ENGLISH 273
TECHNICAL &
SCIENTIFIC WRITING

REGULAR SECTIONS, FERGUSON 476

In this section of English 273 we learn and practice how to write technical and scientific information for various readers. We begin by surveying the work of technical writing – basic project management design, how to navigate work environments, how to work with standards and templates, and other basic knowledge expectations for technical and scientific writers. We will then practice writing several genres of technical writing including instructions, proposals, data visualizations, usability tests, and reports. At the end of the semester we will practice video presentations.

Throughout the semester 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 and scientific 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.

**Practical Strategies for Technical Communication: A Brief Guide**
Third Edition by Mike Markel and Stuart A. Selber.
ISBN: 978-1-319-10432-0
(ebook PDF version can be found for ~$20)

Required textbook. We will use the book starting the second week of class. So please acquire it as soon as possible!

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/](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](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**

Introduction to technical and scientific writing courses use a set of program standards to ensure students across all the sections are held to similar standards to earn at least a C in the course. Please consult the technical and scientific writing program standards checklist (included at the end of this syllabus) to track your progress towards a C in this class.

Below is a list of deliverables you will prepare and submit for this course. Many of these deliverables are graded as Pass/Fail and are listed P/F in the course schedule. Do not worry – significant guidance detailing the qualities of a passing and failing deliverable will be included in all assignment guides.

You may request a revision of failing deliverables. However, it is easy to fall behind in the course if you request too many revisions. You will need to use good
judgement and scheduling to determine whether it is “worth it” to revise. Revision grades will likely not include significant feedback. All revisions are due by our last class of dead week. (December April 30, 2020)

Each section of the class is listed in bold with the weight of grades in that portion of the course indicated.

**Project Management – 20%**
- Scheduling preparation
- Database preparation
- Editing practice quiz
- Correspondence practice quiz

**Teamwork – 10%**
- Team charter
- Instructions

**Decision-making visual – 70%**
- Decision-making visual analysis notes with works cited page
- Decision-making visual proposal and personas appendix
- Gut reaction notes to partner’s decision-making visual
- Usability test questions
- Usability report
- New audience persona
- Short decision-making report on new audience deliverable
- New audience deliverable
- Project video presentation
- Project video presentation discussion
- Course completion report

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**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.](#)
[What University letter grades mean.](#)
**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.**

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**GENERAL SCHEDULE**

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

**Jan. 16** – First day of class

**Project management**

**Jan. 21** – Project flow and scheduling
Homework: Complete scheduling preparation for this class.
Upload proof (screenshots, photos, or documents) of scheduling preparation to the dropbox by next class. (P/F)

**Jan. 23** – Database management
Homework: Complete database preparation for this class.
Upload proof (screenshots or photos) of database preparation to the dropbox by next class. (P/F)

**Hierarchal and non-hierarchal work environments**

**Jan. 28** – Hierarchal and non-hierarchal work environments
In-class reading and discussion
Homework: Bring your current resume to class. If you do not have a resume, this is your opportunity to create one.

**Jan. 30** – Standards and templates
Applying knowledge of standards and templates to resume workshop and discussion.
Homework: Revise resume based on class discussion. (No submission.)

**Attention to language and editing**

**Feb. 4** – Introduction to English grammar and professional tone

Feb. 6 – Introduction to editing
Homework: Complete editing practice quiz.

**Correspondence**
Feb. 11 – Genres of correspondence

Feb. 13 – Situations of correspondence
Homework: Complete correspondence practice quiz.

BEGINNING OF TEAMWORK

**Teamwork**

Feb. 18 – Introduction to teamwork

Feb. 20 – Writing a team charter
Homework: Complete team charter. Upload team charter to dropbox by next class. (P/F)

**Instructions**

Feb. 25 – Introduction to instructions

Feb. 27 – Teamwork on instructions
Homework: Complete instructions. Upload instructions to the dropbox by next class.

END OF TEAMWORK

**Decision-making visual**

**Proposal and personas**

March 3 – Mid-semester
Introduction to decision-making visual
Introduction to proposal writing
Introduction to personas
Homework: Draft proposal and personas. Bring draft to class.

March 5 – Workshop and revise proposal and personas.
Homework: Decision-making visual proposal and personas appendix due to dropbox by Friday at midnight.

March 10 – Spring Break

March 12 – Spring Break

**Decision-making visual**

March 17 – Research data for decision-making visual
March 19 – Analyze data for decision-making visual
Homework: Analysis notes with perfect works cited page due to dropbox by next class. (P/F with opportunity to revise)

March 24 – Mock-up for decision-making visual due to dropbox by end of this class. (P/F)

March 26 – Decision-making visual due to dropbox and presented to partner by end of this class.
Homework: Look at your partner’s decision-making visual and write your gut reaction notes. Submit your gut reaction to the dropbox by next class. (P/F)

Usability Testing and Report Writing

March 31 – Introduction to usability testing
Write and workshop test questions.
Usability test questions due to dropbox by end of this class. (P/F)
Homework: Complete usability testing.

April 2 – Introduction to report writing
Homework: Draft usability report. Bring it to class.

April 7 – Workshop and revise usability reports.
Usability reports due to dropbox and presented to partner by end of this class.

April 9 – Easter Holiday

New Audience Deliverable

April 14 – Introduction to shifting audiences, contexts, and stakeholders
New audience persona due to dropbox by end of this class.

April 16 – Work day on new audience deliverable.
Short decision-making report due to dropbox by end of this class.

Project Video Report

April 21 – Introduction to video presentations

April 23 – Work Day
Homework: New audience deliverable due to dropbox AND project video due to discussion board by next class.

Project Video Presentations

April 28 – Watch video presentations. Give one compliment and ask one question in each video thread.
April 30 – Complete watching video presentations, responding to videos, and answer each question in your video’s thread. (P/F)

May 5 – Final Exam week (Meet to write course completion report – due to dropbox by end of exam time.)

May 13 – Grades due to the university

STANDARDS-BASED GRADING OUTLINE

Each of these standards must be met to pass with at least a C in Introduction to Technical & Scientific Writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Standards</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have perfectly identified the parts of a scholarly research article (IMRAD).</td>
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<td>I have demonstrated understanding of the importance of audience on technical &amp; scientific writing 3 times.</td>
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<td>I have accurately paraphrased an expert source in language a non-expert can understand.</td>
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<td>I have created a visualization that accurately displays quantitative data.</td>
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<td>I have evaluated a text for its usability (ease of understanding, ease of access, reader relevance).</td>
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<td>I have created a perfect works cited or references page.</td>
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<td>I have proofread and corrected errors in my writing 3 times.</td>
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<td>I have demonstrated awareness of a stakeholder other than the main intended reader for a document.</td>
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<td>I have practiced writing in at least 3 different rhetorical modes of writing. (ex. narration, exposition, description, definition, argumentation, synthesis, analysis, summary, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Course Standards</strong></td>
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<td>I have earned at least a 70% or C in the course gradebook.</td>
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<td><strong>Will I pass?</strong></td>
<td>All of these boxes must be checked.</td>
<td>Evidence must be recorded (understandable to the instructor – usually the name of an assignment) for each box.</td>
<td>Notes allow unique situations and exceptions to be addressed.</td>
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<td>“Double dipping,” using the same assignment as evidence for multiple standards, is allowed for program standards.</td>
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