

RWS 3359: Technical Writing

Fall 2022

Fully Online – Asynchronous on Blackboard

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Office: Hudspeth Hall 316

Office Hours: Fridays 1:30pm – 3:30pm (via Zoom or in-person @ HUD 316)

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

This course introduces you to the principles and methods of technical writing that provide you with the skills to improve the ability to communicate through a variety of technical documents and media. Together, we will examine (analyze) a number of writing and design principles and practice (produce) a variety of technical genres. Successful completion of this course will improve your ability to:

- Analyze the rhetorical situation and define the users and/or audience in an instance of communication;
- Apply rhetorical principles to plan and design effective technical documents for diverse media;
- Direct, manage, and monitor the publication cycle of small- and large-scale texts;
- Compose content appropriate for users and genres, revise and edit written work for accuracy, clarity, coherence, and appropriateness, and document resources as defined by a specific field;
- Apply technological and visual rhetorical skills (e.g., document design, graphics, computer documentation, electronic editing, and content management applications) in the composing process and publish, deliver, and archive as required; and
- Work critically and collaboratively to complete projects.

Required Text:

- Mike Markel and Stuart A. Selber, *Technical Communication* (13th ed.) ISBN: 9781319245009. McMillan Publishers.

Assignments

There are three major ways of scoring points for this class: major assignments with several minor writing assignments leading up to it; peer review for final drafts; and discussion board posts. Here is a breakdown of the assignments and associated points.

Assignment	Points	Deadline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Board 	200	(Almost) Weekly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Documentation Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Instructions Analysis ○ Peer Review ○ Instructions Manual 	300 100 30 170	September 9 September 20 September 23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Portfolio (Group) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Topics Memo ○ Peer Review ○ Research Proposal ○ Progress Report ○ Peer Review ○ Recommendation Report 	500 30 30 150 30 30 230	September 30 October 14 October 21 November 4 November 17 December 1
Total	1000	

Assignment Submission Guidelines

- Submit all final drafts as PDFs.
- Submit documents for peer review in Word format (.doc or .docx) uploaded to your respective groups in Microsoft Teams or the Discussion Board page based on the instructions for each week.
- For discussion board posts, type your post in the space provided or copy-paste your post there from another location.
- For assignments with multiple parts, submit in a single document with page breaks between distinct pieces of the project.

Required and Recommended Online Programs

Since this is an online course, we will use online and computer-based tools. If any of the tools are new to you, you should begin familiarizing yourself with them as soon as possible – from the Help Desk at UTEP or YouTube. You must also have reliable access to the

internet. Not knowing how to use the technology or not having access to the Internet will not be acceptable excuses for non-participation or late assignment submission.

- **Blackboard:** Blackboard will be the main interface for our course. This is where you'll find all documents, course materials, resources, and instructions; participate in online discussion groups; submit all assignments; check your grades; and much more. For training or information regarding its use, please refer to the UTEP Connect Online Support Center.
- **Zoom:** If we need to communicate in real time, such as office hours, we will use Zoom. The meeting ID and password are at the top of this document and a direct link is available in Blackboard.

Course Policies

Office Hours, Email, and Availability

I will hold virtual and in-person office hours every Friday 1:30-3:30pm. The Zoom details are available on Blackboard. You do not need to schedule an office hour visit.

Outside office hours, you're welcome to email. On weekdays, I typically respond within 36 hours. I may or may not respond over the weekend so plan your emails accordingly, especially if it's urgent. All emails should be sent from your UTEP email account and include a subject line that clarifies the purpose; this enables me (and you) to keep good records and for easy retrieval in the future.

Finally, I have provided a link within Blackboard for asking questions. This is useful for three reasons: First, in my experience, 90% of your questions are on the minds of other students. Second, several of your questions can be answered by other students without my intervention. Thirdly, for those who did not have the problem you posted, your post and my or other students' answers could provide useful insight. Thus, you do everyone a great service by sharing your question. So, unless a question or issue is private, post it on our Blackboard question page instead.

Attendance

You will demonstrate your attendance by completing each week's Blackboard module, which will include actively engaging in discussions, reading, and participating in activities. Modules must be completed by the indicated deadlines, and the effort put into the modules will determine your participation grade for the week. Late or insufficient posts will not receive full credit. No matter how well you do on your assignments, failure to complete modules will negatively affect your grade and may even cause you to fail the course. Consistent failure to complete modules will prevent you from passing the class. I will recommend a student withdraw if s/he has not submitted a major assignment or contributed significantly to weekly modules.

Netiquette

Since this is an online course, it is important that you familiarize yourselves with netiquette--or online etiquette. Please adhere to the following policies:

- Respect and be courteous to classmates and the instructor. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- Do not use inappropriate language, all capital letters, or language shortcuts. Online entries should be written in Standard English with edited spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.
- Be sure to read everyone's responses before posting. Avoid repetition of what someone else has already said. Add something new to the discussion.
- Do not copy another classmates' response on a discussion board.
- Post in a timely fashion to receive credit for the discussion. Pay close attention to the posted deadlines.
- Finally, Blackboard is not a public Internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted in these online spaces is intended for classmates and the professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to

do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).

University Policies:

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty is never tolerated at UTEP. All cases will be reported to the Dean of Students for Academic Sanctions. These sanctions may include expulsion. All work submitted must be original; students may not submit graded work from another course. Forms of academic dishonesty include:

- *Collusion:* working with others on an assignment intended to be an individual project
- *Fabrication:* deliberately creating false information on a works cited page
- *Plagiarism:* the presentation of another person's work as your own, whether intentional or not (i.e., copying parts of or whole papers off of the Internet).

Copyright and Fair Use

The University requires all members of its community to follow copyright and fair use requirements. Students are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend students nor assume any responsibility for student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject students to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under university policies.

University Writing Center (UWC)

The University Writing Center (UWC) is physically located on the second floor of the UTEP Library in Room 227 and offers free one-on-one writing assistance for students. Online consultations are also available. Graduate and undergraduate consultants work with writers on projects for a wide variety of classes and provide help during all parts of the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Meetings with consultants are on a first come, first-served basis, but you may also make appointments with specific consultants. Some consultants are bilingual Spanish and English speakers.

Consultants will not edit your work for you, and you are the one ultimately responsible for the work you submit and the grade you earn. [Visit the website](#) to learn more or to sign up for online consultations and be sure to request consultations well before a deadline.

ADA Accommodations:

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you suspect that you have a disability and need accommodation, please contact The Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) at 915.747.5148 or at [*cass@utep.edu*](mailto:cass@utep.edu). The CASS office is in Room 106, Union East. Students are responsible for presenting the instructor with any CASS accommodation letters and instructions.

Schedule

- Something is due most Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays
- All assignments are due at 11:59pm on the due date.
- Dates posted are due dates so do the readings *before* or *by* those dates.
- **DB** = Discussion Board; **TC** = *Technical Communication* textbook

Date/Deadline	Readings	Activity/Assignment/Remarks
Week 1 (August 22-28): Introduction		
Mon, Aug 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read syllabus • Review Blackboard page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy textbook
Wed, Aug 24		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Introductions
Fri, Aug 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 1: "Introduction to Technical Communication" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Response: Introductions
Week 2 (August 29-September 4): Understanding Your Audience		
Tue, Aug 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 5: "Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose" • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 3: "Writing Technical Documents" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Audience Analysis
Thu, Sept 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Instructions Analysis Assignment Prompt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Response: Audience Analysis
Week 3 (September 5-11): Analyzing Instructions/Technical Documents		
Tue, Sept 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 20: "Writing Definitions, Descriptions & Instructions" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Submit draft for Peer Review
Thu, Sept 8		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Response: Comment on drafts
Fri, Sept 9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions Analysis Due
Week 4 (September 12-18): Writing Instructions/Technical Documents		
Tue, Sept 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reread <i>TC</i>, Chapter 20: "Writing Definitions, Descriptions & Instructions" • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 11: "Designing Print and Online Documents" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Writing Definitions & Instructions
Thu, Sept 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 12: "Creating Graphics" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Response: Writing Definitions & Instructions
Week 5 (September 19-25): Writing Sentences and Arguments with Clarity		

Tue, Sept 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 8: “Communicating Persuasively” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Peer Review: Submit Draft
Thu, Sept 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 10: “Writing Correct and Effective Sentences” • Appendix C: “Editing and Proofreading Your Documents” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Response: Peer Review Due: Comment on Draft
Fri, Sept 23		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions Manual – Final Draft Due
Week 6 (September 26-October 2): Choosing a Research Topic		
Tue, Sept 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 16: “Writing Proposals” • Review Research Portfolio Prompt • Review Topics Memo Assignment Prompt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Meeting • DB Post: Analyzing a Topic
Fri, Sept 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Memo Format (<i>TC</i> page 386-387) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics Memo Due
Week 7 (October 3-9): Designing a Research Plan		
Tue, Oct 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 7: “Organizing Your Information” • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 9: “Emphasizing Important Information” • Review Research Proposal Prompt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group meeting to discuss research tasks for Research Proposal
Thu, Oct 6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Designing Research-Based Tasks
Week 8 (October 10-16): Providing Helpful Feedback		
Tue, Oct 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 8: “Communicating Persuasively” • <i>TC</i>, Chapter 10: “Writing Correct & Effective Sentences” • <i>TC</i> 72-79: “Critiquing a Team Member’s Work” • Review Prompt for Research Proposal 	
Thu, Oct 13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Providing Helpful Feedback

Fri, Oct 14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Proposal: Submit Draft for Peer Review
Week 9 (October 17-23): Revising with Purpose		
Tue, Oct 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Sample Internal Proposal (TC 453-459) • Review TC 56-61: "Revising," "Editing," and "Proofreading" • Review TC 460: "Writer's Checklist" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Review Due
Thu, Oct 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix C: "Editing and Proofreading Your Documents" • Review Internal Research Proposal Prompt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Using Feedback Effectively/Revision Plan
Fri, Oct 21		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Proposal: Final Draft Due • Assessment of Individual Contribution Due
Week 10 (October 24-30): Researching Effectively		
Tue, Oct 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TC, Chapter 6: "Researching Your Subject" • Review Progress Report Prompt and Samples • Review Recommendation Report Prompt and Samples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Meeting
Thu, Oct 27		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Researching Effectively
Week 11 (October 31-November 6): Creating Meaningful Graphics and Reporting Progress		
Tue, Nov 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TC, Chapter 12: "Creating Graphics" • TC 468-478: "Writing Progress and Status Reports" in Ch. 17 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Meeting
Thu, Nov 3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Creating Meaningful Graphics
Fri, Nov 4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress Report Due
Week 12 (November 7-13): Considering Ethics		
Tue, Nov 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TC, Chapter 2: "Considering Ethics" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Post: Considering Ethics

Thu, Nov 10		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DB Response: Considering Ethics
Week 13 (November 14-20): Drafting Recommendations		
Tue, Nov 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>TC</i>, Chapter 18: "Writing Recommendation Reports" <i>TC</i>, Appendix C: "Skimming Your Sources and Taking Notes" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on your Recommendation Report
Thu, Nov 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Recommendation Report materials (prompt, samples, <i>TC</i> chapter) <i>TC</i>, Appendix B: "Documenting Your Sources" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation Report: Submit draft for peer review
Week 14 (November 21-27): Peer Review & Revising with Purpose		
Tue, Nov 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appendix C: "Editing and Proofreading Your Documents" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation Report: Peer Review Due
Wed, Nov 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Recommendation Report Materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DB Post: Using Feedback Effectively
Thanksgiving Break		
Week 15 (November 28-December 4): Wrapping Up!		
Tue, Nov 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Course Evaluations 	
Thu, Dec 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation Report: Final Draft Due