

# English 3330W: Introduction to Technical Writing

Fall 2017, Section 03. Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. (3 Credit Hours)

Prerequisites: ENGL 1301 & 1302.

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**Instructor** Dr. Craig Plunges  
**E-mail** cep027@shsu.edu  
**Office** Evans Complex (EVC), Room 209

**Office Hours**

- Monday 1-3 pm
- Wednesday 1-2 pm
- By appointment

**Classroom** Evans Complex (EVC) 360

**Textbook** *Technical Communication, 11<sup>th</sup> edition*, by Mike Markel. ISBN: 9781457673375

*Recommended Texts:*

2. A good collegiate dictionary, such as *Webster's College Dictionary* or *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.
3. Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.

**Course Goals** This course is an introduction to the theory and practice of technical and professional communication. Throughout the semester, you will work to accomplish these goals:

- Analyze a rhetorical situation and craft the appropriate documentation to meet its constraints.
- Identify the elements of effective technical writing style and apply these elements to a variety of professional documents.
- Design documents that are usable and visually engaging.
- Create, edit, and revise prose to produce professional, polished documents.
- Produce documents as a member of a team.

This course meets the requirements for the Food Science and Nutrition Knowledge Requirements for Dietetics #2.1: opportunities to develop communication skills necessary for entry into pre-professional practice.

**Course Evaluation** Your grade for this course will be determined according to the following:

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| Major Documents (4)          | 40% |
| Formal Project               | 25% |
| Participation                | 15% |
| Job-Correspondence Portfolio | 10% |
| Final Examination            | 10% |

## **Grading Standards**

I assign grades on a 100-point scale, which corresponds with the University's letter grades as follows:

| <b>Quality of Work</b>   | <b>Score</b> | <b>Grade</b> |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Excellent work – exceeds all requirements with minimal or no errors. In the workplace, your supervisor would be impressed and would pass the document along to others, as is. A customer would use the document successfully and with ease.  | 90 – 100     | A            |
| Very-good/good work – exceeds/meets most requirements with few significant errors. In the workplace, your supervisor would appreciate your work, but would want you to revise it before passing it along. A customer may notice simple mistakes and draw conclusions about the quality of your company.  | 80 – 89      | B            |
| Fair/adequate work – meets most/some requirements, but with fundamental errors. In the workplace, your supervisor would be disappointed with the document and would want it revised significantly before passing it along. In addition, the supervisor could begin to doubt your ability to complete similar assignments successfully. A customer might wonder whether your company deserves her/his business. | 70 – 79      | C            |
| Flawed work – meets few requirements; has excessive errors. In the workplace, your supervisor would have another employee re-do the document. A customer would likely abandon the document and resent your company for wasting her/his time.   | 60 – 69      | D            |
| Does not meet the assignment's requirements. In the workplace, your supervisor would assume that you don't care about your job. A customer would withdraw business, find your company's replacement, and/or ask to work with a different representative from your company.   | 0 – 59       | F            |

## **Policies**

Please read these policies carefully and keep them in mind as you complete this course.

### **Attendance**

- Attend class regularly. If you miss class, you are responsible for the assignments and topics that we cover; accordingly, find a buddy in this class and exchange contact information so that you can stay up to date if you are absent. I'm happy to answer questions after you've spoken with your classmates about what you missed.
- Consider your schedule; regular attendance is essential to do well in this course. If you miss 3 or more class meetings, you will lose 20 points from your participation grade per additional absence (starting with the third absence). This policy applies to all students—including those involved in extracurricular activities.
- Plan for travel dates. Students traveling for extracurricular events are responsible for staying up to date and completing assignments on time. Unless I state otherwise in writing, assignments that fall on a student's travel dates are due as scheduled; additionally, students should return from travel having completed scheduled readings and exercises.
- Participate! In addition to attending class regularly, you are responsible for making thoughtful contributions to discussions and in-class activities.
- Respect your classmates. We are engaged in higher education, so come to class ready to learn from your classmates and me. Treat us respectfully and professionally; we will extend the same courtesies to you.

**Mobile Phones & Devices**

- Before class starts, kindly turn off your mobile phone or put it in “do not disturb” mode; more importantly, put it away with other personal devices (headphones, Bluetooth headsets, iPods, etc.). If you use your phone/device during class, then I will mark you absent. Deductions from your participation grade will be made regardless of why you’re marked absent.
- If you have an unusual situation that requires your being accessible by phone (e.g., ill child or significant other), then please notify me of the situation before class starts and choose a seat near the door. If you must leave the room to take an emergency call, discretely leave the room and re-enter when you’ll make minimal disruption to the class. If you have an ongoing emergency or work situation that requires your regularly receiving calls during class, then you will want to choose a section of this course that better fits with your personal schedule.
- In keeping with University Policy, I must issue a grade of zero to any student who uses or displays a mobile phone (or other personal electronic device) during an exam—even if the device is turned off.
- In the event of a campus emergency, I am the designated contact for our classroom. I will receive a call and text message from campus authorities with relevant information.

**Assignments**

- Complete scheduled readings and daily assignments before coming to class, and arrive prepared to talk about the readings.
- Submit assignments on time. Each assignment will have a specific date and time by which you must complete it. If, for any reason, I don’t have your assignment by the specified time, then your assignment is late. Late assignments will lose 10 points per class-day late. If you must turn in an assignment late, please submit your document (in person) after class or during scheduled office hours.
- When preparing hard copies of assignments, use a laser printer. This class focuses on professional writing, and ink-jet printers are not acceptable for professional-quality documentation.
- Follow assignment guidelines closely. Any assignment not prepared according to my instructions in format, organization, style, or content could receive a grade of *F*.

**Academic Honesty**

- Students at SHSU are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is beyond reproach, so you are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in all academic experiences—both in and out of our classroom.
- Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion, or the abuse of resource materials.
- Students who submit plagiarized work for my review will receive a zero for the assignment—even if only a portion of the document violates academic honesty standards. A second offense will result in an *F* for the course.

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| <b>Student Disabilities</b>    | <p>SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail <a href="mailto:disability@shsu.edu">disability@shsu.edu</a>). I also encourage you to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will remain strictly confidential.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> I can make accommodations only after you've registered with Services for Students with Disabilities and I've received relevant paperwork from that office. For more information about registering for these services see: <a href="http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability/procedures-to-request-services.html">http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability/procedures-to-request-services.html</a></p> |
| <b>Religious Holy Days</b>     | <p>Section 51.911 (b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, United States Tax Code.</p>  |
| <b>Classroom Visitors</b>      | <p>Only registered students may come into our classroom. Student visitations or audits are not permitted.</p>   |
| <b>Overview of Activities</b>  | <p>Throughout the semester, you will complete a variety of assignments—both in and out of the classroom. I will provide detailed assignment sheets, supporting documents, and due times/dates. These documents will also be available via our course's online companion site.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The prerequisites for this course are ENGL 1301 and 1302; accordingly, you must have full understanding of basic grammar and writing mechanics before taking this course. Students who lack proficiency in basic grammar and writing mechanics cannot expect to pass this course.</p>   |
| <b>Readings from Your Text</b> | <p>All students must obtain a copy of the textbook by the first day of class. Your textbook offers a wealth of information regarding theories, genres, methods, and real-world applications of technical writing. I will assign readings that supplement the activities and deliverables for this course. Our assignments and class discussions will rely on your having already read assigned chapters before you get to class.</p>  |
| <b>Exercises</b>               | <p>I will assign exercises from your text and provide handouts in class to engage you in the theory and practice of creating effective documents. All exercises should be typed, printed with a laser printer, and brought to class on their due dates. I might collect exercises as part of your participation grade.</p>  |
| <b>Workshops</b>               | <p>Workshops afford opportunities for experimenting with documentation techniques, collaborating with teammates, providing/receiving feedback, and applying principles covered in our readings and discussions. Throughout the semester, we will have several workshop sessions, and your attendance and participation are required for all of them. I will provide specific instructions for completing each workshop.</p>   |

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| <b>Peer Review</b>            | Peer review, whether in class or online, can help you hone your documents and focus ideas as you work closer towards a final draft. I will help you identify and practice constructive peer-review techniques, and I will give you notice of dates on which we will conduct peer-review sessions.   |
| <b>Correspondence</b>         | E-mail is a part of our daily lives—whether at home, school, or work. This key genre in technical writing must be used effectively, and you will have many instances to practice your daily writing skills via e-mail. Because we are in a technical-writing course, every e-mail that you send to clients, your classmates, or me must demonstrate what you are learning in this advanced writing course. We will focus on principles of effective correspondence early in the semester, and you will practice these principles for the remainder of your professional life. |
| <b>Assignment Drafts</b>      | You will produce drafts and/or mockups of your major documents and the formal project. Drafts are integral to producing effective, professional documents, and they allow me opportunities for helping you improve your documents before you submit them for my final review.   |
| <b>Major Documents</b>        | You will complete a series of major documents, which will allow you to practice working with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correspondence</li> <li>• Technical-writing style and document design</li> <li>• Proposals</li> <li>• Instructions</li> <li>• Job correspondence</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Formal Project</b>         | Your formal project is a medium-to-large technical document that allows you to apply the principles learned from all major documents. I will provide a detailed description of the formal project early in the semester, so you will have opportunities to plan and workshop your ideas.  |
| <b>Instructor Evaluations</b> | Toward the end of the semester, students will have the opportunity to evaluate this course and its instructor. These evaluations allow students to rate the efficacy of the instructional methods as well as their perceptions of the course in general. Any information provided by students is anonymous, and instructors do not receive students' evaluations until the following semester.  |

## Schedule of Readings and Assignments

The following schedule contains readings, assignments, and in-class activities for the semester. Readings will be listed as homework for the next class meeting. Please complete all assigned readings and exercises for a given date **before** you come to class. **This schedule is subject to change** throughout the semester; please keep up with in-class activities and announcements.

**\*NOTE: The syllabus/course schedule is tentative and subject to change.**

**Abbreviations: TC = Technical Communication (Text Book)**

| Date                            | Topic  | Class Activities   | Readings / Hmwk   |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---|
| WEEK 1<br>August 23             | Introduction to English 3330;<br>The memo format             | The Declaration of Independence as a Memo  | <i>Late registration open</i>   |
| August 25                       | State your Business:<br>communicating concisely and directly | PAR Statements (Problem, Action, Response) and Memos (Summary, Discussion, Recommendation)   | <b>HMWK:</b> Write three PAR statements to share in class   |
| WEEK 2<br>August 28-September 1 | Hurricane Harvey   | None   | <i>Aug. 30: Last day to register and to process schedule changes online.</i>  |
| WEEK 3<br>September 6           | Formal Correspondence  | <b>In class:</b> Students work in groups to turn PAR statements into formal emails.  | <b>HMWK:</b> Familiarize yourself with the email and memo templates in TC, ch. 14   |
| September 8                     | Correspondence: Inquiry Letters                              | <b>In class:</b> Students brainstorm with the instructor to collaboratively produce a formal inquiry letter.                       | <b>HMWK:</b> Read Ch. 14, p. 359-371  |
| WEEK 4<br>September 11          | Correspondence: Claim Letters                                | <b>In class:</b> Students work in groups of 2-3 to complete <b>exercise one</b> (ch. 14, p. 383)                                   | <b>HMWK:</b> Type out exercise one and upload it to Blackboard.   |
| September 13                    | Correspondence: Good and Bad News Adjustment Letters         | <b>In class:</b> Half of the students (in pairs) respond to exercise one with a good news response, half with a bad news response. | <b>HMWK:</b> Complete MD 1, part 1  |
|                                 | <b>**MAJOR DOCUMENT 1 DISTRIBUTED**</b>                      |  | Part 1 of Major Document (MD) 1 is due <b>in class on September 15<sup>th</sup>, printed out on paper</b> . You should also upload a copy to Blackboard |
| September 15                    | <b>**MAJOR DOCUMENT 1, PT.1, DUE IN CLASS**</b>              | <b>In class:</b> Begin working on MD 1, pt. 2. If possible, get feedback on your draft from your classmate(s).                     | <b>HMWK:</b> Complete MD 1, part 2  |

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|              | <b>**MAJOR DOCUMENT 1 (pt2) DISTRIBUTED**</b>  |   | Part 2 of MD 1 is due in class on <b>Monday, September 18<sup>th</sup></b> , printed out on paper and uploaded to Blackboard |
| WEEK 5       |  |   |  |
| September 18 | Developing Verbal and Visual Information   | <b>In class:</b> What makes a document <i>persuasive</i> ?  | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 8, p. 171-180   |
|              | <b>**MAJOR DOCUMENT 1, PT.2, DUE**</b>   |   |  |
| September 20 | Varieties of Evidence  | <b>In class:</b> Document analysis activity in groups (p. 181)  | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 9, p. 193-203   |
| September 22 | Emphasizing important information  | <b>In class:</b> Parallel Structures—in groups, students write directives of a complex task, such as cooking a difficult recipe, changing the oil, etc. | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 9, p. 204-212   |
|              | <b>**Introduction to Formal Project**</b>  |   |  |
| WEEK 6       |  |   |  |
| September 25 | Paragraphs and Transitions   | <b>In class:</b> Practice using transitional words and phrases  | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch.9, exercise 5. Be ready to go over it in Wednesday's class. <b>Read</b> Ch. 11, p. 249-256                   |
| September 27 | Designing Print and Online Documents   | <b>In class:</b> Discussion of Design Principles (Proximity, Alignment, Repetition, Contrast)   | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 11, p. 257-275  |
| September 29 | Revising Documents and Adding Graphics   | <b>In class:</b> Begin to revise the text and explain the logic behind the changes you are making.  | <b>HMWK:</b> Begin MD 2. Revise text and complete the first part   |
|              | <b>**MAJOR DOCUMENT 2 DISTRIBUTED**</b>  |   |  |
| WEEK 7       |  |   |  |
| October 2    | Design: Filtering and Grids  | <b>In class:</b> Peer review of MD 2, part 1.   | <b>HMWK:</b> Begin <b>MD 2, part 2</b>   |
|              | <b>MD 2, part 1, DUE</b> (in class, printed out on paper and uploaded to Blackboard) |   |  |
| October 4    | Workshop: <b>MD 2</b>  | <b>In class:</b> Continue working on MD 2   | <b>HMWK:</b> Complete <b>MD 2</b> , due in class on <b>Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup></b> .                                  |
| October 6    | Creating Graphics  | <b>In class:</b> Characteristics of an Effective Graphic; Multicultural considerations (p. 334-335)   | <b>HMWK:</b> Read Ch. 12, p. 295-309   |
|              | <b>**MAJOR DOCUMENT 2 DUE**</b>  |   |  |

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| WEEK 8     |   |   |  |
| October 9  | Workshop: Creating Charts and Tables in MS Word   | <b>In class:</b> Demo and Group Practice  | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 12, p. 310-321  |
| October 11 | Workshop: Creating Line Graphs in MS Word   | <b>In class:</b> Group practice   | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 12, p. 322-335  |
| October 13 | Presenting Photos and Other Works of Art Effectively<br><br><b>**MAJOR DOCUMENT 3 DISTRIBUTED**</b> | <b>In class:</b> Wikipedia for Art Works, Gallery self-presentation.  | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 16, p. 420-430; Look over 436-442 to get an idea of what a formal proposal looks like.  |
| WEEK 9     |   |   |  |
| October 16 | Writing Proposals   | <b>In class:</b> Elements of a formal proposal. Read as a class, “An Example of How the Proposal and Formal Project Work Together.” | <b>HMWK:</b> Write a short (60 second) pitch for your formal project (e.g. What’s your topic? Who is your audience? What will be the result of your project for your intended audience?) |
| October 18 | Pitch Session for Formal Project  | <b>In class:</b> Students have 60 seconds to pitch their proposals to the class   | <b>HMWK:</b> Begin working on MD 3, especially the <b>introduction</b> and <b>description of problem</b>   |
| October 20 | Complete Pitch Sessions (if necessary); Proposals continued   | <b>In class:</b> Pitch sessions & Discussion. Questions on MD 3?  | <b>HMWK:</b> Write your <b>introduction</b> and <b>description of problem</b> for MD 3 and <b>bring three paper copies to class for peer review.</b>                                     |
| WEEK 10    |   |   |  |
| October 23 | Peer Review Session: MD 3   | <b>In class:</b> Students review each other’s work (guidelines for feedback will be handed out)                                     | <b>HMWK:</b> Read Ch. 6, p. 115-119. Begin incorporating peer review feedback to MD 3.   |
| October 25 | Researching your topic, completing your proposal  | <b>In class:</b> Discussion of research methods; Q&A  | <b>HMWK: Complete MD 3 for Friday, October 27<sup>th</sup></b>   |
| October 27 | <b>MD 3 DUE by 5 pm, uploaded to Blackboard</b>   | <b>In class:</b> What problems did you encounter with MD 3?   | <b>HMWK:</b> None  |
| WEEK 11    |   |   |  |
| October 30 | Evaluating and Testing Documents  | <b>In class:</b> Group work—exercise 1, p. 356  | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 13, p. 341-353  |
| November 1 | Writing Descriptions  | <b>In class:</b> Ch. 20, p. 548-551   | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 20, 534-551   |



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| November 3   | Writing Instructions<br><br><b>**MAJOR DOCUMENT 4 DISTRIBUTED**</b>  | <b>In class:</b> What are the characteristics of effective instructions?   | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 20, p. 551-564   |
| WEEK 12<br><br>November 6<br>(last day to drop)<br><br>November 8<br><br>November 10 | Creating Job Materials (Resume, CV, Cover Letters, etc.)<br><br>Job Materials, continued: Managing your Online Presence<br><br>Job Materials: Writing your Resume<br><br><b>**MAJOR DOCUMENT 4 DUE**</b><br><br><b>**Job Correspondence Portfolio guidelines distributed**</b> | <b>In class:</b> Dynamic Self-Presentation: Do you have a good headshot?<br><br><b>In class:</b> Workshop—LinkedIn<br><br><b>In class:</b> Produce a resume outline / draft  | <b>HMWK:</b> Ch. 15, p. 386-396; Set up a LinkedIn account<br><br><b>HMWK:</b> Complete your LinkedIn Profile. Be ready to share with the class!<br><b>Read</b> Ch. 15, p. 397-407<br><br><b>HMWK:</b> Bring a complete draft of your resume to class on Monday. Bring a laptop too, if possible. |
| WEEK 13<br><br>November 13<br><br>November 15<br><br>November 17                     | Job Materials: The Cover Letter<br><br>Workshop: <b>Job Correspondence Portfolio</b><br><br>Peer Review: <b>Job Correspondence Portfolio</b><br><br><b>**Job Correspondence Portfolio DUE**</b>  | <b>In class:</b> Find a job you'd like on Indeed.com, LinkedIn, or similar site, and begin drafting a cover letter for it.<br><br><b>In class:</b> Structured work time<br><br><b>In class:</b> Peer Review (guidelines distributed) | <b>HMWK:</b> Complete your cover letter and continue working on <b>Job Correspondence Portfolio</b><br><br><b>HMWK:</b> Complete Job Correspondence Portfolio. <b>DUE in class on Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup>.</b><br><br><b>HMWK:</b> Continue working on <b>Formal Project (FP)</b>        |
| WEEK 14<br><br>November 20   | Workshop: <b>FP</b>  | <b>In class:</b> Bring laptops, tablets, etc., to work on MD 4   | <i>Nov. 22-24: Thanksgiving holidays for students and faculty.</i>  |
| WEEK 15<br><br>November 27<br><br>November 29<br><br>December 1                      | Workshop: <b>FP</b><br><br>Workshop: <b>FP</b><br><br>Workshop: <b>FP</b><br><br><b>**FORMAL PROJECT DUE**</b>   | <b>In class:</b> Solo / group work<br><br><b>In class:</b> Solo / group work<br><br><b>In class:</b> Solo / group work   | <b>HMWK: FP</b><br><br><b>HMWK: FP due Friday, December 1<sup>st</sup> (in class)</b>   |

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| Finals week<br>December 4-7 | Final Examination | Details TBA | <i>The final is an in-class final to be administered during the time to be specified for each section by the University.</i> |
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**Grades will be posted by Monday, December 11, 12:00 p.m.**