

# RWS 3359: TECHNICAL WRITING

Spring 2022    CRN 23090 (with Bilingual Section)

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## Instructor

Maria Isela Maier  
mmaier@utep.edu

(Use Blackboard course messages for all course correspondence)

**Office:** Worrell Hall, 309

Tues/Thurs 1:00-3:30

## Required Textbook

Markel, M. (2018) *Technical Communication* (12TH ED.) Bedford/St  
Martin's:Boston, MA. // ISBN: 978-1319058616

## Main Assignments Deadlines

Instruction Usability Report	13 February 2022
Process Instruction Proposal	27 February 2022
User Guide	27 March 2022
Product Development Proposal	10 April 10 2022
Product Market Dossier	7 May 8 2022

## 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.

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.

### **\*Bilingual Section**

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.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory. University policy requires that you attend every class. If you miss a class, for whatever reason, you are responsible for finding out about missed information and activities from classmates or the instructor on your own time, not during scheduled class time. **Missing a scheduled office visit also counts as an absence.** Persistent tardiness and early exits may count as absences. You are allowed four (4) “unexcused” absences for the semester; starting with the fourth missed class, every absence will lower your final grade by 10%, or one letter grade. After a student has accrued five (5) absences, the instructor may drop the student from the course.

### **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.

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

## 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.

## Netiquette

Since this class uses 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 requirements of the course.

WEEK ONE: January 18 - January 23

*Introduction to the course*

Navigate Blackboard

WRITING ASSESSMENT MEMO 1 - Technical Communication in my Profession

WEEK TWO: January 24 - January 30

*Introduction to Technical Communication*

Markel // Chapter 3: Writing Technical Documents (Due Tues)

In class peer review for Writing Assessment Memo 1 (must have draft to participate)

WRITING ASSESSMENT MEMO 1- DUE (Sunday before midnight)

WEEK THREE: January 31 - February 6

Introduce Usability Report

Markel // Chapter 11: Designing Print and Online Documents (Due Thurs)

WEEK FOUR: February 7 - February 13

Markel // Chapter 17: Writing Information Reports (Due Tues)

Writing Workshop (Tues) Peer Review (Thurs)

INSTRUCTION USABILITY REPORT DUE

WEEK FIVE: February 14 -February 20

Markel // Chapter 14: Corresponding in Print and Online (Due Tues)

Markel // Chapter 16: Writing Proposals (Due Thurs)

WEEK SIX : February 21 - February 27

Markel // Chapter 10: Writing Correct and Effective Sentences (Due Tues)

PROCESS INSTRUCTION PROPOSAL DUE

WEEK SEVEN: February 28 - March 6

Markel // Chapter 12: Creating Graphics (Due Tues)

Markel // Chapter 20: Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions (Due Thurs)

WEEK EIGHT: March 7- March 13

Markel // Chapter 6: Researching Your Subject( Due Tues)

Outline for User Guide Due in class: (Thurs)

WEEK NINE: March 21 - March 27

Markel // Chapter 13: Evaluating and Testing Technical Documents (Due Tues)

User Guide Peer Review - must have draft to participate (Due Thurs)

USER GUIDE DUE

WEEK TEN: March 28 - April 3

Markel // Chapter 8: Communicating Persuasively (Due Tues)

Markel // Chapter 5: Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose (Due Thurs)

WEEK ELEVEN: April 4 - April 10

Product Development Proposal Peer Review, must have draft to participate, (Due Thurs)

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL DUE

WEEK TWELVE: April 11 - April 17

Markel // Chapter 21: Making Oral Presentations (Due Tues)

WEEK THIRTEEN 3: April 18 - April 24

Markel // Chapter 9: Emphasizing Important Info (Due Tues)

WEEK FOURTEEN: April 25 - May 1

Markel // Chapter 7: Organizing Your Information (Due Tues)

Product mock-up

Oral Presentations

WEEK FIFTEEN: May 2 - May 8

PRODUCT MARKET DOSSIER DUE

Oral Presentations - cont.

WEEK SIXTEEN:

WRITING ASSESSMENT MEMO 2 DUE (on Tuesday, May 10, before midnight)