

## WRIT 3562W-013: Technical and Professional Writing, Fall 2012

**Instructor:** Trent M Kays  
**Classroom:** 204 Appleby Hall  
**Meeting Time:** W 530-8pm

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**Office:** 301 Nolte Center  
**Office Hours:** By appointment

### **Course Overview**

From the course catalogue: Written/oral communication in professional settings. Gathering information, analyzing audience, assessing conventional formats. Drafting, testing, revising documents. Oral presentation of final reports

What we're going to actually do: In this course, we're going to explore the various understandings technical and professional writing, create documents in both face-to-face and online environments, collaborate on writing projects, revise until our eyes are bloodshot, think of creative and clear ways to present information to audiences, figure out what our audiences want and how to give it to them in an ethical manner, and work toward refining our writing practice through the uses of technical documentation.

We're going to work in class together, and we're going to (hopefully) have fun doing it.

### **Textbooks**

*Technical Communication Today* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) by Richard Johnson-Sheehan

### **Supplemental Resources**

Other readings will be provided by instructor

### **Course Schedule (Subject to Change)**

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| <b>Week 1</b> | Introduction to Course: Defining technical and professional writing. Where does it happen? How does it happen? What tools are available to the technical communicator? Thoughts on how the course will run, collaborating, group work, etc.     |
| <b>Week 2</b> | <b>Topic:</b> <u>Workplace Communication, Genre, and Understanding Contextual Audience</u><br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> <i>TCT</i> Chapter 1 and 2  |
| <b>Week 3</b> | <b>Topic:</b> <u>Teamwork and Collaboration; Situations and Ethics</u><br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> <i>TCT</i> Chapter 3 and 4  |
| <b>Week 4</b> | <b>Topic:</b> <u>Memos, Letters, and Emails—Oh my!</u><br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> <i>TCT</i> Chapter 5  |
| <b>Week 5</b> | <b>Topic:</b> <u>Technical Descriptions and Instructions and the Difference Between Them</u><br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> <i>TCT</i> Chapter 6 and 7  |
| <b>Week 6</b> | <b>Topic:</b> <u>Proposals; Or, How to Get People to Give You Things</u><br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> <i>TCT</i> Chapter 8  |
| <b>Week 7</b> | <b>Topic:</b> <u>Activity Reports and Analytical Reports; Or, Let's Analyze Activity</u><br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> <i>TCT</i> Chapter 9 and 10   |
| <b>Week 8</b> | <b>Topic:</b> <u>Defining Your Research and Source Material; Or, Figuring Out What To Say and How To Support It</u><br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> <i>TCT</i> Chapter 14 and 15   |
| <b>Week 9</b> | <b>Topic:</b> <u>Drafting and Revising Until We See the Whites of Their Eyes; Tufte and Visuals</u><br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> <i>TCT</i> Chapter 18 and 19; "Tufte's Principles" ( <a href="http://bit.ly/qGqNp5">http://bit.ly/qGqNp5</a> ) |

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|----------------|---|
| <b>Week 10</b> | <b>Topic:</b> Usability and Document Design; Or, Making Sure People Can Actually Use and Read Stuff<br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> TCT Chapter 17 and 20; "Usability Basics" ( <a href="http://1.usa.gov/cwbOwz">http://1.usa.gov/cwbOwz</a> ) and "Methods" ( <a href="http://1.usa.gov/UxCFzO">http://1.usa.gov/UxCFzO</a> )  |
| <b>Week 11</b> | <b>Topic:</b> Thinking About Web Design; Or, How We Get From Click to Link to Something Useful<br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> TCT Chapter 22; "Web Design Principles" ( <a href="http://bit.ly/brCp6J">http://bit.ly/brCp6J</a> )   |
| <b>Week 12</b> | <b>No Class: Turkey Break</b>   |
| <b>Week 13</b> | <b>Topic:</b> Presentation Tools and Methods; Or, How We Can Present Stuff and Look Good Doing It<br><b>Need to Have Read:</b> TCT Chapter 21; "PowerPoint is Evil" ( <a href="http://bit.ly/ShTR">http://bit.ly/ShTR</a> ) and "Challenging the Presentation Paradigm (in 6 minutes, 40 seconds): Pecha Kucha" ( <a href="http://bit.ly/gSquON">http://bit.ly/gSquON</a> ) |
| <b>Week 14</b> | <b>Topic: Workday</b>   |
| <b>Week 15</b> | <b>Topic:</b> Closing Time: You Don't Have to Go Home, But You Can't Stay Here  |

*All outstanding work and revisions are due by **Midnight on 12/19/2012.***

### **Grading**

I don't really like the current grading structure employed by many teachers, but here's a rough breakdown. (Also: see "Thoughts on Grading" below.)

- Memo: 10 points
- Technical Description: 10 points
- Instructions: 10 points
- Proposal: 20 points
- Activity Report: 10 points
- Analytical Report: 20 points
- Letter of Complaint: 10 points
- Rhetorical Analysis: 10 points
- Presentation: 30 points

Total: 130 points

### **Assignments**

You must turn in all required drafts and revisions. If you do not, you are likely to receive a lower grade for the course. Late assignments may receive a lower grade. Keep copies of all your work in a folder dedicated exclusively to this course; back up your work on your computer in case assignments get lost.

### **Thoughts on Grading**

Honestly, I abhor "grading" as it is currently understood in many parts of higher education. I do not think the current letter grading system (i.e. A-F) employed by many universities, including the University of Minnesota, is conducive to learning. I believe it only gets in the way of learning because many students will become obsessed with the letter grade and not the course content.

Unfortunately, I have to work within the letter grade system. That being said, if you work with me and do the work, there is no reason why you shouldn't get an A. It's not guaranteed, but if you put in a good effort, revise your work when needed, ask questions, get involved in the writing process, and have some fun, then you should do well in the course.

### **My Role as a Teacher**

My role as a teacher is to help you become a better writer, understand the writing process, and work to provide a good learning space. My role is not to break you down or make you feel like inferior writers. There is no such thing as a "good" writer or a "bad" writer; there are only experienced and inexperienced writers.

### ***Absence Policy***

Excused absences include illness as verified by a doctor's note, death in the immediate family, jury duty, military service, religious observances, and participation in officially scheduled university student organization events (e.g., inter-collegiate athletics, ROTC, school sports events; see the CLA policy at <http://www.cla.umn.edu/cgep/3.html> ). Excused absences do not include vacations, transportation problems, or employment. In case of an excused absence, you must notify your instructor of your excuse preferably before you miss class, but no later than 24 hours after the absence.

Missing the equivalent of one week or more of class with unexcused absences may result in a lower grade. Missing the equivalent of three weeks or more with unexcused absences may result in failing the course. In some cases, an excessive number of absences, even if they are excused, may result in a lower grade. A student who is absent for any reason is responsible for all material and activities missed in class. Students must check with the instructor to find out what was missed. Students are responsible for coming to class on time. Tardiness may be considered equivalent to unexcused absences. In addition, a student who is unable to function adequately in class (e.g., falling asleep or attending without appropriate materials or assignments) may be considered to have unexcused absences.

### ***Students with Disability***

Any student with a documented disability condition (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact the instructor and Disability Services (626-1333) at the beginning of the semester.

### ***Student Conduct***

The University of Minnesota Student Conduct Code governs all activities in the University, including this course. Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for others may be subject to disciplinary action under the Code. This includes any behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities. Students responsible for such behavior may be asked to cancel their registration (or have their registration canceled).

### ***Student Writing Support***

Students can get one-to-one consultations on any course paper or writing project at Student Writing Support. Student Writing Support has several campus locations, including the main location in 15 Nicholson Hall. See <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/index.htm> for details about locations, appointments, and online consultations.

### ***Scholastic Dishonesty***

The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

"Scholastic Dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis."  
<http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/cgep/studentconduct.html>

Plagiarism, representing someone else's intellectual work as your own, can result in a grade of **F** for the assignment, and may result in a grade of **F** for the course. Plagiarism can include submitting a paper:

- written by means of inappropriate collaboration
- written by you for another course, submitted without the permission of both instructors
- purchased, downloaded, or cut and pasted from the Internet
- or that fails to properly acknowledge its sources through standard citations

### ***Instructor Prerogative***

Everything listed and outlined on this syllabus is subject to change by the instructor. The instructor will notify students of any and all changes and provide explanations for said changes.