ENGL 3301.20 (Fall 2019)

Technical and Professional Writing

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Office Hours: TR 10:00-11:00 am & 1:00-2:00 pm; W 5:00-7:00 pm

I maintain a consistent web presence and am available via email and in person. I will commonly respond to Blackboard or email requests within 24 hours, but you can expect a response within 3 days.

Catalog Description

English 3301 is an introductory technical writing course designed to help students gain practical experience in finding and interpreting information and writing reports and documents for specialized audiences in the professional world.

Required Materials


Required Technologies

- Basic emailing, web browsing, and word processing skills
- A computer with reliable Internet access and a reliable office software suite. TAMUCC provides students with access to Office 365; visit it.tamucc.edu/Office365/Office365.html
- Access to Blackboard, TAMUCC's Learning Management System (LMS), bb9.tamucc.edu/webapps/login/. Visit iol.tamucc.edu/techreq.html to determine computer requirements for using Blackboard

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:
1. Create documents (written/visual/multimodal) by using effective and appropriate rhetorical methods and strategies in writing
2. Create documents (written/visual/multimodal) by choosing and using appropriate strategies in a variety of genres to achieve specific purposes with specific audiences
3. Create documents (written/visual/multimodal) by locating, selecting, assessing, and analyzing information sources, both print and digital, and integrate and document sources appropriately

About the Course

Technical and professional communicators work alone and with others to prepare documents and presentations that communicate information within business, government, industry, and the scientific community—really, any workplace setting. Technical communicators respond to a problem, whether that is in providing instructions to users of a technology, writing a workplace
report, making recommendations to improve a process, presenting information on a Web page, or reporting on scientific findings. In some industries and companies, “tech writer” is a particular job title or even an entire department of job titles, while in others such writing is just one part of the work that everyone does.

Because of the wide proliferation of writing and publishing technologies in recent decades, nearly every professional is a technical writer.

This course is designed to help you learn to
1. analyze communication contexts in terms of audiences, purposes, and situations,
2. create professional documents that solve problems and improve situations,
3. analyze and apply the ethical responsibilities involved in professional and technical writing,
4. use methods for audience analysis and participatory design, and
5. write and design multimodal documents that audiences and stakeholders find effective, convincing, and usable.

**Graded Activities**

Complete descriptions, requirements, evaluation criteria, and rubrics are available on Blackboard. I will use the grading scale as described in the University *Catalog*.

**Major Project 1: Writing in Your Field Reference Sheet**

20% of final grade

You will survey the kinds of real, working writing individuals in your intended career do and arrange the information for visual reference. You will provide a short description of each different kind of writing, identify typical audiences and purposes, and classify the kinds of writing, matching the items to the chapters in our textbook and resources online via hyperlinks. This chart will be the basis of our next piece of writing, the research report, and a go-to resource once you are in the workplace.

**Major Project 2: Writing in Your Field Research Report**

30% of final grade

You will choose three documents from your reference sheet, locate real, working examples of those documents, and complete an in-depth analysis of each document’s genre and rhetorical features. Your report will describe and draw conclusions about the important purposes, audiences, genres, styles, and other specialized aspects of writing in the field you choose, describing them to someone outside or unfamiliar with that field.

**Application and Homework Activities**

30% of final grade

Explore and practice methods, strategies, and principles of technical communication. Generally, these activities will consist of reading assigned texts, analyzing or creating a document, and working collaboratively with your classmates.

**Chapter Quizzes**

10% of final grade

Show your mastery of material from the textbook through reading quizzes based on each chapter. Practice quizzes are available at the publisher’s website.
Drafts and Peer Review

10% of final grade

Work through multi-phase drafting and review processes with outside readers. Peer review is an opportunity to learn from and with your classmates, rather than just a chance to yell at someone else for using semicolons incorrectly. We will use these sessions to review and work with each other’s documents in a supportive and collaborative environment, as well as to get feedback from your instructor.

Course Schedule

A detailed weekly schedule is available on Blackboard.
Post homework exercises to Blackboard before class on the day assigned.
Blackboard chapter quizzes are due by 11:59 pm on Fridays (2 per week)
Due dates listed on this schedule are tentative; I will provide you with written changes if needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| 1    | Aug 27, 29 | Discuss Chapter 1 (What is PTW?)  
Discuss Chapter 2 (Audience and Purpose)  
Ch 1 quiz due by Friday on Bb |
| 2    | Sep 3, 5 | Discuss Chapter 3 (Ethics)  
Discuss Chapter 7 (Correspondence)  
Ch 2, 3, and 7 quizzes due by Friday on Bb |
| 3    | Sep 10, 12 | Discuss Chapter 5 (Document Design)  
Discuss Chapter 8 (Reports)  
Ch 5 and 8 quizzes due by Friday on Bb |
| 4    | Sep 17, 19 | Discuss Chapter 4 (Style)  
Discuss Chapter 9 (Proposals/Progress Reports)  
Ch 4 and 9 quizzes due by Friday on Bb |
| 5    | Sep 24, 26 | Discuss Chapter 6 (Visuals)  
Discuss Chapter 10 (Manuals)  
Ch 6 and 10 quizzes due by Friday on Bb |
| 6    | Oct 1, 3 | Midterm Recap: What is Technical Communication, Again?  
Friday week 6 is the last day to submit late ETC activities and quizzes |
| 7    | Oct 8, 10 | Document design workshop and deep dive  
Draft review for Project 1 |
| 8    | Oct 15, 17 | Deep focus: Active/Passive Voice & Parallelism  
**Major Project 1 due** |
| 9    | Oct 22, 24 | Style and readability: Word choice in technical communication  
Begin Project 2 analysis |
| 10   | Oct 29, 31 | Audience: Needs and Values  
Outline draft for Project 2 due |
| 11   | Nov 5, 7 | Rhetorical Situations & Genres  
Draft review for Project 2  
**Nov 8: Last day to drop a class** |
| 12   | Nov 12, 14 | Deep dive on reports, progress reports, and professional reporting |
| 13   | Nov 19, 21 | Information Architecture: Headings, Paragraphs, and Sections |
**Course Conduct**

In general, our class meetings will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, and computer time or small-group activity. My ultimate goal is **praxis**, putting our collective knowledge into action, usually in individual and workshop-style activities (inventing, composing, revising, reviewing, or otherwise doing and making) and large- or small-group roundtable discussions. This means that it is vital that you come to class each day prepared to work and prepared to interact with myself and your colleagues in ways that contribute to our learning goals.

I expect a lot out of you—but I also have high expectations for myself. I promise that I will

- Be on time and prepared for discussion.
- Read everything that I’ve asked you to read.
- Do what I can to make the material interesting and class engaging.
- Provide prompt, helpful feedback to your written work.
- Be flexible and willing to make changes as the need arises.

**Come to class meetings prepared**

Along with writing materials for note-taking and in-class activities, bring your textbooks and other required materials to class each day having read and taken notes on all texts assigned on the course schedule. I expect that you will read assigned chapters or articles prior to class; this will ensure your ability to contribute to discussions and other activities.

In discussion, remember to listen as well as speak. Pay attention to whomever is speaking in discussion and refrain from working on material for other classes. Participate when it is your turn to speak; share your opinion, expertise, or question, and respect the opinions and experiences of others.

**Understand late work and revision policies**

Post assignments on time. I am understanding of occasional late work, but this should not be habitual. It is up to you to prioritize learning activities in this class.

- Habitual late homework (beyond three times) will receive 10% point reductions
- Late work for major projects will earn a 10% reduction in grade
- I will not accept major projects more than 5 calendar days late
- The last day to submit late work will be posted in Blackboard

I am on your side, but you are responsible for you: keep up with your assignments and your grades. It is not the teacher’s responsibility to tell you what you have or haven't turned in. Grades will be available in Blackboard so all you have to do is regularly check to make sure you have grades posted for all work.
I accept revisions on major projects, provided that you meet formally with me to discuss feedback on your project, a revision agenda, and a timeline for completion. You can find the complete revise and resubmit policy on Blackboard.

**Practice professional communication in email**

Email is among the more important professional genres we use today, and I expect you will use your university email account for this course. As the class is a professional writing course, I expect that you will practice what we’re learning. We will explore this further in the course, but professional email includes a **meaningful subject line** and a **complete inquiry**, and uses **language appropriate for the writer’s context**.

- Unprofessional emails will result in non-response.
- I will email announcements and information via blackboard to your islander.tamucc.edu email account. You may set up email forwarding if you wish, but you are responsible for checking email. Missing emails is not an excuse for missed work or announcements.
- I will commonly respond to Blackboard or email requests within 24 hours, but you can expect a response within 3 days. I generally do not answer emails over the weekend.

**Learn to use our technology**

As you might rightly assume, a course titled “Technical and Professional Writing” is entirely imbricated with technology: the class is about technology, it meets in a computer lab, and it works because of, as a result of, and in dialogue with technology. This means a handful of things:

- **Tech happens.** Difficulty with your computer or technology is not an acceptable excuse for late work, whether those are reading responses or one of our major projects. Practice agency by backing up your work, ensuring your technology is updated within your means and the expectations of coursework, and saving early & often.

- **You should learn something new about digital technology.** While I do not expect you to become an expert in HTML5 in fifteen weeks, for example, I do expect you to push beyond your current technical knowledge. The days of separating technical knowledge from literacy knowledge are long past. Ultimately, you are responsible for your command of technology as well as course content. I will help you do this and provide resources to support you, but if you are having difficulty it is your responsibility to a) ask for help and b) look for tutorials and supplementary material that work for you (this is but one small example of an important idea, a “rhetoric of personal agency,” which we’ll talk about during the term).

- **Learn from failure.** A spirit of inquiry and experiment is just as important as particular technical skills in this course. "Showing up" with broken or malfunctioning work is far better than showing up with an excuse, and sometimes we can learn more from your broken webtext than some slick Squarespace module. Your honest effort is more interesting to me than perfect work.

- **Manage your distraction machine.** I do not have a cell phone or laptop policy for managing personal technology in the classroom. Mobile devices are powerful writing devices and can be useful personal research tools—and I will occasionally ask you to use them as such. Some students need their mobile device to augment their hearing or note-taking, and other students may have child care or emergency responsibilities that will necessitate discreet use of cell phones. I expect that you will participate and be present in class, but your attention is ultimately your responsibility and your screen is
your business. Importantly, be sensitive to how your technology use may distract other students in the room.

**Course Policies**

**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.

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 at (361) 825-5816.

**Statement of Civility**
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Attendance**
The discussions and work we will undertake during class time are critical to your success in the course. I fully expect you to come to class for every class meeting. I also have three young children and realize that life invades school. Things occasionally happen that may keep you from coming. I will excuse absences for illness, for personal emergency, and for University-related business as defined by the current *Student Handbook*, provided you furnish some documentation. You are responsible for making arrangements for make-up work for excused absences.

- If you miss two classes, your final grade will be penalized.
- If you miss four or more classes without reasonable explanation, you run the risk of failing the course.
- Two tardies will be counted as one unexcused absence.

**Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the
work of another as one’s own work.)

In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in:

- first offense = no credit for assignment
- subsequent offenses = failure of class

In general terms, 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." Instances of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi General Academic Policies and Regulations as listed in the current catalog.

**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 or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. 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. November 8, 2019, is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Grade Appeal Process**

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, 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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at:


For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean's office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html).

**Statement of Academic Continuity**

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites,
and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

**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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.