ENGL 305: Technical Writing | Fall 2019

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Office: 339 Colson Hall
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-2:30pm and by appointment

/ 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.

/ Required Texts

- **SGCT =** Graves, H., & Graves, R. (2012). *A Strategic Guide to Technical Communication* (2nd ed.). Ontario/Buffalo: Broadview Press.
- Additional readings (PDF or web links) are available on eCampus.

/ 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.

/ Communications

Email is the best way to contact me. I check it regularly and will do my best to respond in a timely manner. Typically, you should receive a response from me within 24 hours during the work week and 48 hours on the weekend. Emails are perhaps the most common genre of professional communication; treat them as such. You, too, should check your Mix account email regularly (at least daily). At times, I will send out important information about the course.

/ Attendance & Professional Conduct

Missing class
You may miss **four (4) days of class** without it affecting your final course grade. If you are absent five or more (5+) times—for any reason—you will receive a zero (0) for your participation grade. For each absence beyond your fifth (i.e., starting with your sixth), you may lose 5% from your final course grade (e.g., 85% becomes an 80%, 80% becomes 75%, etc.) in addition to not earning participation points. If you miss more than 7 days of class, you will fail the course.

University policy on excused absences
Excused absences are absences in which the instructor agrees to provide an opportunity to make up missed class work or activities (e.g., assignments, exams). Events that justify an excused absence 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.

> **A note on absences, participation, and make-up work:**
>
> I do not accept late work, except for under extreme circumstances. If you know you will miss class, arrange with me beforehand to submit your assignments.
>
> That said, I know that things happen that may cause you to miss class. Please reserve your absences for those extreme circumstances. You don't get to miss four days of class, then take another four days for a religious holiday, travel with band, and something else that would be "excused."
>
> Because this is a discussion-based, workshop style class, you can't participate (fully) if you're not here, regardless of the reason.

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

Extended absences
If you know that you'll need to miss more than three (3) consecutive class meetings, you should take the course in another term, when your schedule allows you to be present to do your best work. If you are a military service person with possible drill events or deployments please speak to me about a plan for successfully completing all required coursework.

Timeliness and preparation
Simply put, I expect you to treat this class and your classmates professionally; to arrive on time and prepared, having completed all readings, homework, and project drafts; to bring all relevant materials with you every day; to complete all major assignments; to actively contribute to class discussions, workshops, and peer review sessions with thoughtful questions and comments; to seek help early and immediately when you need it; and to generally contribute to a positive learning environment.

Arriving late, even by a few minutes, or leaving early may count as an absence. Being unprepared for class may count as an absence. Working on assignments for other courses during our class time *will* count as an absence and you will be asked to leave.

/ Submitting Assignments

Major assignments
All major assignments will be submitted in-class (printed) and electronically via eCampus. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at or before the start of class on the day they are listed in the course schedule *in both formats.*

If you can't attend class due to an excused absence, you should discuss a make-up date with me beforehand. With the exception of extreme emergencies, 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 submit your assignment to eCampus but don't print a copy for class, it will be considered late.

> **A note on problems with technology:**
>
> In general, problems with technology are not acceptable excuses for late or incomplete work. Computer problems? Internet out? Printer not working? Try going to a computer lab on campus. You should create multiple backups of your work (flash drive, Google Drive, etc.) in case you accidentally erase, overwrite, or otherwise lose your files.

Minor assignments, homework, and in-class work
Writing is a process, and the more writers write, reflect, and revise, the better their writing becomes. As such, in this course, you will complete many in-class or short homework "minor" writing assignments. Some I may collect for a grade, others I may check in class and count as a quiz or toward your participation grade.

Homework, quizzes, and all other in-class assignments will not be accepted late. If you miss a class day when an assignment is due, your grade will be zero, unless you arrange with me to submit the assignment beforehand. If you are absent on a day when you are scheduled to lead a class discussion or give a presentation, you should expect to receive no credit for that assignment.

I do <u>not</u> accept assignments via email.

Professional Standards

As you turn in your assignments, I will hold you to professional standards. Your employer will take for granted qualities such as promptness, neat appearance, 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.

Anything longer than one sheet of paper **must** be stapled (larger documents may require a binder clip). I will not accept unbound or dog-eared papers.

/ Assignments & Drafts

For each major assignment, you will receive a detailed assignment sheet and grading rubric. Assignments are graded on content, technique, and style. Before you submit your final drafts, you will receive extensive comments (from me and your peers, written or oral) that will help you in the revision process.

If you don't hand in a rough draft, I won't grade a final draft. For each calendar day—not class period—that a rough or final draft is late, your final draft will lose 10%.

You must complete all major assignments in this course to earn a passing grade.

> **A note rough drafts:**
>
> I may not collect and comment on your rough drafts before you submit your assignments for grading. I will, however, speak with you extensively in class about your work-in-progress, and you may come to my office hours for additional advice.

The major assignments for this course include:

- **Job Application Materials (20%).** You will create application materials for an appropriate position for a person with your education, experience, and expertise.
- **Technical Description (20%).** You will describe in detail a complex mechanical object or natural process for a non-expert audience.
- **Presentation & Annotated Bibliography (15%).** You will research and plan a talk about a specialized topic, design effective supporting slides, and deliver your talk to the class.
- **Instruction Set & Usability Test and Report (20%).** You will write a comprehensive step-by-step guide to help a user complete a complex task, then test it on real users.
- **Reflection Letter (5%).** You will analyze your own growth and performance as a technical writer and reflect on areas in which you have performed well or still need to practice.

The remaining portion of your course grade breaks down as follows:

- **Homework & Quizzes (10%).** Again, if you are not in class, you cannot earn points for homework or quizzes. Quizzes may be unannounced beforehand.
- **Participation (10%).** Participation is not the same as attendance. Again, I expect you to be present and prepared, and to actively contribute to the class.

/ Grade Descriptions & Grade Weights

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

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., 100 points vs. 150 points). eCampus will display both your point total and weighted grades.

For more on weighted grades, see this handy explanation from the University of Tampa (http://edtech.ut.edu/all-cat/160-weighted-grades-explained).

/ 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.

/ 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.

## / Statement on Sexual Misconduct and Resources

WVU does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence [BOG Policy 44]. 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 (https://titleix.wvu.edu/staff).

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).

/ 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.
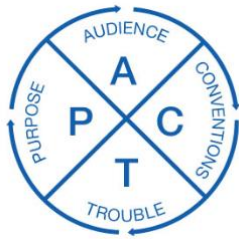
Purpose: What exactly do I want to happen?
Audience: Who is reading, listening, or viewing?
Conventions: What is expected in this context?
Trouble Spots: What could get in the way of my goals?

/ 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.

/ Helpful Resources

Office of Accessibility Services
B20 Stewart Hall
304-293-6700
access2@mail.wvu.edu
http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu

WellWVU (The Students' Center for Health)
Health and Education Building, 390 Birch St.
304-293-5054
wellwvu@mail.wvu.edu
https://well.wvu.edu/about

Carruth Center
Health and Education Building, 390 Birch St.
304-293-4431
wvucccps@mail.wvu.edu
https://carruth.wvu.edu/

Eberly Writing Studio
G02 Colson Hall
304-293-5788
https://speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio

ENGL 305 | Course Calendar | Fall 2019

I reserve the right to make changes to the course calendar as necessary. Any changes will be made in your best interest, and I will communicate them to you as early as possible.

Pay attention to page numbers for readings listed in the course calendar. In some cases, you're only expected to read selections from longer articles, chapters, or books. The entire texts have been provided in case you would like to learn more about a given topic.

Week 1	Unit 1: What Is Technical Writing?
R Aug 23	Course introduction & overview: common (mis)conceptions about technical writing; discuss rhetorical situation; audience, purpose, genre **To prepare for next class**: - Read**:** *SGTC*, Ch. 1, "Thinking about Audience, Purpose, and Genre," pp. 29-50 (skim), and Ch. 2, "Leading and Misleading the Reader," pp. 59-72 - Read: STC, "Defining Technical Communication" (eCampus link) - Complete email homework (handout on eCampus)
Week 2	**Unit 2: Learning to Meet the Needs of a User**
T Aug 27 ***Last day to add/drop class without a 'W'**	**Introduce Job Application Package Assignment** - What is a genre set? - Create Handshake account: Interpreting job ads → audience analysis **To prepare for next class:** - Read: Mike Markel, "Writing Job Application Materials," pp. 405-417 - Read: U-Wisconsin Career Center, "Writing Bullet Point Statements" - Complete: Audience analysis and attach printed job ad (save as a PDF, too!)
R Aug 29	**Due**: Audience analysis Rhetorical elements of the resume: categories and organization - Ethos, pathos, logos (cf. *SGTC*, "What is persuasion?" pp. 174-182) - Enhancing your ethos and pathos: bullet point formula, action verbs, and memorable details **To prepare for next class:** - Begin drafting your resume - Read: *SGTC,* Ch. 5, "Designing Documents and Page Layout," pp. 117-130

Week 3	Unit 2 continued
T Sept 3	Review sample resumes - Visual design in resume: CRAP and using tables to create alignments **To prepare for next class:** - Complete resume drafts - Read: Markel, "Writing Job Application Materials," pp. 425-431 - Read: *SGTC,* Ch. 4, "Writing Technical Prose," pp. 95-105
R Sept 5	Rhetorical elements of the cover letter: moving beyond the resume - Review sample cover letters - Write an effective introduction **To prepare for next class:** - Complete rough draft of resume and cover letter; upload to eCampus - Bring two (2) printed copies of each <u>and</u> two (2) printed copies of your job ad to next class
Week 4	**Unit 2 continued**
T Sept 10	**Due: Job Application rough draft** (resume, cover letter, job ad) In-class peer review - Discuss memo for final draft and thank-you letter/email - How to sign a cover letter **To prepare for next class:** - Complete peer reviews: Print for next class and upload to eCampus
R Sept 12	**Due:** Peer reviews Review: Writing technical prose - Review grading rubric **To prepare for next class:** - Complete: Job Application Package (print & eCampus) - Read: Markel, "Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions," pp. 533-551
Week 5	**Unit 3: Adapting Expert Information for Non-Experts**
T Sept 17	**Due: Job Application Package final draft** (print & eCampus) **Introduce Technical Description** Rhetorical elements of a technical description - Writing technical definitions: Cell phone vs. smart phone - Discuss organizational principles and strategies for providing enough detail

	To prepare for next class: - Complete: Technical Description proposal (print & eCampus) - Read: *SGTC*, Ch. 3, "Researching Technical Subjects," p. 73 and pp. 88-94
R Sept 19	**Due:** Technical Description proposal - Workshop proposals: refining your topic by analyzing audience knowledge - Conducting research/locating useful sources; citing sources **To prepare for next class:** - Read: Selections from Teaching & Learning, OSU Libraries, *Choosing & Using Sources*, Ch. 2, "Types of Sources," pp. 27-61 - Complete: Technical Description source summary (print & eCampus) - Review: Markel, on writing descriptions, pp. 543-548 - Read: Henze, "Adaptation Strategies and Rhetorical Appeals" (handout)
Week 6	**Unit 3 continued**
T Sept 24	**Due:** Technical Description source summary Adaptation Strategies (Penrose & Katz) and Extended Definitions - Wonder appeals and application appeals - Review strategies for effective introductions - Locate adaptation strategies: Curling **To prepare for next class:** - Read: *SGTC,* Ch. 4, "Writing Technical Prose," pp. 108-116 - Read: Troyka & Hesse, "Effective Print Document Design," pp. 460-464, and Markel, "Designing Documents," pp. 266-270 - Complete: Adaptation strategies analysis (Hyperloop)
R Sept 26	**Due:** Adaptation strategies analysis Compare Adaptation Strategy examples - Review organizational principles and strategies for providing enough detail Image search: Google images, Creative Commons, picture attribution - Page layout considerations: balance, white space, justification **To prepare for next class:** - Review: *SGTC*, on ethics in technical writing, Ch. 2, pp. 59-72 - Complete rough draft of Technical Description: Bring two (2) printed copies to next class and upload to eCampus
Week 7	**Unit 3 continued**
T Oct 1	**Due: Technical Description rough draft** In-class peer review

	To prepare for next class: - Complete peer reviews (bring printed copies, upload to eCampus)
R Oct 3	In-class work day: meet with peer review partners before you begin working - Discuss assignment memo **To prepare for next class:** - Complete final draft of Technical Description - Read: *SGTC,* Ch. 13, "Presenting Technical Information Orally," pp. 301-314 - Read: David Hone, "What Is and What Isn't a Scientific Debate?"
Week 8	**Unit 3 continued**
T Oct 8	**Due: Technical Description final draft** (print copy & eCampus) **Introduce Presentation Assignment** - So, what? What's the point? - Discuss archival notes, references, and a quality handout ***<u>Submit by 11:59pm on Sunday</u>*** - Complete: Presentation Proposal **To prepare for next class:** - Read: Garr Reynolds, from "Presentation Design: Principles and Techniques," pp. 121-152
R Oct 10	**No Class: Fall Break** (mid-semester grades due)
Week 9	**Unit 4: Sticky Ideas and Effective Slideware**
T Oct 15	Workshop presentation proposals - Review design techniques: signal-to-noise ratio, picture superiority effect - Discuss sticky ideas: SUCCES(S) - Watch Adam Alter, "Why our screens make us less happy" **To prepare for next class:** - Read: Nathans-Kelly, *Slide Rules,* "Clarify Topics with Full-Sentence Headers," pp. 65-91
R Oct 17	Text-heavy slides and full sentence headers - Compare Jeff Brenman's "Thirst" and a typical-text heavy presentation - Review TC ethics and image copyright **To prepare for next class:**

	- Read: Harrington & Carr, "Twelve Tips for Creating Effective Presentations" (*Note:* the authors contradict Nathans-Kelly—we'll discuss the differences) - Find at least <u>two</u> images you want to use for in-class workshop; save to USB drive and bring to next class
Week 10	**Unit 4 continued**
T Oct 22	In-class workshop: Pictures, graphs, and charts, but maybe not bullets - Background images, contrasting colors, text boxes, and useful animations **To prepare for next class:** - Work on presentation slides and narrative/notes/references
R Oct 24	How to begin and end presentations - Bad habits: "Hi, I'm X," memes, and how *not* to end your talk - Creating a quality handout - Assign presentation dates **To prepare for next class:** - Work on presentation slides/narrative and handout - Practice! Practice! Practice! - Read: *SGTC*, Ch. 10, "Writing How-To Documents," pp. 233-256 Note: Presentations begin Nov. 5 and will take ~40 minutes each day. In the remaining ~35 minutes, we'll work on the next major assignment, which we begin discussing next class. ***Everyone must submit the slides/narrative and handout to eCampus before class on the day presentations begin, regardless of your presentation day.**
Week 11	**Unit 5: Teach Me How to Do It**
T Oct 29	**Introduce Instruction Set Assignment** - Identifying a manageable and interesting topic **To prepare for next class:** - Complete: Instruction Set proposal (feel free to email me early with ideas!)
R Oct 31	**Due:** Instruction Set proposal Workshop proposals Rhetorical elements of instructions: overview/introduction, materials/tool, numbered steps - Review grading rubric

	To prepare for next class: - Read: Markel, "Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions," pp. 551-563
Week 12	**Unit 5 continued**
T Nov 5	**Presentations: slides (w/ narrative) and handout due** (print & eCampus) Instructions: targeting audiences with varying levels of expertise (fried chicken) - Practice writing usable steps: "messy" instructions **To prepare for next class:** - Complete "messy" instructions started in class
R Nov 7	**Presentations** Rhetorical elements of instructions: numbers vs. bullets, tips, cautions, warnings - Compare "messy" instructions **To prepare for next class:** - Online instructions genre analysis - Read: *SGTC,* Ch. 12, "Taking Technical Communication Online," pp. 279-300 *Note:* Ch. 12 focuses on technical writing that prepared for online viewing. Consider how this information is relevant to your instruction set.
Week 13	**Unit 5 continued**
T Nov 12	**Presentations** **Due:** Online instructions genre analysis - What rhetorical conventions did you notice? **To prepare for next class:** - Begin writing your instruction set. Complete the task and write down <u>exactly</u> what you do.
R Nov 14	**Presentations** Creating a functional design for instruction sets: TOC, headings, columns, and typography. **To prepare for next class:** - Continue drafting your instructions

Week 14	Unit 5 continued
T Nov 19 ***Last day to drop a class**	**Presentations** In-class work day: Editing images, placement of images and text **To prepare for next class:** - Continue drafting your instructions - Read: *SGTC,* Ch. 11, "Testing and Reporting Document Usability," pp. 257-278
R Nov 21	Discuss usability testing and usability memo - Sample user tests **To prepare for next class:** - Finish rough draft of instruction set. Bring two (2) printed copies to next class.
Week 15	Thanksgiving Break
T Nov 26	**No class**
R Nov 28	**No class**
Week 16	Unit 6: Usability Testing
T Dec 3	**Due: Rough draft of Instruction Set** - Conduct usability tests **To prepare for next class:** - Compile notes from usability test
R Dec 5	In-class writing: revise instructions and prepare usability memo Discuss final reflection letter
Week 17	Unit 7: Tying It All Together
T Dec 10	**Due: Final draft of Instructions and memo from usability test** In-class work day: Complete final reflection letter **To prepare for next class:** - Complete reflection letter
R Dec 12	**Due: Final reflection letter** - Course wrap-up