

[English 410 :: Technical Writing]

[Section 010 – T/Th, 11:00 am – 12:15 pm, 223 Gore Hall]

[Section 013 – T/Th, 2:00 – 3:15 pm, 307 ISE Lab]

Instructor: Dr. Meg McGuire

Office: 315 Memorial Hall

Phone No.: (302) 831-1394

Email: mmcguire@UDel.edu - best way to reach me

Office Hours: Tuesday 9:30-10:30 am, Wednesday, 12:00-1:30 pm or by appointment

[Required Texts]

- *The Technical Communication Handbook*, Laura J. Gurak and Mary E. Hocks
- *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, Robin Williams

[Description]

This course is designed to help you examine and gain experience with a variety of technical communication genres. You will focus on understanding and negotiating the rhetorical situation, which will help you develop practical approaches for developing content for multiple audiences. By analyzing the purpose, audience, and context of various communicative situations, you will be able to create documents that successfully achieve their intended goals. Importantly, this course will also focus on the design and arrangement of documents, as well as on the development of their textual content.

[Course Objectives]

- To write well in various technical and scientific situations
- To develop a strong, careful, correct professional style
- To communicate effectively in various media (written and oral, visual and verbal, paper and electronic, face-to-face and mediated)
- To demonstrate team collaboration, communication, presentation, and discussion skills
- To develop skills with information technologies for creating, revising, and responding to texts and data

[Course Policies]

Attendance:

A great deal of what we do in this course will build upon discussion and work done during class meetings. Therefore, **daily attendance is required for this class. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences.** Please remember that it is your responsibility to find out from your peers what you missed in class. Contact me as soon as possible via email if you know you must be absent. We will do many graded in-class

assignments and these cannot be made up. **Excessive absences (five or more) will result in failure of the course.**

Tardiness:

Every two (2) tardies equals an absence. As explained above, five or more absences results in failure of the course. If you show up more than 10 minutes late, or must leave early, you will be counted as absent. If you are tardy, you are responsible for notifying me at an appropriate point during the class that you are present. You should keep track of your own tardies and absences. **If you are frequently late or absent, be sure to note the drop date and drop the class asap because you will not pass.**

Extenuating Circumstances:

If you become seriously ill, have a family emergency, or otherwise experience other extenuating circumstances during the semester **that constitute a legitimate reason for missing classes** or falling behind in the course, **let me know as soon as possible so we can try to resolve the issue.** You should also contact the Dean of your College. This office can assist you in notifying faculty and in validating your situation. You will need this validation to make up missed class work and assignments.

Professionalism and Courtesy:

All students are expected to conduct themselves professionally in the class and to treat the professor and other students with respect at all times. I expect you to be physically and mentally 'present'—listen, contribute, and otherwise engage. Texting or carrying on a side conversation, surfing the net or checking FB instead of working is not acceptable in this class.

Late Work:

I do not accept late work. Assignments should be turned in on the date they are due. However, I do realize that life happens and that sometimes life gets in the way of assignments. If this does happen, please let me know **as soon as possible** and we can work something out.

Technology:

If you own a laptop, I encourage you to bring it to class as I will often allocate class time for working on assignments. However, I will expect you to use your laptop like a professional who understands how to appropriately multi-task.

[Course Projects and Assignments]

Major assignments will include instructions and explanations of grading expectations for each project.

In and Out of-Class Assignments and Participation (100 points):

Classroom discussions and activities are important in achieving the overall objectives of the course. Homework and in-class work will be included in the final course grade and will often build towards your final projects. Many of these assignments are graded and some are not, but all are mandatory and necessary to contribute to your success in this course. **I may assign drafts of portions of the Major Assignments for the following class period (i.e.,**

the next time the class meets). I may also ask you to bring a hard copy of assignments to class for peer review or and feedback and/or to upload work to Sakai before the next class period. These assignments and any other work that you complete in class will count toward the 'In-Class Work' portion of the grade. I also expect that you will meaningfully contribute to in-class discussion, whether it is large group discussions or small group work.

Describe Your Field Memo (100 points)

You will explain your future career field and the type of writing and communication that is done in that field and write a memo to me detailing your findings.

Rhetorical Analysis (100 points)

This assignment asks you to analyze a piece of technical communication from your field (user manual, instructions, fact sheet, application, guide) using the key concepts we discuss in class.

Redesign Project (150 points)

You will take the piece of technical communication you chose for your rhetorical analysis and redesign it so that it is more usable for the intended audience. You can take some creative liberties and create something outside its original genre, such as a brochure, a website, an infographic, etc.

Lay Audience (100 points)

You will take technical information and rewrite the text and design the document so that it is easier to understand and use to a lay audience.

Collaborative Project (450 points)

This project asks you to work collaboratively to plan and create a user manual. You will work through the following steps:

- Needs Assessment
- Project Planning
- Creating a User Manual
- Planning Usability
- Giving Presentations
- Attention to Document Design

[University Writing Center]

The Writing Center in 016 Memorial provides free one-on-one instruction to students who have writing assignments in this or any course. You may make an appointment by visiting the Center's Web Site: www.cas.udel.edu/writing-center. (The telephone number is 831-1168.)

[Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)]

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course,

please meet with me in the first or second week of the semester. Any student who may require an accommodation should contact me as soon as you become aware of your circumstances.

[Academic Misconduct/ Plagiarism]

The University of Delaware protects the rights of all students by insisting that individual students act with integrity. Accordingly, the University severely penalizes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Unethical or plagiarized work will receive a zero and may result in failure of the course. I will also report any serious breach of ethics to the Dean of your College.

[Course Evaluation]

A final expectation of the course is for you to complete the on-line student evaluation. This survey will be available for you to complete during the last two weeks of the semester. Apart from being an expectation of the course, your evaluation provides valuable information to me and to the Department.

[Class Schedule]

[*The Technical Communication Handbook - TCH*]

[*The Non Designers Design Book – NDDDB*]

[Dates and activities may change]

Week One

February 11 - Introduction to class

February 13 - Rhetorical situation

Week Two

February 18 – Introduce field memo assignment (Read *TCH* “Emails and Attachments” and “Memos”)

February 20 – Introduce rhetorical analysis

Week Three

February 25 – Continue work on rhetorical analysis (Field Memo due)

February 27 – Rhetorical analysis peer review

Week Four

March 4 – Document Design (Read 1st part of *NDDDB*)

March 6 – Document Design, introduce redesign assignment (Read 2nd part of *NDDDB*)

Week Five

March 11 – In-class time for redesign (Rhetorical Analysis due)

March 13 – Redesign peer review

Week Six

March 18 – Instructions (Read *TCH* “Instructions”)

March 20 – Instructions, introduce lay audience assignment (Redesign due)

Week Seven

March 25 – Descriptions (Read *TCH* “Descriptive Documents” and “Product Descriptions”)

March 27 – (Lay assignment due)

Week Eight

April 1 – Spring Break No Class

April 3 – Spring Break No Class

Week Nine

April 8 – Introduce Collaborative Project

April 10 – Collaboration and Teamwork (Read *TCH* “Teamwork and Collaboration”)

Week Ten

April 15 – Needs Assessment (Read *TCH* “Audience and Purpose Assessment”)

April 17 – Work Day

Week Eleven

April 22 – Project Plan (Needs Assessment due)

April 24 – Conferences (Project Plan due)

Week Twelve

April 29 – Conferences (Project Plan due)

May 1 – User Manuals (Read *TCH* “User Manuals”)

Week Thirteen

May 6 – Usability Report (Read *TCH* “Usability and User Testing”)

May 8 – Work Day

Week Fourteen

May 13 – Presentations

May 15 – Presentations

Week 15

Final Collaborative Project Due (due date to be discussed in class)