

English 421

Technical Writing: Reader-Centered Communication

Sections: 3901/8901
Spring 2006

Instructor: Allen Brizee
Office: Heavilon 209
Office Hours: MW 10:00-11:00
Mailbox: Heavilon 324
Email: hbrizee@purdue.edu
When you email me,
write our course number
in the subject line.

Required Texts and Course Materials

- ***Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach*, 6th Edition by Paul V. Anderson**
- ***Technical Communication Textbook Website:* <http://english.heinle.com/anderson/>**
- **Course Reading Packet, *Rhetoric in Technical Communication:* <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~hbrizee/Website/hbrizeehome1.htm>**
- ***The Brief Penguin's Handbook*, 2nd Edition by Lester Faigley**

Course Description

This course introduces you to the theory and practice of technical writing and its applications in professional settings. In this class, you will learn how to use technical communication in a variety of writing situations, and you will compose documents that solve problems or help readers make decisions. You will also learn how to apply technical writing procedures to best determine the purpose of your documents, analyze your audiences, and adjust your writing to fulfill your readers' needs.

"When the American Society for Engineering Education asked 4,057 engineers to identify subjects needed for professional careers in industry, more respondents named technical writing than named any other subject except management practices."

---Paul V. Anderson, "What Survey Research Tells us About Writing at Work"

Please note that this syllabus is subject to change. I will notify you of changes in class. By remaining in this course, you agree to the terms and requirements included in this syllabus.

Course Objectives

Course objectives include the following:

- Identify and explain workplace writing forms, methods, and issues
- Identify and explain the roles technical writing plays in the workplace
- Identify and explain the role rhetoric plays in technical writing
- Write clear, coherent prose that meets the needs of your audience
- Master the style and citation requirements expected in professional writing
- Work effectively in teams
- Produce articulate and well-developed documents that solve problems and stimulate action
- Adapt your writing skills to meet the demands of ongoing changes in the workplace culture.

Course Policies

Attendance

This course is a studio writing lab, and so attendance is required. If you miss a day with class work, or a quiz, you cannot make up the work completed in class unless you have a medical excuse. If you miss class for medical reasons, you must show me a doctor's note. If you are absent, please contact another student to stay current on notes and assignments. If you miss more than *four* classes, your class participation grade will drop *substantially*. If you miss eight classes, you fail the course.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism in this course will result in an automatic zero for the assignment. Also, I will report plagiarism to the Honor Court. *You* are responsible for reading and understanding the Purdue University Honor Code.

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades are given only by contract and only to students who have regularly attended and participated in the course and completed all work of the course except for the last assignment(s).

Class Preparation and Participation

Come to class having completed the assignments. You will discuss and write about the assignments in groups or with the entire class. Class participation is vital to your grade as you create documents in an interactive, collaborative, and professional setting.

Submitting Assignments

Deadlines are important in the workplace. Each assignment will have a specified due date and, unless stated otherwise, will be due by the end of class on that date. If you must turn in late work, I will accept *one* assignment past the due date. However, the late assignment will be reduced by one letter grade. Please DO NOT email me assignments unless we have arranged otherwise.

Cell Phones

Please turn off your ringers at the door. Use cell phones for medical or family emergencies only.

Course Requirements

Course Portfolio

Some students will provide a course portfolio at the end of the semester for review, so save your work. I use these Portfolios to maintain high-quality writing instruction. Course Portfolios will contain all the major work you complete for this class.

Homework and Daily Writing Assignments

These assignments are as follows: homework for points, homework from the *Technical Communication* website, classroom quizzes, and in-class work.

Homework for points: the Persuasive Memo, the Flyer, the Set of Instructions, and the Review.

Homework from the *Technical Communication* website is at <http://english.heinle.com/anderson/>.

Quizzes will cover lectures and text reading as well as grammar/mechanics.

In-class Work is designed to stimulate your thoughts on the reading assignment, and it allows you to practice technical writing techniques.

Major Assignments

Major assignments will be typed with 1-inch margins. You must include proper documentation with *all* of your assignments. You may revise Project 1 for a grade change averaged between your original grade and your revised grade. The five major assignments are as follows:

1. Résumé, Job Application Letter, and Audience Analysis
2. Semester Project Proposal with Audience Analysis
3. Semester Project Seed Document (Seed Document developed by Dr. Stephen Bernhardt)
4. Semester Project Oral Presentation with Slides
5. Semester Project: Problem-Solution or Empirical Research Report with Letter of Transmittal

I grade assignments based on the system below with letter grades assigned according to the following: Structure, Design, Style, and Grammar/Mechanics.

STRUCTURE (4/10 pts)	DESIGN (4/10 pts)	STYLE (4/10 pts)	GRAMMAR/MECHANICS (4/10 pts)
Correct formatting and organization, effective persuasiveness based on writing genre and document purpose/audience	Strict adherence to the HATS and CARP methodologies, usable, professional pages, and accurate graphics	Reader-centered prose, active/passive voice, sentence-level organization, syntax, word choice	Punctuation, proofreading, correct citation. <i>Please do not underestimate the value of correct grammar and mechanics in your professional documents.</i>

Please note that your grade drops every *five* errors in each of these categories. If you receive a grade of C- or below on Project 1, you *must* visit the Purdue Writing Lab to work on your revision in order to receive credit for the revision. Always keep a copy of your drafts.

The grading scale for the major assignments 1 - 4 (worth 20 points each) is on the left. The grading scale for assignment 5 (worth 50 points) is on the right:

Projects 1 - 4		Project 5	
20-19 A	15-14.6 C	50-47.5 A	37.5-36.5 C
18.8-18 A-	14.4-14 C-	47-45 A-	36-35 C-
17.8-17.2 B+	13.8-13.2 D+	44.5-43 B+	34.5-33 D+
17-16.6 B	13-12.6 D	42.5-41.5 B	32.5-31.5 D
16.4-16 B-	12.4-12 D-	41-40 B-	31-30 D-
15.8-15.2 C+	11.9-0 F	39.5-38 C+	29.5-0 F

Please reference the section titled The Workplace Bottom Line in your Course Reading Packet for an explanation of these letter grades and their “real life” translations.

Rough Drafts

You are required to bring rough drafts to the Writing Workshops. Since revision is important to the writing process, rough drafts for major assignments 1 - 3 will be worth 4 points of the assignment grade. The rough draft for major assignment 5 will be worth 10 points of the assignment grade.

Conferences

There is one 20-minute group conference for the Semester Project Proposal. Also, you must schedule one 30-minute individual conference at some point during the semester. You may also schedule conferences during office hours.

Writing for Change: Student Work on the Course Website

Students may post their work on the course website as project portfolios and archive material. In addition, an independent, outside source will judge the posted work and the winner will receive a git certificate on the last day of class. I'll discuss this more in class.

Interview Role Playing

Toward the end of the semester, we will role play employer/potential employee interview sessions to give you practice in this, sometimes nerve-wracking, rhetorical situation.

Assignment and Course Grading

The tables below detail assignment grade weight and the course grading scale.

Assignment Grading Weight

Five Major Assignments		
	Résumé, Application Letter, Audience Analysis	20 Points Total (4 points for the rough)
	Semester Project Proposal	20 (4 points for the rough)
	Semester Project Seed Doc.	20 (4 points for the rough)
	Semester Project Presentation	20 (10 points - slides, 10 - presentation)
	Semester Project	50 (10 points for the rough)
Homework for Points		
	Persuasive Memorandum	5
	Flyer	5
	Set of Instructions	5
	Article Review	5
Quizzes		
	Chapter Quizzes 1-4	20 (5 points each)
	G/M Quizzes 1 & 2	10 (5 points each)
Class Participation	Discussion, In-class Writing, G/M Minutes, Homework	5
Interview Role Playing		15
		200 Points Total

Course Grading Scale

95-100%	A	190-200 points
94-90	A-	189-180
89-86	B+	179-172
85-83	B	171-166
82-80	B-	165-160
79-76	C+	159-152
75-73	C	151-146
72-70	C-	145-140
69-66	D+	139-132
65-63	D	131-126
62-60	D-	125-120
59-0	F	119-0

Accommodations

If you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you have emergency medical information to share, please let me know as soon as possible.

The Writing Lab at Purdue

The Writing Lab is located in Heavilon Room 226. To make an appointment, call (765) 494-3723. I encourage you to use our Writing Lab as much as possible. Simply put, it is one of the best Writing Labs in the country. If you receive a grade of C- or below on Papers 1 or 3, you *must* visit the Writing Lab to work on your revision. Remember to bring your student ID to the appointment.

Class Schedule

Reading assignments and exercises are *due on the day they appear on the schedule*.

Schedule Key

TC = *Technical Communication*, RP = Reading Packet, CQ = Chapter Quiz,

GQ = Grammar/Mechanics Quiz, HW = Homework due on that day

Date	Reading	Assignment/Exercise
	Week 1: Course Introduction, Communication and Your Career	
Thurs 1/27		Class Introduction Syllabus Review
	Week 2: Reader-Centered Prose, Résumés and Job Application Letters, Developing an Effective Style	
Tues 2/1	TC Website: Chapter 1 Overview, Chapter 1 PowerPoint Presentation, Syllabus	In-class Writing HW: <i>Part 1</i> , Ex 1.1
Thurs 2/3	TC Contents & Chapter 1 (xii-21), TC Chapter 2 (22-51) Assign Project 1: The Résumé and Job Application Letter Sign Up for Four-Person Editing Teams	HW: Ex 2.3
	Week 3: Résumés and Job Application Letters (con't), Defining Your Communication's Objectives	
Tues 2/8	TC Chapter 10 (238-261) RP The Big Seven HATS Overview, JAL Review	CQ 1 (Syllabus, Ch 1, 2) HW: Ex 2.4 (2.4 as <i>warm up</i> for Project 1)
Thurs 2/10	RP Important Questions to Ask to Define Objectives Résumé Review	Ex 10.2
	Week 4: Planning for Usability, Planning Persuasive Strategies, Rhetoric in Technical Communication	
Tues 2/15	TC Chapter 3 (55-77) Assign Projects 2-5: The Semester Project Assign the Persuasive Memorandum Homework	Project 1 Workshop
Thurs 2/17	Meet in McKeldin Library Rm. 2109 TC Chapter 4 (81-96) RP The Fallacies Sign Up for Four-Person Semester Workgroups	Project 1 Due
	Week 5: Rhetoric in Technical Communication (con't), Drafting Prose Elements	

Date	Reading	Assignment/Exercise
Tues 2/22	RP Rhetoric in Technical Communication, Inductive and Deductive Reasoning	CQ 2 (Ch 3, 4, 5) HW: 5.6
Thurs 2/24	TC Chapter 5 (97-123) TC Chapter 7 (161-188) Workgroup Meetings Document Design Handout for Semester Project	CQ 3 (RP, Ch 7) HW: Persuasive Memo Bring Three Semester Project Ideas to Class
Week 6: Drafting Visual Elements, Visual Rhetoric		
Tues 3/1	TC Chapter 8 (213-230) TC Chapter 9 (231-237) Workgroup Conferences	GQ 1
Thurs 3/3	TC Chapter 11 (265-298) Workgroup Conferences "Patients, Medicines, and Information"	CQ 4 (Ch 8, 9)
Week 7: Proposals		
Tues 3/8	TC Chapter 12 (321-344), TC Ref. Guide: 13 Graphics Workgroup Conferences	HW: Ex 11.1 (Computer)
Thurs 3/10	TC Chapter 20 (474-532) TC Chapter 21 (533-553) Workgroup Conferences	GQ 2
Week 8: Proposals (con't)		
Tues 3/15	TC Chapter 13 (347-359) Assign the Flyer Homework "Best Practices for Developing Sales Proposals"	Project 2 Preliminary Workshop
Thurs 3/17	Workgroup Meetings	
Spring Break – Have fun but be safe!		
Tues 3/22	Spring Break	
Thurs 3/24	Spring Break	
Week 9: Proposals (con't), The Seed Document		
Tues 3/29	"Using Writing to Guide Science" (The Seed Document)	HW: Flyer
Thurs 3/31		Project 2 Workshop 2
Week 10: Creating and Delivering Oral Presentations		
Tues 4/5	Workgroup Meetings	Project 2 Due
Thurs 4/7	TC Chapter 17 (403-421) Workgroup Meetings	
Week 11: Creating Instructions		
Tues 4/12	Workgroup Meetings	
Thurs 4/14	TC Chapter 22 (554-578) Assign the Instructions Homework Workgroup Meetings	
Week 12: The Seed Document (con't)		
Tues 4/19		Project 3 Workshop
Thurs 4/21	Workgroup Meetings	Project 3 Due
Week 13: Interview Role Playing		
Tues 4/26	Interview Role Playing	HW: Instructions
Thurs 4/28	Interview Role Playing	
Week 14: Oral Presentations		
Tues 5/3	Presentations Assign the Article Review Homework	Project 4 Due (slides)
Thurs 5/5	Presentations	

Date	Reading	Assignment/Exercise
	Week 15: Oral Presentations (con't)	
Tues 5/10	Presentations	HW: Summary
Thurs 5/12	Last Day of Class, Finish Presentations	
Sat 5/14	Final Exams Begin	
Fri 5/20	Final Exams End	Project 5 Due