Writing in the Professions

English 3375.201 Fall 2013

T/TR 9:30-10:45

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Office Hours:  TTR 11:00-11:30; 3:30-5:00; W 10:30-11:30

Classroom: OCNR 240

WELCOME TO THIS WRITING COMMUNITY!

Course Description

This course focuses on the creation of technical and professional documents and the processes involved. Students study rhetorical theory and apply these rhetorical concepts to real problem-solving projects, done in teams as they undertake an individual/collaborative effort to address an actual need in the community. Field work will direct students to experts in the community and the university. Assigned readings from our major textbook will aid students in understanding writing as social action focused on readers. Students will focus on many genres of technical writing with an emphasis on purpose, process, and structures and apply these genres to writing for the workplace and beyond.

Prerequisites

Students must make a C or better in English 1301 and 1302.

Required Texts and Materials

Flash drives to save work


Books that may be useful to you:
Prerequisites for the Course

To enroll in this course, you must have made a C or better in 1301 and 1302.

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

(4) use visual and written communication to present information in front of an audience.

Course Concepts and Principles

By designing projects related to the needs of the university and/or the community, students will gain an understanding of the following concepts and be able to apply them to multiple writing situations:

• Rhetorical Elements- purpose, audience, presentation of evidence, format, delivery (oral, written, and visual)
• Reader-Response Approach techniques to bring about the desired responses from readers of documents
• Document Design-the organization of information, presentation, textual and visual connections
• Role of Collaboration in the Writing Process – group invention, planning, proposal writing, drafting, peer review/feedback, revisions, roles and functions of collaborating members
• Writer-Based Prose and Reader-Based Prose: moving from the "I" focus to meeting the needs and expectations of the audience
• Tone/Style
• Design Elements of Reports
• Gathering Reader-Centered Information
• Decision Making
• Role of Technology in Document Creation, Presentation, and Globally Networked Environment
• Role of Oral Communication – sharing of information
• Revision/Editing
• Ethics and Writing
Creation of Documents

You will learn the course concepts by writing and working with the following types of documents.

- Project Planning Proposal
- Web based Blackboard Blog to be shared with class and instructor
- Memos
- Reports
- Web based Progress Reports for Clients and Instructor
- Style Sheets (such as APA and MLA) Be aware of style sheet in your major.
- Editing/Revising Professional Techniques and Checklists
- Web Sources

Assignments

Technical Writing Blog Follower Assignment

Technical Writers are becoming increasingly more involved in social networking through blogs. Each week you will follow a technical writing blog and locate one blog that either complements the readings assigned for that week, your career field of interest, and/or applies to the project you or others are working on at the time. The top 25 technical writing blogs can be found at http://www.invesp.com/blog-rank/technical_writing, but there are hundreds out there. You will create a blog each week on Blackboard that responds to a technical writing blog. Your Blackboard blog should provide a link to the blog, explain how this blog is relevant to one or more of the criteria above, and how it meets with a reader-centered approach. It should be a minimum of 250 words and embody some of the best practices of blogging described at http://weblogs.about.com/od/bloggingethics/tp/Blogging-Best-Practices.htm. Each week I will ask for at least two volunteer students (everyone will have a couple of chances to present during the semester) to informally review their blogs to the class highlighting their discoveries. Please create your blog on some sort of word processing program and then paste it onto your Blackboard blog as a precautionary measure, so you have a backup.

Quizzes

There will be periodic quizzes in class to ensure the readings have been done. I will announce that there will be a quiz for the next class period during the previous class and via e-mail. This will allow me to assess how well you are reading the assigned materials.

Editing Professional Documents

This semester we will be working with the Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center on several assignments. One of our first assignments will be to edit some of their documents that may include manuals, procedures, and forms. The Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center wishes
us to focus on grammar, punctuation, content, and syntax. We will implement some reader-centered editing techniques as well. To prepare us for this assignment, we will read several chapters in *Technical Communication* that are pertinent to this assignment. We will review the documents and then create editing checklists based on your readings and in consultation with the Innovation Center prior to editing these documents. This assignment will give you the experience to thoroughly review documents prior to creating technical documents and allow you to better understand our clients at the Innovation Center.

**Major Assignment Description and Components**

For the major assignment in the class, we will be collaboratively serving the writing needs of the Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center (CBBIC). They have provided a list of projects that we can work on. We will determine what projects we can feasibly do in this class, consult with our clients, and proceed with planning and implementing these projects. Our book *Technical Communication* and other resources will serve as valuable guides for us in this process along with feedback from our clients. We will ensure that everyone in this class does equal work through periodic progress evaluations and my consultations with the CBBIC. If I discover that a student is not pulling his or her weight or the clients have expressed dissatisfaction with a student’s progress or work, I will schedule an office meeting with this student that is similar to what would take place in a professional environment. We will work together to rectify this situation.

**Planning for Usability, Techniques for Usability, and Research Methods Proposal**

Using some of the guidelines in Chapter 4-6 of *Technical Communications* and other resources, groups and or individuals will come up with a proposal plan that will be addressed to the instructor and client. The proposal will discuss the process for planning for usability, techniques for planning for usability, and gathering research-centered information that address the project. The proposal should be a minimum of three pages following the proper guidelines to be distributed in class. A memo addressed to the client and copied to the instructor introducing the proposal will be required as well.

**Progress Report**

A progress report on the major project will be sent to the client and the instructor will be copied. Progress report guidelines will be distributed in class, and we will read relevant readings on progress reports.

**Project Work Documents and Oral Presentations**

Upon completion of the project, a reflective memo will be written by each member assessing his or her performance on the project and the quality of the project itself taking into consideration the content of the earlier submitted proposal. This will accompany the work completed on the project. Both the work completed and reflective memo will be counted together in grading.
Group evaluations on your performance within a group will also be taken into consideration. A Pecha Kucha Oral Presentation (see [http://www.forbes.com/2010/01/14/presentations-pecha-kucha-technology-breakthroughs-oreilly.html](http://www.forbes.com/2010/01/14/presentations-pecha-kucha-technology-breakthroughs-oreilly.html)) based on your project will be presented at the end of the semester. Pecha Kucha presentations are becoming more common in professional environments given its visual emphasis and short time sequence.

**Grading**

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Writing Blog Follower Assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editing Professional Documents</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress Report</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Work Documents and Oral Presentations</td>
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**Class Policies**

**Success in This Class**

Each of you can shape this class in a manner that benefits you and your local community. An advantage of the course is that we help each other. We benefit from the experiences that each individual brings, and we applaud the achievements of each individual. In the workplace, being a professional person includes a willingness to collaborate with co-workers to achieve the goals of a department or an organization. Successful employees possess and practice a responsible, professional attitude. That is what I expect from you.

I have an investment in your success. I will give you feedback as we work through each task, and I will help you build whatever goal you set for yourself. You will also want to secure feedback from team members to reach the level of work that you seek. Your efforts and documents will help you build a portfolio of work that represents your abilities and interests and that you can show to prospective employers or graduate school committees. With each project you propose, you will learn new knowledge, new skills, and new perspectives.

**Meaning of Grades**

For the assignments that you do we will use traditional grades, but we will interpret them differently from just what do those grades mean for your GPA (which is certainly important). Some assignments will also carry other performance criteria that will give you an idea of where
your work would stand in the workplace. A general guideline for interpreting grades in the workplace might look something like this (according to the writers of your textbook).

Grades Criteria

A Manager/department head would be very impressed and remember the work when a promotion is discussed. (Or a client would be very impressed and would buy your product, etc.)

B Manager/department head would be satisfied with the job. Good, but not impressed.

C Manager/department head would be disappointed and ask you to revise or rewrite sections before allowing clients and others to see the work.

D Manager/department head may start looking for someone to replace you. (My experience has been that this action would probably happen at the C level. After all, what manager wants to constantly have to oversee every detail of a project and do several reviews of a project that could be done right the first time.

Discussing Grades

If you would like to discuss a grade or any other aspect of your performance, please see me in my office. In a professional setting supervisors and employees do not discuss performance in front of other employees. Read my comments on your work before you come to my office. I will be very pleased to discuss work with you in private.

Absences

As an active participant, you are expected to attend every class on time. Attendance is a crucial part of a class grounded in liberatory learning and teaching that necessitates an active engagement 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. The work we will do during class is crucial to your understanding of the material and your success in the course. When a student is frequently absent, this requires the teacher to frequently explain the assignments and missed activities to the student and can hinder the effectiveness of group activities that require peer feedback. Consequently, the student who is frequently absent creates an unnecessary burden for both the teacher and their peers. Frequent absences will not fare well for your grade in that you will miss assignment explanations, handouts, in class activities, and course grade penalties as listed below. Please provide me with written documentation (e.g. doctor’s excuses, family deaths or serious illnesses, daycare issues, car trouble receipts) for any absences that you might have and e-mail me in a timely manner to notify me of your absence and receive makeup work information from me. I will then let you know if your absence is excused. Failure to follow these procedures will result in an unexcused absence. Four unexcused absences will result in a failure of this course.
Deadlines

Late Work:

All work must be turned in on time unless there are extenuating circumstances that meet with my approval. Please send me an e-mail before the assignment is due explaining why you cannot turn the assignment in on time. This mirrors the professional environment. Failure to do this will result in the instructor denying the submission of late assignments. Late assignments that meet with my approval must be turned in no later than one week after the stated deadline.

Cell Phone and Other Electronic Devices Policy

Please use electronic devices appropriately, out of respect for your instructor and your peers. There are times and places in polite society when texting is simply not appropriate; texting is not appropriate in the classroom unless related to communicating with clients or group members. Similarly, please do not use the internet in the computer classroom or on your laptop for anything other than classwork, as this is often a distraction to those around you. You may wear ear buds or headphones while you are working independently in composition, so long as your audio is inaudible to those around you.

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.

Client Considerations

We will be working with university and local community clients in this class. This means that you are representing the university and, as such, have a responsibility to conduct yourself professionally or risk tarnishing the image of this university and your image as well. If for some reason you are having trouble meeting the expectations of the clients or your share of the work within your group, please let me know immediately. I will send out project evaluation forms to the clients on your performance at the end of the project, so it is best to take care of any potential problems immediately. These project evaluation forms will be taken into consideration for your project grade.

University Policies and Resources

CASA: Writing Center

This is a very valuable, free service for all students. I would encourage all students to take advantage of the assistance consultants can offer in the writing center. They will not write your papers for you, as that would be plagiarism, but they will work on areas of concern. Professional writers ask other writers to offer feedback.
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 Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Catalog for additional requirements. Document all sources that you use.

**Academic Advising:** If you are majoring, or plan to major, in a field taught in the College of Liberal Arts, and if you have not yet obtained a signed degree plan, you should make an appointment to meet with your Academic Advisor. 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.

**Disability Services/ 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 203E, at 825-3466.

**Reminder to English Majors:** As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.

**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.htm. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Reminder to English Majors:** As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.
Tentative Class Plans

Week One – September 5th

Student Introductions. Review of course and syllabus. Introduction to Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center (CBBIC) at http://www.coastalbendinnovation.com/. Instructions on how to create Blogs in Blackboard.

Week Two – September 10th and 12th

Read Editing Professional Documents Assignment. Read Preface and Introduction to Technical Communication: A Reader Centered Approach (TCRCA). Read Chapter 8-9 in TCRCA prior to our visit to the Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center on September 12th. Blog follower entry on Blackboard due by the end of the week (see assignment for details).

Week Three – September 17th and 19th

Read Chapter 17 and 18 in TCRCA to help form collaborative guidelines for this class. Read Chapter 15 in TCRCA. Review CBBIC documents to be edited in groups. Workshop to set up Collaboration, Editing, and Revising guidelines and checklists for documents. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations. Distribute handout entitled “Understanding the Writing Context in Organizations.”

Week Four – September 24th and 26th

Reach Chapter 21 in TCRCA. Writing Workshops on Editing/Revising CBBIC documents. Documents will be due to CBBIC by October 1st. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations. Distribute handout entitled “The Technical Communicator as Author: Meaning, Power, and Authority.”

Week Five – October 1st and 3rd

Read Chapter 23 in TCRCA and review Proposal guidelines for major project. Read Chapter 4-6 in TCRCA. Client will visit class via WebX or live to discuss options for major projects at the CBBIC. Please prepare questions for the client. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations.

Week Six – October 8th and 10th

Research and Writing workshops for Proposal. Read Appendix A in TCRCA, Chapter 22, Project 12, on page 701. Proposal will be due on October 15th. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations.
Week Seven – October 15th and 17th

Due: Proposal. I will meet with the CBBIC client to obtain feedback on your proposals. Workshop on selecting readings from TCRCA that will best meet your needs for this project. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations.

Week Eight – October 22nd and 24th

Review of client feedback on proposals will be discussed in class. Read selected readings to be announced from TCRCA that meet your needs for the project. Workshop on creating client documents. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations.

Week Nine – October 29th and 31st

Read selected readings to be announced from TCRCA that meet your needs for the project. Read Chapter 26 in TCRCA. Workshop on creating client documents. Read selected readings to be announced from TCRCA that meet your needs for the project. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations.

Week Ten – November 5th and 7th

Review Chapter 26 and Project 11 (page 700) to prepare progress report for client. Writing workshop on Progress Report that will be due on November 7th. Prepare for WebX or live meeting with the client to discuss progress reports for November 12th or November 14th. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations.

Week Eleven – November 12th and 14th

Read Chapter 19 in TCRCA and Pecha Kucha online sites and guidelines for presentations and evaluation sheet. WebX or live meeting with client to discuss progress reports. Writing workshop on major documents and Pecha Kucha presentations. A sample Pecha Kucha presentation will be shown in class. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations.
**Week Twelve – November 19th and 21st**

Review Reflective Memo guidelines for major project. Writing workshop on major documents and Pecha Kucha presentations. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations.

**Week Thirteen – November 26th**

Sign up for Pecha Kucha presentations that will take place on December 8th and 10th. Reread Chapter 15 in TCRCA to prepare for revisions of major project. Workshop for major project and Pecha Kucha presentations. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations.

**Week Fourteen – December 3rd and 8th**

Final editing workshop for major project and Pecha Kucha presentations. Pecha Kucha presentations on December 8th and 10th. It is mandatory for everyone to attend both oral presentation sessions. Please e-mail me your Pecha Kucha presentation before your presentation. I will be e-mailing the project evaluation form to the CBBIC client.

**Week Fifteen – December 10th**

Final session of Pecha Kucha presentations. Due: Major Project with Reflective Memo.

**December 17th**

I will be meeting with the clients shortly after the submission of the major projects to assess their responses to the completed work. I will share the project evaluation by December 14th via e-mail, and you will send a memo to me responding to this evaluation by December 17th. Failure to respond via this memo will result in a 10 point deduction from your major project.