



Bridgewater State University

Syllabus Summer 2021

ENGL 201 Technical Writing I

May 31 – June 25, 2021

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Credit: 3

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 “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 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 prior class session. 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. (Habitual late for the class will be noted.)
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 be docked half of a letter grade per day, unless you communicate ahead of time with legitimate reasons 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, all substantiated academic integrity violations will be reported 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. Conan O'Brien once said, "Nobody in life gets exactly what they thought they were going to get. But if you work really hard and your kind, amazing things will happen." Do not be afraid to work hard and feel challenged in this class. But also, create a classroom of mutual civility and respect. It is fine 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, 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. The class is open to suggestions.
3. Discover what inspires you. A lot of what we are 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. Do not be afraid to stop by if you have a question or an idea. You can also email me.

5. Have a sense of humor.

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) Due: June 4

15 % Resume (Rough draft comprises 10% of overall grade) Due: June 4

5 % In-class Writing Practice (If you are absent, it is your responsibility to make the work up outside of class time)

10 % Technical Writing in My Field: Writing a memo

10 % Mini-report: Report on a report (Rough draft comprises 10% of overall grade) Due: June 15

15 % Collaborative Manual/User Guide (Rough draft comprises 10% of overall grade) Due: June 18

15 % Final Project: Design your webpage and submit a written report Due: June 25

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 assignment with assessment and feedback, you have the opportunity to revise it for a higher grade. You may take advantage of this at any point during the semester, but any revised materials are due by the last day of class.

Outline of Assignments/Due Dates

Week One of Class (5/31-6/4)

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

2. Read Markel, Ch. 1 & 2 (PDF) In class: Ethics & Debate Ethical Situations in the Workplace.
3. Presenting Yourself through Technical Writing Tues, June 1 In class: Presenting yourself strategically: Resumes & Cover letters. Due: Read Markel's "Writing Job Application Letters" (PDF) & Markel, "Writing Cover Letters" (PDF)
4. In class: Resumes & Cover Letter Workshops and Questions. Due: Rough drafts of your Resumes and Cover Letters due; bring hard copies to class. *Analyze the art of the "elevator pitch."* Practice writing a speech: *Public speaking, oral communication, and pitching yourself.* 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)* and "Conducting Primary Research," pgs. 93-104 (PDF). In class: Interview Questions Due: Reading; Due: Final drafts of resumes & cover letters. Staple together rough drafts, revisions, and final drafts of resumes & cover letters together.

Week Two of Class (6/7-6/11)

- Day 6. Research and Document Design. In class: Analyze 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. In-class Practice: Analyzing Visual Data. Challenger Explosion exercise in class. In class: Revisions of first part of reports (at least 1 interview and 2 sources). If time allows, analyze grammar & clear syntax.
 8. Introduction to Usability Presentations of "Technical Writing in Your Field"; Due: Final Drafts of Reports, include drafts and workshop reports stapled with your report.
 9. In-class Manuals: Overview of Writing Manuals. Due: Read Markel, "Writing Instructions" (PDF) and "Why doesn't anyone read the manual?" Research Study (PDF). 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: Analyze different platforms to use in class. Time to work on manuals.

Week Three of Class (6/14-6/18)

- Day 11. In class: Whole Class Review of Manuals. Due: Draft of Manual (Color) - Electronic Version or Printout. In class: The future of technical writing. Analyze job advertisements.
12. Begin Final Project in class: Final project options Due: Final Drafts of Manuals. Read: PDF from Markel, Website Design
 13. Website Design. Read: in Markel (PDF). Time to begin work on final projects.

14. Grant Writing. Read: in Markel (PDF). 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 (6/21-6/25)

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 works. Time in class to write and discuss final reflection: What is technical writing? Write your afterthoughts of “testing” out the manuals.