

English 2310: Technical Communication

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Office Hours: TR 12:00-1:00 (or by appointment)

Textbook: *Technical Communication Today* 4th Edition by Richard Johnson Sheehan

Course Description:

The UVU course catalog describes English 2310 as: “for those interested in improving their professional and technical communication knowledge and abilities. Emphasizes clear and concise written, oral, and visual communication strategies. Includes creation of professional documents such as technical descriptions, proposals, correspondence, and other work-related communication in both print and electronic media.”

In this course, we will be focusing on workplace writing and professional communication. This style of writing may be something you’re unaccustomed to if most of your experience has been in college “academic” writing courses. Though academic writing has its fair share of “rules” and standards, technical writing brings a different set of standards to the table, and the end product exists for more specific audiences and contexts. Though you may feel that academic writing leaves little room for creativity, I would disagree with that sentiment. However, technical writing has an element of creativity that is highlighted in different ways. It may eventually come to surprise you how much creativity is involved in technical writing. In some ways, the projects we tackle will offer some of the most opportunities for creativity than any of your other English coursework.

At its core:

“Technical Communication is a process of managing technical information in ways that allow people to take action.” from TCT

Therefore, technical communication is a process of composing that considers audience, purpose, context, and medium in ways that are intimately connected. The end goal is the shaping of potentially large and unruly amounts of research, information, and knowledge into digestible and usable forms that let people take action. A technical document never exists in a vacuum. A CEO may use them to decide on the direction of a business venture. A work team may use them to chart the direction of a developing product. You may have used them if you ever had to build a piece of IKEA furniture or were unsure how to use a function on your fancy smart phone. Again, technical documents gather information and present it in such a manner that the audience can DO something with it. Technical documents are alive, dynamic, interactive, and result-oriented.

Grade Breakdown:

We will proceed with the standard grade breakdown and your individual assignments are graded on a weighted scale.

900-1000 points: A
800-899 points: B
700-799 points: C
600-699 points: D
0-599 points: E

Work Overview:

In-Class Work

Rhetorical Situation Brainstorming (25 points)
Reader Profile (50 points)
Nastygram (75 points)
Mini-Tech Description (25 points)
Research Activity (50 points)
Mini-Instruction Set (25 points)

Major Projects

Response Letter (50 points)
Technical Description (200 points)
Proposal (200 points)
Instruction Set (300 points)

Turning In Work:

All work will be submitted via email to reflect a typical workplace environment. **Please send only .doc or .docx files. An incorrect file format (.odt, .pdf, .pages, etc.) will count as a late submission until I get the proper format (and the grade will be lowered accordingly).** When submitting a file attachment of a major project, the file name MUST include your last name and the project name. For example:

- pepper_techdescription.docx

Projects with incorrect file name formats will be docked 1/3 of their final grade.

All submitted work must be accompanied by a short email memo to me (for both In-Class work and major projects).

This email should demonstrate professional email etiquette and include:

- a specific subject line
- an appropriate greeting (the proper title for me on these is: Dr. Pepper)
- a short, but still **substantial**, reflection upon the assignment
- an appropriate closing with your name

Again, emails that do not include these requirements (for example, simply say: My assignment is attached!) will have the project docked 1/3 of its final grade.

In-Class work will be done in groups. **One member of the group will email the work to me with the other group members CC'd on the email.** Please also include all group members' names in the text of the email.

Lateness Policy/Missed Work:

My lateness policy is fairly straightforward and reflective of the importance of getting your work in on time to both an academic and professional environment. **Major Projects are considered late if they're not in my email by midnight of the due date listed on the calendar.** At that moment, the project is graded down one full letter if I receive it the next day. For each subsequent day late, the grade will go down another full letter. **An assignment can be turned in up to a week late, for F points. After a week, you will automatically receive 0 points for the assignment.**

In-class work for points (see calendar) can only receive points if you are there doing the work in class that day. In the case of multiple absences on the day of in-class work, those students will be contacted together via email to work on the assignment together for make-up points.

Absence Policy:

You may miss **four** class periods with no penalty. I don't necessarily need to be alerted that you're not going to be there (but feel free to send an email if you wish). Every absence after the fourth will lower your final course grade by 1/3. **If you reach seven absences you will not be able to pass the course.** I make no distinction between "excused" or "unexcused" absences. Additionally, three tardies will equal one absence. Please show up to class on time.

Expectations:

Participation: This is one of my primary expectations. Much of our class will involve class discussions or group activities. These discussions will be more enjoyable for everyone if we all participate and do our parts to keep the conversation going in an intelligent and productive manner. Students who continually appear to be unprepared (or unwilling) for discussion will eventually be marked absent even if their bodies are in the room.

Respect: We may be discussing touchy subjects from time to time. Disagreement, challenging questions, and debate are good. Outright disrespect, insults, or meanness are not. Listen to other students openly and respond in productive manners. I also have zero tolerance for any expression of racism, sexism, or homophobia. This usually isn't a problem, but it bears mentioning anyway. We are all here to learn in a safe and open environment.

Unplug: I get it. This is the digital age of constant connectivity to our computers, to our phones, to our iPads, to our etc., etc., etc.. I also get that multi-tasking is technically possible. But from my perspective up front, it's hard to see you texting, or being on the computer (when we're not supposed to be) as anything but tuning out. I don't care what you're doing before class begins, but once it does, please unplug for the duration of our class and give your undivided attention to the day's activities.

Disabilities:

If you have any disability impairing your ability to successfully complete this course, please contact the Accessibility Services Department (LC 312, www.uvu.edu/asd). Academic Accommodations are granted for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the Accessibility Services Department.

Academic Honesty:

The Statement from the UVU "Students' Rights and Responsibilities Code" reads: "Each student is expected to maintain academic ethics and avoid dishonesty in all its forms, including but not limited to, cheating and plagiarism, and fabrication as defined hereafter."

We will be discussing plagiarism in all its forms. I know it's a cliché, but it's true – you're only cheating yourself if you turn in work that is not your own. Instances of plagiarism will certainly lead to a failing grade on the project. From there I will consider the extent and the intent, and I reserve the right to take further action.

In short though, you can guarantee it counts as plagiarism when:

1. Students buy papers or hire others to write papers for them
2. Students quote, copy, paraphrase, or summarize a source without proper documentation
3. Students submit work from other courses without CONSIDERABLE alterations or modifications.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free service to you. Tutors are available to give you one-on-one help with writing assignments from any class. Sign up for an appointment at the desk in LI 208 or call 863-8936. Help is also available through the Online Writing Lab at www.uvu.edu/owl