

# RWS 3359: TECHNICAL WRITING

## COURSE SYLLABUS

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SPRING 2020, CRN 25720 (**ONLINE**)

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

### INSTRUCTOR

DR. MARIA ISELA MAIER  
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OFFICE: WORRELL HALL 309

MON/WED 10:30-12:30

ALSO AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT

### REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

MARKEL, M. (2018) *TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION* (12TH ED.) BEDFORD/ST.  
MARTIN'S: BOSTON, MA. // ISBN: 978-1319058616

### MAIN ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES

INSTRUCTION USABILITY REPORT	15 FEBRUARY 2020
PROCESS INSTRUCTION PROPOSAL	29 FEBRUARY 2020
USER GUIDE	28 MARCH 2020
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL	11 APRIL 2020
PRODUCT MARKET DOSSIER	9 MAY 2020

## 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.

## 1.1 COURSE INTERFACE & SYLLABUS

This course will use Blackboard as the primary online interface, 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.

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. 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.

## 1.2 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.

## 1.3 REQUIRED TEXT

This course will use Markel's *Technical Communication* (12th 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.

## 1.4 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 “assignments” section by midnight of the due date (see course calendar). All assignments are required to be submitted in PDF formats 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.

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

## **1.5 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.

## **1.6 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. Make sure to upload your assignments in PDF format, as this is the only format accepted.

## **1.7 Late Work/Missed Assignments**

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. Otherwise, assignments will receive a 10 percent penalty per day late.

## **1.8 Netiquette**

Since this is an online course, 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/book/0963702513p32.html>

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.

## **1.9 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.

## **1.10 Course Calendar**

A tentative reading and assignment schedule follows, but it may be adjusted as needed. Complete all reading and writing assignments by the Saturday 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 requirements of the course.

WEEK ONE 1/22- 1/25

*Introduction to the course*

WEEK TWO 1/26-2/1

*Introduction to Technical Communication*

WRITING ASSESSMENT MEMO 1 DUE

WEEK THREE 2/2-2/8

Markel // Chapter 3: Writing Technical Documents

Markel // Chapter 11: Designing Print and Online Documents

WEEK FOUR 2/9-2/15

Markel // Chapter 17: Writing Information Reports

INSTRUCTION USABILITY REPORT DUE

WEEK FIVE 2/16-2/22

Markel // Chapter 14: Corresponding in Print and Online

Markel // Chapter 16: Writing Proposals

WEEK SIX 2/23-2/19

Markel // Chapter 10: Writing Correct and Effective Sentences  
PROCESS INSTRUCTION PROPOSAL DUE

WEEK SEVEN 3/1-3/7

Markel // Chapter 12: Creating Graphics

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

WEEK EIGHT 3/8-3/14

Markel // Chapter 6: Researching Your Subject

Markel // Chapter 13: Evaluating and Testing Technical Documents

WEEK NINE SPRING BREAK

WEEK TEN 3/19-3/28

USER GUIDE DUE

WEEK ELEVEN 3/29-4/4

Markel // Chapter 8: Communicating Persuasively

Markel // Chapter 5: Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose

WEEK TWELVE 4/5-4/11

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL DUE

WEEK THIRTEEN 4/12-4/18

Markel // Chapter 9: Emphasizing Important Info

WEEK FOURTEEN 4/19-4/25

Markel // Chapter 4: Writing Collaboratively

WEEK FIFTEEN 4/26-5/2

Markel // Chapter 7: Organizing Your Information

WEEK SIXTEEN 5/3-5/9

PRODUCT MARKET DOSSIER DUE

WEEK SEVENTEEN 5/10-5/15

WRITING ASSESSMENT MEMO 2 DUE