

ENGL 605 Professional Writing Theory

Fall 2022 | Mondays, 4:00–6:50 PM | Colson G06

Instructor

Dr. Sano-Franchini (saw-no-fran-KEY-nee) | she/her

Email: jennifer.sano-franchini@mail.wvu.edu

Zoom: <https://wvu.zoom.us/my/jsanofranchini>

Office: 333 Colson Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 1:00–2:00 PM, and by appointment (in person or Zoom)

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the history of, development of, and current issues in professional writing theory and research. Beginning with foundational histories and theories of the field, we will go on to survey various current concerns and issues in the field, such as usability and user experience (UX) design, risk communication, and the teaching of technical and professional writing. In addition, we will touch on emergent areas of inquiry such as election technologies in professional writing. Throughout our discussions, we will be attentive to the sociopolitical, cultural, economic, and rhetorical implications of technical and professional communication research. (3.0 credit hours)

Learning Outcomes

Students will leave the course with the ability to

- Know the theories that inform and validate the practices of academics and professionals working in the broad field of professional writing
- Comprehend the similarities, differences, and disputes regarding definitions for professional, technical, and business writing
- Evaluate the role of ethics and the law in the professional writing classroom and workplace
- Analyze critical approaches to the uses of technology in the professional writing classroom and workplace
- Apply theories of professional writing to English 304 Business Writing and English 305 Professional Writing classroom pedagogies

Land Acknowledgement

**Adapted from West Virginia University's Program for Native American Studies.*

West Virginia University resides on land that includes ancestral territories of the Shawnee, Lenape, Haudenosaunee (made up of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, Tuscarora nations), and Cherokee. Indigenous peoples have been in the land currently known as West Virginia since time immemorial. Although a land acknowledgement alone is not enough, I provide this land acknowledgement to make visible the history and ongoing effects of colonialism and systemic inequality in our society. As scholars seeking truth and understanding, we must all be mindful of our present participation in this process and take efforts to educate ourselves about the local histories of the places we occupy, contextualizing our learning by deeply engaging with Native American and Black knowledges, and attending to the impacts of our actions and our work on Indigenous, Black, and other minoritized communities.

Relevant Resources

WVU Organizations & Programs

- [Native American Studies](#)
- [Organization for Native American Interests](#)
- [Center for Black Culture and Research](#)
- [Black Student Union \(@bsu_wvu on Twitter\)](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Center](#)
- [Women's Resource Center](#)
- [Faculty Justice Network](#)
 - [The Green Pages](#)
- [The Rack: WVU Student Food Pantry](#)

Community Organizations

- [Morgantown/Kingwood NAACP](#)
- [Morgantown Pride](#)
- [Holler Health Justice](#)
- [Community Coalition for Social Justice](#)

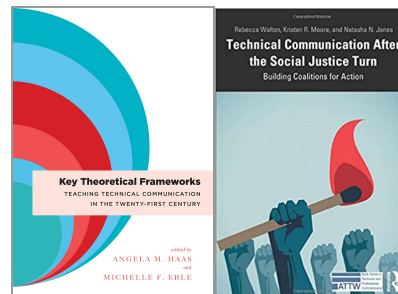
Accessibility

I am invested in providing an educational environment that is equitable and conducive to learning for all students. I recognize that we all experience the world in different ways, and unequal access is embedded into the fabric of our social institutions. I welcome conversations about how we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course, and I ask that you contact me as soon as possible if you would benefit from adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or other circumstances. Students with disabilities can receive official accommodations by [registering](#) with the [Office of Accessibility Services](#). If you do not have a documented disability,

keep in mind that other support services such as the [Eberly Writing Studio](#) and the [Carruth Center for Counseling and Psychological Services](#) are available to all students.

Required Texts & Materials

- Haas, Angela M., & Eble, Michelle F. (Eds.). (2018). [Key Theoretical Frameworks: Teaching Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century](#). University Press of Colorado.
- Walton, Rebecca, Moore, Kristen R., & Jones, Natasha N. (2019). [Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn: Building Coalitions for Action](#). Routledge.
- Additional readings will be made available as PDFs.



* Students are expected to bring any assigned readings and writing implements for note taking to all class meetings.

Course Tools

Here is a list of the primary digital tools we will use for this course:

- [eCampus](#) is where you will submit final versions of assignments and view grades.
- [Google Drive](#) is where I will share all files, including the syllabus, readings, and assignment descriptions. We will also use it to share any drafts of writing assignments, and to provide and receive feedback on writing.
- [Slack](#) is where you can ask questions outside of our scheduled class meeting time, have conversations with one another, discuss readings and ideas, and share items and resources of interest as they come up. Join our Slack workspace by clicking [here](#).
- [Zoom](#) is where you can meet with me for office hours, if you prefer.

You will be able to find links to all of these tools on our [eCampus](#) course home page.

Course Expectations

Workload

Students can expect to spend an average of six hours per week outside of class meeting times on this 3-credit course.

COVID

Although WVU is not requiring masking this semester, I will mask because there may be others in class who are immunocompromised or who live with someone who is. That being said, please be respectful of others' personal space.

If you are not feeling well or have been exposed to someone who isn't, please be considerate and wear a mask. Please do not hesitate to reach out if any circumstances related to COVID (or something else) will affect your performance in this course.

Assignments

Weekly Responses to Readings (WRR) (20%; 200 pts.)

Due: Mondays at 12 PM (noon) to [Slack](#) > #weekly-response-to-readings.

Each week, you will submit a ~500-word response (the equivalent of 2 double-spaced pages) to the upcoming class' assigned readings. As a reminder, any PDFs will be available in our shared [Google Drive](#).

The purpose of this assignment is to help you process and record the ideas that you took away from the assigned readings, and to serve as a jumping-off point for synchronous discussions. What this means is you won't be able to talk about everything you noticed from the readings; you will have to pick and choose a few ideas that were especially significant to you and that you think would be interesting for discussion, and keep the rest of your notes for yourself. You are encouraged to look back on and draw from these responses as you start developing your final project later in the semester.

For your WRRs, you should:

- mention the title(s) and author(s) of the reading
- provide a brief summary/synthesis of the set of readings (not more than a paragraph or ~100 words)
- offer a thoughtful discussion of 2–3 key concepts or ideas from the readings, i.e., how the readings inform your understanding of technical communication, connections between readings and your research interests
- share at least 2 discussion questions. Note that discussion questions should aim to help

you come to a better understanding of the reading(s), including but not limited to its purpose, arguments, methods, boundaries and stakes, how it dialogues with other texts we've read and ideas we've interacted with, and how you see it materializing (or not) in your everyday life.

Please note that these are guidelines and not rules. Feel free to get creative! You're welcome to play with language, form, mode, etc. What I'm looking for here is a critical engagement with the readings. In other words, don't just tell me what it's about and if you agree or disagree. Ask questions about the affordances of arguments, how/when they hold up in what contexts, what other questions they lead you to ask, how they interact with other texts and ideas, etc.

Here are some focusing questions for your responses this semester. To be clear, you're not required to respond to them in your WRRs; they are provided here in case you're not sure where to start. In addition, you might find them helpful as you're working to read strategically. In other words, rather than reading to understand everything that's being said, try reading to answer these questions:

- How do the readings contribute to your understanding of technical communication, including its theories, histories, methodologies, pedagogies, practices, stakes, and boundaries?
- How do the readings support, build on, challenge, question one another?
- How do the readings dialogue with previous readings for this course?
- How do the readings contribute to my understanding of X (fill in the blank—writing, rhetoric, technology, usability, etc.)?
- How do the readings inform my own interests in the field?

You have the option to skip two WRRs without penalty to your grade.

Short Writing Tasks (10% of final grade; 100 pts.)

Short writing tasks are short-term activities that might range from writing to build community and to get to know one another, to activities that teach you how to navigate the course, writing tasks that help us more deeply engage with course readings, and activities that help scaffold the final project. In general, these assignments will be graded on a pass/fail basis (you receive full credit for completing the assignment).

Discussion Facilitation (10%; 100 pts.)

Due: _____

For one class session, you will be responsible for facilitating discussion about that day's assigned readings. Please keep in mind that facilitating a discussion is not the same as *leading* the discussion. Facilitators are not expected to carry the discussion or to have all of the answers. Rather, the goal is to help us, as a group, come to an understanding of what the reading was about, key concepts and ideas from the readings, and how the readings connect with other readings, ideas, and discussions. *In what ways might the readings help us rethink X?*

You are welcome to work toward these goals in whatever way you see fit. Regardless of delivery, you should be prepared with an understanding of what the readings were about, key concepts from the readings, connections to other readings we've done in class, current events/debates to which these analytical concepts might be applied, and discussion questions for us to consider. Handouts and other visuals are encouraged, as are creative and interactive approaches. Your discussion facilitation will be graded based on how effectively you helped us achieve the goals listed above. I will also take into account the creativity of your approach.

Disciplinary Snapshot (15%; 150 pts.)

Due: Monday, November 28

For this assignment, you will choose one subfield of technical communication, and present a snapshot of that area of the discipline. Ideally, this subfield should be relevant to your final project. Things to note: what professional organizations and journals focus on this area and how do they characterize the area? Describe the shape of the subfield: what topics, theories, sites of study and objects of analysis, methods and methodologies are used? What are key research questions and concerns for the area? What could use more attention in the subfield and where do you see it headed? How do scholars in this area take up the call of social justice? Include relevant citations and support for your claims.

Final Project (30%; 300 pts.)

Due: Monday, December 12, 5 PM.

For your final project, you will produce a conference proposal on a topic related to professional writing and technical communication, followed by a conference length (8–12 pp.) research paper with accompanying slides. More details will be shared later in the semester.

Participation (15%; 150 pts.)

**Adapted from the work of Drs. Cheryl Naruse (Tulane University) and James McMaster (University of Wisconsin).*

In the spirit of interdependence and community, participation will be graded collectively rather than individually. Not only are you expected to participate actively and thoughtfully, but also

collaboratively and generously, taking care of each other and each other's ideas. All students will receive the same grade for participation, and that grade will be based on the level of care, dynamism, and intellectual growth we achieve together in each session. In this class, we strive to have the conversations of our dreams: intellectually satisfying, sincere, and transformational. You should not leave our meetings feeling like the same person as you were when we began. We are not here to learn what we already know.

Evaluating Participation

You will complete a written evaluation of the class' performance at the midterm and final points of the semester. This short assessment will make a case for the grade you feel the class as a whole deserves, and should cite evidence to support your claim. This essay should be based on observations and experiences of classroom performance that correspond to the standards of supportive and dynamic discussion that we will establish collectively at the beginning of the semester. Throughout the semester you should take notes that you can use in your essay as evidence: observe and record meaningful moments of exchange, care, intellectual growth, and support.

Below are some examples of how to make participation legible. With issues of disability justice and accessibility in mind, participation in this course includes multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression ([UDL Guidelines 2.2](#)).

Productively contribute to the shape of the course

- Actively participate in discussions by, for instance, speaking up during Zoom sessions, using the chat/Slack, and contributing to any collaborative documents
- Share helpful articles and resources with the entire class and explain what you see as its relevance to our conversations
- Share relevant stories to draw connections between theory, research, practice, and pedagogy
- Ask generative questions as often as you can
- Provide feedback about your experience of the course, communicate about any accessibility or usability issues
- Attend office hours

Contribute to a culture that is conducive to collaborative learning

- Respond to your classmates as well as your professor. Recognize that we all have something valuable to contribute to the course, and be willing to learn not only from your instructor but also your peers.
- Draw connections between different points in the conversation
- Cite each other's comments and ideas by name
- Affirm, amplify, and uplift when appropriate
- Ask genuine questions of the course materials and of each other

- Make space for the perspectives of others. Ask questions when we don't understand what's being said, and avoid making silent judgements. Assume good intentions, forgive mistakes, be accountable to impact
- Support and help your classmates

Contribute to a culture of respect and support

- Engage in active and empathic listening. For example, take notes, listen to try and understand more deeply; not just to agree/disagree or come up with a response
- Be attentive and fully present. Avoid multitasking with side chats, cell phone use, TV, etc. Establish your presence in the course whether through verbal affirmation, body language, asking questions, email responses, sharing resources, etc.
- Remember to slow down, to wait for others to respond to your point, think through and try to understand their responses, then choose whether to follow up or to let things sit with us for a while.
- Be mindful of our personal impact on the group.
- Speak up about harmful comments and behaviors, call in when you are able to do so.
- Attend to accessibility and inclusion.
- Any sensitive information about individuals shared during in class remains in class.
- Let those who are expecting you know when you won't be present.

Grading Scale

Grades will be based on a 1000-point scale, as follows:

A	930–1000 pts.	C+	770–799 pts.	D-	600–629 pts.
A-	900–929 pts.	C	730–769 pts.	F	<600 pts.
B+	870–899 pts.	C-	700–729 pts.		
B	830–869 pts.	D+	670–699 pts.		
B-	800–829 pts.	D	630–669 pts.		

Appendix A. Subfields of TPC for Disciplinary Snapshot

- Business Communication
- Communication Design
- Community Engagement
- Content Strategy
- Disciplinary Issues
- Documentation
- Election Technologies
- Entrepreneurship
- Environmental Communication
- Experience Architecture
- Health and Medical Rhetoric and Communication
- Intercultural and International Communication
- Pedagogy
- Plain Language
- Programmatic Research
- Project Management
- Regulatory Writing
- Risk, Crisis, and Disaster Communication
- Scientific Communication
- Technical Writing
- TPC History and Historiography
- Translation
- Usability and User Experience
- Another subfield, with instructor's approval

Appendix B. TPC Conferences

- Association for Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW)
- Association of Business Communication (ABC)
- Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC)
- ACM Special Interest Group for the Design of Communication (SIGDOC)
- IEEE Professional Communication Conference (IEEE ProComm)
- Interaction Design Association (IXDA)
- Society for Technical Communication (STC) Summit
- User Experience Professionals Association (UXPA) International Conference

Appendix C. TPC Journals

- *Business Communication Quarterly*
- *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*
- *Communication Design Quarterly (CDQ)*
- *IEEE Transactions in Professional Communication*
- *International Journal of Business Communication*
- *Journal of Business and Technical Communication (JBTC)*
- *Journal of Technical Writing*
- *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*
- *Programmatic Perspectives*
- *Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization (RPCG)*
- *Technical Communication*
- *Technical Communication Quarterly (TCQ)*
- *Technical Communication and Social Justice (TCSJ)*
- Another TPC journal, with instructor's approval

Appendix D. Other Resources

Haas, "[ATTW President's Call to Action](#)"

Jones & Williams, "[The Just Use of Imagination: A Call to Action](#)"

[CCCC Black Technical and Professional Communication Position Statement with Resource Guide](#)

[10-Minute Tech Comm Podcast](#)

[TC Talk Podcast](#)