English 273.004
Technical and Scientific Writing
Department of English, SFASU

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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 formatting, 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, some assignments must also be turned in via hardcopy as well. We will go over how to do this in class. Technical difficulties with D2L will not be an acceptable excuse for late work. 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 will include intermediate drafts and other materials.

Grading Policy

Grades will be computed in the following fashion:

- Memos/Emails/Daily: 15%
- Complaint Letter: 10%
- Résumé Project: 25%
- Decision Making Report: 25%
- Instruction Manual: 15%
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. As per University policy, after you have missed the equivalent of 3 weeks of classes, you can NOT pass the course. Since this class meets two days per week, that is 6 absences. **Choose your absences wisely for I will not longer grade your papers after 6 absences.**

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/Monthly Emails**
*There will be 7 memos and 4 emails, you may miss only ONE. I am taking 10 for grades.*

Every other 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 Sunday by 11:30pm 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.

Emails will be sent to me via my sfasu email address. You are required to send one per month: January, February, March, and April. These count in your daily grades and you must follow protocol for proper email format and content.

**Complaint Letter**

Students will pose as consumers and write complaint letters asking for redress. Letters may refer to real experiences or hypothetical ones. Students will be required to not only write a complaint letter, but to also take on the role of the person to whom it was addressed and write a response letter back. This requires the student to think from both sides of the issue as hand so that they can understand what is reasonable to ask for in recompense.

**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

Original Instruction Manual

- A Proposal
- An Instruction Manual
- A Peer Reviewed rough draft

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/.

Resources

The AARC offers 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/, visit them on the first floor of the Steen 
Library, or call them at 936-468-4108.

Tentative Course Calendar

**NOTE: Aside from your reading homework, you are expected to work on our current 
project(s) outside of classroom as part of your homework as well. Yes, we will be doing 
work in classroom, but you will need outside time to complete them all on time.

Week 1
Homework for the week: Read Chapters 1 and 23
T – Introduction to the class; What is Reader-centered Writing? D2L; syllabus
R – Casual tone vs. business tone, Memos, Emails

Week 2
Homework for the week: Read Chapter 5
T – Basics of argumentation; Rhetorical triangle; Assessing advertisements
R – Complaint Letters; Write and peer review a letter of complaint

Week 3
Homework for the week: Read first half of Chapter 2
T – Job skills inventory; Looking for job ads; What does an employer want?
R – Complaint Letter due here; Introduce résumé project, Critique sample résumés

Week 4
Homework for the week: Read second half of Chapter 2
T – Set up résumés using table function
R – Peer review résumés

**Week 5**
Homework for the week: Read Chapter 10
T – **Job Portfolio Final Draft Due**: Interviewing skills
R – Introduce Decision Making Report Project, DMR Formatting

**Week 6**
Homework for the week: Read Chapters 6 and 24
T – Primary vs. Secondary resources, evaluating online resources, Drafting research questions
R – Work on DMR Proposals

**Week 7**
Homework for the week: Read Chapters 7 and 26
T – **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 class on Thursday
**DMR Proposals Due on D2L**
R – Citing Sources, Plagiarism, Work on First Draft of Decision Making Report

**Week 8**
Homework for the week: Read Chapters 8 and 9
T – Reader-Centered Editing
Read Chapter 17
R – **Peer review #1 DMR Rough Draft**

**Week 9**
Spring Break

**Week 10**
Homework for the week: Read Chapter 3 & 4
T – **Peer review #2 DMR Rough Draft**
R – **DMR Final Draft, Rough Drafts, and Response Letter Due**
Instructions for Instruction Manual
Brainstorm with team members for proposal

**Week 11**
Homework for the week: Read Chapters 19 and 28
T – Critique existing instruction manuals; Work on Proposal for Instruction Manual
R – **Easter Break**
Week 12
T – peer evaluations
Homework for the week: Read Chapter 14
R – Infographics

Week 13
Homework for the week: Read Chapter 22
T – Work on Instruction Manual
R – Work on Instruction Manual

Week 14
T – Work on Instruction Manual
R – Work on Instruction Manual

Week 15
T – Peer Review Instruction Manual
R – Instruction Manual Due; Cover final exam info.

Week 16
Final Exam Week