ENGLISH 273
TECHNICAL &
SCIENTIFIC WRITING

In this section of English 273 we learn and practice how to write technical information for various readers. We begin by surveying common professional genres and quickly proceed to technical instructions and the basics of report writing. Throughout we will explore how to shift our writing to accommodate the needs of our readers and the stakeholders in our work. This rhetorical point of view is the essential starting point for good technical writing in many fields.

GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION AND CREDIT HOUR JUSTIFICATION

“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). Prerequisite: Six hours from ENG 131, ENG 132, or ENG 133.” General Bulletin, 2012-2013.

ENGL 2311 “Technical and Scientific Writing” (3 credits) typically meets three times each week in 50-minute segments or twice each week in 75-minute segments for 15 weeks, and also meets for a 2-hour final examination. In addition to weekly readings from the textbook and other relevant sources, students will create a variety of documents including correspondence, job portfolios, feasibility reports, instruction manuals, and visual presentations. Other course requirements include peer review exercises, online quizzes, topic approval memos, and discussion boards. Students are required to submit at least five major projects, one of which is a collaborative writing project that includes a class presentation. These activities average at a minimum 6 hours of work each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course has been selected to be part of Stephen F. Austin State University's core curriculum. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six
objectives for all core courses: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. SFA is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on these six objectives.

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 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. (Communication Skills and Teamwork)

- Write a variety of technical documents, demonstrating their awareness of audience and facility in addressing different audiences and stakeholders in complex rhetorical situations. (Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, and Personal Responsibility)

- 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. (Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, and Personal Responsibility)

- Work in groups to produce and critically evaluate documents, integrating different points of view. (Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility)

- Use critical-thinking skills and exhibit technical proficiency in the invention and composing processes. (Critical Thinking and Communication Skills)

- Understand ethical considerations in technical and professional writing, understanding the consequences of communication acts. (Critical Thinking, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility)

- Tailor communications to social and ethical frameworks, editing them to be effective and responsible in international and intercultural situations. (Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, and Personal Responsibility)

- Adequately research a topic and use documented evidence to support a paper written in the style applicable to their individual field of study. (Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, and Personal Responsibility)

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Access to SFA websites and applications including D2L Brightspace, the library, email, SFA 360, etc.
If the class is not held in a lab – students must maintain access to readings posted on D2L through a personal laptop or handheld device or by printing out texts.

ACCOMMODATION STATEMENT

Stephen F. Austin provides students reasonable accessibility accommodation to participate in educational programs, activities or services. Students requiring accommodation to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should 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 Dr. Parks and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided.

The full policy is available at:

http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/

BRIGHTSPACE BY D2L COURSE WEBSITE

SFA uses Brightspace by D2L as its virtual course management system. You can locate our course website at https://d2l.sfasu.edu.

Class handouts, reading links, assignment sheets, and important documents such as this syllabus will be posted on D2L Brightspace in the content tab.

We will use the discussion board and other D2L features.

Assignments will be submitted electronically. Look in the assessments tab for submission folders.

Locate the site’s gradebook. You are in charge of checking the gradebook for errors throughout the semester.

Please opt in to receiving emails from D2L so that Dr. Parks can communicate with you outside of class.

ATTENDANCE AND LATE WORK

English 273 is a discussion-intensive class. If you miss class meetings you will miss important information, group work, and practice tasks.

Please contact Dr. Parks in advance or as soon as possible after you have an extraordinary circumstance occur that affects your performance in this class.
There are no extra penalties for missing class beyond the natural consequences of missing instruction and in-class assignments. However, these natural consequences add up quickly. Most students who miss class find they cannot pass the class with higher than a C after 4 absences (=2 weeks of class) and most students who miss 6 classes (=3 weeks of class) drop or fail.

**ONLINE AVAILABILITY**

Dr. Parks’ office hours are held during the day – which means some students may not be able to attend office hours. If this is the case, you may request to meet outside of these hours. Online Zoom meetings are an acceptable substitute for face-to-face office hours. Dr. Parks will send you a link if you request this.

Dr. Parks is usually very quick to respond to email if you have a relatively simple question. Feel free to email her at any time at Sara.Parks@sfasu.edu.

**GRADES**

Remember: Your most important grades are the four major unit grades. Each unit is comprised of 1-4 deliverables. However, missing small assignments and participation can still harm your grade.

30% - **Small Assignments** (including in-class assignments, writing process checks, small reading quizzes, discussion boards, teamwork, etc.)

70% - **Four Major Units**

  - Professional Writing Unit – 17.5%
  - Technical Instructions Unit - 17.5%
  - Analytic Report Unit – 17.5%
  - Shifting Report Audiences Unit – 17.5%

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Work for any course should be newly generated by you or your assigned team for each assignment.

Plagiarism involves using another’s work, words, or ideas without correctly giving credit to the author. It is just as serious to plagiarize the work of another student as it is to plagiarize the work of a published author.

Use a standard documentation style to credit your source. If you have questions about correct documentation, please ask!
In a collaborative class such as this, you may not always fully understand what is and is not plagiarism or what type of collaboration outside of class is and is not allowed. If you have questions, please ask!

**General Policy**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

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) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; 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 are (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 an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

**WITHHELD 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.

**OTHER UNIVERSITY POLICIES APPLY**

See these links for some other university-wide policies and explanations:

[Student athletes and representatives in sponsored events.](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_athletes.asp)
[What University letter grades mean.](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/letter_grades.asp)
What University credit hours mean.
How to appeal a grade.
How to request a medical withdrawal.
What happens when you don’t follow the SFA rules.
Your professor is a mandatory reporter for Title IX.

GENERAL SCHEDULE

Please refer to the D2L content for a full schedule. This is just the required outline. Every date indicates a class meeting.

**Unit Theme: Professional Writing**

August 27 – content vs. design
August 29 – last day for schedule changes other than dropping classes
Syllabus design due by next class

September 3 – Job Materials
September 5
Job Ad, Resume, and Cover Letter due by next class

September 10 – Correspondence
September 12
All letters and emails due by next class

September 17 – Proposing changes
September 19
Short proposal due by next class

**Unit Theme: Technical Instructions**

September 24 – Teamwork
September 26
Team contract due by next class

October 1 – Intro to instruction writing
October 3
Instructions content only due by next class

October 8 – Visual design
October 10
Instructions document due by next class

October 15 – Usability testing
Tomorrow is mid semester
October 17
Results of pilot usability test due by next class

**Unit Theme: Analytic Report**

October 22 – Community needs and topic selection
Tomorrow is last day to drop courses
October 24

October 29 – Intro to research
October 31 – daylight savings this weekend

November 5 – Organization and drafting
November 7
Full 1st draft due by next class

November 12 – Revision and editing
November 14
Complete final report due by next class

**Unit Theme: Shifting Report Audiences**

November 19 – Shifting design and style for new readers
Approval for new readers for visual and video report revisions due by next class
November 21

Thanksgiving Break Week

December 3 – Watch video reports in class
Visual report and video report final drafts due to assignment folder by next class.
December 5 – Watch video reports in class

Exam Week – Meet during designated exam time to write reflection memo over the class.

December 18 – grades due to university