

# RWS 3359: TECHNICAL WRITING

Fall 2023

CRN 12284 **-ONLINE**

---

## Instructor

Dr. Maria Isela Maier  
mmaier@utep.edu

(Use Blackboard course messages for all course correspondence)

**Office:** Worrell Hall, 309

Tues/Thursday: 10-11:30a

**Virtual Office Hours - Tues: 1:30-3:30p**

## Required Textbook

Markel, M. (2021) *Technical Communication* (13TH ED.) Bedford/St  
Martin's: Boston, MA. // ISBN: 978-1319245009

## Main Assignments Deadlines

Instruction Usability Report	September 24, 2023
Process Instruction Proposal	October 8, 2023
User Guide	October 29, 2023
Product Development Proposal	November 12, 2023
Product Market Dossier	December 10, 2023

## Course Overview

This course introduces you to the principles and methods of technical writing and provides you with the skills to improve your 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 as well as tasks that the information must support
- 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, such as articles, manuals, and websites
- Compose content appropriate for the 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.

## Course Interface & Syllabus

This course is Blackboard enhanced. In addition to posting and course communication, Blackboard will also serve as a private and secure space for students to access up-to-date grades. If you need help working with Blackboard, please contact me outside of class or seek help at one of the University's computer labs. You can also prepare by taking the Blackboard Student Orientation

(<https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/cid/student-resources/blackboard-orientation.html>)

This syllabus is available on Blackboard. While this syllabus is a binding document, portions, such as the course calendar, are subject to change by written notice or a class announcement. A current draft of the

syllabus and calendar will always be available on Blackboard. Any modifications to the syllabus will be announced on Blackboard, as well.

## **Attendance**

Logging in regularly is a must for an online course. I recommend logging in at least once per day as there may be updates. If logging on or internet access is a problem, you may want to consider withdrawing and enrolling in a face-to-face section. Since you signed up for an online course, it is assumed you have internet access. Missing more than three weeks' worth of postings will result in automatic failure of the course, regardless of your progress on major assignments. Students who do not log on or post to Blackboard by the end of Week Two will be dropped from the course—no exceptions. Online attendance is mandatory. You must log in and participate in the conversation. Otherwise, it may count as an absence. All work must be completed by the due dates posted.

## **Required Text**

This course will use Markel's *Technical Communication* (13th edition)—see page 1 of course syllabus for textbook specifics—as the guiding textbook. All assignments and readings will be listed in the course calendar as well as provided within Blackboard as needed. You will need the textbook for the third week of classes. Please plan for shipping times if ordering online as no extensions or exceptions will be made if you do not have a textbook by the third week.

## **Assignments & Projects**

Assignment sheets will be posted to Blackboard as they become relevant to the course. All assignments are to be submitted via the Blackboard by midnight of the due date (see course calendar). All assignments are required to be submitted in PDF format unless otherwise noted. Assignments submitted in other formats will automatically receive no credit and will be required to contact the instructor in order to resubmit. Please double-check before submitting your assignments. Additionally, assignments should never be sent via email and will not be accepted unless instructed to do so.

## **Reading Responses**

You will read several chapters from your textbook and write a reading response. Reading Responses are available in the week that they are scheduled or by going to the Content page in Blackboard and clicking on the "Reading Responses" tab. Follow the [Reading Responses Guidelines](#) before submitting and always post on to the board, rather than uploading a file.

## **Discussion Posts**

You will be required to complete discussion posts related to the class material. Discussion prompts are meant to help you with upcoming assignments/activities. These discussions will be posted in the week that they are due or you can also access them at the top of the page in Blackboard under the tab "Discussions".

## **Nature and Time Spent on Course**

This course intends to help students develop a wide variety of strategies for communicating in a technical environment and communicating technical information to a variety of audiences and users. Success in this course requires dedication and focus. Be sure to allocate sufficient time for the class projects and work. The general rule for all classes is that students spend two hours working outside of class for each class credit. Because this is a 3-hour class, expect to spend at least 6 hours doing research and writing each week. Further, as an online class, preparing and reading the materials delivered online may account for another 3 hours per week – the same amount of time expected in the classroom.

## **Contacting your Instructor**

The easiest way to contact me is through Blackboard course messages/email. I will generally respond to emails within 24 hours. If you have questions about readings or assignments, make sure you contact me with enough advance notice so that your work/assignments are not negatively impacted. Your email messages are also considered part of your course writing so they should be formatted accordingly and composed with the rhetorical situation.

This course works on a 1,000-point scale and final grades will be determined using the scale below. Grades will be posted to Blackboard. Please see me during my office hours or contact me for an appointment if you wish to discuss your grades.

A=900-1,000 points  
B=800-899 points  
C=700-799 points  
D=600-699 points  
F=599 or below

This course's assignments and their associated point values are as follows:

Participation (Discussion Board Posts/Activities)	100
Reading Reviews (15 @ 10 points each)	150
Quizzes (5 @ 20 points each)	100
Instruction Usability Report	100
Process Instruction Proposal	100
User Guide	150
Product Development Proposal	100
Product Market Dossier (including presentation)	150
Memos (2 @ 25 points each)	50

## Compositions

Your written work is a reflection of your capabilities and efforts and comprises the majority of your final grade. You are therefore expected to produce high-quality, sophisticated documents. A part of that quality is the appearance of your work. Neatness, visual appeal, and mechanical and grammatical correctness are important, although they do not, alone, guarantee a well-made text (or a good grade). Your written documents should have appropriate margins, spacing, pagination, and formatting. Your productions in electronic and other media should be well-designed. In short: take pride in your writing and aim to produce high quality documents.

## Submitting Assignments

Assignments should be submitted following the submission links found on Blackboard. These links will be provided within the modules during the weeks in which the relevant assignments are due. Blackboard comment and grade function works best with Microsoft Word and PDF formats, however, to ensure that your formatting is not changed or altered, please submit all assignments as a PDF and follow APA format unless otherwise noted. Microsoft Word is available to students through the Office 365 Cloud. NOTE: We will be using APA style for the course. This way, we are all on the same page as far as using a citation style. Most disciplines require APA citation format. It is also a good idea to label your submissions. Be sure to name each submitted assignment with your name and the title of the assignment. (For example: jmartinez usabilityreport draft; jmartinez usabilityreport final).

Peer- Review Rough Drafts: Part of the participation grade will include the submission of rough drafts. In order to get the most useful feedback, rough drafts should be completed projects They must also be submitted before or on the due date. When participating in peer reviews, offer constructive written

suggestions. Aim to provide prompt and clear feedback. Your feedback is important and your peers depend on it.

## **Late Work/Missed Assignments**

Each week begins on Monday and ends on Sunday. All major assignments will be submitted to Blackboard. Major projects for final grading will be submitted to Blackboard and due on Sunday before midnight. As a general rule, assignments should be submitted by the posted deadlines. Assignment deadlines are all clearly posted in both this course syllabus as well as within Blackboard. It is your responsibility to manage your time and meet deadlines. With that in mind, late assignments will be accepted without penalty provided you email me at least 2 days prior to the deadline and we agree on an alternative deadline.

## **Netiquette**

Since this class uses a media platform, it is important that you familiarize yourself with netiquette—or online etiquette. Please review “The Core Rules of Netiquette” by Virginia Shea <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>.

We will be talking about audience a lot in this course, and I want you to keep in mind that you are speaking to a professional audience. Additionally, this is a professional writing course, and you should take this into account in all writing you do for this course (postings, responses, assignments, and even emails). When you email me—or anyone really—make sure you include a salutation, background information, and proper closing. Your emails should be professional and cleanly formatted with proper sentence structure and grammar.

## **Additional Information**

Please note these additional policies and information regarding this course.

- **UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER (UWC):** I encourage you to make use of the UWC during the planning, drafting, and/or revising phases of any writing assignments for any class. The trained writing consultants can help give you a fresh perspective on ideas and help you with things like correctness, formatting, etc. The UWC is located on the main floor of the library, to the right of the elevators and computer lab. Please note that extra credit is available (5 extra points) for each major assignment that you take to the Writing Center for review (that’s 25 points total that may be added to your class points). You will need to ask for documentation and submit it to me.
- **RESOLVING ISSUES:** It is your responsibility to manage your workload, complete all assignments, and stay on top of your grades. It is also your responsibility to arrange an office meeting with me to discuss questions/concerns. The earlier you contact me with questions/concerns, the better we can deal with them.
- **PLAGIARISM** is an issue I take very seriously. An act of plagiarism (or other form of academic dishonesty) will be submitted to UTEP’s Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution and may result in university disciplinary action, such as suspension or expulsion. Additionally, please be aware that you may not submit assignments for this course that were produced for another course. If you have doubts whether or not you are using your own or others’ work legally and ethically, ask me or stop by the UWC. Follow the primary principle: Be upfront and honest.
- **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)** requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you suspect that you have a disability and need accommodations, 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 located in Room 106. Union East. Students are responsible for presenting the instructor with any CASS accommodation letters and instructions.

## Course Calendar

A tentative reading and assignment schedule follows, but it may be adjusted as needed. Complete all reading and writing assignments by the **Sunday** of the assigned week. Additionally, please see the task list provided on Blackboard for a complete list of all weekly requirements for the course. What follows is just a rough outline and does not include all the requirements of the course.

WEEK ONE: August 28 – September 3

*Introduction to the course*

Navigate Blackboard

Technical Communication - Memo

WEEK TWO: September 4 - September 10

*Introduction to Technical Communication*

Technical Communication - Memo - DUE (Sunday before midnight)

WEEK THREE: September 11 - September 17

Markel // Chapter 3: Writing Technical Documents

Markel // Chapter 11: Designing Print and Online Documents

WEEK FOUR: September 18 - September 24

Markel // Chapter 17: Writing Information Reports

INSTRUCTION USABILITY REPORT DUE

WEEK FIVE: September 25 – October 1

Markel // Chapter 14: Corresponding in Print and Online

Markel // Chapter 16: Writing Proposals

WEEK SIX: October 2- October 8

Markel // Chapter 10: Writing Correct and Effective Sentences

PROCESS INSTRUCTION PROPOSAL DUE

WEEK SEVEN: October 9 - October 15

Markel // Chapter 12: Creating Graphics

Markel // Chapter 20: Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions

WEEK EIGHT: October 16 - October 22

Markel // Chapter 6: Researching Your Subject

Markel // Chapter 13: Evaluating and Testing Technical Documents

WEEK NINE: October 23 - October 29

User Guide Peer Review

USER GUIDE DUE

WEEK TEN: October 30 – November 5

Markel // Chapter 8: Communicating Persuasively

Markel // Chapter 5: Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose

WEEK ELEVEN: November 6 - November 12

Product Development Proposal Peer Review - must have draft to participate.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL DUE

WEEK TWELVE: November 13 - November 19  
Markel // Chapter 4: Writing Collaboratively

WEEK THIRTEEN 3: November 20 - November 26  
Markel // Chapter 9: Emphasizing Important Info

WEEK FOURTEEN: November 27 – December 3  
Markel // Chapter 7: Organizing Your Information

WEEK FIFTEEN: December 4 - December 10  
PRODUCT MARKET DOSSIER DUE

WEEK SIXTEEN:  
Technical Writing Learning Outcomes – Reflective Memo DUE (on Tuesday, December 12,  
before midnight)