Part 1: Course Information

Instructor Information

Marguerite Newcomb
Office: HSS 4.03.10
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 12:00-1:00
or online by appointment
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Or through Blackboard email

Course Description

This class is designed to introduce students, in all fields of study, to the kinds of communication required in most careers. A technical background is not needed. Writing on a word processor is required, but you do not need previous experience. Technical writing focuses on clear, orderly, readable writing with careful consideration of audience, purpose, and situation.

Prerequisite

In order to take Technical Writing, you must have successfully completed all Freshman Composition courses.

Textbook and Course Materials

Required Text

- The Essentials of Technical Communication, by Elizabeth Tebeaux and Sam Dragga.

Recommended Texts

- The Technical Communication Handbook, by Laura Gurak and Mary Hocks
- Other readings will be provided on Blackboard

Course Requirements

- Internet connection (DSL, LAN, or cable connection desirable)
- Access to Blackboard
- Flashdrive (small) or CD for ePortfolio

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Course Structure

This course is designed for the hybrid environment, which means part of the class will be held online and part of it will be in a traditional classroom. Contact time will be divided as follows: 50% face-to-face and 50% online.

Online sessions will include mainly group meetings and class discussions.

Face-to-face sessions will be held at the UTSA campus:

- **Location:** Main Building 1.206
- **Days:** TBD
- **Time:** 11:00-11:50

Generally, our class is scheduled for Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, however, as a hybrid course, we will have at least one day each week when we meet online instead of in the classroom. You will receive a full schedule on or before the first day of classes. Also, a complete calendar will be located on our class Blackboard site. During the first week of classes, we will be in the classroom all three days.

Blackboard Access

To access a course on Blackboard, you will need access to the Internet and a supported web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google Chrome, Safari, etc.). To ensure that you are using a supported browser and have required plug-ins, please run the Browser Check from your Blackboard course. Refer to the Blackboard Browser Tune-up page for instructions.

Technical Assistance

If you need technical experience at any time during the course or to report a problem with Blackboard, you may

- Visit one of the OIT Student Computing Centers on campus, or
- Send your instructor an email with as much detail as possible about the problem you’re having.

Part 2: Course Objectives

This course is designed to help you learn about the type of writing you can expect to produce in most careers after college. Moving away from essay writing, you will instead write material that is tightly focused on specific audiences and with very specific purposes. Some projects will incorporate collaboration as you learn to work with a team to produce a final product. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to give presentations, again with a pre-determined audience and purpose in mind.

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In order to meet these objectives, you are expected to participate both for your own work and within your groups to complete group projects. Many, if not most, careers that involve any type of writing require collaboration with a team. This course offers you the chance to gain experience in handling some of the challenges that are inherent in teamwork.

Part 3: Topic Outline/Schedule

Important Note: Refer to the course calendar (on Blackboard) for specific dates and deadlines. Activity and assignment details will be explained in detail within each project’s learning module. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Learning Module 1 – Mission Statement – This module discusses ethical behavior with regard to writing and speaking in a business environment, specifically technical writing.

Learning Module 2 – Resume/Cover Letter – We will talk about effective resumes and cover letters, as well as preparing for a great interview.

Learning Module 3 – Panel Discussions – Small groups will present specific topics to the rest of the class in a panel environment. A large selection of topics will be provided – all pertaining to issues in technical writing and communication.

Learning Module 4 – Customer Brochure – This module looks at how to write for an audience of potential customers. This module also allows you to be creative while making the most out of a limited amount of space.

Learning Module 5 – Business Proposal – A business proposal will be prepared based on research done by each small group. Groups will then learn about the various sections of a proposal, as written for different audiences, each with different goals.

Learning Module 6 – Groups will create a short video ad selling a service or product. Ads should be placed on YouTube, and the public availability will be part of a discussion on appropriateness.

Learning Module 7 – Final Project. You will be able to choose from a wide selection of projects. Each involves writing, layout, visuals, research, and a final oral presentation to show off this work. This module will culminate in a formal oral presentation in addition to the hard copy document.

Portfolio – At the end of the semester, you will turn in an electronic portfolio which should include a copy of each project you did. Include a business-formatted memo to me analyzing your own work over the semester. What was your best work and why? What was less than terrific and why? Discuss something you learned this semester that surprised you. (*CD, web site, flash drive, podcast, etc. We will discuss options for the eportfolio throughout the semester.)
Part 4: Grading Policy

Graded Course Activities

Visit the Learning Modules link in Blackboard for details about each project. Click on Assessments to access reading quizzes.

- Mission Statement/Code of Ethics: 10%
- Resume/Cover Letter: 10%
- Panel Discussion: 10%
- Customer Brochure: 10%
- Business Proposal: 10%
- Video Advertisement: 10%
- Final Project: 25%
- Daily work including quizzes, exercises, discussion board participation, group participation, class attendance, and eportfolio: 15%

Late Work Policy

It is your responsibility to keep up with deadlines. There is no make-up opportunity for large projects or any group projects without a documented emergency and instructor approval. If you know you’re going to have to miss ahead of time, you would be well-advised to make arrangements ahead of time.

Viewing Grades in Blackboard

Points you receive for graded activities will be posted in Blackboard. Click on the My Grades link to view. Grades will usually be available within 3-5 days of the assignment. Larger projects may take more time.

Graded Assignments

Grades are numerical on a scale from 1-100. All projects are expected to be organized, proofread, and neat, in addition to well-written. Numerical grades are assigned as follows:

- 90-100: Excellent work. Work is neat, professional, and well-written. Material is comprehensive, supported, and followed the assignment. Deadlines were met.
- 80-89: Good work. Material is nicely done, with just a few mistakes.
- 70-79: Average work. Material was on time, but more effort should be put on proofreading or attention to detail; or the material was not quite what the assignment asked for.

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60-69  Below average work. Material did not follow the assignment. The final product was messy or contained a great deal of mistakes.

0-59  Failing work. Work is unacceptable.

Important note: For more information about grading at UTSA, visit the academic policies and grading section of the university catalog.

Part 5: Course Policies

Attend Class

Students are expected to attend all face-to-face class sessions as listed on the course calendar posted on Blackboard. Attendance at face-to-face class meetings and class participation in online activities is essential for the success of the college experience.

If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to determine what you missed and whether or not this work can be made up. It is strongly suggested that if you miss more than five classes in one semester — no matter the cause — it will become extremely difficult to pass the course.

Online attendance and participation grades will be based on a rubric, which is provided on our Blackboard site.

Participate

In the face-to-face class sessions, attendance and participation will be recorded. In the group environment, groups will have the opportunity to assess their individual members on participation and contribution. So it is extremely important for you to be involved in both. Participation and involvement are good habits to develop now while in college that you can take with you into your professional career.

Complete Assignments

Respect yourself as a college student. This means you should strive to have all assignments done by their deadlines and following their requirements, as well as contributing to your team.

Some projects for this course will be submitted electronically through Blackboard and others are submitted in person. Assignments must be completed and submitted by posted deadlines unless special permission is given by the instructor before the due date. Extensions will not be given without documentation of an extreme emergency.

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Discussion board assignments must be completed by their due dates and times. This includes original responses, as well as responding to your classmates’ online comments, per instructions.

Dropping the Course

It is the student’s responsibility to understand when a course can be dropped. Refer to the UTSA Course Schedule for dates and deadlines for registration. After this period, a serious and compelling reason is needed to drop from the course. Serious and compelling refers to 1) documented and significant change to your work hours or 2) severe physical or mental injury or illness to you or someone in your immediately family.

Incomplete Policy

Under emergency/special circumstances, students may petition for an incomplete grade. An incomplete will only be assigned if at least 60% of the semester’s work has been completed and the student had at least a C in the course. The petition must be made before final grades for the semester are posted. If approved, all incomplete course assignments must be finished within one year of the approval date. After that time, the standing grade will apply.

Special Accommodations

If you have a specific learning disability and require accommodations, please let me know within the first two weeks of school. It is your responsibility to obtain and provide official documentation.

Academic Dishonesty

It is expected that the work handed in by each student will be his or her own. Scholastic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating during tests, will result in penalties ranging from a "0" on the assignment to an "F" in the course. In some cases, academic dishonesty may result in expulsion from the University. Plagiarism involves using someone else’s words, ideas, or pattern or organization without properly acknowledging the source. Consult your textbooks, or visit with me, for a more detailed explanation of what constitutes plagiarism and how to correctly use and document sources.

Basically, the writing you do in all courses must be your own. Sometimes, plagiarism is committed because of a misunderstanding as to what it actually is. Plagiarism is defined as:

- Failure to acknowledge the sources of information, which is neither common nor personal knowledge.
- Failure to place another’s direct words in quotation marks or to indent in the case of longer quotations. If a passage is copied in the exact words of the original text, it must be placed in quotation marks in addition to citation of the source.
- Failure to document a source that has been paraphrased.

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- Collusion - collaboration with another person to prepare work presented for credit. Collusion includes allowing someone else to write or to edit your papers.

Any form of academic dishonesty may be reported to the office of student affairs.