

English 305 – Technical Writing

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Class meets: MTWTh 11:30-12:48, 307 Denney

Office hours: MTWTh 1:00-2:00, 547 Denney

Course description and objectives

The primary objective of English 305 is to help you communicate more effectively in a wide range of business and professional settings, with emphases on document design and presenting technical information in written documents. We will examine the variables at work in all writing/design tasks—writer, reader, information, purpose, and context—and discuss how managing these variables effectively contributes to written messages with an appropriate format, tone, and level of detail. Secondary objectives include learning how to respond effectively to documents produced by others and learning how to deliver effective oral presentations.

What is technical communication?

Technical communication is the transmission of complex information from one party to another. Technical communicators **create documents** that explain ideas and **present arguments** for both **specialist and non-specialist readers**. Technical communication encompasses a variety of **written genres** including memos, letters, manuals, proposals, policies, procedures, documentation, and work logs. Technical communication also includes **spoken forms of communication**: speeches, briefings, consultations, knowledge-transfer sessions, etc. The scope of technical communication as a field continues to widen as **technology** changes the way we communicate. Email, online help systems, websites, documentation databases, object-oriented documentation, and other technology-driven genres have provided and continue to provide resources and challenges for technical communicators.

Required materials

Mike Markel, *Technical Communication*, 9th edition
Flash drive or external hard drive

Course requirements

Group chapter presentation10%

Working in groups of two to three, you will lead a discussion of the day's reading. Identify the most significant points raised in the material, provide examples/demonstrations to explain the material, and raise discussion questions. Presentations should be in PowerPoint format (or something with a similar interface, e.g., Flash) and must run at least fifteen minutes and no longer than twenty minutes. Additionally, you and your group-mates will distribute a presentation outline. Your group's presentation will be videotaped. You will use this video as preparation for your final project presentations (see the web page mock-up description below).

All group members will receive the same grade for the assignment. An exception: if you are absent when your group presents, you will receive a zero for the assignment. Should you need to miss your presentation due to an excused absence, it is up to you to make alternate arrangements with someone from another group.

Three brief (1-2 pages) documents (10% each)30%

Complaint letter, proposal memo for student-defined project, and résumé with cover letter

Student-defined project (3-5 pgs).....15%

This project will be a substantive, extended written treatment of an issue or problem. You will define the context by placing yourself in a specific rhetorical scenario. This project can take the form of a proposal, report, or problem/solution document. You will conference with me outside of class after submitting your proposal memo. Missing this conference will reduce your project grade.

Web page mock-up (10%), presentation (10%), and usability report (10%).....30%

Working in a group of three or four, you will design a Photoshop mock-up of a home page for a company or organization of your choice (might be one you used for the student-defined project). Each group will present their web page to the class, and all group members will receive the same grade for the assignment.

Each group will also write a usability report (1-2 pages) regarding the effectiveness of a web site belonging to a company or organization whose purpose is similar to that of your mock company. Your report will also be a part of your presentation. The web site you choose to review may be a “bad” example or a “good” example, and in your presentation you should compare this site to your own mock-up.

Participation, professionalism, and mini writing activities.....15%

Good participation takes place both inside and outside the classroom. In-class participation includes coming to class on time, active listening, in-class writing, in-class editing, being prepared to contribute your views on the assigned reading, showing a positive attitude, collaborating appropriately, and showing respect to your classmates and to me. Outside participation includes completing assigned reading and writing activities. These are due on the day assigned. Should there be any reason that hinders your ability to participate, please speak with me and we will work together to resolve the situation.

Course policies

Final versions of all assignments must be turned in on time. Late papers are subject to a penalty of one letter grade for each day late. Missing class or technological misfortunes are not acceptable excuses for failing to meet a deadline. Even if you can't get to class, make sure your project does.

Completion and duplication of all drafts on time. It is essential that you have your work prepared and adequate copies available at the *beginning* of the class in which it is to be considered in a small group. Drafts must be complete and top-quality—your best effort to date. Your grade on a given writing assignment will be lowered one letter grade any time you fail to have a thorough, quality draft completed and copies available for group work.

Attendance and punctuality. You are expected to attend each class session and to be on time. Emergencies and illness do arise, of course, and missing a class or two during the quarter might be unavoidable. Your final grade will be lowered 2/3 of a letter grade for each class you miss beyond two (e.g., a B+ would drop to a B-).

This policy is in effect from the date you were first enrolled, not from the date you first attended. The policy does not mean that you have two “unexcused” absences in addition to any “excused” absences. The two allowed absences include both “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Appropriate accommodations to this policy can be made in extraordinary circumstances (e.g., hospitalization, death in the family, military service, etc.). If you encounter such circumstances, please let me know.

Professionalism. On the job, employees are compensated based on productivity and the quality of their work, both individually and in terms of their contributions to group projects. Many workplaces are organized into teams that are assigned particular responsibilities. Employees are evaluated on the basis of their ability to contribute to the project groups to which they are assigned. Similarly, in English 305, a component of your grade will be based on your contributions to the classroom community as a whole and

your effectiveness as a team member of the writing group to which you are assigned. Like conscientious employees in the workplace, conscientious students in English 305 are considerate of their colleagues and do not waste their time by being unprepared. In terms of professionalism, you will be evaluated on (1) your preparation for and participation in class discussion, which involves reading textbook assignments and raising issues and questions in a thoughtful way, (2) your contributions to effective group work, including your suggestions for revising and editing the written work of others, and (3) the extent to which you make a conscientious effort to improve your writing and responding skills as the course progresses.

Academic misconduct. Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. It is a serious academic offense that can result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct and failure for the course. Please remember that at no point during the writing process should the work of others be presented as your own.

Resources

Writing Programs Ombud. The Department of English provides an ombud whose job is to field students' issues and concerns regarding writing courses. The Ombud is Matt Cariello. If you wish to consult the ombud, inquire in the English Dept. office (DE 421) about how to arrange a meeting.

The Writing Center. I strongly encourage you to use the OSU Writing Center, not only for English courses but for all the writing you do in college. Free, one-on-one consultations with writing experts can be scheduled by appointment. The Writing Center is located in 475 Mendenhall Lab on the south side of the Oval. Phone: 688-4291 or visit www.cstw.osu.edu.

Office of Disability Services. If you have a disability and need particular accommodations, please let me know right away, either after class or during office hours. Students who need accommodations should be registered at the Office of Disability Services in 150 Pomerene Hall. Phone: 292-3307.

Schedule

	Topics/Activities	Readings due	Projects due
Week 1			
M 7/27	Introductions		
T 7/28	What is tech-comm? What is rhetoric?	Ch. 1: Intro to Technical Communication, Ch. 5: Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose	Carmen post (part of participation grade): your goals for this class
W 7/29	Chapter presentation	Ch. 4: Writing Collaboratively, Ch. 21: Making Oral Presentations	Chapter presentations begin
Th 7/30	Chapter presentation, Workshop	Ch. 16: Writing Proposals, Ch. 14: Writing Letters, Memos, and E-mails	Proposal drafts due, Conference sign-up
Week 2			
M 8/3	Chapter presentation	Ch. 2: Understanding Ethical and Legal Considerations, Ch. 3: Writing Technical Documents	Final proposals due, Conferences begin (outside of class)
T 8/4	Chapter presentation	Ch. 6: Researching Your Subject, Ch. 7: Organizing Your Information	Conferences continue
W 8/5	Chapter presentation, Workshop	Ch. 9: Writing Coherent Documents, Ch. 10: Writing Effective Sentences	Student-defined project draft due
Th 8/6	Chapter presentation, Photoshop tutorial	Ch. 11: Designing Documents and Web Sites, Ch. 12: Creating Graphics	Final draft of student-defined project due
Week 3			
M 8/10	Review videos of chapter presentations	Ch. 8: Communicating Persuasively, Ch. 20: Writing Definitions,	Draft of complaint letter due

		Descriptions, and Instructions	
T 8/11	Workshop	Ch. 13: Reviewing, Evaluating, and Testing Documents and Web Sites, Ch. 17: Writing Informational Reports	Final draft of complaint letter due, Groups need to choose web site for usability report prior to this class
W 8/12	Workshop	Ch. 15: Preparing Job Application Materials	Draft of resume and cover letter due
Th 8/13	Studio/Group work		
Week 4			
M 8/17	Studio/Group work		Final draft of resume and cover letter due
T 8/18	Studio/Group work		
W 8/19	Presentations		
Th 8/20	Presentations, Evaluations		
Week 5			
M 8/24	**All outstanding work due by 11:59pm in the Carmen dropbox.		