

TECHNICAL WRITING
(with bilingual section)
RWS 3359 CRN 12282 Fall 2023
UGLC 232 TTH 1:30-2:50 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Isabel Baca

Office: Hudspeth 314

Phone: 915-747-6245

E-mail: ibaca@utep.edu

*Best and fastest way of getting a hold of me is via email

Office Hours: TTH 3-4:30 p.m., by appointment, and online

Librarian: Joy Urbina

Office: Library 134B

Phone: 915-747-5066

E-mail: jurbina4@utep.edu

Scheduling an appointment: <http://utep.libcal.com/appointments/joy>

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND RESOURCES

Markel, Mike and Selber, Stuart. *Practical Strategies for Technical Communication: A Brief Guide*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2022.

Course Research Guide: <https://libguides.utep.edu/RWS3359/Baca>

In addition, **for bilingual section:**

Barron's Spanish-English Dictionary or any other substantive Spanish-English/English-Spanish dictionary. Feel free to consult with me if you have any doubt about which dictionary to get.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

RWS 3359 is a technical writing workshop. You will do exercises to prepare for writing, work collaboratively, review each other's writing, and discuss techniques for improving your writing. You will also meet with me individually and with your teams (you will complete collaborative writing assignments) to discuss writing/communication problems, successes, revisions, and progress. Working collaboratively is an essential component of a technical writer's job. Rarely, if ever, does a technical writer work alone and in isolation. Typically, a technical writer collaborates with experts from different fields. For this course, you will work with a librarian who will assist you in learning or enhancing your library information skills as they pertain to technical communication.

RWS 3359 will consist of both written and oral communication assignments. You should view technical communication in two ways: One, it is the process of making and sharing information and ideas on a technical subject and/or in the workplace. Two, technical communication is a set of applications, the technical/workplace documents produced, and presentations given in and for the workplace. One of the

primary goals of a technical communicator and writer is to create, design, and transmit technical information so that people can understand it easily, locate it quickly, and use it safely, effectively, and efficiently.

You will be expected to submit writing assignments through Blackboard on the due dates. Occasionally, I may ask you to submit assignments in class (hard copy) or to email them to me. All assignments need to be professionally submitted. I may request a hard copy of your work or an electronic copy for my educational files.

In addition, you are responsible for reading the assigned chapters even though we may not cover all the material explicitly. You should use the textbook as a reference book. You will show me through our class discussions and activities that you are keeping up with the reading. You must come prepared each class day. If necessary, I will give pop quizzes on the reading assignments, and I will redo the grading scale.

To help you learn or enhance your information literacy skills, you will be working closely with a librarian (See above). She will oversee two assignments that connect to this course's objectives. She has also created a Research Guide for this course. This is to help you identify and integrate library resources for the various research and writing assignments.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will:

1. Learn to use technology, rhetoric, primary and secondary sources, and language to convey technical information to diverse audiences.
2. Practice analytical and critical thinking while engaging in effective communication with a cultural understanding.
3. Practice analytical and critical thinking while engaging in research.
4. Practice advanced research methods using several resources, platforms, and tools.
5. Apply rhetorical theory and writing studies techniques and concepts when making decisions as technical communicators.
6. Practice designing print and digital documents.
7. Learn, understand, and implement job search strategies, practices, and documents.
8. Understand ethical and legal considerations in technical communication.
9. Practice teamwork when producing effective, collaborative, and technical texts, documents, and presentations.
10. Learn or enhance project management skills.

Additional Objectives for English-Spanish Bilingual Section

If you are earning credit for the Bilingual Professional Writing Certificate (BPWC) or choosing to take this course bilingually, you will also:

1. Write and translate ethically and responsibly in both English and Spanish, both in print and online, in non-academic, professional settings.
2. Apply translation theory when making decisions as technical communicators producing bilingual texts.
3. Understand ethical issues pertaining to translating technical documents.

If you are taking this course as an English-Spanish section, you will complete half of the assignments in English and the other half in Spanish. You will be expected to read, write, and conduct research in both languages.

EVALUATION

To qualify for a passing grade, you must attend class regularly and **complete satisfactorily all major and minor assignments**. Higher grades will be given based on quality of performance and excellence in work produced. I will try to respond to your work as your employer would; therefore, in addition to clarity of the message and content, tact, appearance, grammar, and spelling are extremely important. You will also be graded on collaboration and participation.

Assignments *italicized* and **bolded** will be graded by our librarian, Joy Urbina. She will be presenting, overseeing, and grading these assignments. The goal is to help you learn or enhance your information literacy skills. Please note that the *Definition* assignment corresponds to the **Concept Timeline** assignment. The **Evaluating Sources** assignment connects to the *Final Team Project (Manual)*, for which you will be required to provide an annotated bibliography that will serve as a suggested reading list.

You will receive points for each assignment. The following is a list of tentative assignments and their probable weight in points.

Tentative Assignments	Probable Weight in Points
<i>Individual</i>	
Diagnostic (in-class)	5
Definition Assignment - Memo	15
Concept Timeline Assignment	10
Impromptu Instructions Presentation	5
Evaluating Sources Assignment	15
Résumé – Draft, copies, and job ad	5
Résumé – Final draft and job ad	15
Progress Report	10
Final Team Performance Evaluation	10
Participation, Classwork, and Attendance	15
Collaboration	10
<i>Team</i>	
Team Name, Logo, Motto, Goals, and Introduction	5
Team Project Proposal	15
Final Team Project – Manual	25
-with suggested readings	
Final Team Project Presentation	10
TOTAL = 170	

FINAL GRADING SCALE

153-170 = A

136-152 = B

119-135 = C
102-118 = D
101 and below = F

The following is a grading system as it relates to the workplace environment:

- A:** Supervisor would be impressed and remember the work when a promotion is discussed.
- B:** Supervisor would be satisfied with the job but not be necessarily impressed.
- C:** Supervisor would ask employee to revise or rewrite sections before allowing those outside the department or company to see it.
- D:** Supervisor would be troubled by the poor quality of the work and would consider hiring more competent help.
- F:** Supervisor would replace the employee.

CLASS POLICIES

The following sections outline and describe class policies.

Attendance and Punctuality

In the world of business and industry, employees get paid for their presence and productivity. They may be further rewarded for high quality work. When employees are absent, constantly late for work, or do not produce, they are disciplined, sometimes terminated. Similarly, in this class, you will be disciplined for not attending, being late to class, leaving early, and/or not producing. You are expected to attend class regularly. Excessive absences (**three or more**) and/or constant tardiness and leaving early will result in a deduction of points from your final grade. Furthermore, if you are absent, you are responsible for contacting me and making up all the missed work. You must stay in contact with your team members as well! I do, however, understand that life happens. If life presents you with a situation where attending class becomes a challenge, please let me know so that we can schedule an appointment to discuss this.

Academic Dishonesty

The *UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures* defines plagiarism as “the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one’s own academic work offered for credit, or using work in a paper or assignment for which the student had received credit in another course without direct permission of all involved instructors.” It is the official policy of the university that all suspected cases or acts of alleged scholastic dishonesty must be referred to the Dean of Students.

Make-Up and Late Work

No incomplete work will be accepted. No late work will be accepted. You will not be able to make up the missed work and assignments unless this has been discussed with me ahead of time. You may submit work before the due date. Meeting deadlines is an important part of a professional (technical) writer's life. Please follow the course calendar, and when in doubt about assignments, deadlines, and/or course material, contact me.

Cell Phones

Please turn off all cell phones. Unless you inform me of a specific situation that requires you to have your cell phone on, you are to have it off during class.

STUDENT RESOURCES

The following resources may be helpful to you as a student.

University Writing Center (UWC)

If you want to improve your writing and/or get feedback on your writing, you may visit the University Writing Center (UWC). The UWC offers workshops and one-on-one consultations, both in person and virtually. For more information, visit their website: <https://www.utep.edu/uwc/>

Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS)

If you have or believe you have a disability and need specific accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 915-747-5148, or by e-mail to cass@utep.edu. You may also visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.utep.edu/CASS. CASS staff are the only individuals who can validate, and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

Counseling and Psychological Services

As a student, you may seek counseling services at UTEP. Visit the Counseling and Psychological Services website for more information: <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/counseling-services/>

Food Pantry

The UTEP food pantry offers support and assistance to UTEP students who are dealing with food insecurity. Items available to students include cereal, crackers, peanut butter, jelly, rice, pasta, Ramen noodles, tea, dry beans, canned soup, canned vegetables, canned fruit, canned tuna, canned chicken, toiletries and more. The food pantry is located in Memorial Gym, Room 105. For more information, visit their website: <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/foodpantry/>

CLASS CALENDAR

Calendar is subject to change.

OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

These are brief descriptions of the course assignments. All deadlines are listed in the course calendar.

Diagnostic – Ungraded, automatic 5 points for completing the assignment

This assignment consists of writing a memo or letter addressed to me, where you describe your expectations for this course. The purpose is to show me the strengths and weaknesses in your writing. *For bilingual credit, you should write this document in your weaker language, English or Spanish.*

Concept Timeline – Worth 10 points, graded with rubric

For this assignment, you will work closely with the librarian. She will be providing the assignment requirements and will teach you how a concept timeline plays a role in defining a term or concept. This assignment aligns and is completed with the Definition assignment.

Definition - Worth 15 points, graded with rubric

You will select a concept or term in your field of study, and you will define it to four different audiences. The objective is for you to begin exploring the terminology used in your future career and learn the importance of audience awareness in writing. Regardless of your field, you will write definitions and instructions frequently. This assignment aligns and is completed with the Concept Timeline assignment.

Impromptu Instructions Presentation – Automatic 5 points for giving the presentation

This presentation functions in two ways: It gives you practice for the final team presentation, and it allows you to see how teaching a specific task to a distinct audience needs to be clear, accurate, specific, concise, and well organized.

Evaluating Sources – Worth 15 points, graded with rubric

For this assignment, you will evaluate three sources matching your manual's topic for the Final Project. You will compare your research skills for doing a Google search to using a Library database and comparing your sources to determine their quality and usability for your research and manual. This assignment aligns and is completed with the Manual assignment.

Résumé – Draft (Worth 5 points) and **Final Draft** (Worth 15 points), graded with rubric

Writing a résumé is an essential task for any professional. No matter what your major is, you will need to have a strong, appealing résumé that shows the employer you are the best candidate for the job you are seeking.

Progress Report – Worth 10 points, graded with rubric

You will write a progress report on your final team project, the Manual, where you will inform me of what your team has completed and what remains to be done for the team manual.

Final Team Performance Evaluation – Worth 10 points, graded with rubric.

You will evaluate each of your team members and yourself by writing an evaluation specifying each member's contributions.

Participation, Classwork, and Attendance - Worth 15 points

You will receive points for participating in class activities and discussions and for attending class.

Collaboration - Worth 10 points

You will be graded on how well you collaborate with your team. This will be based on my observations and the final team performance evaluations written at the end of the semester.

Team Name, Logo, Motto, Goals, and Introduction – Automatic 5 points

Once you are assigned to a team, you will work together to create an identity and establish goals.

Team Project Proposal – Worth 15 points, graded with rubric

This assignment is the foundation of your final project, the manual. You will propose a topic for the team manual that your team will write and will have three specific sets of instructions on a specific topic, ideally related to your major(s). You will include a timeline and the specific tasks to be completed.

Final Team Project, the Manual with Suggested Readings – Worth 25 points, graded with rubric

You will create a team manual consisting of at least three sets of instructions on a topic related to your major(s). The manual may be multimodal/digital. You must provide a suggested reading list with full bibliographic information and annotations. The Evaluating Sources assignment completes the requirements for the manual.

Final Team Project Presentation – Worth 10 points, graded with rubric

This is the final team presentation where you will explain your manual to the class and teach at least one of your sets of instructions.

Enjoy the holidays and have a safe winter break!