Technical Writing: Writing at Work

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ENGL 213, Technical Writing
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Office Hours: (See attached schedule) AHUM 212
Required Materials: (See attached reading and writing assignment handout below.)

The Seven Rules of the Apocalypse!
1) **Be on time;**
2) **No electronics in class, no cell phones, no internet;**
3) **Turn your papers in on time and use the correct format;**
4) **Do all the readings and be prepared for reading quizzes as necessary;**
5) **Actively participate in class discussions and in-class writings (speak your mind);**
6) **Be prepared to think critically and imaginatively.**
7) **This is a three credit course. Students should expect to work two hours on assignments and preparation outside of class for every one hour of class time.**

Overall Course Objectives
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Develop and implement the concise writing style that is the basis of all technical writing;
2. Understand the stylistic differences between academic writing and technical writing;
3. Create texts using the stages of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing);
4. Apply a variety of strategies for revising texts to accomplish specific communication objectives and to meet the needs of specialized audiences;
5. Apply the technical writing style to a variety of formats, including business letters, resumes, manuals, proposals, and technical reports;
6. Work collaboratively with peers to critique assigned writing projects;
7. Understand the basics of page layout techniques;
8. Utilize computer-generated graphics as a means of conveying information;
9. Conduct Internet and/or library research as needed to complete assigned writing projects; and
10. Develop critical editing and proofreading skills to create polished, professional documents.

Major Topics
• Definition of technical writing and a discussion of documents created in the workplace;
• Characteristics of clear, concise, audience-directed texts;
• Writing as a recursive process;
• Revision;
• Proofreading/polishing texts, the criticality of editing;
• Document layout techniques;
• Use of computer-generated graphics; and
• Print and digital research;

Course Requirements

Individual writing projects will be determined by the instructor and will be described in the syllabus for each section. However, all students will:

1. Use computers to complete all assigned writing projects;
2. Participate in class activities;
3. Create at least four writing projects, each of which employs a different technical writing format (i.e., manuals, proposals, reports, etc.)

Other Course Information

The final grade will be based on the students' writing, graded either cumulatively or in an end-of-course portfolio.

Departmental Plagiarism Policy

1. Students who are determined by their English instructors to have plagiarized will:
    a. First offense:
        1. Fail the assignment and receive no credit for it or in extreme cases, such as lifting large quantities of text from a source or another individual, fail the course;
        2. Meet with the department chair so that they can:
            a. Appeal the decision if they wish;
            b. Be advised of the consequences if they are caught plagiarizing a second time; or
            c. Be advised where to get help so that they can avoid plagiarizing in the future.
    b. Second offense:
        1. Fail the writing course in which they are enrolled whether it is the same course as their first offense or another writing course;
        2. Meet with the department chair and the division dean so that they can:
            a. Appeal the decision if they wish;
            b. Be advised of the consequences if they are caught plagiarizing again; and
            c. Be advised where to get help so that they can avoid plagiarizing in the future.
    c. Third offense:
        1. Be recommended for expulsion from CCBC.

2. At the meeting to discuss a student's first offense, the department chair will open a file to maintain a record of the student's plagiarism.

3. Plagiarism is representing as one's own material words or ideas taken from other sources. Plagiarism includes failure to place in quotation marks and cite researched material from sources as well as buying or copying papers from another person or from the Internet.

Andy Rusnak, Associate Professor, English
English 213, Technical Writing, Writing at Work

Think critically and think imaginatively. These two parts of your mind are critical to good technical and work-related writing. Imagination is critical to the process, analyzing audiences—thought patterns, assumptions, expectations—reaching beyond. Critical thinking is obviously important in comprehending objects, finite operations and procedures, equipment, or data. This class will be taught to prepare you for technical writing in the workplace and will cover:

- The process and evaluation of imaginative and critical scientific and technical writing;
- Some background on history of technology and philosophy of science;
- How and where technology interfaces with culture and the resultant (if any) ethical implications;
- The importance of creating strong visual rhetoric; and
- Having fun.
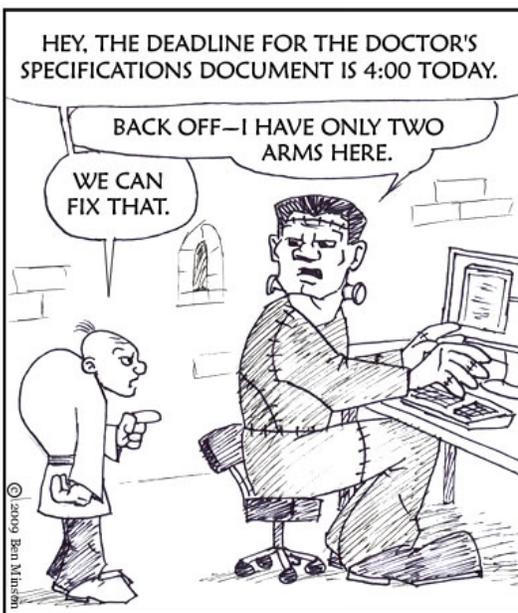
In Dr. Frankenstein's Documentation Department

The class will attempt to streamline curricula to meet needs peculiar to relevant disciplines—health science, information technology, engineering. Students will be able to customize writing assignment subject matter to build portfolios that are relevant to specific disciplines. I will attempt to bring in working professionals who can speak authoritatively to the class. The keys here are:

- Class participation, expressing your ideas and opinions, bringing passion to the discussion;
- Defining the circumstances in which you will use technical and scientific writing in your careers;
- **Understanding that there is not an antithetical relationship between "language arts" and language skills, and understanding and expressing technical and scientific concepts. The world is a much more synthesized place these days. There is no progress in protectionism of any kind, protection of disciplines or subject-matter-turf. Protectionism is about ego and social construction. However, the deeper you appreciate, understand, and are able to use language, the more you will be perceived as able and competent no matter what field you work in.**

We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.
Hemingway

Writing Assignments and Grading:

Assignment	% of Grade	Due Date
Class participation, news bits, in-class writings: Every class students will be responsible for completing the reading assignments. You must come to class prepared to participate in class discussion. This means that with each reading, prepare a series of 3-5 questions. Your attendance and participation in class is critical to your final grade. Twenty-five percent makes the difference between grades. **Bring your own ideas, be original, passionate, be respectful, tolerant.**	25	
Assignment #1: Come to each class prepared to give a short 1-2 minute oral report on any science and/or technology subject/topic of your choice. Scan the internet, newspapers, magazines, books and look for a small news item that you can relate to the class. This is not a formal presentation, just a quick, "here's something new in the world of science and technology" exercise. Present information and propose technological, economic, cultural, and/or moral implications.		
Assign. #2: Portfolio completion #1: (collected at mid-term) Completion of portfolio based on writing assignments, from *Writing on the Job: A Norton Pocket Guide*. • Press release on new technology; • Feature story on new technology (2,000 words); • Profile on someone who works a technical job (2,000 words) **Portfolio completion #2: (collected at end of semester)** • Technical report on experimental results (1,000 words) • Operating instructions/sequential writing w/ 3 graphics (1,000 words)	25	Mid-Term & Final Respectively.
Assign. #3: PowerPoint presentation: For this assignment become an innovator and entrepreneur. Fix (upgrade) or invent a solution for a "problem" or an "issue" in a technical product or process. It can be biological, mechanical, electrical, chemical, involve communications, medical, or transportation technology, anything you have an interest in. Develop a 15 slide presentation, a workable solution, how this new product or process will be used to improve whatever conditions you are targeting. In your presentation you must: 1) Explain in technical detail the problem; 2) Define the market in detail; 3) Estimate the cost; 4) Describe in technical detail the solution; 5) Project the future success of your product or process; 6) Use at least three tables or charts in your presentation that helps with explanations (develop data); 7) Use diagrams that help visually illustrate what you are trying to demonstrate. Innovation is this country's most important commodity for future economies. Learn to think in creative ways.	25	
Assign. #4: Final Exam: Select two essays form Solving Problems in Technical Communications. Essays must be from two different sections in the book. Pick out three quotes from each essay and write a 1,000-word response/reflection, responding to the three quotes. Two, 1,000-word responses, one for each of the two essays you select.	25	Final
Total:	100	

Texts:
Writing on the Job: A Quick reference Guide to Writing in the Workplace, Ed., John c. Brereton & Margaret A. Mansfield.

Solving Problems in Technical Communicatoin, Ed., Johndan Johnson-Eiloa & Stuart A Selber

Technical & Science Writing	Function	Final Products	Audiences
Technical Communicator/ Writer	Acts as interface between subject-matter experts, which include designers and engineers, and end users/customers. Reduces technical language for user comprehension. This includes professional job titles that don't include "writer," e.g. nurse, technician, paralegal, technician.	User documentation, design specifications, installation manuals, hardware & software manuals, technical proposals, reports, presentations.	Various user groups ranging from mainstream to B-to-B customers, government personnel, contractors, sub-contractors.
Science Writers	Via research, acquires specific and detailed academic subject-matter expertise in physical or social sciences and publishes results in peer-reviewed journals.	Well researched, peer-reviewed reports for publication in peer-reviewed journals, print and/or online versions.	Peers who practice same academic discipline.
Technical & Science Journalists	Writers and journalists who interpret the latest scientific and technical research, prepare easily digestible content for mainstream consumption in print and/or online versions.	Mainstream print or online news items, short and long features, blogs.	Mainstream, general audiences.
Technical & Science Public and/or Media Relations Managers/Dir.	To work as a spokesperson for a private company, government agency, non-profit, or public institution that produces, researches, or represents technical or scientific subject matter.	Reports, articles, press releases, presentations.	News outlets, mainstream public, local communities, government representatives and interests, new customers.