

/ ENGL 305: Technical Writing | Spring 2023

Professor:	Dr. Doug Phillips
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Virtual office hours:	10:30am-12:00pm Wednesdays and by appointment
Virtual office:	https://meet.google.com/ijm-ewkd-scz Dial-in: (US) +1 620-412-8945 PIN: 880 711 423#
Note on office hours:	Upon joining the Google Meet, you will be placed in a waiting room. I will allow you entry if/when I am not with another student.

/ Introduction

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.

In this course, you will explore the forms of technical writing that are common in the professions, including memos, instructions, and descriptions. Drawing on the expertise you 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.

/ Course Goals

Students who have completed English 305 should be able to:

1. Specify and adapt to the constraints of the rhetorical situation, especially an audience's knowledge of a topic and its desired uses for a document.
2. Conduct research to gain command of a technical subject and to invent the contents of communication.
3. Convey clearly and precisely the technical aspects of a topic to a non-specialist audience.
4. Develop a functional vocabulary for discussing, analyzing, and planning professional, technical documents.
5. Apply technology to organize and design documents that support reader comprehension.
6. Evaluate and modify a document to ensure its usability and accessibility for an audience

by emphasizing planning, audience analysis, persuasion, clear and effective writing style, organization, graphics, and information design.

7. Demonstrate the ability to speak persuasively in a professional setting, including the ability to select and design effective presentation graphics.

/ Academic Integrity

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course.

For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Standards Policy (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecreditstermsclassification>).

Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

/ Participation & Attendance

Regular participation and engagement are vital to your success in this course. Engagement will be measured by your timely completion of course work, asking and answering questions, and working with your peers.

Absences. You are allowed **four (4)** absences. Your fifth absence will result in a zero (0) for participation. Each additional unexcused absence will lower your final course grade by one full letter grade, and eight (8) or more absences will result in failing the course.

Falling more than two weeks behind the posted schedule of work without a documented special arrangement may result in failing the course. Special arrangements require a formal, written request (prior to an assignment deadline when applicable) that includes an explanation of the circumstances, documentation (if relevant), and a detailed plan for completing any late or missed work. Submitting a formal request for a special arrangement does not automatically guarantee that I will be able to grant your request.

University sanctioned absences are absences in which the instructor agrees to provide an opportunity to make up missed class work or activities (e.g., assignments, exams) and will not penalize students for those absences. These include religious observances, mandatory military obligation, mandatory court appearances, and participation in university

activities at the request of university authorities. Other events may justify an excused absence at the discretion of the instructor or program.

COVID related absences fall under the University attendance policy found here: [attendance](#). As detailed in the policy, a student who becomes sick or is required to quarantine during the semester should notify the instructor. The student should then work with the instructor to develop a plan to complete the course learning outcomes while he or she is absent.

For university sanctioned absences totaling more than three weeks of course work resulting from military obligation, see WVU's [Military Leave section of the undergraduate catalog](#). Students who will miss more than a week of course work due to health condition or personal trauma should refer to WVU's [Emergency Leave Policy](#).

For the full statement, see the Undergraduate Catalog:
<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/enrollmentandregistration/#enrollmenttext>

/ Submitting Assignments

Major Assignments. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed in the Course Calendar. With the exception of extreme emergencies (for which I may require documentation), if you fail to turn in an assignment, the assignment will be considered late.

Major assignments will lose 10% from the final assignment grade for each calendar day that a rough or final draft is late. If you don't submit a rough draft *on time*, you will not be able to participate in the peer review. If you don't submit a rough draft, I won't grade a final draft.

Homework. You will complete many short homework assignments, discussion posts, or other writing to prepare you for the major assignments. Some I may collect for a homework grade, others I may count as a quiz or toward your participation grade. **I do not accept late homework.**

Professional Standards. You're expected to follow professional standards in your work such as promptness, neatness, and correct mechanics (grammar, spelling, and punctuation). Toward that end, please spell check your work and plan ahead when switching between computer programs—documents created in MS Word might look different when saved as a PDF—and don't expect spell check to catch all errors.

Unless otherwise noted, all submissions should adhere to the following guidelines:

- One-inch margins, single spaced, 11- or 12-point legible typeface (e.g., Times-New Roman, Garamond, Arial, or Calibri)
- Written documents should be submitted as .docx or .pdf.
No .txt, .webarchive, .pages, or other file types
- Presentation assignments should be submitted as .ppt or .pptx.

- No emailed homework (unless requested)
- No links to Google Docs. Assignments created in Google Docs should be exported as a Word doc or PDF prior to submission.

/ Overview of Assignments & Grade Weights

Assignments are graded on content, technique, and style. Before you submit a final draft, you will receive a detailed assignment sheet and grading rubric, as well as extensive comments (from me and your peers, written or oral) that will help you in the revision process. For additional comments, please visit my office hours.

Major assignments	Grade weight
Job Application package	20%
Technical Description	20%
Presentation	10%
User Experience Test Plan	10%
User Experience Recommendation Report	15%
Other work	
HW & Quizzes	10%
Participation	10%
Reflection Letter	5%
Total	100%

Weighted Grades

Grades for this course are *weighted*, which means that the point values don't correspond exactly to your overall course grade. In other words, Assignment A and Assignment B might count equally toward your final course grade (20% each), even though the possible points for each assignment may differ (e.g., 50 points vs. 75 points). eCampus will display both your point total and weighted grades.

/ Grade Descriptions

The major assignments for this course will be graded according to the following criteria:

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. A company or organization could use these documents without further revisions and might even use them 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 or organization 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 or organization 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. A company or organization would most probably dismiss the writer from current projects.

Grading Scale

A+: 97 or above

A: 93-96

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C: 73-76

C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69

D: 63-66

D-: 60-62

F: 59 and below

/ Inclusivity Statement

WVU is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this course, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (304-293-6700 or <https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>). For more information on WVU's Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, please visit <https://diversity.wvu.edu/> as well.

/ Sexual Misconduct Statement

West Virginia University does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence [[BOG Rule 1.6](#)]. It is important for you to know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff; keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the [Title IX Coordinator](#).

If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the [Carruth Center](#), 304-293-9355 or 304-293-4431 (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the [Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center](#) (RDVIC), 304- 292-5100 or 304-292-4431 (24-hour hotline).

/ Department of English Affirmation of Values

We, the members of WVU's Department of English, believe that critical and creative reading and writing constitute acts of radical love. We ally ourselves with a multitude of departments, student bodies, and dedicated individuals across the country and the world who refuse to remain silent within a climate of hatred and violence: be it from sexism, racism, classism, ableism, nativism, anti-Semitism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, or Islamophobia. We are committed to building communities, not dividing them.

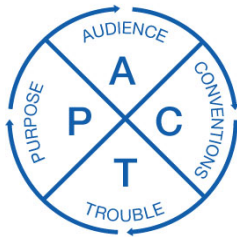
Colson Hall and our classrooms campus-wide are spaces where students, faculty, and staff may safely voice their concerns and where we may, together, foster futures more just. We aim to raise the status of those suppressed by the status quo; in assembly with human and nonhuman beings, we protest all types of environmental degradation, especially those prescribed at the expense of inhabitants' health.

Our research and syllabi affirm the core values of compassion, inclusivity, and care that a diverse humanities program holds for everyone. By telling stories of those who suffer

under oppression in any form, past and present, we honor the ability of language and other means of communication—in each area of study we offer—to redress these wrongs, urge unity, and pursue peace. To those who seek shelter or wish to expand its scope, we welcome you; we thank you; we are with you.

/ SpeakWrite Certification

This course will emphasize effective communication, provide opportunities for feedback and revision, and base a significant portion of the final grade on written and spoken communication. The Eberly Writing Studio will work one-on-one with students on everything from note-taking and pre-writing to revision strategies, editing, and effective presentation techniques.



Purpose: What exactly do I want to happen?

Audience: Who is reading, listening, or viewing?

Conventions: What is expected in this context?

Trouble Spots: What could get in the way of my goals?

/ Mental Health

Mental health concerns or stressful events can adversely affect your academic performance and social relationships. WVU offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns that you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at the Carruth Center for Psychological and Psychiatric Services (CCPPS) website: <https://carruth.wvu.edu>

If you are in need of crisis services, call the CCPPS main number 24/7: (304) 293-4431.

/ Student Support Services

For a complete list of student support options, visit: <https://students.wvu.edu/>

ENGL 305 | Course Calendar | Spring 2023

We may need to adjust this calendar as the semester progresses. In that case, I will communicate any changes to you well in advance and provide a revised course calendar.

Week 1

Tuesday, January 10

- /In class:** - What is technical writing?
- Rhetorical situation: audience, purpose, genre
- /For next class:** - Read: Graves & Graves, Ch. 1, "Thinking about Audience, Purpose, and Genre," pp. 29, 32-36, and 40-45
- Read: Wedberg, "What is Technical Writing and How Does It Relate to UX Writing?"
- Complete: Professional email

Thursday, January 12

- /Due:** - Professional email
- /In class:** - Introduce Job Application Assignment & grade rubric
- Genre sets: Why create separate documents?
- Create Handshake account: Interpreting job ads & audience analysis
- /For next class:** - Complete: Audience analysis (please print, include job ad)
- Read: Markel, "Writing Job-Application Materials," pp. 386-405
- Read: Graves & Graves, Ch. 8, "What is Persuasion?" pp. 174-182
- Read: Gillenwater, "Visual Communication," pp. 15-17

Week 2

Tuesday, January 17

- /Due:** - Audience analysis worksheet
- /In class:** - Rhetorical elements of the resume: categories/organization (logos)
- Bullet point formula, action verbs, and memorable details (ethos/pathos)
- Visual design in resume: CRAP and using tables to create alignments
- /For next class:** - Read: Markel, "Writing Job Application Materials," pp. 411-415

Thursday, January 19

- /In class:** - Cover letter for a job vs. an internship
- Rhetorical elements of the cover letter: select (claims) & develop (evidence)
- Write an effective introduction

- /For next class:** - Complete: Job Application package (resume & cover letter)
- Read: Doyle, "Best thank-you emails for after an interview examples"

Week 3

Tuesday, January 24

- /Due:** - Job Application rough draft (resume, cover letter, job ad)

- /In class:** - Discuss PACT memo and thank-you letter/email
- Review grading rubric
- In-class peer review

- /For next class:** - Complete: Peer reviews

Thursday, January 26

- /Due:** - Job Application peer review

- /In class:** - How to sign a cover letter
- Workshop: Writing technical prose

- /For next class:** - Complete: Job Application package (due next Thurs.)

Week 4

Tuesday, January 31

- /In class:** - Introduce Technical Description
- Why write a technical description?

- /For next class:** - Complete: Technical Description proposal (print for next class)
- Review sample technical descriptions
- Read: Markel, "Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions," pp. 534-551

Thursday, February 2

- /Due:** - Job Application Package final draft
 - Technical Description proposal (printed)
- /In class:** - Workshop proposals: refining your topic by analyzing audience knowledge
 - **Library instruction:** Conducting research/locating useful sources; citing sources
- /For next class:** - Based on audience analysis and library instruction, revise your proposal
 - Read: Graves & Graves Ch. 3, "Researching Technical Subjects," p. 73 and pp. 88-94

Week 5

Tuesday, February 7

- /In class:** - Organizational principles and strategies for providing enough detail
- /For next class:** - Read: Graves & Graves, "Leading and misleading the reader," pp. 64-72 (skim pp. 59-64)
 - Review student samples

Thursday, February 9

- /In class:** - Writing definitions and adaptation strategies (for extended definitions)
 - Effective introductions: Wonder appeals, application appeals, problem/solution
- /For next class:** - Complete: Technical Description source summary

Week 6

Tuesday, February 14

- /Due:** - Technical Description source summary
- /In class:** - Image search: Google images, Creative Commons, picture attribution
 - Page layout considerations: balance, white space, justification
- /For next class:** - Work on Technical Description rough draft

Thursday, February 16

/In class: - In-class work day

/For next class: - Complete: rough draft (upload to Google Drive folder)

Week 7

Tuesday, February 21

/Due: - **Technical Description rough draft (Google Drive)**

/In class: - Discuss PACT memo and grade rubric
- In-class peer review

/For next class: - Complete: peer review

Thursday, February 23

/Due: - Technical Description peer review

/In class: - **Introduce Presentation Assignment:** delivery/narration, archival notes, and a handout
- Identifying a manageable and interesting topic
- Garr Reynolds: What's your point? Why does it matter? and sticky ideas
- SUCCES[S]: Why our phones make us less happy

/For next class: - Read: Garr Reynolds, "Planning Analog," pp. 60-74
- Read: Garr Reynolds, "Crafting the Story," pp. 77-87
- Complete presentation proposal

Week 8

Tuesday, February 28

/Due: - Presentation proposal

/In class: - Workshop proposals
- Planning in analog: narrative arc, problem/solution, key takeaway
- Review student sample presentations

/For next class: - Read: Nathans-Kelly and Nicomento, "Challenge your organization's culture of text-heavy slides," pp. 49-56

- Read: Nathans-Kelly and Nicomento, "Clarify topics with full-sentence headers," pp. 65-91

Thursday, March 2

- /Due:** - **Technical Description final draft**
- /In class:** - Review TC ethics and image copyright
 - Review design techniques: signal-to-noise ratio, picture superiority effect, and sentence headers
 - Background images, contrasting colors, text boxes, and useful animations
- /For next class:** - Find at least two images you want to use for the in-class workshop (bring on flash drive or laptop)

Week 9

Tuesday, March 7

- /In class:** - Narration vs. archival notes
 - Designing an effective handout
 - In-class workday
- /For next class:** - Work on slides, narrative, archival notes, and handout

Thursday, March 9

- /In class:** - How to begin and end a presentation and avoiding bad habits
 - Assign presentation dates
- /For next class:** - Finish presentation slides and narrative, archival notes, handout
 - Note:* everyone must submit assignment on Tuesday, March 21, regardless of presentation date
 - Practice your delivery!

Week 10

Tuesday, March 14

- /No class:** - Spring break!

Thursday, March 16

/No class: - Spring break!

Week 11

Tuesday, March 21

/In class: - No class. Dr. Phillips away.

Thursday, March 23

/In class: - Presentation: slides w/ archival notes and audience handout (everyone)

/For next class: - Presentations (1-7)

Week 12

Tuesday, March 28

/In class: - Presentations (8-14)

/For next class: - The next project will move fast. You may want to begin the readings.

Thursday, March 30

/In class: - Presentations (15-20)
- Introduce User Experience Recommendation Report
- How and why to conduct usability test
- Strategies for working in groups and solving problems

/For next class: - Read: Nielsen, "Usability 101"
- Read: Nielsen Norman Group, "Turn user goals into task scenarios for usability testing"

Week 13

Tuesday, April 4

- /In class:** - Discussion with Rebecca Patton, Professional Technologist, WVU Digital Services
- Identifying user goals, test objectives and tasks
 - Create target user profiles

- /For next class:** - Read: Mifsud, “Usability Metrics: A guide to quantify the usability of any system”
- Read: Usability.gov, “Recruiting Participants & the Legend of ‘The General Public’”
 - Read: Usability.gov, “Running a Usability Test”

Thursday, April 6

- /In class:** - Define usability metrics: success rate, time on task, error rate, satisfaction
- Create participant screener and test script

- /For next class:** - Read: Nielsen, “Thinking Aloud: the #1 usability tool”
- Complete usability test screener and handout (**bring a printed copy to next class**)

Week 14

Tuesday, April 11

- /Due:** - **User Experience Test Plan**

- /In class:** - Practice conducting usability tests

- /For next class:** - Complete user tests: must be complete by next Tuesday

Thursday, April 13

- /In class:** - **No class: Conduct User Tests**

- /For next class:** - Read: Usability.gov, “Reporting Usability Test Results”
- Read: Adobe, “Creating Usability Reports from Usability Test Findings”

Week 15

Tuesday, April 18

- /In class:** - Data collection and reporting
- Discuss 1-page Executive Summary

- /For next class:** - Work on User Experience Recommendation Report and Executive Summary

Thursday, April 20

- /In class:** - **Introduce Reflection Letter (ethos, pathos, logos)**
- Discuss organization, questions for Reflection Letter
- Continue work on User Experience Recommendation Report

- /For next class:** - Finish the 1-page Executive Summary
- Practice your delivery!

Week 16

Tuesday, April 25

- /Due:** - **1-page Executive Summary of findings & recommendations**

- /In class:** - **User Experience Survey findings presentation**

- /For next class:** - Prepare Reflection Letter
- Finish your User Experience Recommendation Report

Thursday, April 27

- /Due:** - **Reflection Letter**
- **User Experience Recommendation Report**

- /In class:** - Course wrap-up
- Complete SEIs