Welcome to this writing community. In this setting you will be involved in various writing projects that allow you (1) to identify needs—related to your academic objectives and your future workplace—and respond to these needs and (2) to address concerns or problems in the community that affect you in some manner. My main objective is to help you enhance the knowledge and skills you bring to the class. You will think through needs/concerns, analyze the audience(s) involved, secure various types of resources, generate solutions, and present these solutions in an effective manner. This is a student-centered course. You are the key agent involved in independent thinking, identifying projects, planning, and making decisions. You are expected to move beyond the traditional student role in which the teacher controls the activities. I do not prescribe assignments. For in-class work and projects beyond the classroom, you will work collaboratively with your classmates to benefit from the competencies that each one of you builds as we immerse ourselves in each project. (I use the word "we" as I become an active participant in helping you connect with each other, and I become a co-learner as each of you begins a project.) In this class we help each other. The success of one student means success for everyone. The writing products you create will depend upon the specific factors that shape each project. And, each project will be different for each student.

My objective is to focus on your authority as a writer. I am not the only expert in this class. In fact, in this student-centered course you will emerge as an expert. You will not passively receive information from me. You will discover information on our course website, and you will receive information from me daily. You will choose the projects, conduct interviews with professionals in your future workplaces, request information from contact persons at the university and community agencies, study and respond to the ideas of technical writers featured in our textbook, search for many types of other information using the Internet, and interact with your peers. As English 3301 is held in a computer-assisted classroom, you have the tools to help you interact electronically with the individuals you need to contact and become knowledgeable about the subject you explore. Your role as a student will change as you make important decisions and choices based on the information you gather and interpret within the classroom and in the
community. You will become a self-directed learner, and you will create opportunities for your academic growth and future professional development.

What Is Technical Writing?

In their book, Information in Action: A Guide To Technical Communication, Jacqueline Palmer and M. Jimmie Killingsworth write that "[t]echnical communication is the process by which researchers and technical experts develop information products for users. . . . The information product has value if it helps the user perform an action efficiently and with sound results. Transforming information into action, then, is the goal of technical communication . . . ." (4). Your class projects will involve individuals who will provide information to help you achieve your purposes and also make use of your work to make decisions. To give you a sense of what is involved in technical communication, I include seven characteristics:

(1) Addresses a particular reader(s)

(2) Helps reader solve problems

(3) Reflects an organization's goals and culture

(4) Is produced collaboratively

(5) Uses design to increase readability

(6) Consists of words or graphics or both

(7) Is produced using high-tech tools

**Required Text and Materials:**


Computer disks or jump drives to save your work. Bring a disk to each class period. If you're using MS Works at home, make sure and save it as "rtf" to make it compatible with the MS Word program in the computer labs (If you have any problems saving your work, please contact the computer assistance office).

Create an account so that you can print documents in class. Make sure that your home computer documents can be opened in class, and, as a safeguard, e-mail these documents to yourself before class. Make sure an attach the document first before sending it.

**Course Concepts:**

By becoming aware of the writing required to be successful in the workplace and analyzing the different types of writing, you will gain an understanding of the following concepts and be able
to apply them in various documents, such as analytical reports and proposals, memos, and correspondence:

- Audience - identify and understand, writing for multiple readers
- Role of collaboration in the writing process - peer review, roles and functions of collaborating members
- Revision/editing - importance of, place in writing process, how each is different
- Role of teacher in writing process (facilitator)
- Effective grammar (letters/memos to contact persons at the university and in the community)
- Conciseness/preciseness
- Mechanics/punctuation
- Tone/clarity/style
- Presentation of information/Format
- Role of technology
- Design elements - white space, paragraphing, headers & footers, document styles, typefaces, and visual aids
- Role of research - questionnaires & surveys, company publications and in-house documents, computer data bases
- Interviewing
- Decision making
- Role of oral communication - connection to written products. You will understand and use these elements by writing and working with the following types of writing:
  - Memos and short reports
  - Analytical reports and proposals (Proposal: Cryptography in Optical Fiber Communication)
  - Instructions and other forms of technical writing
  - Correspondence
  - Job search documents
  - Oral presentations involving technology

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

By engaging in the course activities, students will

(1) identify a need or problem by describing the factors involved

(2) generate a viable solution to the need or problem

(3) create a document that reflects an effective interweaving of purpose and audience.

**Journalism Minors**

Newswriting is a form of professional writing. It has a unique purpose and style, often quite different from other forms of professional writing practiced in this class. If you are taking this
course as part of a journalism minor, you may be able to tailor some of the assignments to meet your needs. Please see the professor to discuss options.

**Writing Workshop:**

This class is designed as a hands-on writing workshop class. You will have an active role as you work on the phases of each project and respond to the work of your classmates. Also, from your classmates you will receive feedback for your work. This class is designed to give you experiences that are similar to those you will experience in a professional workplace. Involved in a professional work setting is deciding what tasks you will do, when you will complete those tasks, how you will gather resources, and how you will complete the tasks. This class will require regular correspondence between you and me, you and your other classmates, and you and university and community sources you will need to contact in order to gather information. Because of this approach, you need to be in class. You will treat this class as your workplace, and you will work on your assignments each class meeting. Writing is an active process, and the more you actively participate, the better results you will see in your writing progress. Absences will affect your performance just as absences will affect your performance at the workplace.

**Course Policies and Requirements**

**The Successful Classroom Environment.** At the beginning of this course, we will discuss certain goals that must be met to achieve a successful learning, teaching, and professional environment. We will take into account effective strategies that worked well for us in previous classes or workplaces and attempt to bring some of these ideas into this classroom. Students and the teacher will work throughout the semester in achieving and revising these goals to meet with success.

1. **Attendance.** As an active participant, you are expected to attend every class. I will pass around a signup sheet for each class meeting. If you miss more than two classes, then I will contact you to discuss the inconsistent attendance. If you miss more than three classes, then I will deduct 10% from your overall grade. You will lose 10% from your grade each time you are absent past the three absences. **If there is an emergency for missing classes, please inform me right away in writing, so I can provide you with class work information and excuse your absences. I am an accessible person and would like to hear about extenuating circumstances that are hindering your performance in class, so we can work out a plan together.** There will be no makeup work for unexcused absences unless there are extenuating circumstances that meet with my approval. Attendance is a crucial part of a class grounded in liberatory learning and teaching that requires you to actively engage in classroom discussions, group activities, and peer editing of papers as well as other writing activities. You are a valuable contributor in this classroom, and a responsible contributor must be in consistent attendance. You must also attend class on time, so as not to take away from the lecture or other activities.

2. **Deadlines and Progress Reports.** You must meet the required deadlines. Late submissions will not be accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances that meet with my approval and are in writing. Please write the reasons for your late submission in memo form and submit it to me the
week that the assignment is due. I will then determine if a penalty for a late submission is warranted.

In this class, it is very important to turn your work in on time and exhibit an attitude of personal responsibility for your grade and your writing progress. I treat this class as if it were a professional workplace, and I expect you to be a professional. What is expected of you at your future place of employment is what I expect of you in class. I want to expand your role as students. You will make choices and decisions regarding the portfolio assignments. You will move beyond the student role to the roles of creator, interviewer, and expert as someone in a liberatory environment. Periodically, and on short notice, I will expect an e-mail to be posted online concerning your progress. This immediate feedback is necessary so that I and your peers can assist you. Please inform me of any special circumstances that need attention immediately.

3. Discussions. You must play an active role in classroom discussions and group activities. Dialogue (whether written or verbal) is a vital part of the learning process for this class.

4. Quizzes. Periodically I will give quizzes based on the readings. You will not be able to makeup quizzes unless there are extenuating circumstances that meet with my approval. Please see Deadlines section for more details on makeup work that meets with my approval.

5. Peer Editing. This crucial aspect of the writing process holds great responsibilities for peer editors and writers. The key to successful peer editing develops when both the peer editor and writer gain mutual respect for their roles in the writing process. Peer editors who carefully listen and respond to writers’ discussions about their papers have a good chance of meeting writers’ needs. Writers who clearly explain their expectations and needs to peer editors have a good chance of receiving valuable feedback. Although writers are not required to use all of their peer editors’ suggestions, they should respect and appreciate their feedback. Students will have input evaluating how well each peer editor performs in their group. Handouts will be distributed in class that explain the peer editing process. In the several years that I’ve been using peer editing in my classes, I’ve noticed, in almost all cases, a steady improvement in grades for those who take this process seriously and work well with their peers. Students will use the MS Word tracking feature to edit peers’ papers. We will review this feature in class. Peer Editing will factor into your grade for the class.

University Policies and Services

Students are expected to abide by the Texas A&M Student Handbook and Code of Conduct. Please review these policies in the handbook or at the designated website. Plagiarism (or other forms of academic dishonesty), gender, race, or class insensitivity, and sexual harassment will not be tolerated within this learning environment.

Acceptance of Diversity: We are one of the most diverse campuses, in terms of racial identity, in the Texas A&M system. This means that we are all meeting and working with people who are different from ourselves in terms of their identities: whether that is defined by their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and/or religion. Respecting and accepting difference is vital
to your success for your professional and personal development in this class, on this campus, and in the global community.

Notice to Students with Disabilities

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Academic Advising

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

Grade Appeal Process

As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

Resources Outside of Class.

The Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA) is now located in Glasscock 112. It is available to any student for free tutoring. Tutors are there to provide services for all stages of the writing process. Tutors, however, will not correct your paper, but instead they can assist you in developing strategies to become a better writer. The Center will assist a student’s writing in any class, and no appointment is necessary. Students must go to the library to make an appointment. Appointments are strongly suggested during the latter part of the semester when many papers are due in classes.

Academic Integrity and Dishonesty

Students are expected to "demonstrate a high level of maturity, self-direction and ability to manage their own affairs" and to "conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards
of academic honesty.” Please refer to the 2000-2001 Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Catalog for additional requirements.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites are English 1301 and 1302.

Grading:

75% of your grade will come from three portfolio projects:

Portfolio 1 = 25% Due: Wednesday, September 30th
Portfolio 2 = 15% Due: Monday, October 26th
Portfolio 3 = 35% Due: Monday, December 14th

Electronic Journals = 10%

To establish a sense of professional community researchers and writers, you will be using electronic journals to correspond with others in this class to introduce yourselves, discover similar professional interests, respond to project ideas, provide information on your plans for projects, and so on. You will cc: me on your correspondences to your peers, and you will be using blackboard e-mail. I will provide you with detailed instructions.

Quizzes = 5% Note: Periodically, you will be quizzed on the readings using a predominantly multiple choice format. There are no make-up quizzes unless you have an excused absence (documentation included).

Blackboard Postings = 5% Note: Online discussion postings must meet deadlines posted on the course schedule to receive full credit. Attendance is also required on the day we discuss the postings to receive full credit.

Peer Response to Projects = 5%

Success in the course:

I am very pleased to be working with you. In this class we all help each other, and we applaud each other's successes. I treat each student with respect, and I expect students to treat each other and me with courtesy and respect. Each one of us should encourage behaviors that help reach excellence. We should not have talking that interferes with learning, tardiness, leaving class early, and talking on cell phones. If at any time you have concerns or questions regarding anything connected to the course, your performance in the course, and grades, please come to my office to talk with me privately. In the professional world, matters of a personal nature are
discussed in private, not in front of fellow employees. In my office you and I can deal with any concerns or questions. (I do not discuss grades in class. Wait a day after a grade has been assigned to come to my office.)

You will have a productive semester. I structure the course so that I can give you help in the classroom, so be sure to ask. Also, you can get help from your peers. You will find that many of your peers have expertise in various areas. Your documents are public and will be read by professionals, and we will all work together to prepare documents that meet high expectations and standards.

CLASS PROJECTS

These projects are described in the *Strategies for Business and Technical Writing* book. This is only an overview. More specific guidelines will be available on the main 3301 page for your class and the 3301 Schedule.

**Project 1: Writing on the Job – Due 9/29**

This project gives you an opportunity to learn about your future work setting, the expectations set for employees, the responsibilities involved, and the role of written and electronic communication in achieving those responsibilities. You will decide what workplace you want to visit and whom you want to contact to discover about that particular setting. This assignment asks you to prepare for an interview with the contact person and meet with that person to secure information. A key part of the information involves how the person uses written and electronic communication, the kinds of documents he/she produces, and the audience(s) for whom the documents are prepared.

As an example, a student wants to become familiar with the work at a child protective agency as she has decided to seek a job there after graduation. She gets in touch with a representative of the agency and schedules an appointment to learn about the person’s duties, the types of written and electronic communication he/she produces, and the audiences involved in these communications. After securing copies of the written products and examining them, she creates one specific document to submit to a supervisor (as though she were already an employee). This process helps the student understand the practices and conventions she needs to learn to be effective employee.

I will provide a sample for this project.

**Project 2: Writing to Get a Job 10/25**

This project allows you to further your career goals by learning to recognize and implement writing strategies to gain a new position. You have the following six options to choose from: Job Review, Writing A Resume Criteria, Applying for a Job Criteria, Applying for Graduate School, and Applying for an Internship.

I will provide a sample for this project.
Project 3: Writing to Fill a Need

This project allows you to become even further involved with the community (both the university community and the larger community). You will identify a particular need within an agency, a political group, a school, or a church and contact a person who will assist you by providing information and giving you feedback as you proceed with your effort. You will write a proposal in which you describe the problem and your approach and sources. The objective is to study the need from several angles and generate several possible solutions. The culmination of your effort will be a report in which you present several options and make one recommendation—the most feasible solution. The report will involve multi use of technology.

Example:

As an example, a student who had volunteered at the city police station found out that the Training Division wanted to create a cultural diversity program for the officers. In the past the officers listened to police supervisors talk about the need to create positive relationships with the community members, and they were given handouts. The student worked with two instructors and decided to create a Powerpoint presentation about cultural diversity. Very few resources were beyond her reach as she searched the Internet for the kinds of visual arguments she wanted to make in the presentation. This project will reach beyond the training setting to the community and hopefully influence the officers as they interact with the citizens of this city. In the process she learned how to solve the various problems she encountered with technology. (The last hurdle involved how to save more than 150 slides and then transport them to the classroom to share her work with her classmates.) This project has the potential to alter social situations. It extends beyond academic goals to move toward social action.

I will provide a sample for this project.

I want to thank Diana Cardenas, Susan Loudermilk Garza, and Tom Murphy for their input on this course.

Schedule Outline

Week One: 8/25 - Read Proper Introductions, syllabus and Liberatory Learning handout Liberatory Learning link. Review highlights of Writing: A Ticket to Work...Or a Ticket Out. Introductions. Discuss course assignments and goals, identify majors. Discuss Project one.

Week Two: 8/30 and 9/1 – Read Writing: A Ticket to Work...Or a Ticket Out, Writing: Powerful Message from State Government and handouts. Read online resources on e-mail etiquette. In class activity on readings. Review Electronic Journal Assignment and Project One. Video showing of Interview One. Send first electronic journal introductory e-mail to peer and cc: professor.

Week Three: 9/6 and 9/8 – Read Gerson and Adelstein chapters in Strategies for Business and Technical Writing (SBTW). Quiz on readings. Review sample handouts on Project One. Discuss
handouts. Distribute handouts on Peer Editing. Video showing of Interviews Two and Three. Send second electronic journal e-mail focused on plans for Project One to peer and cc: professor.

Week Four: 9/13 and 9/15 – Read Chase, Fielden, and Swift in SBTW. Read handout on Memo Writing. Blackboard posting on readings in class. Discussion of postings. Formation of Peer Editing Groups. Writing Workshop on Project One. Send third electronic journal e-mail focused on response to one peer editing group member and cc: professor.


Week Seven: 10/4 and 10/6 – Review TAMUCC’s Career Services Website. Read sample documents for Project 2. Read Munschauer chapter in SBTW. Guest speaker from Career Services. Send fourth electronic journal e-mail focused on plans for Project two to peer and cc: professor.

Week Eight: 10/11 and 10/13 – Read online sources for resumes, cover letters, and grad applications. Read Graber, Reep, and Wate in SBTW. Quiz on SBTW readings. Writing Workshop for Project 2.

Week Nine: 10/18 and 10/20 – Read Weber and Kaplan in SBTW. Blackboard posting on reading. Peer Editing workshop on Project two. Send fifth electronic journal e-mail to peer editing group.


Week Eleven: 11/1 and 11/3 – Read online resource on internal proposals. Read Vinci, Harris, and Mathes in SBTW. Writing workshop on Proposal. Send sixth electronic journal e-mail to peer on proposal.


Week Thirteen: 11/17 – Read handouts on oral presentations. Writing workshop on Progress Reports. Send seventh electronic journal e-mail to peer focused on the Progress Report. Sign up for oral presentations for 11/29 and 12/1

Week Sixteen: 11/29 and 12/1 – Oral Presentations for Project Three.

Week Seventeen: 12/6 – Peer Editing Workshop for Project Three.

Portfolio Three due on Tuesday, December 13th in my office (FC 285) from 11:00 to 12:00.