English/Technical Communication 65

**Introduction to Technical Communication**

Summer 2011

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**Catalog Description**: Introduction to the role of the professional technical communicator in business and industry and practice in methods of developing technical documents.  Prerequisite: English 20.

Welcome to English/Technical Communication 65. This syllabus is your introduction to the basics of the course with the general guidelines and assignments. In order to succeed in the course, you will need to read the textbook, communicate effectively with other students and me, and spend some time with Blackboard.

**The Textbook.** *Technical Communication Today, 3rd Edition*, by Richard Johnson-Sheehan; to purchase as an e-book, try this link: <http://www.mypearsonstore.com/bookstore/product.asp?isbn=0205734847>

**Blackboard**. If you need any help accessing Blackboard or using the various tools, please first look on the Ed Tech web site before asking me: <http://edtech.mst.edu/support/blackboard9/index.html>

**Contact info**: northcut@mst.edu (You may want to memorize this – if you have problems with Blackboard, you’ll need to notify me so we can find a workaround). You’ll need to ask me any questions you have about assignments and grades. We’ll probably communicate a lot through Blackboard and email, possibly through Skype as well.

**Office hours**: 10 a.m. – noon, MWF.

**Requirements:** In order to succeed in this course, you will need access to a working computer with an Internet connection, word-processing programs, and software to listen to audio files in MP3 and view MP4 video; also, you will need to complete the assignments, participate in the online discussions, respond to classmates’ writing, and use the textbook effectively.

**Accommodation**: If assistance is required in order for you to participate fully, notify me immediately (right now) so that arrangements can be made.

**Academic standards**. The Missouri S&T student code of conduct should not be breached in this course, and if it is, I will lower your grade or remove you from the course at my discretion.

**Professionalism Guidelines for Postings:** A major part of this course will be messages you submit in Blackboard discussion board, replies to others’ discussion board postings, and comments on other students’ writing. We are a diverse group in this course, and we will need to learn from conflicts that may arise. We are also on a tight 8-week schedule, and need to keep moving through the assignments because the report at the end will take extra time for writing and grading.

Here the guidelines I ask you to observe as you make various types of postings:

* Post before the deadline; late postings of all types will be penalized by at least 10%
* Maintain a respectful tone and polite conversation, even with your friends
* Don’t write anything you would not want to have on television or on a billboard
* Write everything in such a way that if a prospective supervisor or employer were to read it, you would leave a good impression
* Cultural differences exist regarding directness, tone, and language use, so be as careful as you can in order not to surprise or offend anyone
* If you are offended, wait 24 hours before you privately and calmly explain your thoughts to the person who offended you, and then alert me if you would like me to intervene

PARTICIPATION

Your participation grade will be based not only on doing the assignments, but mostly on the quality and quantity of your contributions to our discussions in Blackboard. Your participation grade will be assigned by me based on your responses to questions that I post, your completion of assignments on or before the due date, and your observation of the professionalism guidelines.

**EVALUATION**

You will be graded based on the quality of your written assignments, including your responses to classmates, plus your participation in the course.

If an assignment is due on June 10, that means it must be submitted by midnight on June 10, or 11:59:59 p.m. We are in different time zones, so observe the time in **your zone** and we will all adjust to the differences. As assignments are graded, you will receive comments that reflect the criteria on the grading rubrics and your success in meeting the expectations for the assignment. You will often be given personalized pointers for improving your skills or adherence to the assignments.

**Participation**. I will be requiring that you comment on other students’ writing, and will offer you opportunities to ask and answer questions, chat about assignments, and otherwise interact with me and others in the course in postings to Blackboard and other ways. You will never be required to be online at a specific time, but I will ask that you contribute postings even if they aren’t attached specifically to a grade. Part of the participation grade is based on the timing of your postings, so watch Blackboard for the deadlines.

Participation grades will be calculated based on the following: number of postings; quality of postings; regularity of postings (at least two per week); appearance in chats and discussion boards; appearance for “office hours” with me online. You can’t go back and “make up” postings once the relevant assignment has been completed; that is, if a review is due on June 14 and you do not complete it, you will not receive credit for it if you complete it in July.

If an assignment is due in Blackboard, emailing me is **not** a good substitute – you will not receive credit for the assignment until you submit it in Blackboard. If you have connection problems, let me know, but use Blackboard for submitting work to be reviewed or graded.

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| **Assignment Number****Due Date** | **Chapters\* (and topics)** | **Points** |
| 1. Introduction June 10 | 1-3 (Communicating the Workplace; The Technical Writing Process; Readers and Contexts of Use) | 100 |
| 2. Ethics AssignmentJune 18 | 5, 7(Ethics; Research & Managing Info) | 100 |
| 3. Evaluating Technical CommunicationJune 24 | 6, 12, A8(Planning and Persuasion; Revising and Editing for Usability; Vague Pronouns) | 100 |
| 4. Complaint Email & LetterJuly 1 | 8, 13, 17(Organizing & Drafting; Using e-mail; Letters & Memos) | 100 |
| 5. Chronological and Functional Résumé July 8 | 15 (Career) | 60 |
| 6. Words, images, and designJuly 15 | 9, 10, 11(Plain Style; Designing Documents and Interfaces; Creating and Using Graphics) | 60 |
| 7. Proposals and instructionsJuly 20 | 20, 21(Instructions; Proposals) | 60 |
| 8. ReportsJuly 29 | 12, 14, 22, 23(Planning; Designing Websites; Activity Reports; Analytical Reports) | 260 |
| Participation throughout the course |  | 160 |
|  | **Total** | **1000** |

\*Note that when a chapter is assigned, you need only skim the chapter for unfamiliar material. Don’t complete the chapter exercises or projects.

Final Grading

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Points | Percentage | Grade |
|  Over 900 | 90+ | A |
|  800-899 | 80-89 | B |
|  700-799 | 70-79 | C |
| 600-699 | 60-69 | D |
| 599 and below | Below 59 | F |

**Course outcomes/objectives**

Here are the goals for the course:

* Understand and demonstrate audience awareness.
* Repurpose documents to fit different contexts of use.
* Practice informal and formal correspondence.
* Practice writing informal proposals and reports
* Recognize the concept of workplace culture as a factor in professional writing.
* Begin to understand ethics as related to document production, workplace behavior, and intellectual property.
* Work with word-processing and data presentation software such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.
* Learn about the field of technical communication as a discipline and a profession.
* Generate career-related materials such as a resume or cover letter.
* Recognize that most technical communication is multi-modal, incorporating words, images, video, sound, and aspects of interface or document design, all of which convey meaning.