

SPRING 2012 | ENGLISH 305 – TECHNICAL WRITING
TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS | G06 COLSON HALL
SECTION W02, 10:00AM TO 11:15AM
SECTION W03, 11:30AM TO 12:45PM

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor: [David Beach](#) | **Office:** 116 Colson Hall | **Phone:** 304-293-9711

E-Mail & AIM: david.beach@mail.wvu.edu

Office Hours: Wed and Fri, 9am to 11am or by appointment. Virtual office hours through Facebook chat.

Required Text & Materials:

- Dobrin, Keller & Weisser, *Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century*, 2e (2010)
- Other handouts (available in eCampus)
- USB Flash Drive
- Set aside approximately \$5 for final portfolio binding (unless you wish to submit a digital portfolio)

COURSE GOALS

English 305 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, 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

- 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 enable you to communicate well, meet deadlines, and work as part of a team.
- Attend and participate in classroom discussions, peer-review sessions and group presentations. Class participation will be a significant portion of your grade.
- Design and execute several forms of technical communication including memos, resumes, instructions and technical descriptions.
- Produce significant (20+ pages), professional work related to your field of study, which has been revised and refined for clarity and effectiveness.
- Demonstrate the ability to speak persuasively in a professional setting, including the ability to select and design effective presentation graphics.

COURSE POLICIES

eCampus & Other Communication Tools

We will use eCampus for course materials, assignments, submissions, discussions and collaboration. eCampus works better with Firefox and Safari, and to a lesser extent with Chrome. **Note:** IE9 is not supported and will not function properly. To access eCampus, follow these directions:

- Open a browser.
- Go to <https://ecampus.wvu.edu/>
- Allow pop-ups to be accepted from this site
- Ensure your Java program is up-to-date
- Click on WVU Main Campus icon (on right side)
- Enter your MIX username and password.
- Click on ENGL-305 (course material will be available on or before Jan 9th)

E-Mail

You should use your MIX e-mail account for class-related correspondence. I will only send material to MIX e-mail accounts to ensure confidentiality. If you use an e-mail account other than the MIX e-mail account, you can have your MIX e-mail forwarded to that account. Your other account should identify you by name, and if possible, you should change the settings on a class-related e-mail to have responses sent to your MIX e-mail account.

Facebook Group

We will use a Facebook Group (BEACH-SP12-ENGL305) as an informal space to continue discussions, share ideas, and have mini-lessons. This is also a way to communicate with me outside of class and office hours since I typically have Facebook open. Feel free to chat with me with course-related questions and/or concerns. If I do not respond immediately, I will respond whenever I see your message. NOTE: I do not accept “friend” requests from students.

Class and Attendance

Because this course depends on your preparation for every class and your involvement during every class meeting, regular and on-time attendance and active participation are critical to your success. On a T-Th schedule, **each student is allowed up to two absences without penalty**. A third absence will result in the loss of *up to one letter grade* for the course. Each subsequent absence will result in the further loss of *up to one letter grade*. Thus, students who miss 5 or more classes *can* fail the course. Arriving late will also impede your success in class. **Four late arrivals will be counted as an absence.**

You are expected to conduct yourself professionally and be an active, dedicated participant and colleague. This means participating in classroom and online discussions, meeting with group members either face-to-face or via a variety of media, attending conferences with me at mutually agreeable times, and posting assignments on time. This also means notifying me of any issues which would impede attendance or completion of work. Things happen in life (loss of job, illness, illness or death of loved ones), and when these things occur, I am empathetic and flexible *if I know about them*. For example, if one has a family emergency, one does not disappear from work without notice; the same thing applies to school (not just this class, but all classes). Maintain contact, and we can work around issues.

Enrollment

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.

- Last Day to Add: Jan 13th
- Last Day to Drop: Mar 16th
- Last Day to Withdraw from the University: Apr 26th

File Naming

Since all assignments will be submitted online, a critical piece of time management and efficiency lies in file naming. When I download assignments to review, each file needs to have a unique file name, or else files are overwritten. For example, if Anna sends me an analysis assignment, and the file is named analysis.doc, and Bill sends me an analysis assignment with the same file name, the latter will overwrite the former unless I change the file name. This, obviously, takes up more time and effort, and raises the possibility of missing and misdirected files.

File names must be labeled with your MIX userid and the name of the work (in shortened form). Here is an example of Jane Doe's Writing Strategies assignment: *jdoe2_strategies*.

I will return unread any attachment that does not follow this file naming protocol. Also, make sure your name is on the document itself.

When I return your work with feedback, you will see "fb_" appended to the front of the file name (e.g. *fb_jdoe2_analysis*). When you submit a revision, you should remove the *fb_* prefix and append "_v2" (e.g. *jdoe2_analysis_v2*) to differentiate the revision from the original.

Late Assignment Policy

No late assignments will be accepted. In cases of *documented* illnesses or emergencies, or bona fide technical issues (such as power and server outages, hard drive crashes, etc.), I will handle those on a case-by-case basis. In any of these cases, contact me as soon as possible to let me know of the issue.

Extra Credit

I am fundamentally opposed to the concept of extra credit since if I offer extra credit to one person, I have to offer it to all.

ENGL305 GRADING POLICY

Your course grade will be based on the following:

- Participation: 10%
 - Attendance, punctuality, class/online discussion, Scientific/Technical Controversy Group Presentation, participating in Peer Review (4 times), Conferencing
- Short Writing Assignments: 20%
 - Mid-term Portfolio (Title Page, Table of Contents, Memo, Library/Internet Guide, Career Fact Sheet, Genre Analysis), Drafts, In-class writing, Homework
- Portfolio: 70%
 - Title Page, Table of Contents, Two of Four assignments from Mid-Term Portfolio, Expanded Definition, Documentation/Instructions, Mechanism/Process Description, Translation, Resume/Cover Letter, Scientific/Technical Controversy Summary

Grade Descriptors for Short Writing Assignments and Portfolio

- **A**—Exemplary work that demonstrates originality and initiative. The content is mature, thorough, and well-suited for the audience; the style is clear, accurate, and forceful; the information is well-organized and formatted so that it is accessible and attractive; genre conventions are effectively used; mechanics and grammar are correct. The portfolio demonstrates a range of well-edited, well-written, well-argued, and well-documented texts that a company could use without further revisions, and might even use as examples when training new employees.
- **B**—Good work. The documents generally succeed in meeting their goals in terms of audience, purpose, and genre without the need for further major revisions. They may need some *minor* improvements in content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics. In the workplace, a company would be able to use the documents without major revisions of any sort.
- **C**—Satisfactory work. Documents are adequate in all respects, but require some substantial revisions of content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics; they may require further work in more than one area. For instance, central ideas may generally be apparent, but may often lack

adequate explanations or documentation necessary for different audiences and purposes. In the workplace, the documents would be functional for an immediate deadline, but would require further revisions before being distributed or made part of a permanent record.

- **D**—Documents are unprofessional. They generally require extensive revisions of content, presentation, writing style, and/or mechanics before the documents could be used by a company. The writer has encountered significant problems meeting goals of audience, purpose, and genre. In the workplace, a company would most probably have to reassign the project to another writer for successful completion.
- **F**—Documents do not have enough information, do something other than is appropriate for a given situation, or contain major and pervasive problems in terms of content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics that interfere with meaning. The portfolio may be incomplete, or plagiarism may compromise the portfolio on ethical grounds. A company would most probably dismiss the writer from current projects.

Grade Descriptors for Participation

Participation in writing classes can take many forms, from talking in class discussion to helping peers in workshops to bringing drafts of papers to office hours.

- **A**—Superior participation shows initiative and excellence in written and verbal work. The student helps to create more effective discussions and workshops through his or her verbal and written contributions. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, thorough, specific, and often provide other student writers with a new perspective or insight.
- **B**—Strong participation demonstrates active engagement in written and verbal work. The student plays an active role in the classroom but does not always add new insight to the discussion at hand. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time and with attention. In workshops or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, specific, and helpful.
- **C**—Satisfactory participation demonstrates consistent, satisfactory written and verbal work. Overall, the student is prepared for class, completes assigned readings and writings, and contributes to small group workshops and large class discussions. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time. In workshops or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful and prompt, but could benefit from more attentive reading and/or specific detail when giving comments.
- **D**—Weak participation demonstrates inconsistent written and verbal work. The student may be late to class, unprepared for class, and may contribute infrequently or unproductively to classroom discussions or small group workshops. Reading and writing assignments are not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, suggestions to group members may be missing, disrespectful, or far too brief and general to be of help.
- **F**—Unacceptable participation shows ineffectual written and verbal work. The student may be excessively late to class, regularly unprepared, and not able to contribute to classroom discussions or small group workshops. This student may be disruptive in class. Reading and writing assignments are regularly not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, the student has a pattern of missing, being completely unprepared, or being disruptive.

Statement on Academic Integrity

WVU's Academic Integrity Policy states:

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.

It is your responsibility to be fully familiar with the Student Conduct Code which can be found at <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>. If you are at all confused about what is or is not plagiarism, ask!

Administrivia

When we meet, cell phones and other personal electronic devices must be silenced, and there should be no texting or electronic chatting in class. It is disruptive to everyone for beepers and cellular phones to ring during class, distracting and disengaging to chat online, and rude to take and make calls during class. Since we meet in a computer lab, food and drink are not allowed.

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I 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. Because all of us are different, we then learn about our differences, what makes each of us unique, and how to be tolerant of our differences. I promote an open classroom where all topics are open for discussion in a rational and unthreatening manner. With that said, what is not acceptable in the classroom is any kind of bashing. This includes, but is not limited to, insensitive and/or inappropriate remarks, statements, or actions regarding race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political preference, *ad infinitum*.

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 (http://socialjustice.wvu.edu/office_of_disability_services, 304-293-6700).

COURSE RESOURCES

Resources

A wealth of resources for writing, both in general and in the disciplines, is located at <http://beach.english.wvu.edu/compresources/> (available Jan 9th).

WVU Writing Center

The WVU Writing Center is a space where both undergraduate and graduate tutors can help you with any aspect of the writing process. The tutors can assist from the beginning stages of brainstorming a topic and starting an essay to the final touches of creating the Works Cited page and revising for the final portfolio.

The WVU Writing Center is located in G02 Colson Hall. Appointments can be made for 30 or 60 minutes by calling 304-293-5788 or dropping in. The Writing Center is open 10am to 5pm, Monday through Thursday, and 10am to 3pm on Fridays. For more information, see http://english.wvu.edu/centers/centers/writing_center.

COURSE SCHEDULE

A schedule of readings in *TC* can be found below. Other readings will be posted in eCampus. *The schedule is subject to slight alteration based on the progress of the class.*

CLASS DATE	DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES
10 Jan	Discussion: Course Introduction and Expectations, Using eCampus
12 Jan	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 1-2, Rhetoric and Technical Writing, Writing Memos
17 Jan	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Appendix A, Grammar, Mechanics, Punctuation, etc.
19 Jan	DUE: Memo Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 3-5, Beyond the Pencil, Ethics in Technical Writing
24 Jan	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 6, Research
26 Jan	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Appendix B, Research continued
31 Jan	DUE: Library/Internet Guide Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 17, Writing in the Online World
02 Feb	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 7, Mechanics of Writing
07 Feb	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 8, Visual Rhetoric, Genres
09 Feb	DUE: Career Fact Sheet Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 9, Layout & Design, Genres continued
14 Feb	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 10, Revising & Editing
16 Feb	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 15, Writing Technical Definitions
21 Feb	Discussion: Writing Technical Definitions continued
23 Feb	DUE: Genre Analysis & Mid-Term Portfolio Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 11, Usability
24 Feb	Last Day to Drop
28 Feb	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 18, Writing Technical Instructions
01 Mar	DUE: Expanded Definition Discussion: Writing Technical Instructions continued
06 Mar	Discussion: Scientific & Technical Controversy Assignment
08 Mar	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 16, Writing Technical Descriptions
13 Mar	DUE: Documentation/Instructions Discussion: Writing Technical Descriptions continued
15 Mar	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 13, Workplace Writing, Translation
20 Mar	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 14, Workplace Writing, Translation continued
22 Mar	DUE: Mechanism/Process Description Discussion: Workplace Writing, Translation continued
27/29 Mar	NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS
03 Apr	Discussion: Resumes and Cover Letters
05 Apr	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 23, Presentations
10 Apr	DUE: Translation Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 19, Manuals
12 Apr	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 20, Proposals
17 Apr	Discussion: <i>TC</i> Ch. 21-22, Informal and Formal Reports
19 Apr	DUE: Scientific/Technical Controversy Group Presentations
24 Apr	DUE: Scientific/Technical Controversy Group Presentations
26 Apr	DUE: Final Portfolio Discussion: Beyond the Classroom and Into the Profession
03 May	Pick up portfolios in instructor's office

SPRING 2012: COURSE AGREEMENT

Please sign and return to the instructor

Course # and section: _____

Name (printed legibly): _____

Local phone: _____

MIX E-mail address: _____

List any specific personal cognitive or physical challenges you choose to inform the instructor about:

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE SYLLABUS FOR THIS COURSE, AND I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE POLICIES.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(* OPTIONAL ***)**

Permission to Copy Student Work

Permission to copy your work is requested for use in academic purposes (e.g., models for other students, examples of genre, samples for classroom activities, inclusion in teaching portfolios, teaching assessment and research, etc.). Your anonymity is assured. All copies of work will have your name and any references to you removed.

I hereby give permission to have my work copied and/or distributed for anonymous, academic use.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Email: _____