



WRIT 3562 Technical and Professional Writing (sec 075) Fall 2012

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3562 Online Syllabus

Overview

Technical and professional writing (or workplace writing) communicates business, technical, or scientific information to readers or users who need this information to solve some problem or complete some task. Technical communication or workplace writing should be understood as persuasive texts that influence the decisions and actions of humans inside and outside of workplace settings.

Writing Practice

Any study of workplace writing will require not only knowledge of the types of writing that happen in the workplace, but also practice with the skills needed in order to compose such texts. This writing-intensive course will introduce students to and allow them to practice the following:

1. The genres of workplace writing--Introducing the various written genres of workplace communication, such as memos, letters, proposals, instructions, and reports, as well as understanding the features that constitute these texts types.
2. The skills of rhetorical and audience analysis--Analyzing writing situations, multiple purposes, and potential audiences in order to create texts that solve problems.
3. The spatial design of visual and verbal information--Understanding and working with the concepts of text arrangement and document design.
4. The features of "readable" written communication--Practicing the skills necessary to produce writing that is as grammatically-correct and as stylistically-appropriate as possible.

Goals

By the end of the course you should be able to do the following:

- Write workplace documents and appropriately apply features and genres of workplace writing such as memos, letters, proposals, definitions, instructions, and reports
- Produce writing that is grammatically correct and stylistically appropriate
- Clearly articulate rhetorical and audience analysis of writing situations, multiple purposes, and potential audiences for written texts (including global audiences)
- Conduct interview and internet research and evaluate the credibility of sources
- Write and compile a research-based report that addresses a specific problem or research question
- Plan, prepare, and deliver an oral presentation
- Visually design a document using principles of page design
- Create graphics such as charts and graphs that ethically display information
- Conduct user testing of instructional documents
- Understand ethics and its implications for technical and professional writing
- Revise and edit your work and that of your classmates so that your writing is energetic, stylistically appropriate, and grammatically correct
- Use a variety of writing technologies such as word processing, presentation software, blogs, wikis, discussion forums, Google Docs
- Constructively work with others on a collaborative assignment

Course Materials

1. The text for the course will be Richard Johnson-Sheehan's textbook, *Technical Communication Today*, 4th edition. Order the text immediately or pick it up at the [U of MN Bookstore](#).
2. You will need a microphone (or access to one) to record audio for your final presentation. Many computers have built in mics, or you may purchase a headset fairly inexpensively. If you are local, you may also

Navigation



use the [Smart Learning Commons](#) in [Walter Library](#).

Institutional Review Board

Because this course involves a research-based report in which you may conduct surveys and interviews of other people, this class follows guidelines for research as approved by the [UMN Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB). The IRB functions to protect human subjects who participate in research by requiring researchers to outline issues of risk, anonymity, and confidentiality in an informed consent form. Our class project is considered "[exempt research](#)" by the IRB, meaning that interview or survey research on topics related to this class are considered "minimal risk" to interview or survey participants. Your instructor can help you with the consent form and with designing appropriate questions. For further information, or for any inquiries, contact your instructor, or contact Director of Undergraduate Studies Dr. Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch (lkbreuch@umn.edu).

- [Research Methods Class Protocol](#) (doc)
- [Consent Form](#) (rtf)

Learning Online

We will rely on the following strategies as we move through the course:

- Writing drafts and final versions of several documents
- Completing graded and ungraded written exercises and assignments
- Editing classmates' work in assigned peer review groups
- Reading the text, emails from the instructor, and critiques of your drafts from the members of your peer review group
- Completing a quiz

Electronic Tools

- You are assigned to a peer review group. In each unit you will find your group's forum space listed under activities or assignments. Please use Word files to edit the work of your group using your group forum space.
- Please send all documents as Microsoft Word or PowerPoint files. As a student, you can purchase discounted Microsoft products [through OIT](#). (Certain restrictions apply.)
- Refer to the [Moodle orientation](#) for help in configuring your browser. If you follow the advice in the orientation, you should be able to navigate the course.

Peer Review Groups

You will be submitting a draft of all major assignments to your peer review group. Please respond within two days after you receive them so your group mates will have time to revise their work.

1. Use the Track Changes function in Word to edit. In addition, use the "Comment" function of MS Word to write any questions, suggestions, or comments. In MS 2007, look for the "Review" tab, and select "Insert Comments." In MS 2003, look for the "Insert" menu, and insert "Comments." For more help, see [Microsoft's instructions for using comments](#).
 - Go to Tools
 - Go to Track Changes
 - Select the features that allow you to track changes on screen and in print
 - Use the assigned color for your changes so your group will know who is sending what
 - For more help, see [Microsoft's instructions for using the function](#).
2. Write a 300-word summary end note at the end of your peer review in which you summarize your questions, comments, and corrections for the author.
3. Be a respectful, helpful editor. This exercise is critical to the course and is part of your overall grade for the course.
4. See Chapter 20 on Levels of Editing, for more information about being a careful and respectful editor.
5. See the [Peer Review Tutorial](#) for more guidance.

Disrespectful editors consider editing to be merely substituting what an author has said with their own ways of saying something. This approach is disrespectful because such editing techniques imply that the editors' writing voices are superior to the original author's voice. Disrespectful editing is a bit like disparaging someone's taste in restaurants, reading choices, cars, clothes, movies, etc.

Respectful editors point out successful strategies as well as indicate problems. Their editing includes noting problems such as the following:

- The purpose of a document is not clearly presented at the beginning

- The author did not keep the needs, background, preferences, or feelings of the audience in mind
- The document contains errors of fact
- A fact, concept, or argument needs more support, evidence, or explanation (need-to-know information)
- The document contains "nice-to know" information, i.e., information that is correct and perhaps interesting to the author but not critical for the audience
- A sentence is not clear or concise
- The author has made a grammatical or punctuation error

Attention: Note that correcting grammatical or punctuation errors is at the bottom of the list. Being correct is important. However, finding errors is much easier than analyzing writing strategies, so beginning editors often focus on errors. Don't! You will shortchange the members of the editing groups who will be evaluated on far more than the absence of errors.

Course Rules

- All late assignments will be lowered by one grade. See Moodle calendar for all due dates; contact your instructor in advance of the deadline if you need to request an extension.
- Plagiarism (using the words or visuals of others without attribution, whether you find them in print or on the Web) will result in a F for the course.
- All assignments must be attractively presented, spell-checked, grammar checked, and proofed. They must also conform to the format conventions modeled in the text.

Grades

Graded Assignments

Assignment	Point Value	Percent of Course
Consumer complaint letters and reflective memo	50 points	10%
Email message to instructor about analytical report	15 points	3%
Technical Definition and reflective memo	25 points	5%
Data Display and reflective memo	25 points	5%
Instructions and reflective memo about your user test	60 points	12%
Progress/Activity Report	50 points	10%
Analytical Research Report	100 points	20%
Power Point presentation	25 points	5%
Editing quizzes	50 points	10%
Peer Review Groups (contributions to your editing group)	50 points	10%
Discussion Forum Participation (all Unit Forum Assignments)	50 points	10%
Total	500 points	100%

The instructor will grade the final versions of assignments. This is what the grades will signify.

A An employer would be delighted to send this document because the writer has exceeded expectations by producing a particularly well-written, complete,

creative, and audience-specific solution to a problem.

B An employer would be comfortable sending out this document. It meets the needs of the audience and does not contain any serious problems.

C An employer would be reluctant to send this document because of one major problem and/or several minor ones.

D An employer would not send out this document.

F An employer would realize the writer missed the point of the assignment and the company's standards of excellence.

Grading Scale

A	94 – 100%	470 points and above
A-	90 – 93%	450 - 469
B+	87 – 89%	435 - 449
B	84 – 86%	420 - 434
B-	80 – 83%	400 - 419
C+	77 – 79%	385 - 399
C	74 – 76%	370 - 384
C-	70 – 73%	350 - 369
D+	67 – 69%	335 - 349
D	64 – 66%	320 - 334
D-	60-63%	300 - 319
F	59% and below	299 and below

Ungraded exercises

Although these exercises won't be graded, you will not be able to pass the course without completing them. Think of them as in-class activities.

How to Succeed in This Class

- This class requires that you stay on schedule. Several of the assignments are part of a large project, so if you get behind, you'll not enjoy the benefits of your peer review sessions. Also, you will be graded on class participation.
- Always carefully read the guidelines and evaluation criteria and grading forms for each assignment because you won't have the benefit of a class lecture to get you started.
- Consider the members of your peer review group as your key to success. Respond to their emails and edit their drafts promptly. If you run into problems, ask them for help or clarification.
- Check in to the course every day so you can pick up the latest communications from your instructor and your peer review group.

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