

ENGL 305 W01: Technical Writing Fall 2013 Syllabus

M/W/F 10:30–11:20 a.m., Colson G06
Instructor: Jay Kirby
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Office: 242 Colson
Office Hours: M/W 12:30–2 p.m. and by
appointment

Required Text

Dobrin, S. I., Keller, C. J., & Weisser, C. R. (2010). *Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century* (2nd Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Course Description

This course will introduce you to strategies for communicating discipline-specific knowledge to interested outsiders in a professional setting. Often, we call this technical communication. Some of the material you write for the the course may be what people would consider “technical”—engineering, computer science, medicine—but this course will provide strategies for explaining information to any person who is involved with, but not expert in, a given topic. This is quite important in almost any workplace because not everybody will have the same understanding of all information.

We will explore technical communication in a number of genres common to the field: memos, formal reports, technical descriptions. Using expertise from your coursework, you will explore technical communication through topics important to the work you plan to do. A primary assumption of this course is that technical communication responds to a particular problem, audience, and purpose. This course will develop strategies to deal with these various problems, audiences and purposes.

Also, this course is designed to emulate a professional environment. Therefore, you will be held to professional standards in your work.

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 strategy that enables you to communicate well, meet deadlines, and work in a team
- That you design and execute several forms of technical communication
- That you produce a significant professional portfolio
- That you demonstrate the ability to speak persuasively in a professional setting

Course Requirements

You will be evaluated on written documents, oral presentations, and class participation. You will receive a detailed assignment sheet for every assignment. Written assignments (after the first assignment) will pass through peer review before I grade them.

Assignments and Grading

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent of final grade</u>
Introductory Memo:	5%
Job Search Materials:	10%
Technical Description:	10%
Proposal with Annotated Bibliography:	15%
Feasibility Report:	20%
Report Presentation:	10%
Portfolio:	20%
Participation:	10%

You will submit assignments primarily through WVU's Gmail. Each assignment will have specific directions about how to deliver the material. You will submit documents in a format specified in the instruction sheet for that assignment. Ask me any questions you have about formatting.

This class will include a great deal of reading and writing, and it is imperative that you stay on top of the work.

Participation

Rather than using a difficult-to-define method of measuring “participation,” your participation grade will come from participation in class discussions, projects, and readings. To receive full participation credit, you need to amass at least 100 participation points during the course of the semester. Simply coming to class will not earn any participation points.

You may earn up to one point a day for participating in class discussion.

You may earn up to one point for responding to reading assignments; you may earn this reading-response credit by responding to “In Your Experience,” “Analyze This,” or “Explore” questions in *Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century*. Responses should be emailed to me before the class meeting after the reading is assigned. For instance, to receive credit for a reading assignment on a Monday, you must email me your response before Wednesday's class. These responses should be at least 250 words in length.

You may earn points for completing in-class assignments, too. These assignments will be worth a variable number of points.

You will have the opportunity to score all 100 points if you attend every class, complete all the in-class work, complete all reading assignments, and participate in all class discussions.

Late Work

As this class will emulate a professional environment, late work is unacceptable. In a workplace, your career will suffer if you are habitually late; here, your grade will suffer. Any assignment submitted after the due date will receive no more than half credit. If an assignment is more than one week late, then you will receive no credit for the assignment.

Attendance

Again, as this class will emulate a professional environment, I expect you to be present at every class. Additionally, if you miss a class, I expect that you will contact me and assure me that you will be able to stay stay on track with your work.

Missing up to three classes will not directly affect your grade. However, missing classes may mean that you miss participation points or that you miss important information about upcoming assignments. If you miss more than three classes, I will lower your grade by one letter. I reserve the right to lower your grade an additional letter for each additional absence. More than six absences will without exception result in a failing grade.

Please note that there is no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. All absences count equally. If you know that you will need to miss numerous classes, you need to meet with me early this semester to make arrangements.

Also, it is vital that you come prepared for peer review sessions. If you do not bring a draft of your work for a peer review session, I will mark you absent for that day. You will also receive no participation credit for the peer review.

Document Retention

You should have all work saved in at least two locations. In addition to saving work on a harddrive, you should also save work on a USB drive or use some sort of Internet back-up such as Google Docs, DropBox, or SpiderOak. I will expect you to be able to access any documents for this class from our computer lab.

Additionally, as you revise documents, create new files to keep track of your revisions. You may decide to go back to an earlier version, and you want to be able to access that version.

Email

We will often use email to communicate in class. You should check your MIX account at least once a day and you should reply to any email that requires response as soon as you can. You should expect me to respond to your emails within 24 hours during the week, within 48 hours during the weekend. If you do not hear back from me, feel free to nudge me with another email.

Computer Lab

Our class will meet in a computer lab every day. Many days, we will use the computers in our class work. However, it is vital you stay on task in the lab. Using computers outside of classwork (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) without permission will reduce your participation grade. The same goes for off-task use of smartphones or other devices.

Additionally, the computer labs in Colson do not allow food or drink. Please respect this rule.

Academic Dishonesty

WVU works to maintain a high level of respect for the work of others. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity. Dishonesty of any type 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 details of WVU's definitions and treatments of academic dishonesty, please see the Student Conduct Code (http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code). If you have questions about possibly improper citations, references, or any other activity that might be interpreted as academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the issue.

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.

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, veterans 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

Consider taking your ideas and written work to the WVU Writing Center. You can find information about the writing center at its Web site (<http://english.wvu.edu/centers-projects/writing-center>). At the writing center, trained tutors can help you with any phase in the writing process. Additionally, their online resources (<http://english.wvu.edu/centers-projects/writing-center/resources>) provide information about many writing projects.

Schedule of Work, English 305, Fall 2013

As the course progresses, the schedule may change. Check the schedule frequently for updates. I will also send an email whenever I update the schedule

Week 1: Introductions and Memo about field	8/19 Class: Introductions, syllabus questions Assigned: Introduction memo Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 1, "Technical and Professional Communication in the Workplace"	8/21 Class: Technical communication Homework: <i>TCTC</i> chapter 14, "Finding and Obtaining Employment"	8/23 Due: Introduction memo Class: Finding jobs Assigned: Resume, cover letter, and career fact sheet Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 12, "E-mail, E-Messages, and Memos", job listings
Week 2: Resume, cover letter, and career fact sheet	8/26 Due: 3 job listings Class: Email set-up, fact sheets, design Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 9 "Layout and Design"	8/28 Due: Resume examples Class: Memo Dissection, Peer review information Homework: Resume readings	8/30 Class: Dissecting resumes and cover letters Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 4 "Ethics and the Workplace Writer"
Week 3: Resume, cover letter, and career fact sheet	9/2 NO CLASS	9/4 Due: Draft of resume, cover letter, and fact sheet Class: Peer review Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 3, "Technical Communication and Electronic Media"	9/6 Due: Resume, cover letter, and fact sheet Class: Preparing documents for readers Assigned: Technical description Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 2 "Rhetoric and Technical Communication"
Week 4: Technical description	9/9 Class: Understanding audience Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 16, "Technical Descriptions and Specifications"	9/11 Class: Understanding audience Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 6 "Researching and evaluating source material"	9/13 Due: Technical description topic Class: Technical instructions, Homework:
Week 5: Technical description	9/16 Due: Technical instructions topic Class: Technical instructions Homework: <i>TCTC</i>	9/18 Class: Usability testing for instructions	9/20 Class: Revising instructions, reflections Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 8, "Visual Rhetoric and Technical

	Chapter 11, "Usability"		Communication"
Week 6: Technical description	9/23 Class: Creating visuals Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 7, "Organizing and Drafting Documents"	9/25 Due: Draft of technical description Class: Peer review	9/27 Due: Technical description Class: Exigency, Internet research Homework: News articles, midterm memo
Week 7: Research	9/30 Due: Midterm memo No regular class, conferences	10/2 Due: News articles Class: Evaluating research Homework: Group work readings	10/4 Class: Group assignment Homework: Database work
Week 8: Annotated Bibliography and proposal	10/7 Class: Using databases Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 20 "Proposals and Requests for proposals"	10/9 Class: Understanding audience Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 21, "Informal Reports"	10/11 Class: Working remotely
Week 9: Annotated bibliography and proposal	10/14 Due: Bibliography and proposal draft NO CLASS	10/16 No regular class, group conferences	10/18 No regular class, group conferences
Week 10: Feasibility reports	10/21 Class: Understanding audience Homework: Feasibility report examples	10/23 Class: Designing visuals Homework: Layout readings	10/25 Due: Bibliography and proposal Class: Creating layouts Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 22, "Formal Reports"
Week 11: Feasibility reports	10/28 Class: Organizing reports Homework: Questions to research	10/30 Due: Research questions Class: Researching for answers	11/1 Class: Work day
Week 12: Feasibility reports	11/4 Class: Work day	11/6 Class: Proofreading Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 10, "Revising, Rewriting, and Editing"	11/8 Due: Feasibility report draft Class: Peer review Homework: Portfolio readings
Week 13: Portfolios	11/11 Due: Feasibility report Class: Preparing	11/13 Class: Preparing portfolios	11/15 Due: Portfolio draft Class: Peer editing

	portfolios		Homework: <i>TCTC</i> Chapter 23, “Presentations”
Week 14: Presentations	11/18 Class: Presentation practice	11/20 Class: Using slideware	11/22 Class: Using slideware
Week 15: Thanksgiving NO CLASS THIS WEEK	11/25 NO CLASS	11/27 NO CLASS	11/29 NO CLASS
Week 16: Presentations	12/2 Due: Presentation Class: Presentations	12/4 Due: Presentation Class: Presentations	12/6 Due: Presentation, Final portfolios Class: Presentations