

**I. Course and Instructor Information:**

**Instructor:** Dr. Teresa Quezada

**Office Hours:** By appointment via email

**E-mail:** tquezada2@utep.edu

**Section (s):** RWS 3359 – Technical Writing  
CRN 14983

**II. Course Description:**

The primary goal of RWS 3359 is to develop students' effective communication in technical writing within a variety of fields and contexts. This effective communication is based on an awareness of and appreciation for discourse communities and culture as well as knowledge specific to subject matter, genre, rhetorical strategy, and writing process.

The class presents an approach to communication that helps students determine the most effective strategies, arrangements, and media. You will produce a variety of documents and presentations to gain more confidence and fluency in visual, oral, and written communication.

As an online class, I use Blackboard for all aspects of our class. When in doubt, check Blackboard for course documents, announcements, email, assignment and course information. Blackboard will provide students with permanent access to the syllabus, supplemental reading materials, e-mail, and discussion groups. It is vital that students check and participate in the online environment consistently as it is an integral part of the course. Assignments will be presented, prepared and evaluated entirely on-line.

Another goal of RWS 3359 is to strengthen your self-learning skills. This means that you will be required to work independently to be fully prepared for class and for the writing projects you must complete. Blackboard will also help you work toward this goal.

**III. Learning Outcomes:**

In this course you will

- Analyze the rhetorical situation and define the users and/or audience as well as the tasks that the information must support.
- Apply rhetorical principles to plan and design effective technical documents for diverse media.
- Research appropriate sources that inform your writing.
- Compose content appropriate for the users and genre. Revise and edit written work for accuracy, clarity, coherence and appropriateness, and document resources in the health care environment.
- Apply technological and visual rhetorical skills (e.g., document design, graphics, computer documentation, electronic editing, and content management applications) in the composing process. Publish, deliver and archive the composed documents as required.
- Consider the ethical dimension of composing and working in a professional setting.
- Recognize and respect various cultural attitudes toward and conventions for technical communication.
- Work critically and collaboratively to complete projects.

**IV. Texts and Materials:**

*Technical Communication*, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition by Mike Markel and Stuart A. Selber. Bedford/St. Martin's. 2018.

*Writing Around the World: A Guide to Writing Across Cultures*, by Matthew McCool  
Continuum. 2009

These books are available through the UTEP Bookstore and other vendors and are also available as e-books. Please make sure you order your books from a vendor(s) who can deliver in 3 – 10 days.

Internet access and access to Blackboard.

Access to a scanner. Since all documents must be submitted in a digitized format, you may have some instances where you will have to print out, sign, and resubmit a document. The best way to do this is to have it scanned.

Electronic storage capacity for all your documents. This can be a flashdrive, a dropbox service, One Drive, whatever you prefer, but make sure you keep copies of all your **submitted** assignments until grades are **posted**.

**V. Course Assignments (this syllabus provides an overview of major assignments, minor assignments will be available through Blackboard)**

**Participation in Class:** Participation online is mandatory. The activities included in this category ensure that students learn the material, are capable of analyzing it and applying it to their own writing and that of their peers. This score will include homework, drafts, discussion postings, and other minor assignments the instructor assigns. These points will be determined and distributed by the instructor. **300 points.**

**Long Definition with Visuals:** You will define a term in your field of study or assigned by your instructor. **100 points.**

**Instructions:** You will develop a set of instructions for a process in your field of study or a process assigned by your instructor. The assignment will also include a transmittal memo and will incorporate intercultural communication elements. **100 points.**

**Peer Reviews & Usability Reviews:** We may have an opportunity to review technical documents prepared by students in a Technical Writing Course at the University of Puerto Rico. These peer reviews along with usability reviews throughout the course will account for **175 points.**

**Writing for a Non-Expert/Non-Technical Audience:** You will identify an article in your field/discipline that presents information relevant to a non-expert audience. In a memo, you will explain how this information is relevant to a non-expert/non-technical audience and who that audience is. The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of your assignment will be to draft a short explanation summarizing the main points of the article to your selected audience. **100 points.**

**Technical Report:** You will write a report on a technical topic of your choosing as a team. This project will consist of 3 deliverables:

1. **Proposal memo** where you identify your selected topic, your audience for the report and the purpose for writing the report. **50 points.**
2. **Technical Report** where you present your issue, your research and your recommendations. **125 points.**
3. **Draft Presentation** where you prepare a PowerPoint presentation for your selected audience based on your report. You will submit the PowerPoint file along with the notes or script that you would be presenting to your audience. **50 points**

**Grade Distribution (Students can earn a total of 1000 points for the course):**

**1000-900 = A**  
**899-800 = B**  
**799 -700 = C**  
**699- 600 = D**  
**599 and below = F**

Notice that the points you earn determine your final grades. If you earn 899 points, then you earn a B not an A. I usually allow opportunities for extra credit such as consultations with the University Writing Center or participation in University-approved research projects. As such, I do not “round up.”

**A note about grades:** Since this is an upper-division, professional writing course, the expectation is that the writing will be appropriate for the audience, professional, and error-free.

- The students with work in the “A” range consistently produced exceptional work with little or no errors in their writing; students completed all of their work, followed the directions provided, and turned in all assignments on time.
- The work in the “B” range is mostly error-free and/or considers the appropriate audience and professional nature of the writing situation; students have generally turned most, if not all of the work, and turn assignments in on time.
- Work that is in the “C” range generally has errors, may not fully consider the audience, or professional nature of the work; did not follow the directions provided, there may be missing participation assignments and work may have been turned in late.
- Work that is below a “C” is not effectively written, major assignments may be late or missing, guidelines were not followed, and student did not participate in class.

**VI: Course/Instructor Policies:**

**Contacting your Instructor:** The easiest way to contact me is through e-mail. I will generally respond to e-mails within 24 to 48 hours during the workweek, Monday through Friday – note that this is a generally accepted business practice. While I may respond more timely than indicated, you cannot assume that I will respond immediately. 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 e-mails are also considered part of your course writing so they should be formatted accordingly and composed with the rhetorical situation in mind. We will discuss composing and responding to e-mails further in class.

**Projects Format:** Assignments must be word-processed using **Microsoft Word** and saved as a “.doc” file or “.docx” file. Please make sure you use Microsoft Word and not Pages or another texting application – BlackBoard does not recognize those files and I am unable to review them.

Use 12 pt. font, one-inch margins, and spacing appropriate to the genre you are composing. Use a font style that is easily readable like Times New Roman, Arial, or Georgia.

Microsoft Word is available to students at all campus computers and is also available for student computers through the technology center on the third floor of the Library.

Students should name each submitted assignment with their last name, first name and an abbreviation of the assignment. For example, if I were submitting my instructions assignment, I would name the file:

Quezada\_Teresa\_Instruct.docx

The system will automatically add the “.docx” extension.

**I will not accept files without this naming convention and students may receive a zero for that assignment if it is not submitted correctly or to the correct assignment space in Blackboard.**

**Rough Drafts:** Part of the participation grade will include the submission of rough drafts. To get the most useful feedback, rough drafts should be completed projects. They must also be submitted before or on the due date.

**Rough Draft Feedback:** On the rough drafts, students will receive marginal comments as well as comments at the end of the project. The purpose of this feedback is:

1. To make sure the assignment meets the requirements and is on the right track; and consequently,
2. To comment on the “big issues.” Students will receive comments based on the most important elements of the assignment. Addressing these concerns should help students write a more effective project. The comments will NOT focus on grammar and such—so it is a good idea to get additional help from the Writing Center for this. We will work on general grammar and usage items in class to address some issues, but remember this is not a grammar course. Your textbook and documents/links on BlackBoard are also valuable resources – use them to their fullest.

You will receive feedback from two primary sources in class: your colleagues and your instructor. Your feedback to your colleagues will help in two ways: you will provide a new perspective to your colleagues’ writing and your own writing will be informed by both the strengths and weaknesses you identify in the writing you review. That will make you aware of your own composing process and strengthen your own review/revision process.

We may have the opportunity to partner with a Technical Writing class at the University of Puerto Rico for peer reviewing. This intercultural peer reviewing will allow you to test your writing on English-speakers from a different culture and will enrich your writing and editing experiences. You may participate in a study conducted by the two instructors, but are not required to do so. You will receive further information as we get closer to the intercultural peer reviewing.

I will also assign in-class peer review teams for the semester. These teams will be responsible for reviewing, commenting and then reflecting on the peer reviewing process.

**Participation/Attendance:** Attendance is determined by class participation online. Students must be prepared, participate in online discussions, and become familiar with the material in each of the modules consistently to understand and incorporate the rhetorical strategies and processes used to complete the projects. Class participation assignments cannot be made up.

**University Writing Center:** UTEP’s University Writing Center (UWC) is available to assist all UTEP students with writing for all of their classes. The undergraduate and graduate writing consultants at the UWC can help students at all stages of the writing process, from understanding an assignment and brainstorming, to final formatting and citations. The UWC’s services are free to all UTEP students, and you can walk in and work with a consultant whenever you are ready, or you can make an appointment either through the Center’s website: ([uwc.utep.edu](http://uwc.utep.edu)) or by calling 915-747-5112. In addition to face-to-face assistance, the UWC offers online synchronous assistance through Writing Help Online Center (WHO) which is available to students enrolled in the growing number of online courses, degrees, and certificate programs at UTEP. There are also numerous resources available on the UWC website 24/7 for self-help through the writing process. Please keep in mind that the UWC does not edit papers. Instead the Center engages in a collaborative conversation with students to help them improve their writing skills and abilities.

**Technology:** If home access is not possible, and you are in the El Paso region, arrangements can be made to use a computer regularly on campus to complete assigned work. Student computer labs such as ATLAS at the UGLC or at the library are often available until midnight, but schedules do vary. All work in this course is submitted online, and not having access to a computer will not be an excuse for incomplete or late assignments.

Technology problems are also not an excuse for work that is late or missing. Students need to get into the habit of completing assignments for this course well before the due date to allow time for dealing with technology problems. Expect that at some time, the network will be down, computers will go on the fritz, or some other small catastrophe will occur. If students are prepared ahead of time, they can go to plan B.

Remember to save early, save often, save in multiple places. Losing material because of computer crashes, disk problems, or other issue is not an excuse for late or incomplete assignments.

You will need the following software on your computers to efficiently work in this course. In some cases your computer may already have some of these programs installed.

- Adobe Acrobat Reader. You can get the program by going to <http://www.adobe.com/> and then clicking on the icon on the center of the screen which says 'Get Adobe Reader'? Follow instructions to install the reader.
- Adobe Flash Player. You can get the player by going to <http://www.adobe.com/> and then clicking on 'Get Adobe Flash Player?'. Follow instructions to install the player.
- Apple QuickTime Player. You can get this player by going to <http://www.apple.com/>. Once there, click on the 'Downloads'? tab on the top of the page and then click on QuickTime 'Download'? and follow instructions.
- Microsoft Office. I recommend buying this if you do not have any word processing software or presentation software. As students, you can generally buy this entire package for about \$25, far less than the store price of approximately \$400.

### Online “Netiquette”:

- Always consider your audience. Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading any postings.
- You must be respectful and courteous to classmates and instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated. I will intervene in discussions that I determine are disrespectful or discourteous. Continued violation may result in low grades and/or referral to the Dean of Students for appropriate disciplinary action.
- Do not use inappropriate language, all capital letters, or language short cuts. Online entries and e-mails should be written in Standard English with edited spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Remember that all communication within the class context, to your fellow students and to your instructor should be considered professional writing.

- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.
- Be sure to read everyone's responses before posting. Avoid repetition of what someone else has already said. Add something new to the discussion!
- Do not copy another classmates' response on a discussion board.
- No credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.
- Be sure to post in a timely fashion to receive credit for attendance and for the discussion. **Late postings will not receive credit.** Pay close attention to the posted deadlines.
- The class management system, Blackboard, is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).

**Drop Policy:**

I do not automatically drop students even after they have missed major assignments or failed to log into BlackBoard for a prolonged period of time (yes, I can tell when you last accessed the system). You must initiate the drop yourself, so be mindful of University policy regarding dropping classes and drop dates.

**Late Work:**

- Minor assignments and class participation assignments are due by the due date. No late submittals will be accepted and these assignments cannot be made up.
- You must contact me to submit major assignments after the due date. Do not assume that I will accept them – you must make arrangements with me. If accepted, they will be reviewed with the following policies:
  - Final assignments submitted one **calendar day** after the due date will be penalized up to one letter grade.
  - Assignments submitted more than one day late may not be acceptable to the instructor for credit.
- Be sure to submit all major assignments to pass this class. While late work may adversely affect a grade, a zero can adversely affect enrollment.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic Dishonesty is **NEVER** tolerated by UTEP. All cases are reported to the Dean of Students for Academic Sanctions. Sanctions may include expulsion. All work submitted must be original; students may not submit graded work from another course.

Forms of academic dishonesty include: *Collusion*—lending work to another person to submit as his or her own; *Fabrication*—deliberately creating false information on a works cited page, and *Plagiarism*—the presentation of another person's work as your own, whether meaning to or not (i.e. copying parts of or whole papers off the Internet). See the Dean of Students website at <http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm> for more information.

**Copyright and Fair Use:** The University requires all members of its community to follow copyright and fair use requirements. Students are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend students nor assume any responsibility for student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject students to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies.

**Group Assignments:** Group assignments can sometimes create tricky situations. Some students don't always "pull their weight" and this upsets group members that are doing their work and being good contributors to the group. Despite this, group assignments are valuable because they help students work together for a common goal. Group work is a professional life reality and learning how to work in a group will be central to projects in this class. **Students who are not doing their group work can be voted off of their groups and may have to complete the entire project on their own or may fail the assignment.**

**Documentation Styles:** We will use APA style.

It is important to realize that the most important words in a paper are yours as the student, researcher, writer, and ultimately health professional, not those of the supportive research. Strive to draw inferences from research material and weave into your reaction and evaluation of source materials into your projects. One of the worst things students can submit to peer groups or instructors is a "patchwork"—that is, a project that simply links a series of quotations or paraphrased sentences that is followed by citation or footnote numbers.

**ADA:** The *Americans with Disabilities Act* requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. When students suspect they have a disability and need an accommodation, they should contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at

Phone:(915) 747-5148  
Union Building East Room 106  
cass@utep.edu

Students are responsible for presenting the instructor any CASS accommodation letters and instructions.

**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 researching 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.

**Comments from your instructor:** Regardless of your major, communicating effectively and professionally is valued by a myriad of employers. My goal is to help you succeed and learn the strategies to help you communicate in a variety of contexts and with a variety of audiences. It is extremely important that you communicate with me immediately if you are not receiving feedback either from me or your colleagues on drafts and assignments. We can usually resolve issues quickly if we address them timely.

**VII. Course Calendar is a separate document also available through Blackboard that lists required readings and major project due dates. It is subject to change. Most changes and reminders will be promulgated through the announcements function of BlackBoard, so you will receive those notifications once they are posted.**