English 3373.003 - Technical Writing

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Course Description:

Welcome to English 3373 - Technical Writing! Although this class is titled “Technical Writing,” a more apt description would be workplace writing. Technical writing is a form of communication, a type of conversation, an interactive process that involves writers and readers who respond to one another. In fact, technical writers create documents that use description and explanation in order to persuade readers to take action. Consequently, effective technical writers must have: 1. a clear understanding of the subject matter; 2. a thorough awareness of the intended audience(s); and 3. a strong mastery of the required technical writing forms or genres.

Technical writing, or workplace writing, has many forms, including letters, memos, reports, proposals, presentations, and manuals. Since there are so many forms, it’s not possible for students to learn everything they might eventually need for a workplace in this one course. Students can, however, gain an appreciation for and refine skills needed to develop writings that are clear, concise, well-organized, and honest. Because of the variety of considerations in technical writing, you will be responsible in many instances of figuring out what the best presentation for your purpose and audience will be. The textbook will supply you with samples of some documents you may find in various workplaces, but it is your job to make sure that your document is most effective for its users.

Clear writing is expressed in a manner that is suitable for an intended audience. Concise writing says all it has to but not more. Well-organized papers are easy to follow because form and logic work together. Facts and figures, sources and statements, interpretations and conclusions must be meticulously honest in order to establish and maintain the author’s integrity and authority.

Attendance:

Since the nature of this class largely relies on your participation, it is important for you to attend each class. Much of the work done here is collaborative; it is beneficial for you to communicate with others as ideas come to you as well as when you are working through your papers. Chronic lateness is unacceptable, as is coming to class unprepared and unread. An attendance sign up sheet will be available the first ten minutes of class to verify your attendance on any given day. After 10 minutes the sign in sheet will be removed and the opportunity to make your attendance known will be lost. You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet. It is important that you come to class on time and be ready to work – you will have a much more productive and enjoyable experience if you do. In addition to coming to class prepared and ready to work, it is important to be respectful of the other people in class. This means that every one’s opinion will be listened to, there will be no talking while others have the floor, work will be critiqued but not criticized, and that classroom will be treated as an environment for learning. Any violation of this policy of decency could result in a loss of attendance points. In an effort to create a learning
environment the use of cell phones is prohibited. If there is an emergency and there is an exigent need to receive a call during class please see me before class and be prepared to take the call outside the classroom. Otherwise the use of cell phones in class will not be tolerated and points will be deducted from your final grade if this policy is abused.

**Course Requirements:**
Your final grade will be based on written work as well as participation. You will be producing a large volume of work this semester, both formal and informal. You should save all of your work until you have received your grades from UTA.

**Late Assignments and Extensions:**
Late assignments will not be accepted. All assignments are due by 8pm on the day scheduled. There will be no exceptions for late assignments. Also no extensions of time will be granted. Work is expected to be completed and turned in on the date due.

**Grading Standards:**
The grading scale for this class is: A - 90% or better, B - 80-89%, C - 70-79%, D - 60-69%, or F - below 59%.

**Revisions:**
While current writing theory suggests that writing is a process and that process is usually interrupted only by deadlines, there will be no opportunity to rewrite an assignment that has been turned in for a final grade in this class. As this class is designed to mimic workplace writing conditions as closely as possible, rewrites will not be an option. Several opportunities will be available in class to get feedback on your writing assignments. Additionally, you should make use of the writing resources available on campus such as the UTA Writing Center located in room 411 of the Central Library. Appointments can be made with the writing center by calling 817-272-2602.

**Grade Distribution:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Assignments</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topics in Technical Writing Discussion Leader</td>
<td>150 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume/Cover Letter Portfolio</td>
<td>200 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing in Your Profession Portfolio</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions, Procedures, and Process Portfolio</td>
<td>150 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Design Portfolio</td>
<td>250 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>150 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1000 pts</td>
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**Academic Integrity:**
If you are suspected of academic dishonesty, you may be called before the Vice President of Student Affairs to receive disciplinary action. Forms of academic dishonesty include: collusion - lending your work to another person to submit as his or her own; fabrication - deliberately creating false information on a works cited page; and plagiarism - the presentation of another person's work as you own, whether you mean to or not. Allowing another writer to write any part of your essay is also plagiarism. Plagiarism is easy to avoid; simply acknowledge the source of any words, phrases, or ideas that you use. If you are not sure how to quote or paraphrase a source, etc. check with me.
• **Special Conditions**
  As an instructor, I am required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate based on that disability. If you have a disability that might influence your performance in this course, you must inform me in writing (email is fine) within the first two weeks of school and must officially register at the Office of Students with Disabilities.

• **Course Outcomes**
  **Writing**
  • Employ proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling in writing.
  • Employ standard style sheet guidelines for formatting assignments and citations.
  • Write with clarity to communicate effectively with the targeted audience.
  • Adapt writing for different styles or forms including reflections, primary research, letters, and proposals.
  • Respond critically to course material, using synthesis and analysis.

  **Oral**
  • Express ideas or arguments in oral form.
  • Synthesize information in a spoken form.
  • Paraphrase ideas from class discussions in oral form.
  • Employ effective collaborative skills in group environments.
  • Develop active listening skills including paraphrasing and synthesizing ideas expressed in class.

  **Critical Thinking and Analysis**
  • Explain and describe meanings of course readings, which may include scholarly articles and/or articles from the popular press.
  • Identify rhetorical elements in reading materials.
  • Develop methods and strategies for analyzing and interpreting texts.
  • Recognize and synthesize multiple interpretations of a single text.
  • Develop critical understanding of one’s own writing and writing process.
  • Respond critically not only to one’s own work but to fellow students’ work.
  • Explain the differences among different types of critical analytical approaches.
  • Evaluate an oral, visual, or written workplace writing for sound or faulty (fallacious) reasoning.
  • Apply different and appropriate critical frameworks to the analysis of texts.
  • Apply knowledge of context to the analysis of texts.

  **Research**
  • Utilize proper citation and bibliographic form.
  • Identify and locate a variety of sources relevant to research topic.
  • Distinguished between multiple types of sources such as peer-reviewed sources.
  • Appropriately apply multiple sources such as peer-reviewed articles and websites.
  • Identify and explain secondary criticism on a topic.
  • Analyze and apply secondary criticism on a topic.
  • Utilize research materials to make and present an analytical argument.
  • Respond critically to the writing of others in primary and secondary sources.
  • Synthesize multiple critical approaches to formulate student’s own argument

  **Technology and Multi-Media**
  • Use word processing programs in the completion, creation, and editing of assignments.
  • Employ electronic research methods such as search engines, the internet, and library databases in the completion of class assignments.
  • Discern between and utilize appropriate academic materials in classroom assignments.
  • Use email and email attachments to communicate with instructor and other students.
# Technical Writing Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/20 Tues</td>
<td>Introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/22 Thur</td>
<td>Kimball and Hawkins p. 1-20 exercise 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27 Tues</td>
<td>Kimball and Hawkins  p. 20-38 exercise 1 &amp; 3. Bring colored pensils, pens, markers, crayons to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/29 Thur</td>
<td>Kimball and Hawkins p. 38-69 exercise 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3 Tues</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Technical Writing Genres: Resumes and Cover Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/5 Thur</td>
<td>Guest Speaker. Resume/Cover Letter Writing Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10 Tues</td>
<td>Mock Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12 Thur</td>
<td>Mock Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17 Tues</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Technical Writing Genres: Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19 Thur</td>
<td>Resume/Cover Letter Portfolio Due. APA Workshop at the Central Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/24 Tues</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Technical Writing Genres: Memos, Letters and Emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/26 Thur</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Technical Writing Genres: Proposals and Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/3 Tues</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Audience Considerations, Purpose, and Tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/5 Thur</td>
<td>Writing in The Professions Portfolio Due. Discuss Instruction, Procedures, and Process Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10 Tues</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Writing Instructions, Procedures, and Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/12 Thur</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Evaluation and Recommendation Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/17 Tues</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/19 Thur</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/24 Tues</td>
<td>Instruction, Procedures, and Process Portfolio Due. Discuss Web Design Project Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26 Thur</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Multiculturalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/31 Tues</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/2 Thur</td>
<td>Topics in Tech Writing - Ethics and Legal Considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7 Tues</td>
<td>Web Design Workshop - Central Library Basement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/9 Thur</td>
<td>Web Design Workshop - Central Library Basement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/14 Tues</td>
<td>Web Workshop - Draft if Usability memo due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/16 Thur</td>
<td>Web Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/21 Tues</td>
<td>Web Workshop - Draft of Industry Analysis and Proposal Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/23 Thur</td>
<td>Web Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28 Tues</td>
<td>Web Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30 Thur</td>
<td>Web Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/5 Tues</td>
<td>Web Design Presentations/ Web Portfolios Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/7 Thurs</td>
<td>Web Design Presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Writing Assignments

### Writing Assignment Format

All writing assignments must conform to the following requirements:

- Must be typed 12 point New Times Roman, double spaced with one inch margins.
- Do not put extra spaces between paragraphs.
- Do not fully justify your text.
- All assignments must have your name on each page and page numbers.
- The assignments must be either stapled or turned in in a folder with pockets.

Also papers with more than three proof-reading errors will result in the final grade being reduced by 10%. Proof reading errors might be fragment sentences, comma splices, tabs that are more than five spaces, wrong words used i.e., then instead of than or there instead of their.

### Topics in Tech Writing Discussion Leader

For this assignment you will be responsible for educating your colleagues on one topic that is important to technical or workplace writing. At least two people will address the same topic. It is up to the discussion leaders to determine among themselves if the discussion will be lead by a team or by an individual. In any case, the discussion leaders should spend some time preparing their discussion as they will be responsible for 60 minutes of class time. While the discussion leaders are expected to explain the key elements of their topic, they are not expected to talk for the entire time. They should lead the discussion, not be the discussion. The discussion leaders will need to engage their colleagues possibly by asking direct questions, having hands-on activities, or in-class writings. Additionally, the discussion leaders should prepare some kind of hand-out for the group to take with them and a short bibliography in case someone wants to investigate the issue further. Technical writing textbooks will be available from the instructor, but you are welcome to use any source you deem reliable and reasonable to facilitate an interesting discussion.
Resume/Cover Letter Portfolio
The resume project will be turned in as a portfolio. The purpose of the portfolio is to show the progression of your work and to give you the opportunity to revise previous work in order to present the most polished work for evaluation. Your portfolio should include:

- **A copy of the job ad in which you are responding.**

- **A Revised Copy of Your Resume.** There will be an opportunity during class for comments and suggestions to be made on a draft of your resume. Your portfolio should include that draft copy in addition to the revised final version of your resume.

- **A Revised Copy of Your Cover Letter.** What is said in a cover letter is nearly as important as what appears on your resume. Again, time will be allotted in class in order to have your cover letter vetted by your peers. Your portfolio should include a draft copy of your cover letter in addition to the revised and final version of your cover letter.

- **An Evaluation or Reflection Letter.** The reflection memo/letter should not be a recitation of the day’s events, but rather the memo should show a deeper understanding of the importance (or lack of importance) of the processes involved in constructing this resume portfolio. You might comment on the value of the readings or assignments. You should critically comment on your own writing process – What was difficult? What was easy? How do you plan to overcome the challenges that you faced writing the resume and/or cover letter? What did you learn in the mock interview? This is an opportunity for you to better understand the processes necessary for presenting and selling yourself to a potential employer. Therefore, feel free to comment on any aspect of the process that you feel is important.

**IF ALL COMPONENTS OF THE PORTFOLIO ARE NOT PRESENT, THE PORTFOLIO WILL NOT BE GRADED.**

Writing in Your Profession Portfolio
The purpose of this portfolio is to help you become familiar with the types of writing you are likely to encounter in your profession. The portfolio should include:

- **Four Summary/Analysis memos.** You will need to include four summary/analyses, which discuss writing in your profession. You may find scholarly articles in the peer-reviewed journals of your profession or you may find articles in publications for your profession. You will need to conduct your own library research in order to find enough articles in which to summarize and analyze. See below for specific directions on how to write the annotations.

- **One Memo Synthesizing the four articles from the above assignment.**

- **Two Critiques of Two Samples of Writing in Your Profession.** You will need to include one memo for each writing sample where you analyze the effectiveness of the sample. Please include a copy of the writing sample you are critiquing. You will want to include an analysis of the audience and purpose of the document, possibly an analysis of the research used in the document, how the information is organized, and whether the document is persuasive and coherent. You can use the writer’s checklists found in the Markel textbook as a guide for these evaluations. There is no page length required for this assignment, but you want to make sure that your evaluation is thorough and complete. Remember, in the workplace your opinion counts so make sure that you spend sufficient time in preparing your critique.

- **Presentation of Writing in the Profession Findings.** You will be required to make a 5 min. presentation to the class based on your findings. While you are not required to have PowerPoint
or other visuals, you will want to take into consideration what the needs of your audience might be. You are aiming for a clear, concise, and coherent explanation of your findings and you are empowered to do what is necessary to accomplish that goal.

**Summary/Analysis:** You will write a two page summary/analysis, which includes the following:

- A complete "works cited" citation should be included in the memo.
- A 3-4 sentence **summary** of the main idea or central point of the material under discussion.
- A smooth **transition** between that summary and what comes next.
- An **analysis** of the text. This might include comparing or contrasting it to another text we have read or elsewhere, placing the text in a more familiar context, drawing conclusions based on your understanding, making a distinction the author doesn’t, examining the author's (or your) assumptions, and so on.
- Your **personal response** to the material/ideas based on your prior knowledge and experience and any personal connections you make with the text(s).
- Fulfill **documentation** requirement with correct in-text citation, which includes page numbers after paraphrases and direct quotations plus naming the author appropriately.

**Writing a Summary**

A summary is condensed version of a larger reading. A summary is not a rewrite of the original piece and does not have to be long nor should it be long. To write a summary, use your own words to express briefly the main idea and relevant details of the piece you have read. Your purpose in writing the summary is to give the basic ideas of the original reading. What was it about and what did the author want to communicate?

While reading the original work, take note of what or who is the focus and ask the usual questions that reporters use: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Using these questions to examine what you are reading can help you to write the summary.

Sometimes, the central idea of the piece is stated in the introduction or first paragraph, and the supporting ideas of this central idea are presented one by one in the following paragraphs. Always read the introductory paragraph thoughtfully and look for a thesis statement. Finding the thesis statement is like finding a key to a locked door. Frequently, however, the thesis, or central idea, is implied or suggested. Thus, you will have to work harder to figure out what the author wants readers to understand. Use any hints that may shed light on the meaning of the piece: pay attention to the title and any headings and to the opening and closing lines of paragraphs.

In writing the summary, let your reader know the piece that you are summarizing. Identify the title, author and source of the piece. You may want to use this formula:

In "Title of the Piece" (source and date of piece), author shows that: central idea of the piece.  
The author supports the main idea by using ____________________ and showing that ____________________. 

7
In the short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," author James Thurber humorously presents a character who fantasizes about himself as a hero enduring incredibly challenging circumstances. In his real life, Walter Mitty lives an ordinary, plain life; he is a husband under the control of an overbearing, critical wife. Thurber uses lively dialogue to give readers an understanding of Mitty's character. The story takes place over a period of about twenty minutes; during this brief time, Mitty drives his wife to the hairdresser and runs errands that his wife has given him while he waits for her. In between his worrying that he is not doing what she wants him to do, he daydreams about himself as a great surgeon, brilliant repair technician, expert marksman, and brave military captain. This story shows that fantasy is often a good alternative to reality.

http://homepage.smc.edu/reading_lab/writing_a_summary.htm

SAMPLE SUMMARIES:

Weak (the author describes the article rather than summarizes):

This article focuses on the growing problem and cause of noise pollution. It explores the effects of population growth, urban sprawl, and the increase of traffic and aircraft prevalence on noise levels. This article offers specific information regarding decibel measurements and risks of prolonged exposure. The author provides specific decibel levels for a variety of machines and situations.

I plan to use this information in the final report section dealing with health risks caused by high noise levels. <evaluation

Better: (the author summarizes by providing key details):


This article provides information on the growing problem and causes of noise pollution. Population growth, urban sprawl, and increases in traffic and aircraft transportation are having a marked effect on noise levels. Escalating decibel levels and prolonged exposure increase the risks to hearing and health. In the United States, 30 million employees are vulnerable to the possibility of hearing loss because of hazardous noise levels on the job. Children and animals are
also at risk to the physical effects of noise, such as stress, elevated blood pressure, and increased heart rate. Various decibel measuring machines are available for various situations. In conclusion, the article shows that health and hearing risks due to combined decibel levels and extended exposures occur in everyday life.

I plan to use this information in the final report section dealing with health risks caused by high noise levels. <evaluation
http://www.class.uidaho.edu/adv_tech_wrt/resources/general/how_to_summarize.htm

Synthesis Essay

In this section you are reflecting on connections made between the four articles of your choosing. The below list identifies some ways that a synthesis can be constructed.

➢ Identify the problem, questions or issues raised in the articles.
➢ Identify and consider the influences of context and assumptions.
➢ Develop, present, and communicate your own perspective, hypothesis or position.
➢ Present, assess, and analyze appropriate supporting data/evidence.
➢ Integrate issue using other perspectives and positions.
➢ Identify and assess conclusions, implications, and consequences.

A synthesis essay should be organized so that others can understand the sources and evaluate your comprehension of them and their presentation of specific data, themes, etc.

The following format works well:

The introduction (usually one paragraph)
1. Contains a one-sentence statement that sums up the focus of your synthesis.
2. Also introduces the texts to be synthesized:
   (i) Gives the title of each source (following the citation guidelines of whatever style sheet you are using);
   (ii) Provides the name of each author;
   (ii) Sometimes also provides pertinent background information about the authors, about the texts to be summarized, or about the general topic from which the texts are drawn.

The body of a synthesis essay:
This should be organized by theme, point, similarity, or aspect of the topic. (See above bullets) Your organization will be determined by the assignment or by the patterns you see in the material you are synthesizing. The organization is the most important part of a synthesis, so try out more than one format.

Be sure that each paragraph:
1. Begins with a sentence or phrase that informs readers of the topic of the paragraph;
2. Includes information from more than one source;
3. Clearly indicates which material comes from which source using lead
in phrases and in-text citations. [Beware of plagiarism: Accidental plagiarism most often occurs when students are synthesizing sources and do not indicate where the synthesis ends and their own comments begin or vice versa.]

4. Shows the similarities or differences between the different sources in ways that make the paper as informative as possible;

5. Represents the texts fairly—even if that seems to weaken the paper!

Look upon yourself as a synthesizing machine; you are simply repeating what the source says, in fewer words and in your own words. But the fact that you are using your own words does not mean that you are in anyway changing what the source says.

Conclusion.
When you have finished your paper, write a conclusion reminding readers of the most significant themes you have found and the ways they connect to the overall topic. You may also want to suggest further research or comment on things that it was not possible for you to discuss in the paper.

[Assignment found at http://users.drew.edu/~sjamieso/Synthesis.htm]

Instruction, Procedures, and Process Portfolio

The instruction, procedures and process portfolio should include the following:

• **The original copy of your instruction, procedure, or process** that your partner used to complete the task.
• **A revised copy of your instruction, procedure, or process.**
• **The evaluation memo and grade from your partner.**
• **A copy of the memo you wrote** regarding your partner’s instruction, procedure, or process.
• **A reflection memo** addressing the challenges you faced in writing the instruction, procedure, or process. Basically – what have you learned about technical writing and yourself through this assignment?

For this assignment you’ll be provided with an opportunity to write an instruction, procedure, or process. You will then give the document to your partner so that s/he can attempt to accomplish the task. Your partner will then write you an evaluation memo suggesting areas that need improvement. This memo should include a description of how easy or difficult the task was to accomplish, suggestions for improvements from the users perspective, and suggestions on grammar and mechanics. The memos written for this portfolio should be sufficiently detailed that some one who doesn’t know what you’re doing will be able to understand the situation.

Web Design Portfolio

The web design portfolio should provide you with a skill that can be used in many different kinds of business. You are being asked to design a web site for any industry you chose. For example, the site could be a hotel web site, a restaurant web site, or even a hospital web site. The web design portfolio should include:
• **Draft and revised copy of an industry analysis and a proposal for the design.** You will need to look at 5-7 web sites of different businesses in your industry. You will need to provide specific details about each site, evaluate what you find useful or not on the site, and then make your proposal for your web site based on the industry standards you've discovered. You must also be able to explain to the client why the elements of your web design should be what they are. If you say the background should be yellow, you need to be able to explain why yellow is significant.

• **Draft and revised copy of a usability memo.** You will need to pick one website to evaluate the usability of that site. You can visit http://www.usability.gov/ to learn more about what usability entails.

• **Web Site**

• **Presentation of web site.** This will be an in-class presentation where you share your design with your classmates and discuss the significant features of the site and your process in developing the site.