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Technical Writing | RWS-3359
CRN: 23402

Instructor: Veronica Cruz

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Office Hours: Tuesdays/Wednesdays/Thursdays 9:00 am – 10:20 am and by appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

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 to complete projects through social justice approaches.

REQUIRED TEXT

This course will use Markel's *Technical Communication* (12th edition) as the guiding textbook. All assignments and additional readings will be listed in the course calendar.
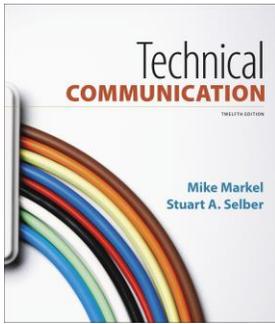
Markel, M. (2018). *Technical Communication* (12th ed.) Bedford/St. Martin's: Boston, MA.

ISBN: 978-1319058616

Link to text on Amazon.com

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 or seek help at the Technical Support center at the UTEP Library.

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.

ATTENDANCE

In this class, attendance is measured by participation in reading responses. The attendance policy for this course is simple: with each missed week of reading responses, it constitutes an absence of one week of class. When it becomes evident that it is not possible to participate in class (as in keeping up with your reading responses), you need to contact me immediately to discuss the attendance policy and how it applies, before resuming robust participation in reading responses. Students are allowed 5 unexcused absences in the semester. Students exceeding 5 absences will not be dropped from the course; rather, they will receive a failing grade.

ASSIGNMENTS & PROJECTS

Assignments guidelines will be posted to Blackboard. All assignments are to be submitted via the Blackboard "Assignments" folder by midnight of the due date (see course calendar). **All assignments are required to be submitted in PDF formats unless otherwise noted.** Please double-check before submitting your assignments. Additionally, assignments should never be sent via email.

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 send me an email if you wish to discuss your grades.

A	900 - 1000 points
B	800 - 899 points
C	700 - 799 points
D	600 - 699 points
F	599 or below

This course's assignments, their deadlines, and associated point values are as follows:

	Assignments	Deadlines	Total Points
1.	Discussion Board Posts (5 @ 20 points each)	Sundays by 11:59 pm	100
2.	Reading Responses (15 @ 20 points each)	Saturdays by 11:59 pm	300
3.	Website Analysis Report	February 21, 2021	100
4.	Instructions Project Proposal	February 28, 2021	100
5.	Instructions Projects	March 28, 2021	150
6.	Final Project Proposal	April 4, 2021	100
7.	Final Project	May 12, 2021	150
8.	What is social justice in technical communication? (Extra Credit; Optional)	May 14, 2021	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. The citation styles used in this class are APA or MLA. 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 Major Assignments in PDF format as this is the only format accepted. For weekly submissions, use the following links on Blackboard: Discussion Board and Reading Responses. In total, you will be using three submission links to submit your works: **Major Assignments, Discussion Board**, and **Reading Responses**. Reading Responses are due on Saturdays by 11:59 pm. Major Assignments and Discussion Board Posts are due on Sundays by 11:59 pm. All assignments must use either APA/MLA citations.

If you are not happy with the grade you receive on any assignment, you can revise the assignment, have a UWC consultant review it, and resubmit the assignment for a higher grade. These are considered redo assignments. I will accept redo assignments only if they are seen by a UWC consultant and proof of visit is provided. You can submit redo assignments at any time; the last day to submit redo assignments is on Friday, May 14, 2021. Please note that this is only for assignments that have already been graded.

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 well before the deadline and we agree on an alternative deadline. Otherwise, assignments submitted late will receive one letter-grade deduction per day late (i.e., submitting an assignment on or after 12:00 am will result in a late submission).

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.

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 proposer closing. Your emails should be professional and cleanly formatted with proper sentence structure and grammar.

COURSE POLICIES

Please refer to the following policies for this course. If you have any questions, please send me an email and I will be happy to help.

➜ **UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER (UWC):** I encourage you to make use of the UWC during the planning, drafting, and/or revising phases of writing any assignment in this class. The trained writing consultants can help give you a fresh perspective on ideas and help you with things like correctness, formatting, etc. For further information, please visit https://www.utep.edu/uwc/. In addition, please note that they are not accepting any f2f consultation. Due to the current pandemic, the UWC services will remain virtual.

➜ **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 contact 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 result in an 'F' for the course, and may include other University disciplinary action, such as suspension or expulsion. Students suspected of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR). You should become familiar with the ethical guidelines for conduct spelled out in the Student Affairs section of the Handbook for Operating Procedures. Additionally, please be aware that you may not submit work for this class that was produced for another class. You must produce your own original work in this class and appropriately identify any portion of your work which is collaborative with others, borrowed from others, or which is your own work from other contexts. Always cite your information. If you have doubts as to whether or not you are using your own or others' work legally and ethically, ask me or contact the UTEP Writing Center. Follow this primary principle: Be upfront and honest.

➜ **ADA:** The Americans with Disabilities Act 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 accommodation, please contact The Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) at (915)747-5148 or at 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 writing assignments by the end of the day on Sunday of the assigned week (unless otherwise mentioned). Complete all readings and reading responses by the end of the day on Saturday of the assigned week. Discussion Board Posts must also be completed by the end of the day Sunday of the assigned week. **What follows is just a rough outline and does not include all requirements of the course.**

Week	Dates	Agenda/Topic	Weekly Readings	Assignments Due
1	1/18 – 1/24	Introduction to the Course	• Read Course Syllabus • Read Lecture: Course Introduction	• Discussion Board Post
2	1/25 – 1/31	Introduction to Technical Communication	• Read "Intro to Technical Communication" PowerPoint • Read Gerdes' "Professional and Technical Communication: An Overview" • Read Parker's "What is Technical Communication?" • Read Website Analysis Report Assignment Guidelines	• Discussion Board Post
3	2/1 – 2/7	Writing and Designing Technical Documents and Websites	• Read Chapter 3: Writing Technical Documents • Read Chapter 11: Designing Print and Online Documents	• Reading Responses
4	2/8 – 2/14	Writing Reports	• Read Chapter 17: Writing Informational Reports • Read Lecture: Rhetoric • Read Jeffrey and Zickel's "What is the Rhetorical Situation?" • Read UIS "The Rhetorical Situation" • Read U of A "The Rhetorical Situation"	• Reading Response • Discussion Board Post

5	2/15 – 2/21	Writing Proposals and Correspondence	• Read Chapter 14: Corresponding in Print and Online • Read Chapter 16: Writing Proposals • Read Instructions Project Proposal guidelines and sample	• Reading Responses • **Website Analysis Report**
6	2/22 – 2/28	Writing Effective Sentences & Documents	• Read Chapter 10: Writing Correct and Effective Sentences	• Reading Response • **Instructions Project Proposal**
7	3/1 – 3/7	Writing Instructions & Creating Graphics	• Read Chapter 12: Creating Graphics • Read Chapter 20: Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions • Read Instructions Project Assignment Guidelines	• Reading Responses • Discussion Board Post
8	3/8 – 3/14	Researching Your Subject & Understanding Ethical Considerations	• Read Chapter 2: Understanding Ethical and Legal Considerations • Read Chapter 6: Researching Your Subject	• Reading Responses
9	3/15 – 3/21	Spring Break	• Nothing	
10	3/22 – 3/28	Reviewing & Editing	• Read Chapter 13: Evaluating and Testing Technical Documents • Read Final Project Proposal Assignment Guidelines	• Reading Response • **Instructions Project**
11	3/29 – 4/4	Communicating Persuasively & Audience/Purpose	• Read Chapter 5: Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose • Read Chapter 8: Communicating Persuasively	• Reading Responses • **Final Project Proposal**

12	4/5 – 4/11	Emphasizing Important Information	• Read Chapter 9: Emphasizing Important Information • Read Final Project Assignment Guidelines	• Reading Response
13	4/12 – 4/18	The Final Project	• Nothing!	• Discussion Board Post
14	4/19 – 4/25	Organizing Your Information	• Read Chapter 7: Organizing Your Information	• Reading Response (final Reading Response)
15	4/26 – 5/2	Final Project	• Nothing!	
16	5/3 – 5/9	Final Project	• Nothing!	
17	5/10 – 5/14	Finals Week		**• Final Project Due May 12** • Last day to submit Re-do assignments: May 14

UTEP'S LEARNING RESOURCES

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support. Familiarize yourself with the resources below.

- **UTEP LIBRARY**: UTEP's Library provides access to a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference services and librarian assistance for enrolled students. The UTEP Library's website can be found at http://libraryweb.utep.edu/.

- **REFWORKS**: Provides a bibliographic citation tool. You can find UTEP's access to RefWorks at https://libguides.utep.edu/RefWorks.

- **UTEP'S VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORK (VPN)**: UTEP's electronic resources (i.e., Library resources) are available to registered students when working from outside the campus network. In order to access these resources, you will need to set up a Virtual Private Network (VPN) that basically recognizes that you are a UTEP student and can look for journals and use subscriptions UTEP/you have paid for. More information on setting up VPN can be found at https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/ServiceCatalog/NET_VPNGlobalProtect.html.

- Technology-related additional information on working remotely is available at https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/workingremotely.html.