

ENGL 421 Technical Writing

Spring 2015

COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor
Daniel Liddle

Office Hours
**Monday 11:30-1:30 or by
appointment**

Office
Hevilon 215

Email
dliddle@purdue.edu

Required Text
***Technical Communication
Today (4th Edition)***
By Richard Johnson-Sheehan

Course Overview

Welcome to English 421! In this class you will learn the **rhetorical principles** and **writing practices** necessary for producing effective technical documents, memos, reports, and collaborative projects in professional contexts. The curriculum is guided by the needs and practices of business, industry, and society at large, as well as by the expectations of Purdue students and programs. The class is held in a computer classroom to ensure that you are prepared for the writing environment of the 21st-century workplace. The course will teach you the rhetorical principles that help you shape your business writing ethically, for multiple audiences, in a variety of professional situations.

Course Goals

Writing In Context

In this class you will need to analyze professional cultures, social contexts, and audiences to determine how they shape technical writing. To meet this goal, this class will focus on writing for a range of different audiences, from your peers in the workplace, to those in other workplaces, to the public. We will also discuss the ethical dimensions of technical communication.

Project Management

Two of the major assignments for this class will involve considerable planning, research, drafting, revising, and editing, both individually and collaboratively. To execute these projects effectively, you will need to develop a professional ethos and maintain accountability for your work.

Document Design

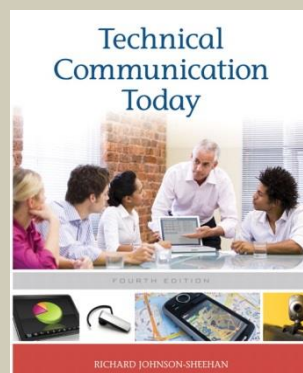
As you can see, this document uses design to lead the reader through the information. By the end of this course, you will be required to make rhetorical decisions about the documents you create, adapting the design of your documents to meet the needs of your readers.

Teamwork

In addition to regular group work, one of the major assignments in this class will be a group marketing proposal. This will require you to determine the roles and responsibilities of the group, set team goals, and manage team conflicts constructively.

Research

In this class you will learn to understand and use various research methods to produce professional documents, including analyzing professional contexts, locating and evaluating source material, and selecting appropriate primary research methods.



Course Projects and Activities

Unit 1: Employment Materials

The focus of our first unit will be on developing a set of employment documents. In creating these documents, you will need to locate jobs that you might apply to once you leave Purdue and analyze the implicit and explicit requirements of the job posting. Then, you will develop all the necessary materials for applying to that position, including an application letter, a resume, and a professional interview.

Unit 2 and 3: Technical Description and Instructions

In the first part of this unit you will select a thing, place, or process to describe and use rhetorical strategies to compose a clear and effective technical document. In the second part of the unit you will compose a set of instructions or procedures/protocols that document how to complete some task.

Unit 4: White Paper

In this unit you will write a white paper report, a type of document often used to sum up what is known about a given subject. This report will require extensive research



and document design, as you will aim to construct a report that is both comprehensive and engaging.

Reading Responses

You will be responsible for keeping up with the readings in the class. Often, I will assign reading responses to direct your attention to a particular aspect of these readings. For each reading response, I expect you write at least 300 words summarizing the reading, answering a question, or providing resources, depending on what is asked of you. Late

reading responses will not be accepted for a grade in this class. If the class appears to not be reading the required articles, I will give reading quizzes to make sure those who do the reading are rewarded for their work.

Ethos Grade

In this class you will be evaluated on your professional ethos, which will include not only your participation in class, but your behavior and attitude in class as well. You will receive an update of this grade at least three times before the end of the semester.

Grading

Summary

The four major projects in the course will be comprised of several components, each of which will be worth a percentage of your final grade.

Your final course grade will be evaluated on the standard plus-minus letter-grade scale: A=100-94, A-=93-90, B+=89-87, B=86-84, B-=83-80, C+=79-77, C=76-74, C-=73-70, D+=69-67, D=66-64, D-=63-60, F=59 or below. All major assignments will be graded on this scale as well.

Students must participate in all of the three major projects and complete a majority of the required weblog posting assignments in order to pass this class. Students with questions about final grades should review university policies regarding grade appeals,

which are outlined by the Dean of Students here:

<http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/gradeappeal.pdf>

The University regulations are here:

http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu_conduct/stu_regulations.html

Collaborative Work

Teamwork is a required component of the course. You and your project team members are responsible for updating one another and me about assignment development and progress. In addition, you also are responsible for negotiating together all aspects of your work, including planning, drafting, revising, file managing, and scheduling of assignments. When a collaborative project is assigned, you will receive explicit guidelines for successful collaboration.

Late Work

The majority of missed class assignments cannot be made up. If a serious and unavoidable problem arises, however, you should contact me in writing prior to the deadline to determine whether an extension for the work will or will not be granted.

Grading Breakdown	
Employment Materials	25%
Technical Description	15%
Technical Instructions	25%
White Paper	15%
Reading Response, Peer Review, Quizzes, etc.	10%
Ethos Grade	10%

INFORMAL POLICIES



Phone Use Policy

By this point in your academic career you should know the difference between respectful and disrespectful phone use. If your phone becomes a distraction it will impact your ethos grade.



Email Policy

I will give you at least 24 hours to respond to any emails I may send you, and I will not expect you to answer emails after school hours or on the weekend. I expect the same courtesy from you. If you have a problem or a question about an assignment the night before it is due, consult google or your fellow classmates before emailing me.

FUN FACTS

86%

The percentage of job recruiters who state that written and oral communication skills are a top priority in hiring decisions.¹

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email: dliddle@purdue.edu

Office: Heavilon 215

Office Hours: Monday 11:30pm-1:30pm

1. Holland, Kelley. "Why Johnny Can't Write, and Why Employers are Mad" *CNBC.com* 2013. Web.

Official Policies and Procedures

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required at all scheduled electronic and face-to-face (F2F) meetings. Since you will be working in project teams much of the semester, you also will be required to attend any scheduled out-of-class meetings with your team to complete course assignments. **Four** absences will result in your final grade being lowered by as much as a letter grade. More than four absences can result in a failing grade for the course. Excused absences may be granted for religious holidays or university-sponsored events, provided you make a written request to me no less than two weeks in advance and that you complete any required work before the due date. Being excessively or regularly late for class or team meetings, both electronic and F2F, can also be counted as an absence.

Academic Integrity

My Policy

Perhaps you forgot to cite a source. Perhaps in your home country it is allowable to use material without citing it. Perhaps you forgot that a paraphrase still needs a citation. But while none of these cases would appear malicious, I would still count these as instances of plagiarism. In this class plagiarism will be taken very seriously, because in the working world plagiarism can get you fired or sued. Better you receive a lower grade in this class and learn a lesson than go to jail ten years from now.

If I find that you have plagiarized, I will give you an automatic 50% grade on the assignment. I will also email you and ask for a one-on-one meeting to discuss the incident of plagiarism in question. I reserve the right to allow you to make up the assignment for a reduced grade if I find that the instance of plagiarism wasn't intentional. If I find that you have plagiarized a second time I will report the incident to the Dean of Students Office.

University Policy

Purdue students and their instructors are expected to adhere to guidelines set forth by the Dean of Students in "Academic Integrity:

A Guide for Students," which students are encouraged to read here:

<http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academicintegritybrochure.php>

The preamble of this guide states the following: "*Purdue University values intellectual integrity and the highest standards of academic conduct. To be prepared to meet societal needs as leaders and role models, students must be educated in an ethical learning environment that promotes a high standard of honor in scholastic work. Academic dishonesty undermines institutional integrity and threatens the academic fabric of Purdue University. Dishonesty is not an acceptable avenue to success. It diminishes the quality of a Purdue education, which is valued because of Purdue's high academic standards.*"

Academic dishonesty is defined as follows: "Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [University Regulations, Part V, Section III, B, 2, a] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972]"

If you have any questions about this policy, please ask.

In Case of a Campus Emergency

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. You can acquire updated information from the course website, by emailing me, or by contacting me through the English Department at 765-494-3740.