

# English 3330W: Introduction to Technical Writing

Fall 2017, Online (3 Credit Hours)

Prerequisites: ENGL 1301 & 1302.

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<b>Office Hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only by appointment</li></ul>

**Classroom** Online

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

**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.

<b>Course Evaluation</b>	Your grade for this course will be determined according to the following:	
	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:

Quality of Work	Score	Grade
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.

<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>

<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. Please complete the 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.

The following key will help you understand the conventions and abbreviations listed in your course schedule.

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
MD	Major Document
Exercise X.Y	Chapter X, Exercise Y (e.g., Exercise 14.3 = Exercise #3 in Chapter 14).

## Schedule

**\*\* Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at midnight on the specified date\*\***

### Weeks 1, 2 & 3 (Aug 23 – Sept 10)

**\*\*This is a long period of time to accommodate for Hurricane Harvey closures/delays\*\***

#### Module 1: Course introduction and business correspondence

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What we'll complete	Introduce the Course; Discuss Technical & Professional Writing
What to read	Ch 14; watch video in module 1
What's due	Addendum A from your syllabus (by Sept 10) Discussion Board Post 1 (DBP1) (by Sept 8) - Respond to DBP1 (by Sept 10) Post an Introduction (by Sept 8) - Say hello/respond (by Sept 10) Analysis memo (by Sept 10)

### Week 4 (Sept 11 – 17)

#### Module 2: Collaborative writing

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What we'll complete	Identify and practice effective habits for group writing
What to read	Chs 4 & 17; BB post in Module 2 titled "Background on Working Collaboratively"
What's due	DBP2 (by Sept 13) - Respond to DBP2 (by Sept 15) Activity 1: Choosing a Point of Contact (POC) (should be completed by Sept 13-15) Activity 2: Writing a team charter (by Sept 17)

### Week 5 (Sept 18 – 24)

#### Module 3: Audience analysis

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What we'll complete	Broader understanding of audience and its needs
What to read	Chs 5 & 10
What's due	DBP3 (by Sept 20) - Respond to DBP3 (by Sept 22) Major Document 1, part 1 (MD1PT` 1) (by Sept 22) Major Document 1, part 2 (MD1PT` 2) (by Sept 24)

### Week 6 (Sept 25 – Oct 1)

#### Module 4: Technical writing style

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What we'll complete	Becoming comfortable with elements of style
What to read	Ch 10 + video
What's due	nothing

**Weeks 7-8 (Oct 2 – 15)**

**Module 5: Document design**

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What we'll complete	Apply knowledge of style and design to document(s)
What to read	Design PowerPoint pdf, Learning about branding and logos readings
What's due	DBP4 (by Oct 6) - Respond to DBP4 (by Oct 8) Q&A discussion board (post and respond throughout weeks) MD2: Style and Design (by Oct 15)

**Weeks 9-10 (Oct 16 – 29)**

**Module 6: Project proposal**

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What we'll complete	Clearer understanding of and nailing down ideas for the Formal Project
What to read	Ch. 16, Introducing the formal project, proposal resources
What's due	DBP5 (by Oct 20) - Respond to DBP5 (by Oct 22) Formal project ideas group discussion (as needed throughout the weeks) MD3: Proposal (by Oct 29)

**Weeks 11-12 (Oct 30 – Nov 12)**

**Module 7: Instructional writing**

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What we'll complete	Understanding and application of instructional writing
What to read	Ch 20, Background: Instructional writing, Sample instructions
What's due	MD4: Writing effective instructions (by Nov 12)

o drop the course with a "Q" is November 10.

**Weeks 13-15 (Nov 13 – Dec 3)**

**Formal Project**

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What we'll complete	Formal project
What to read	review previous chapters/readings as needed
What's due	Formal project (by Dec 3)

**Final project (Dec 4-5)**

**Job Portfolio - \*\*\*This will be offered as extra credit\*\*\***

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What we'll complete	Job portfolio (resume + LinkedIn account)
What we'll read	Ch 15
What's due	Job portfolio (extra credit) (by Dec 5)



**Addendum A: Agreement for Working Honestly and Ethically in ENGL 3330**

This course focuses on developing *your* writing skills; accordingly, I can grade only your original work during the semester. To avoid any confusion over what constitutes "original work," read and consider the following statements. Signal your understanding of each statement by initialing the corresponding blank. If you do not understand a statement, then ask me for clarification before initialing.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I should *never* copy and paste information from outside sources – even if I cite them.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I must create original content (whether text or images) for all assignments.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I may research information via interviews, internet searches, and/or library visits. But I also understand that duplicating text/content from documents that I find from any research method is unacceptable for this class.

\_\_\_\_\_ I promise to seek Dr. Blackburne's guidance if I am unsure about how to treat researched information. Dr. Blackburne will be more than happy to help.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that this course is not an editing course and that I will not be able to simply revise, modify, or reformat existing text(s) for my Major Documents or the Formal Project.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand the concept of *plagiarism* and how both SHSU and Dr. Blackburne have used it in describing expectations for my performance in this course.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that Dr. Blackburne will require me to submit documents to turnitin.com via the course's Blackboard site.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that if I submit a document containing *any* amount of plagiarized content, I will receive a zero for that assignment. A second offense will result in an F for the course and academic sanction. I further understand that any resulting grade will be non-negotiable.

I certify that I have read the above statements and that I will comply with them. In addition, I will adhere to the standards of Academic Honesty described both in this syllabus and in the Sam Houston State University Student Guidelines.

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Student's Name

Student's Signature

Date