

ENG 330 Introduction to Technical Writing

Fall 2007; Credit 3; CID 5204

Location: AB2-110
Time: MWF 9-9:50 a.m.
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Hours: MWF 10:30-11; 12-1; TR by appointment

Course Description

This course, according to the catalog description, will introduce students to the special problems of technical literature and technical report writing. Additionally, students will study and practice formal and informal writing in professional settings.

Prerequisite: 6 hours of freshman English.

Drawing on rhetorical theory as its foundation, this course helps students understand the unique features of writing in professional settings and teaches them to analyze situations in order to create effective communication. Students will create documents in a variety of workplace genre, including employment documents, correspondence, and formal technical reports. Students will be expected to work on individual and team projects in class and through Blackboard, and are encouraged to design writing projects reflective of their own disciplines' practices. A large component of this course is teamwork, although most grades are individually earned.

Course Objectives

- Analyze rhetorical components of writing situations.
- Research, design, create and prepare informal and formal documents suitable for the workplace.
- Balance visual and verbal elements of communication in documents.
- Search for and report information.
- Edit documents for accuracy and precision.
- Respond effectively to others' writing.

Required Textbooks and Technology

- Markel, Mike. *Technical Communication*. 8th ed. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. (ISBN-13: 978-0-312-44197-5)

This book is an integral component of the course and students are expected to have access to it from the first day of class. Students will also be able to use web supplements available at the companion website, TechComm Web <bedfordstmartins.com/techcomm>.

A word about the book: I consider the text an integral part of our discussions. I will expect you to read the text and become familiar with its design. It is a useful, well-designed document that will help you work through this class; it is loaded with gems. I will refer to it often and will expect you to do the same. In addition to assigned readings, you will be using the text as a handbook to help you format assignments, check for proper language use, and guide your projects both in and out of class. Note the detailed appendices that will help guide your writing and editing. Use the text as your first stop to find answers to questions about the field or about your assignments. If you need further elaboration, feel free to ask me.

- Flash drive (labeled with your name, course, & contact information) to transport and backup course assignments.
- **Internet service and access to Blackboard.** You will access course materials and post weekly assignments through **Blackboard**, so you will need *readily available* internet access, preferably high-speed access.

Class Policies

Attendance

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. If you miss class for whatever reason, you do not get the benefit of the day's discussion and activities. If you arrive after attendance has been taken, it is your responsibility to tell the instructor after class is over so that you can be counted tardy rather than absent (3 tardies equal 1 absence). The instructor will keep the official record of attendance and students are responsible for making sure their attendance is properly recorded.

Attendance in the classroom assumes students will be prepared and will actively participate in the day's activities. Ten points of your final grade comes from your attendance. Earning attendance points is vital to your final grade in this class, so make sure that you attend class regularly. Many research studies have shown a direct link between class attendance and higher grades. Attendance points will be earned according to the following list:

0-1 absences =	10 points	5 absences =	7 points
2-3 absences =	9 points	6 absences =	6 points
4 absences =	8 points	7 or more =	0 points

Note that you can miss up to 3 classes and still earn the equivalent of an “A” in attendance; however, if you miss more than 2 weeks equivalence of classes, you will earn no attendance points.

Attendance is mandatory for successful completion of this course. Even a moderate number of absences may seriously jeopardize your ability to learn the material and pass the course. Since much of our work will build on material previously completed and will include team and group interaction, you should make every effort to attend class and be on time. If you are absent during a scheduled team project, you forfeit the right to work as part of the team and you will receive a “0” for that deliverable. Students must be in the classroom for the entire time in order to receive full credit for attendance.

Please do not schedule doctor or dental appointments, meetings with other instructors, advisers, etc. during class time. I will have the same respect for your time and will make sure that I am in class as scheduled, barring any unforeseen emergencies. As it is we only have a few hours each week together and every class session will be important to your development as a professional writer.

If you are unable to attend a class, you must make sure you are prepared for the session when you return. Much of what you need to know to be prepared will be on the calendar, but unanticipated events can occur during classes that may change the calendar. Contact a classmate to see what unanticipated assignments, discussions, etc., you might have missed; this will help ensure that you are not surprised when the class is doing something for which you aren’t prepared.

Individual and group responsibility

During the semester you will be working in teams whose responsibility will be to read and provide constructive criticism on each member’s written work and at times create a document as a team. Because your input is essential to the success of the entire team, your attendance is essential. Failure to work as part of the collaborative team will mean you do not have the proper background to do the assignment and no grade will be recorded.

If you are to bring a draft of an assignment, make sure you are clear about its purpose and have that draft with you. Do not come to class without the needed materials, including your book, your drafts, and supplementary materials you might be using for your project. We will workshop assignments in class and you must have the proper materials in order to be able to participate and get the full benefit of the class interaction.

Assignments

Because writing is a process and involves various stages, students are expected to work through projects in a step-by-step fashion and **turn in all of these steps** when the assignments are due. If any step in the process of a particular assignment is missing or completed unsatisfactorily, the final paper will not be accepted.

Plagiarism in any of its forms will not be tolerated and will result in **automatic failure of the course** and university disciplinary action. You should be especially careful when using the Web for your research. Technology allows for easy “borrowing” of ideas and information. However, all intellectual property must be respected. You will be expected to follow proper citation format. We will discuss proper citation format in class and discuss alternate ways (based on disciplines) of citing material. Feel free to ask questions so that we can discuss this fully and so that you will have no doubt about expectations. We will use Turnitin.com in this class and students will be expected to upload their assignments and furnish the instructor with a proper receipt.

Cell phones and MP3 players

These wonderful advances in technology have also helped advance bad manners. Please turn off any of these devices when you arrive in class and put them away. If a student uses a cell phone during class, even to text a message, he/she will be **asked to leave the classroom** for the day.

Computer Use

Using the computer during class for other than class assignments will not be tolerated. If you access Facebook, My Space, or any other site not affiliated with our coursework during class, you will be **asked to leave the classroom**, since it will be obvious that you do not care to attend to the class activities.

DO NOT check e-mail, surf, or engage in any activity with the computers while the instructor is lecturing or while you are working on an assignment. DO NOT use the computer for any activity other than that assigned while students are working independently. If you need to access the Internet or your email for the assignment, be sure you receive permission before accessing the sites.

The penalties for using the computer for other than course work during class are:

- ✦ an absence being registered for that day
- ✦ a zero being entered for the current assignment

DO NOT send items to the printer while the instructor is talking or once class has begun. All work must be printed before class begins.

Late work

No late work will be accepted for any reason. If you are absent, it is still your responsibility to turn in assignments and be prepared for the next class session. If you are going to miss class you must still turn in your assignment on time. Being absent or late does not change the due date/time for any assignment. Failure to follow this standard policy will result in a zero for that assignment.

Exams

We do not have traditional exams in this class. Your final deliverables in each genre serve as the equivalent of an exam.

Grades

Your final grade will be earned according to the following table:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Deliverable</u>	<u>Points</u>
Instructions	Instruction Exercise	10
Job Portfolio	Resume & Application Letter	15
Research Project	Recommendation Report Project	45
	Informal Proposal	10
	Progress Report & Bibliography	15
	Final Recommendation Report	20
Reading Logs	Blogs	20
Participation	Attendance and activity	10
<i>Total Points for the Semester</i>		<i>100</i>

The grading scale is based on a ten-point system:

A=90-100;

B=80-89;

C=70-79;

D=60-69;

F=59 or below.

Overview of course tasks

For each deliverable you will be required to complete several tasks. Each assignment,

and grading criteria for each assignment, is fully explained in the assignments section of Blackboard. A full project description, specifications, and grading criteria are included with each major assignment. Assignment sheets for blogging, conducting peer review, and other supportive resource sheets also reside on Blackboard. In order for you to receive full credit for the assignments, you must complete all preparatory work. A successful student will:

- **Read and use the textbook, including optional support materials** such as flash cards, self-study guides, etc., which are available at the book's supplemental website, <bedfordstmartins.com/techcomm>.
 - Reading assignments are not optional. You will be expected to keep up with the reading and to use the information to work through the course. The textbook is full of interactive exercises to help you think through the reading material and implement new ideas.
 - Take full advantage of the resources available online.
- **Blog** as directed by the guidelines and according to the class calendar. Blogs serve an instructive purpose and show that you are engaging with the course material. Actively participating in the blogging activity is your opportunity for expanding class discussion and getting assistance with ideas that need more clarification. Your blog posts, along with those of your classmates and instructor, will form a large part of your learning and are not considered an optional component of the course.
- **Draft assignments** as directed. Drafting is an important component of working through written coursework. Writing is a process. Students who actively use the process are more successful than those who skip this step or haphazardly use the process.
- **Workshop drafts** with others in the class. Students are all responsible for bringing drafts and responding to drafts of other students. When you respond to the draft of other students, remember to give constructive feedback and to be the kind of reviewer you'd like to have for your own writing. You will have explicit instructions on how to workshop each others' drafts.
- **Revise final documents** after you receive peer feedback. The document you turn in for evaluation to your instructor should reflect a revision of your original draft, not just a fix of the copyediting issues. Thoughtful consideration of peer feedback is expected.
- **Write a completion report** for each assignment. These reports will allow you to give important feedback to your instructor before your document is graded. Your instructor will use this feedback to determine how well you understood

course material and how she can assist you in further developing your skills as a writer. Use this component of the course to reflect upon your own learning and to assess your own skills and areas for improvement.

- **Upload your final documents** by the appropriate deadline. The Blackboard system will only accept documents up until the assigned time. No late work will be accepted, no matter the reason. Documents can always be submitted early, if the need arises.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

American with Disabilities Act

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be

penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Course Calendar

Tentative Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Notes:

1. The following schedule may be revised or replaced as the semester progresses. Watch Blackboard for updates.
2. You are responsible for completing and submitting assignments on time.
3. Readings are from *Technical Communication*, by Mike Markel (8th Edition, 2007).

Week #	Beginning Date	Class Preparation Completed <i>before</i> class	In-class Activities*
1	Aug 20		<p>Course Overview and Guidelines</p> <p>Post Professional Intro in Discussion Thread</p> <p>Complete Tech Comm Tutorial: <i>Designing Docs w/Word;</i></p> <p>Submit response to questions by Monday, August 27, 9:00.</p>
2	Aug 27	<p>Read Chapters 1, 14, 19</p> <p>Post Blog 1 by Monday, 9:00 a.m.</p>	<p>Read & Respond to Blogs by Wednesday, 9:00 a.m.</p> <p>Instructions exercise in class</p> <p>In-class teams: Revise Memphis Folding Stairs instructions based on Markel Reading and tutorial</p> <p>Workshop revised instructions using Markel checklist</p>
3	Sep 5	Draft #1 Instructions	Workshop #1 Instructions

4	Sep 10	<p>Revise #1 Instructions</p> <p>AJC Job Interview Game</p>	<p>Submit #1 Instructions on or before 9 AM on Monday, Sep 10</p> <p>Introduce Job Portfolio (assignment #2)</p>
5	Sep 18	<p>Read Chapters 11, 12, 15</p> <p>Post Blog 2 by Monday, 9:00 a.m.</p>	<p>Read & Respond to Blogs by Wednesday, 9:00 a.m.</p>
6	Sep 24	<p>Draft #2 Job Portfolio</p>	<p>Workshop #2 Job Portfolio</p>
7	Oct 1	<p>Revise #2 Job Portfolio</p>	<p>Submit #2 Job Portfolio on or before 12:00 noon Wed, Oct 3</p> <p>Complete Tech Comm Tutorial: <i>Evaluating Online Sources</i></p>
8	Oct 8	<p>Read Chapters 3, 5, 16</p> <p>Post Blog 3 by Monday, 9:00 a.m.</p> <p>NOTE: Last Day to Drop with a "W" October 10th</p>	<p>Read & Respond to Blogs by Wednesday, 9:00 a.m.</p> <p>Discuss XYZ Statements and Submit (via e-mail to instructor)</p> <p>Introduce Audience analysis</p> <p>Web Research</p>
9	Oct 15	<p>Draft #3a Proposal & Audience Analysis</p>	<p>Workshop 3a Proposal Draft & Audience Analysis Form</p>
10	Oct 22	<p>Revise #3a Proposal</p>	<p>Submit 3a Proposal Draft & Audience Analysis Form on or before 9:00 AM on Monday, Oct 22</p> <p>Introduce # 3b Progress Report and Annotated Bibliography</p> <p>Complete Tech Comm Tutorial: <i>Preparing Effective Charts & Graphics</i></p>
11	Oct 29	<p>Read Chapters 6, 8, 17</p> <p>Post Blog 4 by Monday, 9:00 a.m.</p>	<p>Read & Respond to Blogs by Wednesday, 9:00 a.m.</p> <p>Database Research</p>

12	Nov 5	Draft #3b Progress Report & Annotated Bibliography	Workshop #3b Progress Report & Annotated Bib Draft
13	Nov 12	Revise #3b Progress Report	Submit #3b Progress Report & Annotated Bib on or before 9:00 AM on Monday, Nov 12 Bring graphic to class Introduce #3c Recommendation Report
14	Nov 19 Holiday Nov 21-23	Read chapters 10, 13, 18 Post Blog 5 by Monday, 9:00 a.m.	Read & Respond to Blogs by Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. Draft in class
15	Nov 26	Draft #3c Recommendation Report	Workshop #3c Recommendation Report Draft
16	Dec 3	Workshop #3c Recommendation Report	Workshop #3c Recommendation Report
Final	Dec 12	Revise #3c Recommendation Report	Submit #3c Recommendation Report in Blackboard by 10:00 AM on Wed, Dec 12

*Some activities will be carried over for out of class completion.