Current Approaches to Composition and Literature

English 3375.201 Fall 2014

T/TR 9:30-10:45

Classroom: OCNR 241

Dr. Cristina Kirklighter

Office Phone: (361) 825-2263

Office: Faculty Center 254

E-mail: cristina.kirklighter@tamucc.edu

Office Hours: TR 11:00-12:00, 2:00-3:00; W 10:30-11:30

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 learn to communicate. They will

- Analyze information
- Analyze purpose and audience
- Create rhetorically effective professional documents

These learning outcomes stem from 21st Century Technical Communication Skills:

A 21st century technical communicator creates documents that communicate effectively, persuasively, and concisely. Specifically, the technical communicator

- solves problems to help achieve an organization’s goals
- addresses a particular user/purpose/task
- acquires, evaluates, and applies core knowledge and designs content
- integrates cultural and ethical considerations
- promotes collaboration
- incorporates appropriate combination(s) of text or graphics
- uses appropriate tools/media technology

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 Technological 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 the style sheet in your major

• Editing/Revising Professional Techniques and Checklists
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 or applies to the project you or others are working on at the time. You will create a blog each week on Blackboard that responds to a technical writing blog. As some examples of technical writing blogs, you might look at I’d Rather be Writing and Kai Weber who also lists a number of other technical writing blogs on her page. 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 Blogging Best Practices. Each week I will ask for at least two volunteer students (everyone will have a few times 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 given problems with Blackboard.

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 Corpus Christi Literacy Council on several assignments. We will be working on enhancing their website, social media, and other related projects, where we’ll use our expertise as technical writing students to serve the mission and goals of the Corpus Christi Literacy Council.

Major Assignment Description and Components

For the major assignment in the class, we will be collaboratively serving the writing needs of the Corpus Christi Literacy Council. They have a 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 Corpus Christi Literacy Council. If I discover that a student is not pulling his/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**

Technical Writing Blog Follower Assignment 15%

Quizzes 10%

Editing Professional Documents 20%

Proposal 15%

Progress Report 5%

Project Work Documents and Oral Presentations 35%

**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.

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 or we can talk via phone. 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.

**Attendance/Participation**

**Absences:**

As a professional 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, group work, and course grade penalties as listed below.

If you plan on being absent from my class, just as you would in a professional workplace, you will need to inform me and your group members (if you are working on an assignment for that day together) via e-mail or phone once you know that you will not be able to attend class. This is what a professional is expected to do when he/she is absent. If you do not do this, you will not be able to make up any in-class assignments for that day or turn in anything that is due on that day thereby receiving a late penalty for your work. To be considered present, you must be on time (unless there are extenuating circumstances that meet with my approval), participate in all class activities, and remain in class for the entire period. Leaving early, coming in significantly late, taking noticeable breaks in the middle of class, or not fully participating (for example frequent texting and facebooking, studying for other classes, nonrelated class computer use, etc.) during in-class work will result in an absence and zero credit for any in-class work that day. Five absences for a MW schedule will constitute a failure of the course. Attendance is taken in my class via a sign-up sheet so as to document the absences.

**Deadlines**

As a professional, 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 an e-mail no later than the due date of the assignment. Such requirements will better prepare you for the deadline responsibilities that you will have in your classroom and to various co-workers and school administrators.
I treat this class as if it is a professional workplace, and I expect you to be a professional. What is expected of you at your place of employment is what I expect of you in class.

**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.

**In Class Conduct**

Please refrain from using your computers or phones for unrelated work during class. I will periodically ask everyone to turn off their monitors during some non-related computer or lectures and put away their phone, so we can avoid temptations to check our e-mails, facebook, etc. Cell phones should only be used for research or other class related activities in class.

**University Policies**

**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 Website at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](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.

**Notice to Students with Disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. You can also visit their website at [http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/](http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/) and contact them via e-mail at disability.services@tamucc.edu.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance (361)825-5816.

**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.

Dropping a Class

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Please be aware that you are allowed 6 drops in your entire undergraduate career, so these decisions must be made carefully. November 15, Friday is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

The University will not tolerate plagiarism or any other form of intellectual or academic dishonesty. Violations of academic honesty will be processed under the Procedure for Academic Misconduct Cases 13.02.99.C3.01 (see http://ses.tamucc.edu/grievances.html and the Student Code of Conduct http://judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu/assets/2013-2014StudentHandbook.pdf). All cases of academic misconduct are recorded in the student’s file. Consequences are determined by the faculty member and/or the Academic Integrity Hearing Panel. It is sometimes difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is. Students sometimes commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes

• using the work of another as your own,

• down loading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,

• using resource materials without correct documentation,

• using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation, or

• turning in a researched paper without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

Acceptance of Diversity We are the most diverse campus, 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, class, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, and/or religion. Respecting and accepting difference is vital to your success in this class, on this campus, as a future teacher in your own classroom, and in the global community. You are also responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state, and federal government.
Tentative Class Plans

Week One

Student Introductions. Review of course and syllabus. Introduction to Corpus Christi Literacy Council. Instructions on how to create Blogs in Blackboard and review sample blogs.

Week Two

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 Corpus Christi Literacy Council. Blog follower entry on Blackboard due by the end of the week (see assignment for details).

Week Three

Read Chapter 17 and 18 in TCRCA to help form collaborative guidelines for this class. Read Chapter 15 in TCRCA. Review Corpus Christi Literacy Council Documents. Blog follower entry on Blackboard and two volunteer informal presentations. Distribute handout entitled “Understanding the Writing Context in Organizations.”

Week Four

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

Week Five

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

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

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

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

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

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

Week Eleven

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

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

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

Final editing workshop for major project and Pecha Kucha presentations. Pecha Kucha rehearsal. It is mandatory for everyone to attend both the rehearsal and oral presentation next week Please e-mail me your Pecha Kucha presentation before your presentation. I will be e-mailing the project evaluation form to the client.

Week Fifteen

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

Final Exam Week

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 4th via e-mail, and you will send a memo to me responding to this evaluation. Failure to respond via this memo will result in a 10 point deduction from your major project.