

Bridgewater State University

Syllabus Summer 2019

ENGL 201 Technical Writing I

May 27 – June 21, 2019

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Course Description

This class is designed to prepare you for the different kinds of writing and communication in your future workplace. These kinds of writing could be emails with potential clients, presentations with visuals, manuals/guidebooks, proposals, and models. This course focuses on preparing you to present specialized information (where we get the “technical”) in a clear and accessible way to your audience. Further, you will develop familiarity with specific writing contexts within your own fields of study and will gain experience communicating technical information to non-technical audiences. This course also emphasizes document design, visual rhetoric, and digital research methods in designing, developing and delivering documents.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Communicate effectively and work collaboratively
- Identify, analyze, and target readers/listeners
- Articulate your communication purpose and employ appropriate rhetorical strategies in the service of that purpose
- Demonstrate facility with ideas and language
- Analyze and synthesize information in sophisticated and complex rhetorical/logical structures
- Devise and employ effective document design
- Know and be able to modify conventional formats such as manuals, technical reports, and other standard professional documents
- Conduct relevant, digital, and innovative research, both primary and secondary
- Understand and implement appropriate strategies for gathering information
- Integrate the ideas and language of various sources
- Document sources and research professionally

Required Text

You will receive readings the prior class session as a handouts. If you are absent from class or misplace them, they are also available in Electronic form (PDFs or links) on Blackboard under “Course Content”—“Readings.” Most of the readings are from Mike Markel’s *Practical Strategies in Technical Communication*.

Requirements

You will be expected to:

1. Attend all class meetings, prepared.
2. Participate actively and constructively in class discussions.
3. Participate in writing exercises during class and outside of class.
4. Participate in draft workshops and group work (a draft for workshop must be a complete draft: it has a beginning, middle, and end and is ready to share).
5. Conduct various types of research including interviews, observations/field work, and textual research in the library and on the Web.
6. Submit all work on time (on the hour/day it is due; late papers will normally be docked half of a letter grade per day, unless you communicate with me ahead of time for an extension before the due date).

Please note: Passing the course requires timely completion of all assignments.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to abide by the academic policy of Bridgewater State University.

Plagiarism, the presentation of someone else's words or ideas as one's own, is a violation of the academic community and of Bridgewater State University. According to the BSU Student Handbook, "A violation may result in a reduced grade, suspension or dismissal from the university." Depending on the seriousness of the offense, you may fail the course and/or face disciplinary action before the university's Academic Review Panel. Regardless of the outcome, I report all substantiated academic integrity violations to the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs. Consult the Bridgewater State University *Undergraduate/Graduate Catalog 2016-2017* for a detailed discussion of BSU's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Other Suggestions

1. Work hard and be kind. One of my favorite quotations is from Conan O'Brien, when he ended his 20-year run on NBC as a Late Night host. He said, "Nobody in life gets exactly what they thought they were going to get. But if you work really hard and you're kind, amazing things will happen." Don't be afraid to work hard and feel challenged in this class. But also, create a classroom of mutual civility and respect. It's okay to disagree or have a different perspective, but do so in a respectful manner, in ways that do not devalue anyone in the room.
2. See the Syllabus as a starting point, not as an ending point. If you find something outside of class (an article, film clip, report, website, horror story of your own from IKEA, etc.) that you think would be interesting, feel free to bring it in. If you have an idea for a particular project that extends beyond options given, please let me know. I am open to suggestions.
3. Discover what inspires you. A lot of what we're doing in technical writing is exploring our future professions – consider what motivates you and inspires you in your discipline. Consider the language and skills valued in your discipline, and what about it motivates you.
4. Talk to me. Don't be afraid to stop by if you have a question or an idea. You can also email me.

5. Have a sense of humor. Self-explanatory.

Grading & Assessment Methods

15 % Class participation (engagement, involvement in small and large group discussions, readings)

15 % Cover Letter (Rough draft comprises 10% of overall grade)

15 % Resume (Rough draft comprises 10% of overall grade)

5 % Peer Review (If you are absent for class, it is your responsibility to discuss with me a peer review partner and make the work up outside of class time)

10 % Technical Writing in My Field

10 % Mini-report: Interviews from the Field (Rough draft comprises 10% of overall grade)

15 % Collaborative Manual/User Guide (Rough draft comprises 10% of overall grade)

15 % Final Project

| Grade | Description | 4-point Equivalent | 100-point |
|----------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
| A | Superior | 4.0 | 95-100 |
| A- | Superior | 3.7 | 90-94 |
| B+ | Good | 3.3 | 87-89 |
| B | Good | 3.0 | 83-86 |
| B- | Good | 2.7 | 80-82 |
| C+ | Satisfactory | 2.3 | 77-79 |
| C | Satisfactory | 2.0 | 73-76 |
| C- | Satisfactory | 1.7 | 70-72 |
| D | Poor | 1.0 | 65-69 |
| F | Failure | 0.0 | 0-64 |

Revision Policy

After you receive your final assignment with assessment and feedback, you have the opportunity to revise it for a higher grade taking into account peer review and feedback from me. You may take advantage of this at any point during the semester, but any revised materials are due by the last day of classes

Outline of Assignments/Due Dates

Week One of Class (5/27-5/31)

First Day of Class: Introductions. Discuss syllabus and disciplines represented. What is Tech Comm. & Ethics? In class: Introduction to Technical Communication.

2. Read Markel, Ch. 1 & 2 (PDF-Handout) In class: Discuss Ethics & Debate Ethical Situations in the Workplace.

3. Presenting Yourself through Technical Writing Tues, 9/18 In class: Presenting yourself strategically: Resumes & Cover letters. Due: Read Markel's "Writing Job Application Letters" (PDF-Handout) & Markel, "Writing Cover Letters" (PDF-Handout)

4. In class: Resumes & Cover Letter Workshops and Questions. Due: Rough drafts of your Resumes and Cover Letters. (2 copies of each) due; bring hard copies to class. Also, discuss the art of the "elevator pitch." Practice public speaking, oral communication, and pitching yourself verbally. Read: <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/16/a-3-step-formula-for-a-great-elevatorpitch.html>

5. Introduction to Report Writing: Due: Read Markel, Report Writing (PDF-Handout) and "Conducting Primary Research," pgs. 93-104 (Handout). In class: Interview Questions Due: Reading; Due to me: Final drafts of resumes & cover letters. Staple together rough drafts, peer review, and final drafts of resumes & cover letters together.

Week Two of Class (6/3-6/7)

Day 6. Research and Document Design. In class: Discuss reports of the US Government on Katrina (skim): <https://www.uscg.mil/history/katrina/docs/USHouseOfRepKatrina2006MainR1eport.pdf> FAA Accident Report of US Airways Flight 1493 (1991): <https://www.nts.gov/>

7. Peer Review In class: Analyzing Visual Data. Challenger Explosion exercise in class. In class: Peer Review of first part of reports (at least 1 interview and 2 sources). If time, discuss grammar & clear syntax

8. Introduction to Usability Presentations of "Technical Writing in Your Field" Final Drafts of Reports due to turn in to me, include drafts and workshop reports stapled with your report.

9. Manuals In class: Overview of Writing Manuals. Due: Read Markel, "Writing Instructions" (PDF) and "Why doesn't anyone read the manual?" Research Study (handout). In class: Write It, Do It Exercise. Examples from the Joy of Cooking and recipe blogs. Brainstorming ideas, generating possible groups, talking out ideas.

10. In class: Discussing different platforms to use in class. Time to work on manuals in groups

Week Three of Class (6/10-6/14)

Day 11. In class: Whole Class Review of Manuals. Due: Draft of Manual (Color) - Electronic Version or Printout. In class: Discuss the future of technical writing. Analyze job advertisements using Voyant.

12. Begin Final Project Discussions In class: Discuss final project options Due: Final Drafts of Manuals. Read: PDF from Markel, Website Design

13. Website Design. Read: in Markel (handout). Time to begin work on final projects.

14. Grant Writing. Read: in Markel (handout). Also, time to continue work on final projects.

15. Workshops: final projects. Have materials to be workshopped ready and in class. Whole Class workshop This will take a great deal of time. Please come ready to get started immediately.

Week Four of Class (6/17-6/21)

Day 16. Finishing up workshopping of any remaining final presentations. Last Day to work on final projects post workshop.

17. Begin Final Presentations. Questions and concerns about website design (in preparation for second to last class).

18. Final Presentations continue. Questions and concerns about final portfolio.

19. Finish presentations. Draft of website for workshopping.

20. Due: Portfolio Draft of website. Final Projects. Any revision work. Time in class to write and discuss final reflection: what is technical writing. Invited guests to “test” out our manuals/games.