

English 305: Technical Writing, Section W01	
Spring Semester, 2013 - Tuesday/Thursday in Colson G06	
Instructor: Ashleigh Petts	
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Office: Colson 242	Office Hours: Tues 10:00-11:00, Wed 12:00-2:00, and by appointment

Introduction and Course Description

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 that 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 memos, instructions, and technical reports. 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.

Texts

Tebeaux, Elizabeth, and Sam Dragga. *The Essentials of Technical Communication*. 2nd Ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. ISBN: 9780199890781

Reynolds, Nedra, and Rich Rice. *Portfolio Keeping: A Guide for Students*. 2nd Ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006. ISBN: 9780312419097

Additional readings on eCampus

Other Required Tools

MIX email address

Google Drive through MIX account

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 allow you to communicate well, meet deadlines, and work as part of a team.
- That you attend and participate in the classroom discussions and peer review sessions. Class participation will be a significant portion of your grade.
- That you design and execute a successful memo, résumé and career fact sheet, instructions, and technical report.
- That you produce a significant (20+ pages) professional portfolio in which you revise and reflect on your selections.

- 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 class participation, performance on quizzes, formal and informal writing assignments completed in class and at home, formal and informal oral presentations (including a group presentation near the conclusion of the semester), and your electronic portfolio. Each assignment for your portfolio passes through a drafting stage before you turn in your “final for now” version of the assignment. You will have the opportunity to revise your documents as you make selections for your final portfolio.

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Possible Points</i>
Class Participation	10%
Quizzes	05%
Informal Writing Assignments	15%
Group Presentation	10%
Electronic Portfolio	60%

As you turn in your assignments, I will hold you to the professional standards in your field. For example, your employer will take for granted qualities such as promptness, neat appearance, and correct mechanics (grammar, spelling, and punctuation).

Attendance and Late Arrivals

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

Lateness is defined as arriving five minutes past the course start time. If you arrive late four times, I will record that pattern as an absence.

It is particularly important for you to attend—and be prepared to participate in—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,” in general they should be complete enough for you to receive substantial help from your peers. Under no circumstances will I accept a “final for now” version of a document unless I have seen a 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.

Grading

Superior ~ A (99, 95, 90)	Strong ~ B (89, 85, 80)	Satisfactory ~ C (79, 75, 70)	Poor ~ D (69, 65, 60)	Failing ~ F (<60)
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Grade Descriptors

Portfolio Writing

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 dismiss the writer from current projects.

Informal Writing

√+	Very good
√	Acceptable
√-	Unacceptable
0	Didn't do it

Participation

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 workshops 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.

Google Drive & Portfolio Keeping

All documents will be collected and presented using Google Drive. 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. Organize and label the documents as you go and it will benefit both of us.

Tip for naming digital documents: It's useful to employ 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 create a folder in Google Drive to house my "New Hire Memo," and name my documents like so (notice how I use my initials):

First draft - NewHireMemoAP1

Second draft - NewHireMemoAP2

Peer-reviewed draft - NewHireMemoAP2edits

"Final for now" draft - NewHireMemoAPffn

Final draft - NewHireMemoAPfinal

In addition, I recommend backing up your files in a second location (your hard drive, for example) regularly.

Email/eCampus

Please check your MIX account regularly, as I will occasionally send email reminders and announcements to the class. In order to save paper, I will post assignment sheets and other materials to eCampus.

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 (as in no ringing and no vibrating) during class time, as they are disruptive to the class. Please do not text during class. I will do the same. Furthermore, our classroom computers are for class use only – do not check Facebook, Twitter, or any other site not related to the course. These activities are very detrimental to your class participation grade. Finally, please respect the request for no food or drink in the lab.

If at any time course requirements or expectations are unclear, please do not hesitate to ask me about them.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

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. For procedures regarding the procedure for handling academic dishonesty cases, please consult the current Student Conduct Code at http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code.

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, as spelled out in the university's regulations (see the Student Conduct Code for more information).

Social Justice

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 304-293-5788. 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->

[projects/writing-center](#)>.

Schedule of Work (subject to change according to progress)

Abbreviation: FFN = "Final for now" draft

Week 1	Introduction
1/15	Introduction to course and colleagues
1/17	Readings: <i>Essentials</i> Ch. 1 and <i>Portfolio Keeping</i> pgs. 1-7 Assigned: "New Hire" Memo
Week 2	"New Hire" Memo
1/22	Reading: <i>Essentials</i> Ch. 7
1/24	Due: "New Hire Memo" first draft Readings: <i>Portfolio Keeping</i> pgs. 8-16 and 24-27; peer review handout on eCampus In-class peer review of "New Hire Memo"
Week 3	"New Hire" Memo
1/29	Readings: <i>Essentials</i> Ch. 2 and writing process/rhetoric handouts on eCampus
1/31	Due: "New Hire Memo" FFN draft Reading: <i>Essentials</i> Ch. 12 Assigned: Résumé & Career Fact Sheet + 3 job prospects
Week 4	Résumé & Career Fact Sheet
2/5	Due: 3 job prospects In-class drafting
2/7	Due: Résumé & Career Fact Sheet first draft In-class peer review of Résumé & Career Fact Sheet
Week 5	Ethics and Intellectual Property
2/12	Readings: <i>Essentials</i> Ch. 3 and eCampus handout on intellectual property
2/14	Due: Résumé & Career Fact Sheet FFN draft Reading: eCampus handout on ethics
Week 6	Midterm Portfolio and Instructions
2/19	Reading: <i>Portfolio Keeping</i> pgs. 17-23 Assigned: Midterm reflective memo
2/21	Reading: <i>Essentials</i> Ch. 10 Assigned: Instructions
Week 7	Midterm Portfolio and Instructions
2/26	Due: Midterm reflective memo first draft In-class peer review of midterm reflective memo
2/28	Due: Midterm Portfolio and Reflection Reading: <i>Essentials</i> Ch. 5
Week 8	Instructions
3/5	Due: Instructions first draft In-class peer review of instructions
3/7	Reading: <i>Essentials</i> Ch. 6
Week 9	Technical Report
3/12	Due: Instructions FFN draft Reading: <i>Essentials</i> Ch. 8 Assigned: Technical report, proposal, and presentation
3/14	Reading: eCampus handout on working collaboratively

Week 10	Technical Report
3/19	Due: Report proposal Reading: eCampus handout on research
3/21	Reading: eCampus handout on documenting sources
Week 11	Spring Break
3/26	No class
3/28	No class
Week 12	Creating an Oral Presentation
4/2	Reading: Essentials <i>Ch. 11</i>
4/4	Reading: eCampus handout on oral presentations
Week 13	Technical Report and Preparing for the Final Portfolio
4/9	Due: First draft of technical report In-class peer review of technical report
4/11	Reading: <i>Portfolio Keeping</i> pgs. 40-60 Assigned: Final reflective memo and final portfolio
Week 14	Group Presentations
4/16	Group presentations
4/18	Group presentations
Week 15	Conferences
4/23	Group conferences on technical report at Eliza's
4/25	Optional individual conferences on final portfolio
Week 16	Final Portfolios & Final Week of Class
4/30	Due: Technical Report Due: Draft of Final Reflective Memo In-class peer review of Final Reflective Memo
5/2	Due: Final Portfolio Course evaluations & closing remarks