2014

305-01 Professional Writing

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Texts
*Technical Communication Today*, Fourth Edition
Additional Readings on the Website

**Course Description**

English 305 teaches students the rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for shaping their professional writing ethically, for multiple audiences, in a variety of professional situations. Informed by current research in rhetoric and professional writing, this course will ask Xavier English students to write in new contexts, for new audiences, and with new technologies. And to ensure that students taking this course are prepared for the writing environment of the twenty-first century workplace, this course will involve computer-aided publishing and digital writing.

We will begin this class with a short introduction to rhetorical theory, examining how the concepts of writer, audience, purpose, and language interact in public and professional rhetorical situations. Next we will use these rhetorical skills to analyze job advertisements and create a portfolio of job search materials. During the middle of the semester, we will do professional writing work for the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, researching and composing a white paper report. We will conclude the semester with journalistic writing, where you will translate specialized academic knowledge (from a Subject Matter Expert) into an engaging piece of writing for a public audience.

**Course Goals**

My overarching goal for this course is for you to flourish as a writer within and beyond college. If you plan to seek permanent employment or an internship, I hope you will develop the skills to be successful in the workplace. If you plan to apply to graduate school or professional school, I hope you will envision yourself as a professional and as a member of a discourse community. Ultimately, I hope you will develop writing skills that you can bring to the issues about which you are most passionate.

**Writing in Context:** Students will analyze professional cultures, social contexts, and audiences to determine how they shape the various purposes and forms of workplace writing, such as persuasion, organizational communication, and public discourse. Our discussions and projects will emphasize writing for general audiences and understanding the ethical dimensions of professional communication.

**Writing Process:** Students will develop and understand various strategies for *effectively* and *efficiently* researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents that respond effectively and ethically to professional situations and audiences.

**Collaboration:** Students will learn and apply strategies for successful collaboration, such as working and communicating online with colleagues, setting and achieving project goals, responding constructively to the work of your peers, and working as part of a writing team and/or with a client organization.
Research: Students will understand and use triangulated research methods (scholarly, primary, and digital) to produce professional documents: analyzing professional contexts; assessing and using information resources; using primary research methods such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys to collect data; working ethically with research participants.

Document Design: Students will learn conventions for designing workplace documents, including understanding and implementing various principles of format and layout and interpreting and arguing with visual information.

Technology: Students will select and use technologies appropriate to the conventions of various types of workplace communication, including email, memos, letters, reports, online documents and websites, and white papers.

Final Exam
The final exam period for this course is Wednesday, May 7 from 2:00–3:50. University policy does not allow me to change this time, so please make your travel plans accordingly.

Major Course Projects
During the semester, you will complete four major projects: a rhetorical analysis paper, an employment portfolio, a collaborative white paper report, and a news article. Most of these assignments have multiple components, so it is important to refer to the assignment sheet as you work. Each of these assignments asks you to learn professional genre conventions and must be typed or digitally produced. Please save the drafts of your projects that I have commented on and the drafts from class workshops. You must complete all four major projects to pass the class.

Case Studies
Several times during the semester, you will complete case studies during class and outside of class. The purpose of these case studies is in part to introduce you to professional writing tasks that we will not cover in detail. (For example, if a case study asks you to compose a memo to your instructor, be sure to complete the project and to produce a professional memo.) I will evaluate these case studies on a five point scale, based on how thoughtful and complete you were in producing a professional document.

Grading
Your grade in this class will be weighted this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Analysis Paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Portfolio</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Paper Report</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME News Article</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies and Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And letter grades will be assigned according to this scale:

- 94–100: A
- 90–93: A–
- 87–89: B+
- 84–86: B
- 80–83: B–
- 77–79: C+
- 74–76: C
- 70–73: C–
- 67–69: D+
- 64–66: D
Attendance and Participation
I will keep record of your attendance, and each student is allowed three absences. The fourth and each subsequent absence will lower your final grade by 5%. If you do miss a class, take responsibility for the missed material by calling someone else. And please be on time; students more than ten minutes late will be counted absent.

Class attendance involves more than your physical presence; on the days when we do workshops and you are required to have a full draft, not having a draft means being considered absent. Though I will not allow you to make up a missed reading quiz, I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

Plagiarism
A basic assumption of this course is that language is power; consequently, it is important to use it responsibly, truthfully, and accurately. We define plagiarism is the copying, deliberate or not, of another person’s work or ideas without the proper citation. The consequences of academic dishonesty are serious: a grade of zero on the paper, a letter on file with your dean, and other potential disciplinary action. When in doubt about how to cite or manage information, please talk to me in advance.

Technology
One of the major challenges of this course will be thinking about technology in new ways: you need to see technology as a tool that allows you to construct documents, images, and ultimately your message. While academic writing certainly involves rhetorical design choices (MLA format is indeed a choice), the projects in this class ask you to make conscious design choices and manipulate technology accordingly. Using templates from Microsoft Word or other sources further undermines your credibility as a professional writer, and I hope you will take up the challenge of creating your own design schemes.

Late Work
All assignments are due at the beginning of class, and I will count off one full letter grade for each day your work is late. Missed presentations cannot be made up at another time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic in Class</th>
<th>Due Today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>--Course Introduction</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| January 15 | --What is Rhetoric?                                                            | --Read *TCT* Chapter 1  
--Rhetoric and Professional Writing  
--Introduce Rhetorical Analysis Paper  
--Write: How do the elements of professional communication differ from your academic writing?  
--Email: Personal Inventory |
| January 17 | --Read *TCT* Chapter 2  
--Read Readers and Levels of Audience  
--Profiling Readers  
--Profiling Contexts  
--Write: Pick one rhetorical artifact [on website] and profile its readers or context using the chart in *TCT*. |
| January 20 | No Class—MLK Day                                                              |                                                                            |
| January 22 | --Modeling Rhetorical Analysis  
--Rhetorical Success                                                             | --Continue drafting paper  
--Read rhetoric articles [on website] |
| January 24 | --Rhetorical Analysis Peer Review                                             | --Draft of Rhetorical Analysis (make this available electronically)         |
| January 27 | --Rhetoric Wrap-Up  
--Introduce Employment Portfolio  
--Case Study One: Bad News Letters                                               | Rhetorical Analysis Due |
| January 29 | --Job Advertisements  
--Job Search Resources                                                             | --Read *TCT* Chapter 11  
--Write: Skills profile [on website] |
| January 31 | --Research and Analysis  
--Workplace/Corporate Rhetoric                                                     | --Identify Three Jobs/Internships and bring the information to class today |
| February 3 | --Lecture: Résumés  
--Document Design                                                                  | --Read *TCT* Chapter 18  
--Write: Project #1 on page 516 [you may do this activity individually or in a small group] |
| February 5 | --Case Study Two: Résumé Revision  
--Design and Formatting Q&A                                                       | --Work on Résumés  
--Bring to Class: A résumé from an employed person in your field |
| February 7 | --Class Workshop: Résumés                                                     | --Draft of Traditional Résumé Due (bring twenty paper copies and have it available electronically) |
| February 10| --Lecture: Cover Letters  
--Kairos and the Cover Letter                                                     | --Read *TCT* Chapter 5  
--Write: Expand skills profile into descriptions of your experiences |
| February 12| --Case Study Three: The Nastygram  
--Rhetorical Voice                                                                | --Work on Cover Letter |
<p>| February 14| --Class Workshop: Cover Letters                                               | --Draft of Letter Due (available on paper and electronically) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| February 17| - Planning and Composing Websites  
- Online Portfolios  
- Social Media and Online Ethos   |
|            | -- Read TCT Chapter 22                                                       |
| February 19| - Free Website Options  
- Basic HTML Tags   |
|            | -- Bring your website plan to class today for the first workshop (a tree diagram and basic design ideas) |
| February 21| - Work Day on Websites   |
|            | -- Work on your website  
-- Revise other parts of your employment portfolio to maintain a consistent design scheme |
| February 24| - Class Workshop: Websites   |
|            | -- Full Version of Website Due (make sure your website is active)            |
| February 26| Open House Conferences – Hinkle 221                                         |
| February 28| - Employment Project Reflections  
- Introduce White Paper Project  
- Guest: Associate Dean Mengel   |
|            | Employment Portfolio Due                                                     |

**Upcoming Due Dates**

Collaborative White Paper Report  
Presentations: April 2 and April 4  
Papers: Friday, April 4  
SME News Article: Friday, May 2