ENGL 202C: Technical Writing
Course Descriptions and Policies Fall 1998

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Fall 1998
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Materials
Style for Students: Effective Writing in Science and Engineering by Joe Schall
Course Packet (available at Gnomon Copy)
Readings on Reserve in 116 Burrowes, Reserve Reading Room in Pattee Library

Course Description
The purpose of this course is to further familiarize you with and help you successfully
manage writing practices in your disciplinary and institutional communities now and in
the future. This course will revolve around the production of a number of technical
texts—written, oral, and on-line—in various rhetorical situations. Some of these
situations will be given to you, and some you will create. You will learn about different
technical genres and conventions, but more importantly you will learn rhetorical
strategies regarding the invention, arrangement, style, and delivery of technical texts.

Class will usually take place in a discussion or workshop format in which you will at
different times discuss assigned readings, perform in-class writing, give oral
presentations, critique sample documents, critique peers’ documents, and even lead
discussions and workshops. In short, this will be a highly interactive class, so come
prepared.

Because technical writing on the job is often collaborative, several of the assignments
will be group ones. Indeed, this class will involve more group work than most others.
One such assignment will be a real-world writing project in which groups of you write
instructions or manuals for the Center for Academic Computing (CAC) on campus. The
documents you produce will likely be used by CAC and its Penn State audience. This
assignment does not require you to have extensive computer experience. It will,
however, involve a few visits to CAC and some collaboration with the staff there.

Finally, this class will involve a small amount of work on the web. Here’s the URL for
the web site for our course:
http://www.courses.psu.edu/courseweb/courses/?course=engl202c_jbs148/
I will post updated schedules, assignments, and other materials here from time to time.
We will also use a web program called CourseTalk to post responses to readings and
discuss them outside of class. Here’s the URL to access our CourseTalk web site:
http://projects.cac.psu.edu/ct/
I’ll show you how to use this program in class.
Course Objectives

- Understand the discourse features in your technical disciplinary community.
- Specify the purposes, audiences, and uses of your writing.
- Identify the characteristics of your audiences—including their background, knowledge, needs, values, motivation, and context—in such a way that forms a sound basis for deciding how to write to them.
- Develop a range of writing processes appropriate to various writing tasks, including collaborative ones. Practice collaborating with peers and with professional workplace writers (at CAC).
- Arrange texts to be accessible and reader-centered. Organize material to raise and satisfy readers' expectations.
- Make the organization explicit through forecasting and transitional elements, headings, white space, typography, and other elements of page design.
- Learn appropriate superstructures and conventions for memoranda, letters, resumes, reports, proposals, instructions, and other technical texts.
- Produce several types of documents with real audiences and purposes and common in technical discourse communities.
- Design and use tables, figures, and other visual elements in a reader-centered way.
- Critique and revise your own documents to insure that they fulfill their purposes.
- Form a community of writers with your peers in which you provide one another with extensive written and oral feedback.
- Learn and practice strategies for planning and delivering oral technical presentations using PowerPoint.
- Practice using electric media—namely e-mail and the web—for organizational correspondence.

Grades

I will assess your work based on the English Department's grading criteria (in packet) as well as more specific criteria related to each assignment. In addition, I will expect your documents to meet workplace standards of delivery and mechanical/grammatical correctness. In the workplace, even a single spelling or grammatical error could jeopardize your credibility or ethos. When grading, I will ask one overriding question: Does this paper do its job effectively? That is, would your document have the intended effect on the readers you're addressing?

Your overall grade in the course will be determined according to the following distribution:

1) Short reports (two texts, from a case) .......................... 15%
2) Job Application Package (three texts) .......................... 15%
3) Real-world Writing Assign. (instructions or manual for CAC) ... 20%
4) Progress Report (of assign. 3, oral report with PowerPoint) ..... 10%
5) Proposal .................................................................... 15%
6) Style Group Presentations ............................................. 10%
7) Professionalism and Participation (includes web responses as well as performances in discussions, workshops, and groups) ........... 15%
The short reports and job application package will be individual assignments. All others will be collaborative. If I determine that your performance on a group assignment was less than 100%, you will receive a grade lower than the overall group grade.

**Text Requirements**
- Except for in-class writing and peer critiques, all texts must be word-processed.
- You should e-mail all correspondence to me (including comments, suggestions, responses, excuses) in memo format.
- All responses to readings must be posted on CourseTalk the day before the class discussion.
- Unless I instruct you otherwise, bring the original and two copies of drafts prepared for writing workshops. In the workplace, a draft is not a "rough" document that has been quickly thrown together, but a complete and polished text. If you miss a writing workshop, it is your responsibility to arrange a make-up workshop with two of your peers.
- In this course, as in the workplace, you must turn in work on time. Due dates are highlighted on the course schedule. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized at least one letter grade unless you have made arrangements with me well in advance.
- All drafts must be turned in with the final text. At the end of the semester, I will collect all of your writing to keep on file.

**Promptness and Attendance**
Promptness and attendance are crucial to a discussion/workshop class. It should go without saying that you should arrive at class early and prepared. Tardiness disrupts the kairos of the class. According to English Department policy, your letter grade may be lowered after three unexcused absences. After six absences you may fail the course. Attendance at writing workshops is imperative. Missing a workshop may result in a reduced grade for that assignment.

**Conferences**
I strongly encourage you to see me during my office hours or by appointment, especially when you have questions about an assignment, need help with a particular writing problem, want extra feedback on drafts, or have questions about my comments on your work. Of course, you can also correspond with me via e-mail. All groups will meet with me in my office at the beginning of the real-world and proposal assignments.

**Other Resources**
The Writing Center in 219 Boucke offers provides trained peer tutors who can help you with writing problems or assignments. Be sure to bring a copy of the assignment sheet when you visit. Another helpful resource is the internet. Several universities, in particular, have excellent on-line writing centers where you can get specific advice about different aspects of the writing process. Here are two such sites, both of which have links to other resources:
1) Purdue University  owl.trc.purdue.edu/by-topic-alternate.html
2) RPI Writing Center  www.rpi.edu/dept/llc/writecenter/web/home.html

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is taking someone else's published or unpublished words without crediting them. When it amounts to an attempt to deceive, plagiarism or academic dishonesty has dire consequences, as spelled out in the University's Policies and Rules booklet.

**Disabilities**
If you have a disability that might prevent you from meeting the requirements of this course or hamper your full participation, please see me as soon as possible so we can make necessary accommodations.
ENGL 202C: Technical Writing
Course Schedule Fall 1998

This is a tentative schedule; changes in the schedule will be posted on our class web site. Homework assignments are due on the following class meeting. For the readings, S=the Schall textbook, P=course packet, and R=readings on reserve.

W 8/26  Course introduction; What is technical writing?; Memo format
         Homework: Introductory memo in Scott mailbox by 8/27

F 8/28  Class introductions; What is technical writing?; Five canons
         Homework: R Reynolds article and response via e-mail by 8/30; S
         chapter 2

M 8/31  Discuss Reynolds article; Style groups
         Homework: P cases; S pp. 18, 131-133

W 9/2   Short reports assign.; Letters and memos

F 9/4   The rhetorical situation; Invention for cases

W 9/9   Invention for cases; Demonstration of CourseTalk
         Homework: R Redish article and response on web

F 9/11  Discuss Redish; Arrangement; Setting the context

M 9/14  Style group 1 on Conciseness
         Homework: Draft of short reports

W 9/16  Writing workshop for short reports

F 9/18  Short reports due; Job application package assign.
         Homework: S chapter 8; P samples

M 9/21  Invention for resumes

W 9/23  Invention for cover letters; Critique samples

F 9/25  Style group 2 on Active Style
         Homework: Draft of job application package

M 9/28  Writing workshop for job application package

W 9/30  Job application package due; Real-world writing assign.
         Homework: Web readings
F 10/2  Guest speaker from Center for Academic Computing
        Homework: P on collaboration

M 10/5  Collaboration

W 10/7  Collaboration; Group work on real-world assign.
        Homework: R on instructions

F 10/9  Group work on real-world assign.
        Homework: Visit CAC; Mini group proposal on web

M 10/12 Instructions and manuals
        Homework: P sample instructions and CAC
               document

W 10/14  Critique samples; Progress report assign.
        Homework: S pp. 15-17, 28-31; Group meeting with instructor

F 10/16  Group work on progress reports
        Homework: S chapter 5

M 10/19  Delivery and visuals

W 10/21  PowerPoint workshop

F 10/23  Style group 3 on Positive Tone

M 10/26  Progress report presentations

W 10/28  Progress report presentations

F 10/30  Group work on real-world assign.
        Homework: Draft of real-world assign.

M 11/2   Writing workshop for real-world assign.

W 11/4   Style group 4 on Coherence

F 11/6   Group work on real-world assign.
        Homework: New draft and poster of real-world assign.

M 11/9   Poster workshop with person from CAC
        Homework: P readings

W 11/11  Ethics of technical writing
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F 11/13</td>
<td><strong>Real-world writing assign. due; Proposal assign.</strong> Homework: S pp. 10-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 11/16</td>
<td>Proposals and RFPs</td>
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<td>W 11/18</td>
<td>Problem statements; Group work on proposals Homework: Mini group proposal on web</td>
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<td>F 11/20</td>
<td>Style group 5 on Inclusive Language Homework: Group meeting with instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 11/23</td>
<td>Group work on proposals Homework: P samples</td>
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<td>W 11/25</td>
<td>Critique samples</td>
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<td>M 11/30</td>
<td>Style group 6 on Emphasis Homework: Draft of proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 12/2</td>
<td><strong>Writing workshop for proposal</strong> Homework: R reading and response on web</td>
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<td>F 12/4</td>
<td>Making the transition to writing in the workplace</td>
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<td>M 12/7</td>
<td><strong>Proposals due; Final revisions</strong> Homework: S pp. 23-28, 160-169</td>
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<td>W 12/9</td>
<td>Formal reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 12/11</td>
<td><strong>Final revisions due; Course evaluation</strong></td>
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