TECHNICAL WRITING
RWS 3359   - Fully Online Course

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REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Markel, Mike. *Practical Strategies for Technical Communication.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013.
E-editions of this book are available. This textbook is available at the UTEP bookstore.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the UTEP Blackboard Learn course management
system. You should have a UTEP e-mail account and have access to the Web. You may use any of the
primary Web browsers—Chrome, Google, Firefox, or Safari.

You will need to have or have access to a computer/laptop, printer, scanner, a webcam, and a microphone.
You will need to purchase a USB (flash drive).

You will need to download or update the following software:
Microsoft Office, Adobe, and Java.

Once you log into the course, you can click on the **"Ready for Online Learning?" link** in the left
sidebar to access information regarding the software/hardware you will need for the course and to access
Blackboard tutorials that will help you navigate the Blackboard learning system. Check that your
computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course**. If, during the
course of the semester, you can't log in or have any other technical problems, call Tech Support at
915-747-5257. You can also consult the links "Blackboard Help" and "Tech Support" located on the
left sidebar.**

This course is designed and works under Mountain Standard Time (MST). Please keep this in mind when
submitting assignments and meeting deadlines.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

 RWS 3359 is a technical writing workshop. Students will do exercises to prepare for writing, work
collaboratively, critique each other's writing, and discuss techniques for improving their writing. Working
collaboratively is an essential component of a technical writer's job. Rarely, if ever, does a technical
writer work alone and in isolation.

Students 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.

Students will be expected to submit all writing assignments on the due dates and meet all deadlines, including those for discussion boards and exercises. All assignments need to be professionally submitted. Students should keep a hard copy of all assignments for themselves.

In addition, students are responsible for reading the assigned chapters even though we may not cover all the material explicitly. Students should use the textbook as a reference book. Students will show me through discussion boards, assignments, and activities that they are keeping up with the reading.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

Each time you sign into the course, you will be on the Homepage. Start by reading the "Course Announcements," checking "Course E-mail," reading all weekly class materials, the textbook materials, other additional resources, and watching the videos. Complete all activities on time. Be sure to meet all deadlines. Work collaboratively and respectfully with other students and your team members as required.

COURSE PARTICIPATION

As a required part of this course, you will:
- Spend a minimum of 5-7 hours per week on the course Website retrieving e-mail, reading and reviewing materials, completing exercises and activities, and participating in discussion boards and team discussions/conferences. Each week begins on Monday morning at 8:00 a.m. (Mountain Standard Time) and ends on Sunday, 11:59 p.m. (MST).
- Spend an additional 4-8 hours per week on- and off-line working on your writing, editing assignments, working with your team (online and/or in person), and reading the textbook chapters.
- Work collaboratively with your classmates (your team) on assignments.
- Correspond with your instructor concerning questions or concerns.

COMMUNICATION

Because this is a completely online course, all communication is through the Blackboard learning management system. In addition to the course materials (syllabus, assignments, learning modules, etc.), you will find the following links available to you.

*Course Announcements –*I will post updates, any changes to lessons/assignments, emergencies/important notifications, and reminders of course activities. **READ THESE FIRST! Make it your routine to check announcements at the beginning of each day. You will receive announcements, when necessary, during the week as well.**

Discussions- A specific number of discussion boards (DB's) are planned for the course, but I will add extra discussion boards if I see the need to address other issues, topics, or the readings themselves. This course is meant to be highly interactive, and the Discussion Board is one means to achieve this. I expect for all students to keep up with and complete all the assigned readings, and all **students must meet the**

deadlines for the discussion boards and assignments. As teams, you will also conduct your own group discussions and collaborative writing through the team discussion boards. You will find instructions on how to access and add discussion boards in the link "Communication Forum" in the left sidebar. Please remember that the Discussion Board is reserved for meaningful classroom discussion. You will not receive credit for a post if you simply say, "I have nothing to add," or "I have no questions," or just a "yes" or "no" answer. It is not appropriate to use the Discussion Board to talk about topics not related to this course, to complain, to promote your business, or to sell anything. I reserve the right to delete any message that I feel is not on topic or that contains controversial or insulting language. Failing to meet the deadlines or requirements for each discussion board will result in a loss of points.

*Course E-Mail (Messages)-*Occasionally, we will be communicating with each other via e-mail. To be consistent and avoid confusion, we will use the Course E-mail (Messages), the messaging system within Blackboard. You will find this tool in the left sidebar. To send me and/or your classmates messages, please use Course E-mail (Messages). Only when it is an emergency and/or Blackboard is down and not working, should you contact me through the university's e-mailing system, Outlook, at ibaca@utep.edu. **Check your Course E-Mail (Messages) on a daily basis. You will not be notified that you have new messages automatically. You MUST check Course E-Mail (Messages)!**

Access Your Group- You will be assigned to teams. I will organize and set up the teams and group links accordingly. As teams, you will use the discussion board set up as team (group) discussion boards. Here, you and your team members will hold conversations and discussions on team assignments and tasks. You may also exchange and upload files to revise, edit, and proofread together. **I will be included as a member of each team's discussion boards, blogs, and wikis**, giving me access to all your team discussions and team communication. Only when I deem necessary, I will participate in your team discussions.

Should you experience technical difficulty submitting your assignments via the Blackboard system, use regular UTEP e-mail (Outlook) as the alternate plan.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources and assistance can be found by consulting the various links located on the left sidebar. Under the link "***Ready for Online Learning***?" you can access helpful resources. Under this link, you are provided with guidelines and additional resources for the following:

🎬**Communicating Effectively Online**
🎬**Checking your Technology for the Course**
🎬**Getting help from the University Writing Center (UWC)**
🎬**Accessing Blackboard Tutorials**

Please take the time to visit these links and become familiar with the information provided. Make sure that you also visit the rest of the links on the left sidebar, since these too will provide you with contact information for your library liaison and resources for library research and assistance.

UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES

Please familiarize yourself with university and course policies.

Americans with Disabilities Act- UTEP's Center for Accommodations and Support Services
If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 915-747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in the UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at htttp://sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS staff members can validate and authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

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 assignmentfor 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. However, 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. For technical difficulties, contact Technical Support (the Help Desk).

EVALUATION

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

Students 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
Individual	
Definition Assignment - Memo	20
Final Team Performance Evaluation	20
Participation	10
Collaboration	20
Discussion Board 1.1 – Video (self-introduction)	10
-Response to two classmates' videos	10
Discussion Board 1.2 – What Is Technical Communication and Selected	10
Technical Term/Concept in Your Field of Study/Major	
-Response to two classmates' posts	10
Discussion Board 2.1 – Doing Research in Your Field – Name and describe	10
ONE important professional organization in your field or ONE journal read	
by people in your field.	

-Response to two classmates' posts	10
Discussion Board 3.1 – Evaluating Instructions and Suggesting Improvements	10
Exercise #8 in Chapter 14 of your textbook, page 389-90	
-Response to two classmates' posts	10
Discussion Board 4.1 – Locating a job ad for a position in your field that interests	10
you upon your graduation from UTEP (with your Bachelor's degree).	
-Response to two classmates' posts	10

Team

Team Project Proposal	20
Final Team Project – Manual	50
-with suggested readings	
Final Team PowerPoint Presentation	20

                            TOTAL =   **260**

FINAL GRADING SCALE
234-260 = A
208-233 = B
182-207 = C
156-181 = D
155 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.

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 participating, not meeting deadlines, and/or not producing. **This is a summer course lasting only four weeks. Missing deadlines or not being present online makes it difficult for you to be successful in this course**. You must stay in contact with me and your team members as well!