ENGL 5389: Teaching Technical Communication

Fall 2011
Wed., 6:00-8:50 p.m., PH 310

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Office Hours: TR: 9:30-10:45 a.m. & by appointment

Course Description
This graduate seminar introduces students to the historical and theoretical issues in teaching professional and technical communication. Students will research and report on topics related to the teaching of technical communication in both academic and workplace settings, and consider a range of approaches for teaching technical communication courses. The semester’s work will contribute to a class blog of shared teaching materials, discussions, and Web resources. Students will be able to apply knowledge into teaching in university, community college, and business settings.

Readings
• Additional readings will be provided in Blackboard
• Links to Web resources will be provided in Blackboard and course blog.

Course Objectives
Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
• Understand technical communication as an academic discipline.
• Learn the theoretical and historical foundations of technical communication.
• Understand the different genres associated with technical and professional communication.
• Acquire a variety of teaching strategies and technologies.
• Produce writing assignments and syllabi based on research.
• Create a collaborative Web space for presenting and discussing pedagogical approaches.

Assignments

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<tr>
<td>Reading Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology Presentation</td>
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<td>Class Blog</td>
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<td>Short Assignments</td>
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<td>Portfolio: Assignments, Syllabus, Cover Memo</td>
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**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is mandatory.

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:** It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. According to the UT System Regents’ Rule 50101, §2.2, "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts."

**Support Services Available:** The University of Texas at Arlington supports a variety of student success programs to help you connect with the University and achieve academic success. These programs include learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at 817-272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.

**Electronic Communication Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. All students are assigned a MavMail account. *Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.* Information about activating and using MavMail is available at [http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/](http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/)
Weekly Schedule for Readings and assignments

Unit 1: Theoretical Foundation and History

(1) August 31: Course Introduction
In Class:
• Intellectual autobiography
• Introduction to course
• Go over syllabus; introduction to blog; sign up for presentation days

(2) September 9: Defining Technical Communication
Readings:
• Miller, Carolyn R. “A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing.” (Blackboard)
• Allen, Jo. “The Case against Defining Technical Writing.” (Blackboard)
• Rutter, Russell. “History, Rhetoric, and Humanism: Toward a More Comprehensive Definition of Technical Communication.” (Blackboard)
• Miller, Carolyn R. “What’s Practical about Technical Writing?” (Blackboard)
• Ornatowski, Cezar M. “Technical Communication and Rhetoric.” (Blackboard)
• Dombrowski, Paul M., ed. Humanistic Aspects of Technical Communication.
In Class:
• Discuss readings

(3) September 14: Histories and Future
• Connors, Robert. “The Rise of Technical Writing Instruction in America.” (TTC)
• Durack, Katherine T. “Gender, Technology, and the History of Technical Communication.” (Blackboard)
• Kynell, Teresa, “Technical Communication from 1850-1950: Where Have We Been?” (Blackboard)
• Staples, Katherine. “Technical Communication from 1950-1998: Where are we now?” (Blackboard)
• Kilings worth, M. J. “Technical Communication in the 21st Century: Where Are We Going Now?” (Blackboard)
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In Class:
• Discuss readings
• Technology Presentation #1

Unit 2: Tech Comm as User-Centered Rhetoric

(4) September 21: The Rhetorical Situation
Readings:
• Bitzer, Lloyd. "The Rhetorical Situation." (Blackboard)
• Ong, Walter. "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction." (Blackboard)
• Ede and Lunsford. "Audience Addressed, Audience Invoked." (Blackboard)
• Johnson, Robert. "Audience Involved: Toward a Participatory Model of Writing." (Blackboard)
• Callahan and Dobyns. “Rhetoric as a Meeting of Minds.” (Blackboard)
In Class:
• Discuss readings
• Technology Presentation #2

(5) September 28: User-Centered Design
Readings:
  • Johnson, Robert. "The Ubiquity Paradox." (Blackboard)
  • Redish, Janice. "What is Information Design." (TTC)
  • Mirel, Barbara. "Advancing a Vision of Usability." (TTC)
  • Kramer and Bernhardt. "Teaching Text Design." (TTC)
  • Nielsen, Jakob. *Usability 101*
  • “The Big Four: Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, Proximity.” (Blackboard)
In Class:
  • Discuss readings
  • Technology Presentation #3

(6) October 5: Genre + Short Assignments
Readings:
  • Miller, Carolyn. "Genre as Social Action." (Blackboard)
  • Luzon, Maria Jose. "Genre Analysis in Tech Comm." (Blackboard)
  • Berkenkotter and Huckin. "Rethinking Genre from a Sociocognitive Perspective." (TTC)
  • Blakeslee, Ann. "Bridging the Workplace and Academy: Teaching Professional Genres through Classroom-Workplace Collaborations." (TTC)
In Class:
  • Discuss readings
  • Discuss Short Assignments

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(7) October 12: Organizational Contexts
Readings:
  • Nardi and O’Day, *Information Ecologies, Ch 4*
  • Slack, Miller, and Doak. "The Technical Communicator as Author: Meaning, Power, Authority." (Blackboard)
  • Driskill, Linda. "Understanding the Writing Context in Organizations." (Blackboard)
  • Spilka, Rachel. "Orality and Literacy in the Workplace." (Blackboard)
  • Spilka, Rachel. "Communicating Across Organizational Boundaries." (TTC)
In Class:
  • Discuss readings
  • Technology Presentations #4

(8) October 19: Ethics
Readings:
  • Dombrowski, Paul M. “Ethics and Technical Communication: The Past Quarter Century.” (Blackboard)
  • Russell, David R. “The Ethics of Teaching Ethics in Professional Communication: The Case of Engineering Publicity at MIT in the 1920s.” (Blackboard)
  • Katz, Steven B. "The Ethic of Expediency: Classical Rhetoric, Technology, and the Holocaust." (Blackboard)
  • Ornatowski, Cezar M. "Between Efficiency and Politics: Rhetoric and Ethics in Technical Writing." (Blackboard)
In Class:

- Discuss readings
- Technology Presentations #5

(9) October 26: Intercultural Communication + Short Assignments
Readings:

- Linda Beemer, "Learning Intercultural Communication Competence" (TTC)
- Emily Thrush, "Multicultural Issues in Technical Communication" (TTC)
- Fukuora, Kojima, Spyridakis, "Illustrations in User Manuals: Preference and Effectiveness with Japanese and American Readers." (TTC)
- Thrush, Emily A. “High-Context and Low-Context Cultures: How Much Communication is Too Much?” (Blackboard)
- Bosley, Deborah. "Cross-Cultural Collaboration: Whose Culture is it Anyway?" (Blackboard)
- Barry Thatcher, "Understanding Digital Literacy Across Cultures" (Blackboard)
- Thrush, Emily A. “Bridging the Gaps: Technical Communication in an International and Multicultural Society.” (Blackboard)

In Class:

- Discuss readings
- Discuss Short Assignments

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Unit 4: Digital Technology and Tech Comm

(10) November 2: Digital Literacy
Readings:

- Selber, Stuart A. Multiliteracies for a Digital Age, Ch 1. (Blackboard)
- Ann Wysocki, "The Multiple Media of Texts." (Blackboard)

In Class:

- Discuss readings
- Technology Presentations #6

(11) November 9: Digital Literacy and Technical Communication
Readings:

- Saul Carliner, "Computers and Technical Communication" (Blackboard)
- R. Stanley Dicks, "The Effects of Digital Literacy on the Nature of Technical Communication Work" (Blackboard)
- Salvo and Rosinski, "Information Design" (Spilka ch 4)
- Hardt-Davidson, Bill. "Content Management" (Spilka ch 5)
- Dave Clark, "Shaped and Shaping Tools" (Spilka ch 3)
- Swarts, Jason. "Technological Literacy as Network Building." (Blackboard)

In Class:

- Discuss readings
- Technology Presentations #7

(12) November 16: Visual Rhetoric + Short Assignments
Readings:
Unit 5: Pedagogical Directions

(13) November 23: Pedagogical Directions, I
Readings:
• Bay, Jennifer. "Networking Pedagogies for Professional Writing Students." (TTC)
• Bay, Jennifer. "Preparing Undergraduates for Careers: An Argument for the Value of Internships." (Blackboard)
• Freedman and Adam, "Learning to Write Professionally" (TTC)
• Robey, Khoo, Powers, "Situated Learning in Cross-Functional Teams" (TTC)
In Class:
• Discuss readings
• Technology Presentations #8

(14) November 30: Pedagogical Directions, II + Short Assignments
Readings:
• Blakeslee, Ann M. “Bridging the Workplace and the Academy: Teaching Professional Genres through Classroom-Workplace Collaborations.”(TTC)
• Dubinsky, James M. “Service-Learning as a Path to Virtue: The Ideal Orator in Professional Communication.” (Blackboard)
• Matthews and Zimmerman. “Integrating service learning and technical communication: Benefits and Challenges.” (Blackboard)
In Class:
• Discuss readings
• Discuss Short Assignments

(15) December 7: Dinner and Final Questions on Portfolio
In Class:
• Dinner
• Final Discussion on Portfolio
• Course Evaluation