted absent.** Further, if a student comes to class on a peer-review or conference day unprepared—that is, without a draft to workshop with his or her classmates—he or she will be counted absent.

If a student finds that any other unavoidable conflict prevents him or her from attending class or being on time, that student should discuss this conflict with me prior to the absence (if possible). Otherwise, the student should contact me about the absence as soon as possible.

Late work

If a student cannot attend class on the date an assignment is due, he or she should discuss a make-up date with me before the absence. If the student does not contact me before the time an assignment is due, the assignment will be considered late. I am generally flexible when I am kept informed of absences, but I am generally not flexible when a student skips multiple classes without contacting me, then shows up wanting to make up missed work.

I will not accept any project or assignment that is more than a week late unless the student makes an appointment with me during office hours to discuss his or her reason for turning in the work after the deadline. If a student fails to attend class on the day he or she is scheduled to lead a class discussion or give a presentation, that student should expect to receive no credit for the assignment. Homework, and in-class assignments will not be accepted late.

Submitting course work

Unless otherwise noted, all course assignments will be submitted electronically. We will discuss the method and procedures for submitting assignments in class. All assignments are due before the start of class on the day they are listed in the course schedule.

Technology policy

We will use technology frequently in this class. Occasionally, you will be introduced to new technologies that you may be unfamiliar with. When this happens, these new technologies will often be discussed in class; however, when faced with new tools and technologies you should expect to spend some time working with and learning the technology, researching the technology, and, when possible, sharing what you learn about the technology with your fellow students when they need help.

You are welcome to use the provided computers during class for note-taking and relevant research; you are also welcome to bring laptops or other portable computing devices for these purposes. In

general, most technology is welcome in class as long as it is used to aid student learning; technology that doesn't serve this purpose—or actively distracts you or your classmates—is not welcome.

Work visibility

Due to the nature of the course, you will be sharing your work with your fellow classmates as part of workshops and peer review sessions. Additionally, you may occasionally be required to share your non-graded work publicly on the web (e.g., on a class blog). By taking this course, you are indicating that you accept these requirements.

Research and scholastic honesty (The P-Word)

One of the most common forms of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. Taking someone else's published or unpublished ideas and submitting them as your own constitutes plagiarism and will result in formal academic discipline. In general, if a student turns in work that is not her or his own, in whole or in part, without adequate attribution to the original author, or if he or she any commits any other form of scholastic dishonesty, these actions will result in either a major course penalty or, depending on the severity of the violation, failure for the course. If a students have any questions about the use they are making of sources for an assignment, they should see me *before* the assignment is turned in. For a complete discussion of what constitutes plagiarism and the relevant WVU disciplinary procedures, students may consult the [West Virginia University Undergraduate Catalog](#) (pdf) and the [West Virginia University Student Conduct Code](#).

Accommodations policy

If you have a documented learning disability, hearing or vision problem, or any other special need that might affect your performance or participation in the class, please contact WVU's [Office of Disability Services](#) to arrange accommodations.

Social justice policy

English 305 supports WVU's commitment to social justice. The classroom community will work to create a positive learning environment based on open communication and mutual respect.

Miscellaneous notes

Please keep the following in mind:

- Bring all materials to each session. This includes all course texts as well as printouts of any additional reading, assignment drafts and research sources, lecture notes, and a writing implement.
- Make an effort to check the online schedule often. You are responsible for monitoring any updates to the course schedule, including additional assignment information, homework, or new reading material.

Schedule

This is the course schedule for the fall 2011 section of **English 305, Technical Writing**. Readings and assignments are due on the day they are listed in the schedule.

Week	Meeting	Schedule/Readings	Assignments
Aug. 22-26	1	Course Introduction	
	2	Read the Learning Record (LR) " Information for Students ," following all the links in the main section of the page	Twitter Assign
Aug. 29-Sep. 2	1	Unit 1: Description Read <i>Technical Communication</i> (TC) Chapter 1, "An Introduction to Technical Communication" & Ch. 12, "Technical Descriptions and Process Analyses"	Complete Par LR and record
	2	Read TC Ch. 2, "The Communication Process"	
Sep. 5-9	1	Peer Review	
	2	Online Document Design and the Cloud	Project 1.1 du
Sep. 12-16	1	Read TC Ch. 9, "Document Design"	
	2	Read TC Ch. 3, "Clarity, Conciseness, Accuracy, and Ethics in Technical Communication"	

Sep. 19-23	1	Peer review	
	2	TBA	Project 1.2 du
Sep. 26-30	1	Unit 2: Instructions Read TC Ch. 13, "Instructions, User Manuals, and Standard Operating Procedures"	
	2	Read TC Ch. 5, "Research and Documentation"	
Oct. 3-7	1	Read TC Ch. 11, "Communicating to Persuade"	
	2	Read TC Ch. 10, "Using Visual Aids in Technical Communication" and Tufte, "Chartjunk" and "Aesthetics and Technique" (download pdfs on ecampus)	
Oct. 10-14	1	Peer review	
	2	Midterm LR Discussion Session	Project 2.1 du
Oct. 17-21	1	LR Moderation	Midterm LR p
	2	Read TC Ch. 15, "Summarizing Technical Communication"	
Oct. 24-28	1	Peer review	

2 Using online collaboration tools

Project 2.2 du

Oct. 31-Nov. 4 1 **Unit 3: User Testing Reports**

2 Read TC Ch. 16, "Short, Informal Reports"

Nov. 7-11 1 Read TC Ch. 17, "Long, Formal Reports"

2 Group work

Nov. 14-18 1 Peer review

2 Group work

Project 3.1 du

Nov. 21-25 **Thanksgiving Break: No class**

Nov. 28-Dec. 2 1 Group work

2 Peer review

Dec. 5-9 1 Learning Record: Final questions

Project 3.2 du

2 Course evaluations

Final LR parts