

RWS 3359: Technical Writing

CRN 12281*¹

Course Meetings: Monday and Wednesday 1:30 pm - 2:50 pm, UGLC 234

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Soyeon Lee

E-Mail: slee15@utep.edu (expect a response within 24-48 hours M-F; emails beyond Friday 5 pm and over the weekend will be answered on Monday)

Office Hours: Mon. 12-1:20 pm & Wed. 12-1:20, Hudspeth Hall 309

Or schedule an appointment via email

Course Description & Learning Objectives

This course introduces you to the principles and methods of technical writing based on problem-based learning and provides you with the skills to improve your ability to communicate through a variety of technical documents and media. Technical writing is constantly evolving across different contexts and media and is found within not only specific fields that deal with technical information but also fields ranging from technology to science and business to government.

You will examine and analyze diverse genres in writing and rhetorical principles and produce a wide range of technical documents in professional settings, which keep pace with rapidly changing rhetorical situations in and out of the academy. In this course, you will be guided to situate the course assignments to your own life experiences, professional careers, disciplines, real-world community settings and engage technical writing with social, cultural, and political factors. Successful completion of this course will improve your ability to:

1. Analyze the rhetorical situation and define the users and/or audience
2. Compose content appropriate for the users, genre, and media
3. Adopt technological and visual rhetorical skills (e.g., document design, graphic computer documentation, and electronic editing) in the composing process
4. Revise and edit written work for accuracy and coherence through collaboration writing, peer review workshops, and interactions with written and oral instructor/community client feedback.
5. Adopt community-based research skills and knowledge and collaboration skills (*CEL)
6. Promote social responsibility in technical writing by integrating human-centered or user centered design and proposing actionable writing solutions (*CEL)

*The CEL designation of this course indicates “Community Engagement & Leadership” and is a certificate program in the College of Liberal Arts that aims to build transforming learning through partnerships and activities with/for/about community groups. Your community

¹ This course is pending to obtain the Community Engagement and Leadership (CEL) designation. The designation is subject to the approval of the College of Liberal Arts. The CEL partnership is with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UTEP, and the CEL community-based client project.

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engagement will be generally community-based technical writing practices through teamwork, implemented in one of the major writing assignments, presentations, brief writing activities such as progress reports, memos, reflections, and self/peer evaluations, and those components will ultimately serve as the minimum 20 hours for the CEL components. All communication with your community organization client will be arranged by the instructor and the CEL-relevant activities with community partners and team members will be in person or online through UTEP Zoom.

Course Goals

In this course, you will explore technical communication with human-centered design and aim to achieve several conceptual skills to implement human-centered design principles in technical communication. Those conceptual skills include rhetorical proficiency, abstraction, social proficiency, experimentation, and critical system thinking (Henschel & Meloncon, 2014).

Out of these five conceptual skills, this survey course will focus on three main skills:

- Rhetorical proficiency
- Social proficiency
- Critical system thinking

Rhetorical proficiency enables you to write documentations with rhetorically sensitive audience awareness. Social proficiency will direct you to learn how to collaborate in writing across different stakeholders including community partners and users in diverse communicative settings. Lastly, critical system thinking will aim at understanding the connections between seemingly different parts and processes and cultivate ethical responsibility to integrate reflections on ideological and power relations in structures, designing actionable solutions, and delivering communication outcomes in an effective way.

These three goals will be based on ethical and reciprocal partnerships between the course and the community partners. The purpose of the partnership with community organizations and community-oriented research projects is to enhance teaching and learning experiences by integrating real-world communicative situations and to have students obtain leadership and social skills by cultivating collaboration skills in team projects and networking with others in the community partner.

Required Materials



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This RWS 3359 course will use an open education resources textbook, *Open Technical Communication*, by Jonathan Arnett et al. This textbook is accessible online at <https://alg.manifoldapp.org/projects/open-technical-communication>

This RWS 3359 course will use Blackboard as the primary class management interface. If you need help working with Blackboard, please contact UTEP Technology Support > Blackboard at https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/ServiceCatalog/BB_Students.html

Click the following link for more information about Microsoft Office 365 and follow the instructions:

https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/ServiceCatalog/SOFTWARE_PAGES/soft_microsoftoffice365.html

You can download Microsoft Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal: <http://portal.office.com/>

If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students: <https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/>

Course Communication

UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student account and please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name.

I will have office hours for your questions and comments about the course. My office hours will be held on my office on Monday 12:00 - 1:20 p.m. and Wednesday 12:00 - 1:20 p.m. Hudspeth Hall 309 or through Zoom. Please email me if you'd like to make an appointment for some other times.

Assignment Descriptions

Community-Engaged User Experience (UX) Design Project (*CEL): You will produce a UX design report with/for/to your client, a particular community organization. Based on a rhetorical understanding of the communication goals and users, you will contribute to enhancing the user experience of applications/websites or other interfaces.

Community-Engaged UX Design Project Presentation (*CEL): You will present your research report through a 6-8 minute oral presentation with a slide deck.

Writing for a Professional Community: Employment Project: You will write multiple versions of resumes and cover letters for different audiences and purposes and experiment with applying for jobs and communicating with a professional community.

Content Strategy and Usability Testing: You will write a formal report on content strategy and usability testing results of a website.

Assignment	Description	Group or Individual	Points (% of Grade)
Introduction & Module 1	Progress Memo Usability Testing Plan Usability Testing Finding Memo	Group	35 pts
Community-Engaged User Experience (UX) Design Project (*CEL)	Final Draft: UX Design Co-learning and Co-solving Report and Prototype Self/Peer Evaluation Discussion Question (DQ) Reponses		
Community-Engaged UX Design Project Presentation (*CEL)	UX Design Co-learning and Co-solving Report Presentation	Group	5 pts
Module 2	Rhetorical Analysis of Job Ads Cover Letter and Resume	Individual	20 pts
Writing for a Professional Community: Employment Project	Rough Draft and Professional Website Peer Review Final Draft Reflection Discussion Question (DQ) Reponses		
Module 3	Target Content Analysis Memo Usability Testing Materials	Group	30 pts
Content Strategy and Usability Testing	Memo Report Final Report: Content Strategy and Usability Testing Self/Peer Evaluation Discussion Question (DQ) Reponses		
Professionalism	Attendance, Ethics, and Class Discussion Participation	Individual	10 pts
			100 pts (=100%)

100-90=A 89-80=B 79 -70=C 69 - 60=D 59 and below=F

For your assignment submission, you must adhere to the following submission guidelines to receive a proper grade for your assignments each week.

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- Assignments are due either on Sunday by 11:59 pm or Tuesday by 11:59 pm. They are to be submitted by no later than 11:59 PM.
- You must use MS Word file formats for all of your assignments. (No Google Doc or MS Word Online document link can be accepted).
- The naming convention of your assignment files should be as follows: [Last Name]_Course Project Assignment Title.docx or [Team Number]_Course Project Assignment Title.docx.
- For formatting and styles, you will use APA Style, seventh edition. Consult [Purdue OWL](#) or [APA Blog](#)
- Assignments for this course are assessed according to rubrics. You can find these rubrics from the appropriate assignment guidelines on Blackboard.

Languages

In your work for this course, you have the right to use any languages at your decision based on your target audience and rhetorical decision in multilingual and global communication environments. Also, you are welcome to use sources in languages other than English. To provide a translation or not is your rhetorical and stylistic decision based on your audience analysis, and I respect your decision.

Assessment Procedures

For assignments, I will use the following grading procedures:

- You will receive point-based grades. You can earn a total of 100 points in this course.
- Each module has several Discussion Question (DQ) posts, and you are required to respond to those discussion questions. Often, they are reading responses or brief writings. Each discussion post is graded as a total of 1 point. It will be graded as 1 (excellent), 0.9 (above average), 0.8 (sufficient), 0.7 (insufficient), or 0 (not completed, absent, or late).
- Professionalism points (total 10 points) will be graded as attendance (5 points), ethics (2 points), and class discussion participation in person and online (3 points). If you do not meet the requirement of ethics and class discussion participation, you will not receive points. For attendance, please see the course policies.
- Each group work will end with your rhetorical assessment (self/peer evaluation). Your evaluation will be used in distributing group points to individual members. Although your group gets the grades for a group project, your individual grades will reflect the result of other members' peer evaluation results.
- If you do not complete one of the three major assignments/modules, you will not get a passing grade from this course.

Course Policies

Please refer to the following policies for this course.

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Late assignments: Submit your work on time (as indicated on the course schedule). Late work will affect your grade. I reserve the right to not provide a grade to late work for brief writings and to provide a lowered grade to major assignments submitted beyond 3 days after the deadline. Communicate your progress with me. If you have questions regarding any lesson, let me know. If you are inevitably unable to meet the due dates of the major assignments, work with me to set up plans.

I do not accept late submissions for brief assignments, discussion questions, and rough drafts, so if you miss your due date and time, you cannot earn the points. To make success in this, it is important to set up your study habit following the regular assignment deadlines: Sunday and Tuesday 11:59 pm.

For final major projects, you will refer to the late assignment policy below:

- 1 day late = 1-point deduction
- 2 days late = 2-point deduction
- 3+ days late = final paper grade is a ZERO

Make-up work for time missed from the course activities will be allowed if you have a university excused absence and follow university guidelines. If you miss a deadline for major assignments due to an emergency or illness, or if you have a university-approved excuse ahead of time, you must notify me as soon as possible. If you have an emergency, you need to contact me, provide written evidence, and make any necessary arrangements immediately (within 24 hours). If you miss a major project deadline beyond three days and do not have a university-acceptable excuse or do not make arrangement within 24 hours with written evidence, you will receive a "0" on the assignment. Keep in mind that a make-up assignment may be of a different format than the original assignment.

Attendance: If you need to miss class, let me know via email or in person ahead of time via email. In case you miss class, I ask you to be still responsible for the work or presentation materials due that day. University policy allows two kinds of absences: university-recognized activities and observances of Religious Holy Day. Please refer to [UTEP's Attendance & Grading policies](#).

It is your responsibility to manage your time in the classroom and to participate appropriately in order to be successful in this course. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late or leave more than 10 minutes before the end of class, it will be marked as late. 2 late arrivals will count as 1 absence.

Emailing me to say that you will be absent does not mean that the absence is excused. 2 absences will not affect your attendance points.

- 3 absences will result in 1-point deduction.
- 4 absences will result in 2-point deduction.
- 5 absences and beyond will result in 0 point in your attendance grades.

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If you feel sick and need to be absent, please prioritize your health and let me know as soon as possible and communicate your absence(s) with your group members. You can use 2 absences that will not affect your attendance grade for medical conditions. Given this pandemic situation, which is evolving, I will be willing to discuss alternative plans when you feel unwell due to COVID-19 or other serious illnesses that needs to take more than 2 absences. Please provide any written evidence (such as a screenshot of the test result, an email, a letter, and a doctor's notice, which shows your name and dates) and communicate with me as early as possible.

According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, "When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of "W" before the course drop deadline and with a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline." See academic regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excused absences.

Therefore, if I find that, due to non-performance in the course, you are at risk of failing, I will drop you from the course. I will provide 24 hours advance notice via email. Or I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the Registrar's Office to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an "F" for the course.

Course Schedule

A current version of the syllabus and course schedule will always be available on Blackboard. Any modifications to the syllabus or to the course schedule, which is subject to change, will be announced in writing or in class meetings. Please refer to a separate copy of the Course Schedule document posted on Blackboard.

Teamwork Policies

1. Students who are absent on team-organizing day or do not respond to team-forming posts will be assigned to a team at my discretion. Attendance during the team project and equal contributions will be important for your team's success.
2. Teams will be composed of 3-4 members.
3. Your contributions to the team will be documented by your team members in the meeting log.
4. Additionally, your overall team contribution will be reported by other team members via team rhetorical assessment forms. Every team member must take responsibility for contributing equally to the team's work. If not, that team member will not be given the full group grade of the assignment. If your team member has difficulties in contributing to the team or do not execute substantive portions of each assignment, consult me via email as soon as possible.

General Course and University Policies

Please refer to the following university policies.

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Participation

Respect the views of others. Maintain and promote a civil environment for learning. If your behavior seems distracting/harmful toward others, I will ask you to leave.

I expect you to come ready to ask questions and discuss ideas. Our class sessions rely on your participation and engagement including arriving on time and staying for the full class, coming prepared (complete reading and assignments before class; bring reading materials and your notes for discussion), and participate actively in discussion and class activities.

Students who have difficulties in joining the CEL community engagement project will have an alternative engagement plan. Those who are inevitably unable to be involved in group projects and/or community-based writing projects due to extenuating circumstances will consult me as early as possible.

Academic Integrity Statement & Professionalism

As a scholar and member of intellectual communities, you will abide by the standards of academic honesty and responsibility. According to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution at UTEP, academic integrity is a “commitment to fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.” To achieve the learning goal by exchanging ideas and making scholarly conversations, all UTEP members have the responsibility to respect these values and execute ethical behaviors and independent thought that are essential.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the [UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures](#). It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Any violations of academic integrity and honesty will be reported in a written form and referred to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#). All work submitted must be original. Students who plagiarize or self-plagiarize (i.e., students who submit works that were submitted to other courses) or who fabricate (create false information on a reference page) or who collude (lend work to another person to submit as their own) will receive a zero grade for the assignment and for the professionalism grade, and if academic integrity is further breached in other assignments, students automatically get an F grade and may not be able to continue the coursework and/or UTEP coursework. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. Please refer to the UTEP [Academic Integrity](#) webpages. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Guidance on Generative Large Language Model-based Tools

You may not use generative Large Language Model-based AI tools (LLMs) such as Chat GPT and Google Bard to complete your writing assignments. As your major assignments and brief writings are based on your group work and reflections on your own writing activities, those tools are not suitable. More importantly, they are reported to aggravate unequal access, exclusion, and bias (see Dobrin, [2023](#)). Please refer to the [MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI Working Paper](#) to learn more about risks induced by using LLMs. Please refer to

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the [MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI Working Paper](#) to learn more about risks induced by using LLMs.

Students must cite any borrowed content sources to comply with all applicable citation guidelines, copyright law, and avoid plagiarism. Instances that violate these guidelines will be referred to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#).

Plagiarism Detecting Software

Some of your course work and assessments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used to review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

Academic Resources

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Ask for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- [History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.
- [The Miner Learning Center](#): Join peer-led study sessions in person or online to review content and discover study strategies in core curriculum courses.
- [UTEP Edge](#): UTEP's cross-campus framework for student success and empowerment – develops students' assets through high-impact experiences made possible by the expertise and dedication of faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners.

Individual Resources

- [Student Success Help Desk \(SSHD\)](#): Students experiencing challenges or obstacles to academic success including registration, financial, food, housing, and transportation resources may submit a ticket request assistance to studentsuccess@utep.edu
- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- [UTEP Food Pantry](#): Non-perishable food items are available to students who are currently enrolled in classes. Bring a Miner Gold Card to Memorial Gym, Room 105, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
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Resources for Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Violence

UTEP is committed to providing an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from gender and/or sex discrimination of any kind. Sexual assault, discrimination, harassment, and other Title IX violations are not tolerated by the University. If I become aware that an incident of sexual misconduct has occurred, as an instructor I am required by law to report it to UTEP Title IX Coordinators.

- Counseling and Psychological Services: <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/> Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.
- On Call Crisis services: Please refer to our [Crisis & Emergency](#) page to learn what is considered a mental health crisis.
- Our Miners Talk: Crisis Line will also remain in operation for after-hours services. After hours, please call 915.747.5302.

COVID-19 Precautions

Please stay home if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID 19 testing. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit epstrong.org

ADA Statement

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements. Students must present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/> or call the CASS at 915-747-5148 or email them at cass@utep.edu