

I. Course and Instructor Information:**Instructor:** Dr. Teresa Quezada**Office Hours:** Mondays from 3:00 to 4:15 PM
and by appointment.**Link to schedule an appointment:**<https://calendar.app.google/mqUnpsGFf1HipdKW6>**E-mail:** tquezada2@utep.edu**Section (s):** RWS 3359 – Technical Writing
CRN 11927 (Online Section)**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.
- 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.
- Work critically with generative Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- 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, 13th Edition by Mike Markel and Stuart A. Selber. Bedford/St. Martin's. 2021.

This book is available through various vendors and as an e-book. Please make sure you order your book 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 submit a document. The best way to do this is to have it scanned.

Electronic storage capacity for all your documents. This can be a flash drive, 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: 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, peer review reflections and other minor assignments the instructor assigns. These points will be determined and distributed by the instructor. **375 points.**

Writing a Definition/Description: You will identify a concept, process or item in your field/discipline and provide a definition/description. You may use AI for this assignment as specifically indicated on the assignment sheet. **150 points.**

Writing for a Non-Expert/Non-Technical Audience: You will identify a concept, process or item in your field/discipline and then prepare a document 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 2nd part of your assignment will be to draft an extended definition or description for your audience. You will be using graphics to enhance your explanation. **150 points.**

Instructions: You will develop a set of instructions for a process in your field of study or a process assigned by your instructor. **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 provide multiple opportunities for extra credit to include consultations with the University Writing Center, additional writing exercises and 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 that meets the purpose of the assignment and is appropriate for the intended audience. The work has few or no errors in the 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:

Course Communication: The easiest way to contact me is through e-mail. I will generally respond to e-mails within 24 hours during the workweek, Monday through Friday – note that this is a generally accepted business practice. While I may respond more quickly 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.

We also have 2 other ways to communicate:

- **Discussion Board:** If you have a question that you believe other students may also have, please post it in the Course Help Board of the discussion boards inside of Blackboard. Please respond to other students' questions if you have a helpful response.
- **Announcements:** Check the Blackboard announcements frequently for any updates, deadlines, or other important messages.

Projects Format: Assignments must be word-processed using **Microsoft Word** and saved as PDF files. After you have completed your assignment, save it as a PDF – that's an option under "Save As". Please make sure you use PDF 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.pdf

The system will automatically add the ".pdf" 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.

I will 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. Students must be prepared, participate in discussions and ad hoc group work, 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.

Technology:

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

Technology problems are 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.

IMPORTANT: If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#). They are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

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.

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.

Incomplete Grade Policy: Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

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.

Guidance on Artificial Intelligence:

The use of generative AI tools such as Chat GPT is permitted in this course for specific activities that will be addressed in each individual assignment instruction set.

However, you may not use AI tools to fully complete any assignment.

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.

Scholarly Integrity: 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 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.

Accommodations Policy:

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University.

The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal

COVID-19 PRECAUTION STATEMENT

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as

possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. 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.

University Resources:

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

Technology Resources

- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

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 \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

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 outside of class time.

For the online section, 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 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.

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

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.