English 202C.25 — Technical Writing

Policies and General Information

Instructor

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Text

Lay et al. Technical Communication

Objectives

The main purpose of this course is to give you practice writing within workplace situations. You will write to a variety of audiences using a variety of common genres (including proposal and progress report). Along the way, we will talk about ways writing functions within the workplace and strategies you can use to make your writing most effective. Planning and revision will feature prominently, and you will be able to take advantage of in-class workshops to get feedback on your writing.

Help Beyond Class Time

I will be happy to help you at times other than our scheduled class meetings. You may find that e-mail is the most convenient way to reach me, since I check my messages frequently and usually reply quickly. When you want to talk about a draft, however, you might do best to visit me during my office hours so we can look at the draft together. Come to my office with one or more of your group members if you'd like. You are also welcome to call me at home, and you will usually find me there during working hours (expect for office hours, when you can reach me at the office, of course). Regardless of how you contact me, be prepared to direct my attention to specific issues that concern you, rather than just asking me to “see what I think” of a draft or idea.

Participation and Professionalism

In this course, I will hold you to standards similar to those in the workplace. This class will function as a group of workplace colleagues; I will serve as the manager. Your attendance at every class and group meeting is essential. I expect you to demonstrate a professional, serious attitude towards your work and the work of your classmates. You are responsible for reading and following course policies and assignment sheets, and for asking questions when you do not understand. You are also responsible for scheduling your work so that you can meet deadlines. I expect you to attend class every day, appropriately prepared and with readings or other requested materials in hand.
Your participation is especially important on workshop days, when your colleagues need your comments on their work. I expect you to provide thoughtful comments informed by the principles and strategies discussed in class. Missing one of these days without clearing the absence with me beforehand or receiving an excuse afterwards (see below) will lower your project grade one full letter (from B to C for example).

Of course, illness, family emergencies, religious holidays, or a university-sponsored activity can force you to miss classes. To request that an absence be excused, submit a memo (and attached documentation) no later than the first class period you return.

After three unexcused absences, your course grade will be dropped by one increment (B to C+ for example) for each subsequent absence, reflecting the burden your absence places on the class and on your education.

Late work delays everyone else and cannot be tolerated in the workplace or in this class. Late papers will be docked one full letter grade per late day. I will make no exceptions unless you seek and receive an extension in advance of the deadline. Failure to bring a reasonably complete draft on workshop days will also lower the final paper grade one full letter.

Copies of Papers
Always turn in two copies of your documents. One copy will be graded and returned to you; the other may be used, if you agree, in future course packets. (You will have an opportunity at the end of the semester to give or withhold permission for the use of your work in future packets.) I urge you to keep another copy of your work on file for your own reference.

Plagiarism
You will receive a copy of the departmental statement on plagiarism. If you have questions about the subject after reading the statement, please see me for more explanation. In addition, if you ever have questions about how or when to document a source, please ask me before turning in your paper. Plagiarism almost always leads to failure of this course and may lead to suspension or expulsion from the University. Always document all sources using an appropriate style guide.

Grading
Grades reflect the quality of your work, judged according to the detailed standards set by the English department. You will receive a copy of these standards. In this class, much of your work will also be judged according to the standards you and your classmates develop during the proposal phase.

Access
Penn State encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about access, please talk with me at the beginning of the semester.
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Course Projects

This semester, you and your fellow students will produce a final report that will benefit a local business, agency, or other group of people. The following projects are steps towards that goal.

Instructions (15%)
Since instructions are designed to help a reader complete a specific task, they are a good project to begin with in this course that will emphasize writing to readers. We will study readers and purposes, document design, and other concepts. The instructions assignment will allow you to practice applying these concepts in writing before we begin the major projects of the course.

Proposal (20%)
Your main task this semester will be to complete and report on some work that will benefit a group of people. The work can be technical or textual, and you will work with a group of classmates to complete it. After you and your group select a project, you'll write a proposal to convince me that the project is appropriate and feasible. Once I approve your proposal, you will be able to use it to guide the rest of your work this semester.

Progress report (10%)
In order to offer useful suggestions to your group, I need regular updates on your group's work (just as a manager would in the workplace). During the semester, you will write a progress report on behalf of your group. You will need to gather information from your group members (according to procedures your group will agree on), select the most relevant information, and present the information in an organized, persuasive manner.

Individual project (15%)
Your group's work will require, or be enhanced by, various writing tasks other than the proposal and final report. Your group may need to write frequently to the person or group who "commissioned" your work. You may realize that people other than the readers of your final report could benefit from some of the work you have done, if that work is presented in a brochure or instructions. Your project may involve significant research that should be documented in an intermediate report for circulation among your group. Together with your group, you will develop a list of the writing tasks that apply. You will be responsible for one of those tasks.

Short arguments (5%)
During the semester, we will have many decisions to make regarding the conduct of the course, group work, and writing. Rather than making those decisions unilaterally, I will solicit your input and will sometimes ask you to share your ideas with the class (via e-mail) as well as with me. You may also submit unsolicited short arguments for "extra credit," making sure that you engage my interest in your point.
Collaboration portfolio (10%)

As a group member, you will make phone calls, write e-mail and paper memos, conduct interviews, participate in meetings, and communicate in other ways with me, your group, and people outside this class. Keep records of all phone conversations and copies of all memos, e-mail, minutes, notes, and other correspondence. At the end of the semester, you’ll turn in an organized portfolio of these materials to document your role in the collaborative effort.

Final report (25%)

You and your group will be responsible for researching, writing, and revising a final report on your project. If the goal of your project is to produce a document needed by a local group, that document may serve as your final report. Otherwise, your report will explain the work you have completed.
# English 202C.25 — Technical Writing

## Syllabus

### Introduction to purpose and audience

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 11</td>
<td>Introduction to course</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Writing in the workplace; the rhetorical situation</td>
<td>pp. 12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Planning and purpose: the keys to useful writing</td>
<td>chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Instructions assignment; topic proposal assignment; introduction to audience analysis</td>
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</tbody>
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### Instructions

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>Audience: needs, attitudes, and knowledge; user audiences</td>
<td>chapter 3</td>
<td>T: topic proposal due (e-mail M by 3 pm for return in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>User audiences; superstructure and style options for instructions</td>
<td>chapter 14</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 1</td>
<td>Workshop on structure and style; document design</td>
<td>pp. 318-28,</td>
<td>T: one body section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and 378-85</td>
<td>R: illustration or page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Document design; workshop on design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Full draft workshop; group formation process</td>
<td></td>
<td>T: full draft of instructions W by noon: e-mail argument for group formation method</td>
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### Team-building

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Vote on group formation process; group formation; team-building</td>
<td></td>
<td>T: instructions due; bring textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Brainstorming for project ideas; collaboration: strategies for making it work</td>
<td>chapter 6</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Correspondence: the key to productive, low-stress collaboration; portfolio assignment</td>
<td>pp. 590-98,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>and 604-09</td>
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# Proposal

**Feb 22**
- Creation of team evaluation form; individual project assignment; interviewing strategies
- Contacting potential commissioners

**Mar 2**
- Introduction to proposals
- Progress reports

**7,9**
- Spring break

**14**
- Proposals: superstructure, problem statements
- Proposals, continued

**21**
- Persuasion: strategies for building credibility and convincing readers
- Persuasion, continued

**28**
- Full draft workshop: within groups
- Full draft workshop: between groups

**Mar 24**
- this week: agree on a project

**Mar 29**
- Progress reports

**Apr 2**
- this week: consider options for individual projects
  - F: group progress report

**Apr 7**
- persuasion: strategies for building credibility and convincing readers
  - chapter 5

**Apr 16**
- Full draft workshop: within groups
- Full draft workshop: between groups

**Apr 21**
- Persuasion, continued

**Apr 28**
- Full draft workshop: within groups
- Full draft workshop: between groups

**Apr 30**
- Full draft workshop: between groups

**May 2**
- Final report

# Final report

**Apr 4**
- Reports: project management, structures, assessing and synthesizing what you have learned
- Reports, continued

**Apr 11**
- Finding and emphasizing a main point; introductions

**Apr 13**
- Organization strategies

**Apr 18**
- Organization strategies, continued

**Apr 20**
- Document design for reports

**Apr 25**
- Full draft workshop

**Apr 27**
- Wrap-up

**May 2**
- Final report and collaboration portfolio due
- F: group progress report
- T: proposal due
- R: revised draft

**May 6**
- Reports, continued
- F: group progress report

**May 11**
- Finding and emphasizing a main point; introductions

**May 13**
- Organization strategies

**May 18**
- Organization strategies, continued

**May 20**
- Document design for reports

**May 25**
- Full draft workshop

**May 27**
- Wrap-up

**May 30**
- Final report and collaboration portfolio due

**Jun 3**
- Final report and collaboration portfolio due