

SYLLABUS TECHNICAL WRITING

Instructor: Garrett Nichols
ENGL 235, Sec: HYC, Fall 2013

CONTACT INFORMATION

E-mail: [e-mail address]
Phone: [phone number]

Office Hours: M 5:30 – 7:40 p.m. and by appointment

Welcome to Technical Writing. Over the course of this quarter, we will explore, practice, and refine our approaches to technical writing and technical communication. We will also interrogate our positions as technical writers, students, co-workers, citizens, and human beings in contemporary society.

Course Description and Prerequisites:

Prerequisites: ENGL 101 or equivalent course from another college with a C- or better.

Course Description: Focuses on the development of professional skills in research, design, and communication of technical information. Emphasis on audience analysis, clear and effective writing style, and use of visual elements, by creating documents in a variety of professional report formats, such as memos, proposals, progress reports, completion reports, and instruction manuals. Computer use is required. Fulfills a written communication course requirement at Bellevue College.

Learning Outcomes and Course Objectives

After completing this course, student should be able to:

- Write documents such as summaries, instruction manuals, analyses, proposals, and research reports using accepted professional formats
- Design a research strategy to solve a specific problem for a specific client
- Conduct secondary and primary research
- Propose a clearly reasoned, convincingly supported solution to a client's problem
- Paraphrase, summarize, and quote information with integrity and document sources accurately, following the accepted form for the field of inquiry
- Design visually effective documents and presentations
- Revise and edit to improve clarity, economy, and rhetorical effectiveness

Concepts taught in this course:

- Analyzing rhetorical situations to make decisions about effective communication within and across cultures.
- Recognizing and applying how technical writing genres function and adapt based on the needs of the communication context
- Recognizing how power and privilege can impact technical communication practices and strategies
- Designing and interpreting simple primary research
- Evaluating and interpreting secondary resources for credibility and context-appropriate use
- Understanding and applying the elements of successful visual rhetorics for the purposes of page layout, design, and graphic creation.
- Practicing various editing techniques for clarity, conciseness, and precision

Textbooks & Resources

- **REQUIRED:** Dobrin, Sidney I., Christopher J. Keller, and Christian R. Weisser. *Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice, 2010. Print.
- **REQUIRED:** Schell, Jesse. *The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses*. Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufmann, 2008. Print.
- **REQUIRED:** Internet access and access to MyBC and Canvas by the end of week 1.

- Various craft/design supplies, including scrap cardboard, game pieces, timers, etc. These can be scavenged.

Grading Policies and Assignments

In this course, we will complete three major projects, each composed of smaller assignments. These assignments are designed to help you refine your approach to technical writing. Class participation is also a significant factor in your grade, measured not only by verbal participation in class but also by your ability to work with your classmates on group work, peer review, discussions (online and in the classroom), etc.

A note on group work: Many of us are understandably reluctant about group projects, in part because many times the “group” part of the project fails to add anything to the learning opportunities of the assignment. Technical writing (and, indeed, all composition) is often collaborative, and in this course, we will be employing good community and collegial practices. This will be measured not only by how much each person “completes” in a project, but in the ability of the group to effectively communicate with each other and those outside of the group, when necessary.

Assignments and grade weights:

Weekly journaling & discussion: 25%

Homework: 15%

Proposal project: 20%

WikiHow project: 20%

Board game project: 20%

A: 100 – 93%

A-: 92 – 90%

B+: 89 – 87%

B: 86 – 83%

B-: 82 – 80%

C+: 79 – 77%

C: 76 – 73%

C-: 72 – 70%

D+: 69 – 67%

D: 66 – 63%

D-: 62 – 60%

F: 59 – 0%

Class Schedule and Major Deadlines

All classwork is due on the date listed. Similarly, readings are to be completed by the date listed (we will be discussing them in class that day). For major projects, you will receive an assignment sheet at the beginning of the project with smaller deadlines broken down. Keep track of these assignment sheets – you will be asked to refer to them to guide you through these projects.

Weekly Journaling & Discussion

Each week, you will journal about the week’s readings, discussions, and projects on Canvas. These journal entries must be completed by Friday evening (at midnight). You are then asked to respond substantively to two of your peers’ entries by Sunday evening (at midnight). Finally, you need to respond to any comments that your classmates have made on your entries before our class meeting on Monday. If nobody has commented on your entry for the week, you should comment on the responses left on others’ entries. The purpose of this weekly writing is to initiate conversations that are based on our readings but go beyond them to include the personal expertise we all bring to the class.

In these journal entries, you are expected to substantively synthesize and analyze the week's materials. Your journaling should go beyond evaluation (e.g. "I liked this reading" or "this reading was really difficult to understand") to a deeper analysis of the implications of what you've read and discussed (e.g. "Haas's argument that Native American wampum as hypertextual, predating the Western colonial 'discovery' of hypertext, should encourage us to look beyond hypertext to other instances of colonial rhetorics of 'discovery' in technical writing, including the very idea of technical writing as a 'professional' practice"). We will use our class time on Mondays in part to unpack our online discussions and delve deeper into what we've been thinking and learning. Because we do not meet in person for five hours/week, this is a major component of your final grade. Take it seriously and do not skimp.

Homework

This includes any daily take-home work or other assignments not included in any of the larger projects. Many of these assignments will take place during the first few weeks of the semester, as we practice different techniques and technical writing strategies. When you turn in these assignments, I will give them an "advisory grade" with a few inclusive comments. You will have the opportunity to revise these items and turn them in at the end of the semester. If you are happy with the work you've done, you can keep them, and I will mark the "advisory grade" as your final grade for those assignments.

Proposal Project – Due Monday, October 28th

In this project, you will write a full proposal for a project you have designed to make the Bellevue College campus more sustainable. This is in response to a real funding opportunity for BC students, so I encourage you to think of this not as just a project you will complete for class and then never return to but a project that you have the opportunity to put into practice.

WikiHow Project – Due Friday, November 18th [tentative]

In this project, you will design an online instruction manual for any topic you choose. You will make use of effective technical writing strategies to clearly help your audience navigate through your planned activity through the use of multiple medias, including videos, hyperlinks, graphics, sound, etc.

Board Game Project – Due Wednesday, December 11th [tentative]

In this project, you will work in groups to design a board game from scratch, complete with the board, any necessary pieces, packaging, instructions, and a poster advertisement. You will put into practice the technical writing strategies we have learned through the semester, in both the board game as a technical writing artifact as well as in the communication/writing strategies you use with your teammates.

Reading Schedule

A note on readings: I encourage you to plan ahead and divide up each week's readings into manageable chunks. Attempting to read all of the selections the day before your journaling entries are due is difficult, but separating them into smaller daily readings should make for a far more pleasant experience. It will also allow you to more fully digest what you've read and apply it to other readings.

Week 1: 9/25 – 9/29

TCTC: Chapters 1, 2, 12

Week 2: 9/30 – 10/6

TCTC: Chapters 4, 7, 13

Katz: "The Ethic of Expediency"

Week 3: 10/7 – 10/15 (Begin proposal project)
TCTC: Chapters 20, 6, 3

Week 4: 10/14 – 10/20
TCTC: Chapters 10, 11
Haas: “Wampum as Hypertext”

Week 5: 10/21 – 10/27
TCTC: Chapters 15, 16

Week 6: 10/28 – 11/5 (Turn in Proposals; begin WikiHow project)
TCTC: Chapters 17, 18, 19

Week 7: 11/4 – 11/10 (Introduce Board Game project)
TCTC: Chapters 8, 9
TAGD: Chapters 1, 2

November 11: No Class (Veterans Day)

Week 8: 11/11 – 11/17
TAGD: Chapters 3, 4, 5, 23, 24

Week 9: 11/18 – 11/24 (Turn in WikiHow project)
TAGD: Chapters 7, 8, 25, 26

Week 10: 11/25 – 12/1
TAGD: Chapter 31

Course Policies

Attendance

Because we only meet in person once per week, attendance at these meetings is critical. You will be permitted one unexcused absence from our Monday meetings. The online component of this course does not have set “class times,” so you should be able to complete all the online requirements within your schedule. Weekly deadlines (such as journaling) and assignment deadlines are firm. If you have an excused absence, you are expected to make up any missed assignments/projects within one week of the missed class.

Every unexcused absence from our physical class beyond the first absence will result in a 5% grade deduction (i.e. one-half of a letter grade). If something comes up that will require you to miss class, please let me know so we can work something out.

Late Assignments

Homework assignments must be uploaded to Canvas by midnight on the date listed. Late homework and journaling assignments are not accepted. Major projects are to be turned in during class or uploaded to Canvas on the date listed. If you are struggling with an assignment or anticipate a reason you may miss a deadline, please see me about a reasonable extension. I’m not a monster.

Classroom Etiquette

In this class, we will be participating in a writing community in which we must necessarily rely on each other to produce ethical and culturally-respectful writing. As in any community, we must be respectful of all members and their experiences, thoughts, and beliefs. Any talk or actions that single out or demean others are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. If something like this happens, depending on the occasion, I will personally talk with the person(s) responsible to convey why and how such language or actions are inappropriate. If it happens repeatedly, I will ask the offending person(s) to

leave. Remember that offensive talk or actions is not limited to what happens verbally during class but also includes what is written in your assignments.

Please review the Bellevue College "Affirmation of Inclusion" statement:

"Bellevue College is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination. We value our different backgrounds at Bellevue College, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators are to treat one another with dignity and respect.

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/about/goals/inclusion.asp>"

Plagiarism

The writing you complete in this class is expected to be honest and original. Turning in and taking credit for writing that you did not create is neither honest nor original. (Seriously. Aside from the fact that it didn't originate in your head, plagiarism is *so* five years ago.) In this course, you will learn how to identify and incorporate outside sources into your writing in an ethically responsible way.

When you turn in writing assignments on *Canvas* your work will be checked for originality with the Turnitin software. I encourage you to upload your assignments early in order to catch any inadvertently un-cited sources in your assignments.

Please refer to the BC Student Code:

"Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pagers to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Vice President of Student Services for possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Vice President of Student Services." The Student Code, Policy 2050, in its entirety is located at:

http://bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050_Student_Code.asp

A good resource on plagiarism is the BC Writing Lab:

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/Plagiarism.html>

Useful Links

Bellevue College E-mail and Access to MyBC

All students registered for classes at Bellevue College are entitled to a network and e-mail account. Your student network account can be used to access your student e-mail, log in to computers in labs and classrooms, connect to the BC wireless network and log in to *MyBC*. To create your account, go to: <https://bellevuecollege.edu/sam> .

BC offers a wide variety of computer and learning labs to enhance learning and student success. Find current campus locations for all student labs by visiting the [Computing Services website](#).

Disability

The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. Please visit the DRC if you have any questions about classroom accommodations whether you are a student or a faculty member. **DRC has temporarily moved to the Library Media Center for fall and winter quarters.**

If you are a student who has a disability or a learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the DRC staff as soon as possible.

The DRC office is located in B132 or you can call our reception desk at 425-564-2498. Deaf students can reach us by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Please visit our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc. Remember if you are someone who has either an apparent or non apparent disability and requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc., please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter.

Public Safety

The Bellevue College (BC) Public Safety Department's well trained and courteous non-commissioned staff provides personal safety, security, crime prevention, preliminary investigations, and other services to the campus community, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Their phone number is 425.564.2400. The Public Safety website is your one-stop resource for campus emergency preparedness information, campus closure announcements and critical information in the event of an emergency. Public Safety is located in K100 and on the web at: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/publicsafety/>

Academic Calendar

The Bellevue College Academic Calendar is separated into two calendars. They provide information about holidays, closures and important enrollment dates such as the finals schedule.

- Enrollment Calendar - <http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/calendar/deadlines/>. On this calendar you will find admissions and registration dates and important dates for withdrawing and receiving tuition refunds.
- College Calendar - <http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/calendar/holidays/0910.asp>. This calendar gives you the year at a glance and includes college holidays, scheduled closures, quarter end and start dates, and final exam dates.