

**ENGLISH 393: TECHNICAL WRITING
COURSE SYLLABUS / SUMMER I 2011
0207 Tawes Hall; MW, 6pm-9:20pm**

Instructor: Amanda Olson
Office: 1232 Tawes Hall
Office Hours: MW, 5-6pm
Email: alcolson@umd.edu
Text: Lannon, J. and Laura Gurak. *Technical Communication*. Boston: Longman, 2011. (12th ed);
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Supplies: box of swing clips, binding and copies for final report

COURSE OVERVIEW & REQUIREMENTS

This course focuses on effective process of written, oral, and visual technical communication for academic and professional settings. Students in this course study how technical professionals communicate to solve problems and answer questions, including conducting library and empirical research, creating proposals, and using collaboration to create written documents and oral presentations. Students are exposed to conventions of organization and style appropriate to writing for the sciences, including documentation and peer review. Students also learn about adapting their writing for various audiences and contexts they might encounter professionally.

Learning Outcomes

In addition to the skills noted above, you should be able to do the following upon completion of this course:

1. Analyze rhetorical aspects of audience, purpose, and context to communicate technical information effectively in written, oral, and visual media.
2. Recognize structures of technical documents. Understand the processes that produce these documents as well as the organizational and stylistic conventions characteristic of them. Apply this knowledge to your own writing tasks.
3. Approach the literature relevant to your field of study with a critical eye.

The means of achieving these outcomes include:

1. Reading and discussing examples of various academic and professional genres as presented in the textbook, created by former students, or published by scientists and engineers to illustrate various methods and conventions of organization and style typical of these genres.
2. Practice applying this knowledge to your own writing.
3. Practice reading and evaluating professional discourse in the literature of your chosen field of study.

Course Requirements

Writing assignments for this course require you to both target experts within a profession and translate jargon for an **outsider audience**: describing technical processes and mechanisms, defining technical terms, observing and interpreting measurable data, consulting and evaluating research sources, and designing professional-looking user-based documents. **You'll be producing 25-30 pages of original writing in this course.**

Much of the course's work goes into the final project—a 20-30 page technical report or manual written for a specific, real-world audience that is not your instructor. You will work in a group of either two or three students to create this project (duos will write 20-page documents; trios will write 30 pages). I encourage you to think about this project as a “problem / solution” situation in which you write the change you wish to see. You will individually complete several other assignments that connect to this project: your library research tutorial and workshop session, an annotated bibliography, and several topic-relevant memos. You will additionally complete professional-related assignments (a resume and cover letter) and peer-related assignments (workshops, draft critiques), and a group oral presentation.

Please note that you will be required to submit at least one draft of many of these assignments. If you are not prepared with a draft, be advised that you will lose 1/3 of a letter grade for that assignment.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

This is a workshop-style class; therefore, attendance and participation is required. You will be given class time throughout the semester to work in groups and also to do research and to conference with me and with each other. Make use of this time. Come prepared to participate in an intellectual dialogue by completing the required reading and assignments for each class. Students will be allowed four (4) absences without penalty. If you miss more than four days, three percentage points will be deducted for each successive absence. (e.g. One additional absence will drop an 85% [B] to an 82% [B-].)

If you are involved in university-sanctioned activities this semester, please notify me within the first two weeks of class. If you will be observing religious holidays this semester, please notify me within the first two weeks of class, and please be prepared to **make arrangements with me in advance to make up work that you will miss**. If you have extenuating circumstances that arise during the semester, you must make arrangements with me (**this means informing me and then receiving a response from me**) in advance of planned events. Missing half the semester or more, regardless of the reason, will result in a failing grade.

Coming late to class is disruptive. Leaving class early or in the midst is also disruptive. I will take roll at the beginning of class. It is your responsibility to ensure you are marked on the class roll.

Participation

Your participation grade reflects my observation and judgment about your performance in the classroom and in the course as a whole. A typical participation grade is a B. The student who makes an unusually strong contribution to our learning environment may receive an above-average participation grade. The following examples are the kinds of behaviors that have earned students their participation grades.

High-Scoring Participation

1. Brought the textbook to every class session and used it.
2. Asked useful questions in class about assignments and activities.
3. Arrived on time for class; prepared to work before I took attendance.
4. Submitted papers when due.
5. Scheduled conferences with me for guidance long before an assignment was due in order to incorporate my advice on strengthening the document.
6. Used classmates, the syllabus, and my office hours—rather than email—to inquire about missed assignments and to solicit clarifications.

Low-Scoring Participation

1. Failed or refused to purchase the course textbook.
2. Read a text or did work for another course during class time.
3. Worked on the crossword puzzle during class time.
4. Sent a text during class.
5. Checked a text during class.
6. Surfing the web during class.
7. Failed to bring the required hard-copy versions of assignments to class.
8. Arrived consistently late for class.
9. Failed to meet deadlines.
10. Missed classes because scheduled conflicting events.
11. Failed to be an effective, worthwhile team member.

Communication

The primary way of contacting me is in person. Please make the necessary arrangements to attend my office hours if you want to discuss course policies, ask questions about readings, or get feedback on assignments and essays.

I am available by email if you need to inform me in advance of an excused absence or if an extended emergency arises. My practice is to respond within 24-48 hours, but if you fail to hear from me after that time period, please resend your message. **Do not use email to inquire after what you missed while you were absent, to find out what is assigned for an upcoming class, to submit draft material, or to discuss non-academic issues.** These things should be done with the help of a classmate, by consulting the syllabus, or by meeting with me during office hours.

Conferences and Workshops

I will meet with your project groups a couple of times throughout the semester to conference about your work. Some of these meetings may occur during class, or they may occur in place of class. These conferences are mandatory. I will inform you ahead of time about what you need to do to be prepared for each one.

Additionally, you will be required to read and comment on your peers' work throughout the semester. I call this "workshop," and, with one exception, it will occur during class time. On workshop days, you are required to come prepared with your completed draft, exchange that draft with a peer, review that peer's draft, and discuss your comments together. This aspect of our course is aligned with the collaborative nature of the workplace, and I expect you to approach workshoping with an attitude of professionalism.

Late Assignments

I do not accept late work. Your work is due on the assigned date as noted on the calendar. In the case of an emergency or extenuating circumstances, please contact me as soon as possible so we can work together on an effective course of action. *If you know in advance that you will need to miss a class, please contact me at least one week beforehand as well as receive a response from me* in order to submit an assignment on a due date that varies from what is stated on the calendar. **Please be advised that you may not submit papers to my office or to the PWP office.**

Cell Phones and Computers

You are not allowed to take calls, make calls, send texts, email, or surf the web during our class period. Please **turn off your cell phone, laptop, iPad or iPod, or other electronic devices** when you come to class, and please plan to use computers only for class activities.

Plagiarism

All the work you submit must be written for this course during this term. Work from other courses or from other academic or non-academic settings, past or present, is not acceptable and may be subject to immediate failure. If you wish to submit extensively revised or expanded work previously submitted in this or another course, you must obtain my approval in advance.

University Policies

Honor Code Standards: Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at the university. The University of Maryland, College Park, has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html>. Violations of the university's Honor Code will result in an automatic F grade for the assignment in question and may result in a grade of XF for the course and expulsion from the university. Please familiarize yourself with the University's Honor Code.

Preventing Sexual Harassment: The University of Maryland is committed to maintaining a working and learning environment in which students, faculty, and staff can develop intellectually, professionally, personally, and socially. Sexual harassment by university faculty, staff, and students is prohibited. This constitutes campus policy.

Students with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (enacted in 1990) prohibits discrimination based on disability in employment, public service, public accommodations, telecommunications, and transportation. The Act is intended to afford the disabled equal opportunity and full participation in life activities. If you have a disability and need accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services and let me know your needs in the first few weeks of class, *before* assignments are due.

GRADING

Good writing requires skills and proficiencies that you can only develop with practice. Without your dedicated application to the writing process, a good grade simply isn't possible. Please take the time you require to make a good effort and apply yourself fully to both the research and writing components of the class. Be advised that I can easily note when a writer has taken shortcuts such as inadequate time for critical thinking about the subject, hasty research, and last minute writing. It is my job as a teacher to point out those failures and grade accordingly.

The following are some general guidelines for the grading standards in this course:

Grade A Document Exceeds the standards for the assignment stipulated in rubric, assignment sheets, and classroom discussion. A documents are written with a high degree of audience awareness and solidly exhibit the following characteristics: 1) sufficient and credible information; 2) appropriate tone and word choice (level of technicality); 3) logical organization; 4) accessible structure; 5) credible source citations; and 6) consciousness of aesthetic/usable format.

Grade B Document Meets the standards of the assignment. B documents have almost all the virtues of an A document, but one or more of its component elements is flawed or inadequate. B documents need editing revisions to make them excellent. (For instance, persistent grammar errors could reduce an A document to a B.)

Grade C Document Does not quite meet the standards of the assignment. One or more of the above-mentioned qualities of an A document is missing, inadequate, or significantly flawed. C documents need more revision and, often, re-working of the entire piece to make them excellent. They often have mechanical problems or formatting inconsistencies that need to be addressed.

Grade D Document Does not meet the standards of the assignment. D documents pay little attention to the qualities exhibited in A documents. They have significant problems with conception or execution. Often, little attention is paid to mechanics.

Grade F Document Fails completely to meet assignment standards in both content and structure. Is poorly researched and hastily referenced. If a document contains plagiarized work, it will receive a failing grade.

ASSIGNMENT POINT VALUES

(I = individual assignment; G = group assignment)

I. Memos (175 points)

- # 1: Topic Consultation Summary (25 points) I
- # 2: Topic Memo (50 points; 25 individual draft, 25 group draft) I and G
- # 3: Audience Analysis for Recommendation Report (50 points) I
- # 4: Citation Style Sheet (10 points) I
- # 5: Annotated Bibliography (25 points) I
- # 6: Personal Accountability and Work Breakdown (15 points) I

II. Papers and Assignments (405 points)

- Grammar Exercises (80 points) I
- Resume and Letter (100 points) I
- Proposal for Final Project (100 points) G
- First Draft of Final Project (50 points) G
- Second Draft of Final Project (75 points) G

III. Final Draft of Final Project (200 points) G

IV. Participation (50 points) attitude, attendance, timeliness, preparedness, contribution (see syllabus for further discussion) I

***Note: Previous students have found it wise to SAVE all graded and returned final drafts of the above-listed assignments until the semester is complete.

Grade Breakdown

Grade	Points
A	1000 – 935
A-	934 – 895
B+	894 – 865
B	864 – 835
B-	834 – 795
C+	794 – 765
C	764 – 735
C-	734 – 695
D+	694 – 665
D	664 – 635
D-	634 – 595
E	below

COURSE CALENDAR

*****Information on this schedule is subject to change at my discretion. I reserve the right to make whatever changes may be necessary in order to fulfill course or class needs.

Date	Readings / Homework (DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS)	In Class Activities / Objectives
Week One W 1 June	Lannon Ch 1 Lannon Ch 6 Lannon Ch 15	workplace communication the writing process memos introduction to final paper genre
Week Two M 6 June	job description from a potential employer GrEx #1 Memo #1 (2pgs): Topic Consultation Summary Draft: resume / cover letter Lannon Ch 17 Lannon Ch 18 "The Great Turning"	workshop formal letters resumes sustainability conversation follow up
W 8 June	GrEx #2 Final Draft: resume / cover letter Draft: Memo #2 (3pgs): Topic Memo (individual) Lannon Ch 23	project pitches; select project groups formal reports
Week Three M 13 June	GrEx #3 Final Draft: Memo #2 (3pgs; group) Lannon Ch 2 Lannon Ch 3	evaluating audience persuading audience
W 15 June	GrEx #4 Final Draft: Memo #3 (2+pgs): Audience Analysis Lannon Ch 23 Lannon Ch 24	library session (6107 McKeldin Library) formal analytical reports proposals
Week Four M 20 June	GrEx #5 Draft: Proposal (4pgs); bring three copies Lannon pp 676-81	documentation style; scholarly source review
W 22 June	GrEx #6 Final Draft: Proposal Memo #4: Citation Style Sheet Memo #5: Annotated Bibliography Lannon 175-76; 680; 677 Lannon 248-51; 289	using paraphrase, summary, quote using visuals
Week Five M 27 June	GrEx #7 First Draft: Final Project (10 pgs) Lannon 199; 206; 208	workshop and conferences paragraphing; chunking; overview discuss front matter, binding requirements
W 29 June	GrEx #8 Second Draft: Final Project (15 pgs)	workshop and conferences oral presentations
Week Six M 4 July	Independence Day holiday; campus closed	
W 6 July	Final Draft: Final Project Memo #6: Personal Accountability and Work Breakdown oral presentations	

