

# English 3330W: Introduction to Technical Writing

Spring 2018, Sections 20, 22, & 25. Online (3 Credit Hours)

Prerequisites: ENGL 1301 & 1302.

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**Office Hours** By appointment via Skype; username: bcstrubberg

**Classroom** Blackboard

**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.

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

Major Documents (4)	50%
Formal Project	25%
Participation	10%
Discussion Board Posts (5)	15%

## **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**

- Log in to Blackboard often (daily, if possible). You are responsible for keeping up with class modules and the assignments and topics that we cover; accordingly, communicate with your group members often to stay up to date if you cannot log in for several days or are confused. I'm also happy to answer questions after you've spoken with your classmates.
- Consider your schedule; logging in regularly is essential to do well in this course. The pace of this course can be intense if you put off work until the due date. Log in daily (or every other day minimally) to stay up to date with course assignments. Doing some work each day will serve you better than trying to cram all the work in to a weekend.
- 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 logging in regularly, you are responsible for making thoughtful contributions to discussions and other activities.
- Respect your classmates. We are engaged in higher education, so be ready to learn from your classmates and me. Treat us respectfully and professionally; we will extend the same courtesies to you.

<b>Assignments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete scheduled readings before completing your assignments or participating in class discussions.</li> <li>• 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 email me with an explanation and an official request for an extension. Furthermore, if you experience technical difficulties that prevent you from uploading your assignment, email me as soon as possible (before the assignment is due). The final due date for major assignments (the four major documents and the formal project) is considered to be the end of the grace period. See course schedule for more information.</li> <li>• Follow assignment guidelines closely. Any assignment not prepared according to my instructions in format, organization, style, or content could receive a grade of <i>F</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Academic Honesty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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 <i>F</i> for the course.</li> </ul>
<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 physical classrooms on campus. Student visitations or audits are not permitted. This policy does not affect our online class.</p>

## **Overview of Activities**

Throughout the semester, you will complete a variety of assignments. I will provide detailed assignment sheets, supporting documents, and due times/dates on our Blackboard course site.

**Note:** 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.

### **Readings from Your Text**

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.

### **Exercises**

I will assign exercises from your text and provide materials online to engage you in the theory and practice of creating effective documents.

### **Group Discussions**

Group discussions can help you hone your documents and focus ideas as you work closer towards a final draft. I will give you notice of required discussions regarding certain major assignments.

### **Correspondence**

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.

### **Assignment Drafts**

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.

### **Major Documents**

You will complete a series of major documents, which will allow you to practice working with the following:

- Correspondence
- Technical-writing style and document design
- Proposals
- Instructions
- Job correspondence

### **Formal Project**

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.

### **Instructor Evaluations**

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 topics for the semester.

Please complete the readings and exercises for a given date before the end of its corresponding week. For our purposes, a week is Monday–Sunday, with Monday effectively serving as the beginning of our class week and Sunday serving as the end of the week. All due dates refer to the Sunday listed at the end of dates in the “Week/Dates” column. For example, MD 1 is due Week 4. That means it is due by Sunday, 2/11.

**Grace Periods.** I grant grace periods for all major documents and the formal project. If you feel you need extra time, you may take advantage of the grace period with no explanation required. Students who choose to use the grace period for a given assignment are still responsible for keeping up with all other work on the course schedule. In other words, even though you may choose to submit an assignment during its grace period, that does not mean you receive extended time for readings or discussion board posts; the class continues regardless. The grace period simply allows you to take extra time on a major assignment if you need it. Please pay attention to the course schedule for specific grace period length; most are one week, but some are not.

**This schedule is subject to change** throughout the semester; please keep up with class activities and announcements.

The following key will help you understand the abbreviations listed in your course schedule. Please note that Discussion Board Posts (DBPs) and Group Discussions are different kinds of assignments. See their corresponding module pages in Blackboard for more information.

Abbreviation	Meaning
MD	Major Document
DBP	Discussion Board Post

Week/Dates	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
Week 1, 1/18–21	Introductions; What is Technical Communication?	Syllabus; Ch. 3	Syllabus Addendum; Group Discussion 1 re: Personal Introductions
Week 2, 1/22–28	Correspondences	Ch. 14	DBP 1
Week 3, 1/29–2/4	Writing Collaboratively	“Background Reading”; Ch. 4	Group Discussion 2 re: MD 1
Week 4, 2/5–11	Audience Analysis	Ch. 5	<b>MD 1 (group may request extension, if needed)</b>
Week 5, 2/12–18	Technical-Writing Style	Ch. 10	Ch. 10 exercises; <b>MD 1 grace period ends</b>
Week 6, 2/19–25	Document Design	Design PPT; Ch. 11	<b>MD 2 (1-week grace period, if needed)</b>
Week 7, 2/26–3/4	Job Correspondence	Ch. 15; posted readings	DBP 2; <b>MD 2 grace period ends</b>

Week 8, 3/5–11			<b>MD 3 (1-week grace period, if needed)</b>
Week 9, 3/12–18	<b>Spring Break! Have fun. Don't work too hard unless you need to finish MD 3.</b>		MD 3 grace period ends
Week 10, 3/19–25	Proposals	Ch. 16; "Introduction to Formal Project"	DBP 3
Week 11, 3/26–4/1	Research	Ch. 6; Appendices A & B	Group Discussion 3 re: Formal Project topics
Week 12, 4/2–8			<b>MD 4 (1-week grace period, if needed)</b>
Week 13, 4/9–15	Instructional Documents	"Background"; Ch. 20	DBP 4; MD 4 grace period ends
Week 14, 4/16–22		Samples	DBP 5 re: research
Week 15, 4/23–29		Ch. 17	Progress Report w/ 2-page excerpt of Formal Project
Week 16, 4/30–5/6		Appendix C	<b>Formal Project (4-day grace period, if needed)</b>
Final Exams, 5/7–10			Formal Project grace period ends (note: this grace period ends on the last day of finals: <b>Thursday, 5/10</b> )*
Grades due, 5/14			

\*Although you may submit the Formal Project as late as 5/10, I encourage you to submit it earlier to ensure you have time to view your final course average in Blackboard before I submit final grades to the Registrar's Office. If you submit this assignment on 5/10, your final average may not be calculated until the day grades are due.