

Technical Writing

English 305-W01

G06 Colson Hall

T/TH 8:30–9:45 a.m.

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Office Hours: T/TH 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

(and by appointment)

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, 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, 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

15 “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, partial credit or no credit 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 – BadNewsLetterJH2edits.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

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!)

Week 1	Introduction & Memo
Tuesday 8/24	Intro to course and colleagues Assigned: Memo
Thursday 8/26	Due: Memo Reading: Gerson Ch. 1 (pp. 2-18), Ch. 2 (pp. 22-44) Assigned: Email Report (short, informal)
Week 2	Writing Process & Audience Awareness
Tuesday 8/31	Due: Email Reading: Gerson Ch. 3 (pp. 48-76) & Ch. 6 (154-198) Assigned: Letter
Thursday 9/2	Due: Letter (hard copy and electronic) Reading: Gerson Ch. 4 (pp. 84-119) Assigned: Résumé (& Reflection Memo), Career Fact Sheet, and 2-3 job prospects
Week 3	Résumé & Career Fact Sheet
Tuesday 9/7	Due: Career Fact Sheet, job prospects Reading: Gerson Ch. 7 (pp. 201-230)
Thursday 9/9	Due: Draft Résumé for peer review Reading: Gerson Ch. 8 (pp. 236-254)
Week 4	Research & Career Fair
Tuesday 9/14	Due: Résumé & Reflection Memo Reading: Gerson Ch. 15 (pp. 432-477) Assigned: Career Fair Report & Questions
Thursday 9/16	Career Fair – 10 a.m. -3 p.m. Mountainlair <i>No class</i>
Week 5	Technical Description/Process Analysis (Group Project)
Tuesday 9/21	Due: Career Fair Report Reading: Gerson Ch. 9 (pp. 262-286) Assigned: Technical Description/Process Analysis (& Individual Reflections)

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Thursday 9/23	Due: Defined process and potential graphics for in-class workshop Reading: Gerson Ch. 11 (pp. 322-342)
Week 6	Technical Description/Process Analysis (Group Project)
Tuesday 9/28	Due: Draft Technical Description/Process Analysis for peer review Group Work
Thursday 9/30	Due: Technical Description/Process Analysis & Individual Reflections Group Presentations Assignment: Literature Review (& Topic Brainstorming)
Week 7	Research & Literature Review
Tuesday 10/5	Due: Topic Brainstorming Reading: Gerson Ch. 5 (pp. 128-150) & Gerson Ch. 14 (pp. 420-430) Assigned: Literature Review periodicals/resources
Thursday 10/7	Due: Bring in at least one periodical on your topic Reading: Your periodicals/resources
Week 8	Literature Review
Tuesday 10/12	Reading: Your periodicals/resources
Thursday 10/14	Due: Draft of Literature Review for peer review
Week 9	Report Topic Proposal
Tuesday 10/19	Due: Final Literature Review Reading: Ch. 16 (pp. 484-519) and Ch. 17 (pp. 525-558) Assigned: Final Report (& Report Proposal)
Thursday 10/21	Due: Final Report Brainstorming/Pre-Writing Assignment
Week 10	Conferences – Report Topic Proposals Due <i>Assigned: Draft Works Cited/References</i>
Tuesday 10/26	No class – individual conferences, mid-term grades & research!
Thursday 10/28	No class – individual conferences, mid-term grades & research!
Week 11	Final Report (pre-writing)
Tuesday 11/2	Due: Works Cited/References Assigned: Draft TOC
Thursday 11/4	Due: Draft TOC (w/peer-review tracked changes) Assigned: Draft Introduction
Week 12	Final Report (pre-writing/writing/graphics)
Tuesday 11/9	Due: Draft Introduction (w/peer-review tracked changes) Reading: Supplementary text Assigned: Draft Report Graphics

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Thursday 11/11	Due: Draft Report Graphics Assigned: Draft Discussion (1000+ words)
Week 13	Final Report (writing)
Tuesday 11/16	Due: Draft Discussion (w/peer-review tracked changes) Reading: Gerson Ch. 18 (pp. 562-588) Assigned: Additional Front/Back Matter Draft
Thursday 11/18	Due: Draft Front/Back Matter element (w/peer-review tracked changes) Workshop and progress reports
Week 14	Thanksgiving Week – No Class
Tuesday 11/23	No Class
Thursday 11/25	No Class
Week 15	Presentations
Tuesday 11/30	Report Presentations Due: Draft Final Report for peer review
Thursday 12/2	Report Presentations
Week 16	Presentations, Final Report Due & Evaluations
Tuesday 12/7	Report Presentations Due: Final Report
Thursday 12/9	Report Presentations Course Evaluations & Closing