English 273.011
Technical and Scientific Writing
Department of English, SFASU

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Office Hours: MWF 12:30-3
other times by appointment

Meeting Times and Location: MWF 3-3:50 F476

Description

ENG 273 Technical and Scientific Writing: “Study of the rhetorical principles involved in technical and scientific workplace writing. Emphasis on the production of professional documents, such as analytical reports, in both traditional and online formats. Will not satisfy literature requirement; will not count toward an English major or minor (except for a minor in technical writing).

Additional Information

In English 273 you will learn and practice the forms of written and oral communication used in science, business, engineering, and the workplace in general. You will analyze typical rhetorical situations, recognize conventional styles of presentation, and learn how to tailor your writing to a variety of audiences. You will study and practice the processes of written composition and the general principles of good communication, with the aim of becoming an efficient and effective writer and editor.

The business world is plagued by inefficient, incorrect, and sometimes unethical writing. By the time you finish this course, you’ll be part of the solution, not part of the problem. You’ll be able to write things that do what you need them to do without causing undue confusion, conflict, or offense.

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives

In any given semester, one or more of the following Core Curriculum Objectives for the English Foundational Component Area in Communication Writing may be assessed. These objectives are:

1. Critical Thinking Creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.

2. Communication Skills: Effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.

3. Teamwork: The ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.
4. Personal Responsibility: The ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

**English Program Learning Outcomes**

This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in this course.

**Student Learning Outcomes for ENG 273**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Understand the recursive writing and social editing process and be able to write a variety of technical documents in an acceptable level of Standard American English. (This outcome aligns to the Core objectives for Communication Skills and Teamwork).

2. Write a variety of technical documents, demonstrating their awareness of audience and facility in addressing different audiences and stakeholders in complex rhetorical situations. (This outcome aligns to the Core objectives for Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, and Personal Responsibility).

3. Write technical and workplace documents by applying the appropriate categorical modes of rhetorical composition (descriptive, expositive, scientific, etc.), integrating visuals with text, and presenting information in an oral format. (This outcome aligns to the Core objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, and Personal Responsibility).

4. Work in groups to produce and critically evaluate documents, integrating different points of view. (This outcome aligns with the Core objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility).

5. Use critical-thinking skills and exhibit technical proficiency in the invention and composing processes. (This outcome aligns with the Core objectives of Critical Thinking and Communication Skills).

6. Understand ethical considerations in technical and professional writing, understanding the consequences of communication acts. (This outcome aligns with the Core objectives of Critical Thinking, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility).

7. Tailor communications to social and ethical frameworks, editing them to be effective and responsible in international and intercultural situations. (This outcome aligns with the Core objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, and Personal Responsibility).
8. Adequately research a topic and use documented evidence to support a paper written in the style applicable to their individual field of study. (This outcome aligns with the Core objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, and Personal Responsibility).

**Required Text and Materials**
A reliable way to store and transfer files (preferably a USB/Flash drive).
A stapler, paper clips, or binder clips
A pocket folder
Regular access to and ability to use D2L
Any writing handbook, such as the one you may have been required to buy in English 131 and 132.

**Course Requirements**
All writing assignments prepared outside of class must be typed. The format will vary for each writing assignment, depending on its purpose and audience. Ideally, the topics for your major assignments will relate to your major field and/or future professional interests. All assignments will be graded for proper format, soundness of content, attention to rhetorical context, resourcefulness, grammar, and mechanics.

All assignments must be completed in the order in which they are given, and you must complete all the major assignments and the final exam in order to pass this course.

Late work will receive a 5% penalty per day up to 7 days after which the assignment will receive a zero.

If you foresee that you will have difficulty meeting a due date, **let me know in advance** and we can work out an accommodation. Otherwise, the penalty outlined above will apply.

All assignments will be turned in via D2L on their scheduled due date. We will go over how to do this in class. Technical difficulties with D2L will be discussed in class, including how to handle that issue if it occurs. If you have questions about how to turn in an assignment, you need to **let me know in advance** so we can work on it together.

Most major assignments except the final exam will include intermediate drafts and other materials.

**Grading Policy**

Grades will be computed in the following fashion:
Weekly Memos: 15% (10 memos average together)
Complaint Letter: 10%
Résumé Project: 20%
Decision Making Report: 25%
Instruction Manual: 20%
Final Exam: 10%

Assignments

In-Class Participation

I will take attendance in class everyday in some fashion, be it a simple tally of who is present, a quiz or a writing activity, or the like. I may draw attention to this or I may not.

Students may miss up to five classes with no penalty and no excuse necessary. After that, I will deduct two percentage points off of the student’s final grade up to a maximum of 10%.

This class is “flipped” which means that a great deal of the work you do in class will be hands on, either drafting documents or peer reviewing the work of your classmates. Students who are unprepared for the in-class activity (for example, those who did not bring a rough draft in with them when we are doing peer review) will be counted as absent for that day. Students who do not participate in the day’s activities or who ignore the guidelines for those activities will be marked absent.

Weekly Memos

Each week students will have the opportunity to write a short memo addressed to the rest of the class, summarizing the key points of the week’s readings or of a classroom discussion, due on Friday at 11pm via D2L. Memos should not be rehashes of assignment prompts. Any sources referenced should be cited.

Memos are graded on formatting, clarity of prose, accuracy of information, and proofreading/copy editing.

I will count the best five memos towards your final grade.

Complaint Letter

Students will pose as consumers and write complaint letters asking for redress. Letters may refer to real experiences or hypothetical ones.

Résumé Project

Will include

- Résumé
• Cover Letter
• Thank You Letter
• Job Ad

Decision Making Report

Will include
• Memo
• Annotated Bibliography with a Research Plan
• 2 Peer Reviewed rough drafts
• A thoroughly-researched report describing multiple options to solve a problem and arguing in favor of the one that the author believes will be the most effective
• Response Letter

Instruction Manual

• A Proposal
• An Instruction Manual
• A Response Letter
  A Presentation

Final Exam

. This will be a take-home final that you will type, print, and turn in on final exam day.

A Note Regarding Grades

In college, the grading scale used by your instructors to assess your work is likely very different from the one by your high school. In college, “A” work is truly exceptional, both in the sense that it is extremely high in quality and in the sense that it bears the unique stamp of the individual who created it. “B” work exceeds expectations, but is more expected or less insightful than “A” work. “C” work meets expectations for the assignment and goes no further. “D” and “F” work both have serious issues that need fixing if the student hopes to move forward in the course. Keep this in mind as you work on your assignments for the semester.

Grading Scale

A (excellent performance): 90-100.
B (above average performance): 80-89.
C (average performance): 70-79.
F (failure): 0-59.
Plagiarism/Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity: Adhering to academic integrity standards at all times by producing your own work and successfully attributing others’ ideas to them is a necessary aspect of university communication.

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assignment; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism.

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to: (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author due credit.

Any appeals on academic integrity cases must be made within thirty days after the first class day of the next long semester. Students should appeal to the instructor first then to the chair if the situation is not resolved. Further appeals can be made to the dean and provost if necessary.

Please read the complete policies at: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp and http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-appeals-by-students.pdf.

My policy is simple: plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in a zero for that assignment, or a failing grade for the course depending on the severity of the violation.

We will be discussing the proper way to cite your sources during this class, but in the meantime, if you have any questions about this definition or about a particular case in any of your courses, it is up to you to approach me (or any of your other instructors) for help.

Classroom Conduct

In order for our classroom sessions to be productive, we need to create an environment in which none of us are afraid to put ourselves out there in front of each other. Rudeness will not be tolerated. We may discuss “hot button” issues, but we need to be respectful of the opinions, feelings, and life experiences of others. Hateful language or behavior such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc is not acceptable. Students who engage in this behavior will be asked to leave the classroom and may be subject to further disciplinary action.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Special Accommodations**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify your instructors and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided.

Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations, and no accommodations can be made except through the ODS. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**Resources**

The AARC offer free writing tutoring, which is available on a walk-in and appointment basis. They also offer online writing tutoring services and workshops about writing-related topics. For more information, go to [http://library.sfasu.edu/aarc/](http://library.sfasu.edu/aarc/), visit them on the first floor of the Steen Library, or call them at 936-468-4108.

**Course Calendar**

**Week 1**

Read Chapters 1 and 23  
M – Introduction to the class.  
W – What is Reader-centered Writing?, D2L, Emails  
F – Casual tone vs. business tone, Memos

**Week 2**

Read Chapter 5  
M – Basics of argumentation, Rhetorical triangle.  
W – Assessing advertisements  
F – Write and peer review a letter of complaint
**Week 3**

Read first half of Chapter 2  
M – Job skills inventory, Looking for job ads  
W – Reading the job ad, Critique sample résumés  
F – Critique sample résumés continued

**Week 4**

Read second half of Chapter 2  
M – Introduce résumé project  
W – Set up résumés using table function  
F – Peer review résumés and craft response letter

**Week 5**

Read Chapter 10  
M – Interviewing skills  
W – Introduce Decision Making Report  
F – DMR Formatting

**Week 6**

Read Chapters 6 and 24  
M – Primary vs. Secondary resources, Evaluating online resources  
W – Evaluating online resources continued, Drafting research questions  
F – Work on DMR Proposals

**Week 7**

Read Chapters 7 and 26  
M – NO CLASS – Head over to the library and find two scholarly secondary resources relevant to your case study that you can bring with you to next class  
W - Citing Sources, Plagiarism  
F – Work on First Draft of Decision Making Report

**Week 8**

Read Chapters 8 and 9  
M – Reader-Centered Editing  
Read Chapter 17  
W – Work on DMR  
F – Peer review #1 DMR
Week 9

Read Chapter 3 & 4
M – Answer questions over DMR peer review; work on editing DMR in class
W – Peer Review #2 on DMR
F – DMR Final draft, rough drafts (both of them), and response letter due now; Instructions for Instruction Manual

Week 10

Read Chapters 19 & 28
M – Critique existing instruction manuals
W – Critique existing manuals

Week 11

M – Peer Evaluation on Proposal
Read Chapter 14
W – Discuss Chapter 14
F – More discussion; work on Instruction Manual

Week 12

Read Chapter 22
M – Work on Instruction Manual
W – Work on Instruction Manual
F – Work on Instruction Manual

Week 13

Read Chapter 22
M – THANKSGIVING BREAK
W – THANKSGIVING BREAK
F – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14

M – Continue working on manual
W – “
F – “

Week 15

M – Peer Review over Instruction Manual
W – Editing and revising Instruction Manual
F – Instruction Manual due here; Cover final exam info….

Week 16

Final Exam

TBD