

# Technical Writing ENGL 305

Syllabus url: <http://tinyurl.com/ldvnuh3>

Class Blog: [engl305s14baldwin.wordpress.com](http://engl305s14baldwin.wordpress.com)

Professor Sandy Baldwin

TR 10:00-11:15

Fall 2014, G06 Colson Hall

Office: G20 Colson

Hours: TR 11:30-12:30

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(use this email *only*)

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## Description

This course is designed to introduce you to strategies for translating between discipline-specific knowledge and audiences of 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.

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 writing strategies for diverse communication situations. Some specific course objectives include:

- mastering 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;
- refining a writing process that will enable you to communicate well, meet deadlines, and work as part of a team;
- attending and participating in classroom discussions and peer-review sessions (which will be a significant portion of your grade);
- demonstrating the ability to speak and present persuasively in a professional setting, including the ability to select and design effective presentation graphics; and
- designing and executing several forms of technical communication including memos, letters, an object/process description, instructions, an informal report, and a presentation.

## Required Text (available at WVU bookstore)

Paul V. Anderson. *Technical Communication: A reader-centered approach* [TC]. 8th Edition. Wadsworth 2014.

## WordPress Site

Your WordPress site will be the primary venue for presenting your work. See the [WordPress FAQ](#) (attached to this syllabus) to set up your site. Your site must be set up by class time on September 2. The site will be a public representation of you as a technical communicator.

## Assignments

1. Job Package (20%)
2. Mechanism/Process Description (20%)
3. Instruction Set (20%)
4. Usability Memo Group Project (20%)
5. Scientific/Technical Controversy Data Visualization and Lightning Talk (20%)
  - All assignments are due at class time on the date indicated in the schedule.
  - Short ungraded assignments and drafts of assignments can be in written as blog posts or attached to a post in doc or pdf format.
  - Assignments for a grade are due on the date listed on the syllabus. They are turned in on your WordPress site. They should be attached to a post under the Assignments menu item (we will create this menu item in class).
  - Assignments must be in the proper format (pdf for the first four assignments, ppt or similar for the last). Other formats will not be accepted for final versions.

## Grade Descriptors

The following are general guidelines to expectations and criteria for grading work.

**A Outstanding:** represents superlative participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with very high quality in all course work.

**B Excellent:** represents above-average participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with consistently high quality in course work.

**C Average:** represents good participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with generally good quality overall in course work.

**D Below average:** represents uneven participation in course activities; some gaps in assigned work completed, with inconsistent quality in course work.

**F Inadequate:** represents minimal participation in course activities; serious gaps in assigned work completed, or very low quality in course work.

## Participation

300-level writing classes are dedicated to preparing students for careers as professional communicators. As such, in-class activities and discussion are a primary means of instruction and learning. All students are expected to conduct themselves like professionals in the course. Participation includes but is not limited to coming to class prepared and with all the work due; participating in class activities; and maintaining a courteous and considerate attitude in class (for example: cell phones on silent). All work should be turned in promptly, on the due date, with the proper formatting, and with attention to spelling and grammar. Completing ungraded writing such as drafts and other short writings is assumed as part of your participation. Every failure to participate in the above manner will lower your overall final grade by 1/3 of a grade (e.g. from an A to an A-, and so on).

## **Attendance**

Attending class and participating in the class activities is indicative of professional conduct and is a basic courtesy to others in the class. You are expected to attend every class. Every unexcused absence or failure to participate after the second week – starting with class on September 2 – will lower your overall final grade by 1/3 of a grade (e.g. from an A to an A-, and so on). I am happy to discuss the absence policy. I will determine what constitutes an excused absence.

## **Academic Integrity Policy**

“Faculty, students, and administrators share the responsibility to maintain the University’s academic integrity. It is essential that grades measure the achievement of the individual student. Academic dishonesty includes the following: plagiarism; cheating and dishonest practices in connection with examinations, papers, and projects; and forgery, misrepresentation, and fraud. Cheating and plagiarism are condemned at all levels of University life. Refer to the official University policy on cheating and plagiarism available in the University’s catalogs, and the Academic Integrity/Dishonesty Policy.” - Policy listed in the [WVU Faculty Handbook](#)

## **Diversity Statement**

“The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. 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 Accessibility Services (304-293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.sandbox.wvu.edu/ddei>.”

## Schedule

All assignments and readings are due at the beginning of class on the date listed. You must be prepared to discuss the readings in the class they are due. Unless otherwise discussed or arranged, assignments delivered after the due date are considered late and will not be accepted.

<b>Date</b>	Topics	Reading [TC]	<b>Due</b>
<b>Aug 19</b>	Introduction. Go over syllabus; Defining Technical Communication; Introduce Job Package		
<b>Aug 21</b>	No class		
<b>Aug 26</b>	Topic: Interpreting job ads; WordPress intro	Chapter 1-2	<b>Basic WordPress site. See <a href="#">FAQ</a></b>
<b>Aug 28</b>	Topic: the Resume; More WordPres.	Chapter 3	<b>Three possible job ads for your Job Package</b>
<b>Sep 2</b>	Topic: the Cover letter; More WordPress	Chapter 4-5	
<b>Sep 4</b>	Workshop Job Packet		<b>Draft Job Packet.</b>
<b>Sep 9</b>	Introduce Mechanism/Process Description		<b>Job Packet</b>
<b>Sep 11</b>	Topic: Elements of Mechanism/Process Description	Chapter 8-9	
<b>Sep 16</b>	Topic: Technical Writing as Problem Solving. Documentation	Chapter 10 and Appendix A	<b>250 word proposal for Mechanism/Process Description</b>
<b>Sep 18</b>	Topic: Visual Elements in Technical Communication	Chapter 14-15	
<b>Sep 23</b>	Workshop Mechanism/Process Description		<b>Draft Mechanism/Process Description</b>
<b>Sep 25</b>	Introduce Instruction Set		<b>Mechanism/Process Description</b>
<b>Sep 30</b>	Topic: What are Instructions?	Chapter 11-13	

<b>Oct 2</b>	Topic: User-centered Instructions	Chapter 27-28	<b>250 word analysis of audience and rhetorical situation of Instruction Set</b>
<b>Oct 7</b>	Topic: Designing the Instruction Set	Chapter 16	
<b>Oct 9</b>	Workshop Instruction Set		<b>Draft Instruction Set</b>
<b>Oct 14</b>	No class		
<b>Oct 16</b>	Introduce Usability Test		<b>Instruction Set</b>
<b>Oct 21</b>	Topic: What is Usability?	Chapter 17-18	
<b>Oct 23</b>	Topic: Planning Usability Tests	Chapter 19	
<b>Oct 28</b>	Topic: Conducting Usability Tests		<b>Draft Usability Test Questionnaire and Methodology</b>
<b>Oct 30</b>	Topic: Creating your Usability Memo	Chapter 23-24	
<b>Nov 4</b>	Workshop Usability Memos		<b>Draft Usability Memo</b>
<b>Nov 6</b>	Introduce Scientific/Technical Controversy Lightning Talks		<b>Usability Memo.</b>
<b>Nov 11</b>	Topic: What is a controversy?	Chapter 6-7	
<b>Nov 13</b>	Topic: Creating your Presentation	Chapter 24-25	
<b>Nov 18</b>	Topic: Public Presentations	Chapter 20	
<b>Nov 20</b>	Workshop Controversy Lightning Talks		<b>Draft Scientific/Technical Controversy</b>
<b>Nov 25</b>	No class: Thanksgiving		
<b>Nov 27</b>	No class: Thanksgiving		

<b>Dec 2</b>	Controversy Lightning Talks		
<b>Dec 4</b>	Controversy Lightning Talks		
<b>Dec 9</b>	Last class		<b>Scientific/Technical Controversy Lightning Talks</b>