

WRT332/2001: TECHNICAL WRITING

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WRT332/2001
Summer 2020
ONLINE -
Asynchronous

Required Text:

Lannon, John M. and Laura J. Gurak. *Technical Communication*. 13th ed. Pearson, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-321-89997-2.

Recommended:

Alred, Brusaw, and Oliu. *Handbook of Technical Writing*. Bedford/St. Martin's Press.

Save your written work on reliable media and upload assignments to the appropriate links on SAKAI. Always retain a copy of your work.

Course Description

WRT332 aims to help you develop the skills you will need to write technical documents successfully. The course will introduce rhetorical principles and compositional practices necessary for writing effective professional communications, such as reports, instructions, and documentation, within your own profession, including

- writing to multiple readers for various purposes
- writing in real world contexts that require collaborative action
- using technology to develop technical documents
- developing ethical and responsible writing strategies
- advocating user needs for documents
- planning and managing short- and long-term writing projects
- designing and implementing appropriate research strategies
- following and adjusting technical writing conventions
- developing effective technical style and tone
- designing documents (e.g., layout, formatting, incorporating graphics/visuals into documents)

Given the nature of a technical writer's work, the course will involve both individual and some collaborative assignments. You can apply the principles introduced in class to knowledge of your own field of study.

WRT332: Technical Writing offers a General Education requirement for English Communication and places special emphasis on composing and reading processes appropriate to professional work. It focuses on language, sentence, and paragraph skills appropriate to workplace writing and on audience analysis as a function of rhetorical differences. To fulfill Gen Ed requirements, students in WRT332 will write effective documents, competently use information technologies, and read complex texts. They will analyze a number of rhetorical situations that writers face depending on the individual or community with whom they are communicating, as well as collaborate effectively with peers to develop, draft, and revise documents that are focused, organized, and coherent. Students will sharpen their ability to observe and gather various forms of data and to use both primary and secondary sources to support ideas.

Learning Outcomes

1. *Rhetorical Knowledge*

Students will

- recognize different situations for writing and responding;
- practice various types of writing appropriate to varied situations, including field-based and text-based research;
- reflect on the appropriateness of choices for rhetorical situations;
- produce texts / documents that meet the demands of the rhetorical situation considering focus, development, organization, coherence, and correctness.

2. *Composing, Revising, and Editing:*

Students will:

- recognize and enact writing as a multi-step process;
- practice multiple rounds of invention, research, feedback, and revision;
- reflect on which strategies work for them, and identify crucial components of their individual writing processes;
- produce a final portfolio or project that meets expectations for finished, polished work ready to be evaluated.

3. *Collaborative Production and Evaluation of Texts*

Students will:

- recognize the value of others' insights, research, and reactions;
- practice finding research that deepens their understanding of a topic;
- practice providing formative responses to one another on drafts-in-progress;
- produce together at least one writing project.

4. *Reflective Learning*

Students will:

- recognize the difference between the project itself, and their reflective thinking on the project;
- practice integrating their reflections and insights in one context to other projects;
- reflect on themselves and articulate their developing identities as writers;
- produce reflective elements that introduce their final artifacts. These elements should reflect on learning and identify the choices and changes made in preparing the portfolio or final project.

5. *Conventions and Craft*

Students will:

- recognize standards of correctness, usage, and style;
- practice a range of styles, registers, and conventions;
- practice editing for repeated patterns of error;
- reflect on their “personal” writing style and learn strategies for expanding their repertoire;
- produce a final set of work (portfolio or project) that adheres to the conventions of Standard Written English and to either MLA or APA documentation styles.

Requirements

1. Regular online attendance. The coursework can be challenging and even a little lapse in presence can hinder your ability to complete it successfully. If an emergency or illness requires that you miss for an extended time, simply notify me.
2. Assignments completed on time. Work is due on the date assigned. In fairness, without legit excuse, assignments not handed in on the due date can't be accepted and no “partial credit” will be given them. If you can't hand in an assignment on time due to illness or some other important reason, simply let me know.

Likewise, no “make-up” quizzes. Quizzes must be taken during the extended time period allotted on SAKAI.

3. Work neat and professionally presented. Include the following information on written work (unless notified otherwise): your name, my name (spelled correctly, please), the name/number of course (WRT332/2001: Technical Writing), and the

due date. Type this information on individual vertical lines in the upper left-hand corner, double-spaced.

4. Complete reading from our text in the assigned time frame.
5. Academic Honesty: We need to understand plagiarism and its consequences. Please consult the *URI Student Handbook* about academic honesty and related issues. The penalty for plagiarism is a by necessity a zero for the assignment and a perhaps too a report to the academic dean, who has the option to administer a failing grade for the course; in addition, the charge of academic dishonesty may go on record in the Office of Student Life. Many handbooks and on-line writing guides offer extensive help on matters of plagiarism and how to acknowledge source material, as does our textbook. If you need more help understanding when to cite something or how to make clear your references, simply ask.
6. Special Needs. Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations (I will distribute a Student Fact Sheet at the first class on which any disability may be noted with complete confidentiality.) As part of this process, please be in touch with Disability Services in the Office of Student Life.
7. The URI Writing Center (Room 009) and Academic Resource Center (in Fall and Spring semesters only) on the fourth floor of Roosevelt Hall can be helpful resources for successful academic performance. The staff can help with a variety of writing tasks from the most basic to the most sophisticated. You can get help with all phases of writing, from generating ideas, finding topics, developing ideas, revising and editing. Make an online appointment to get feedback/help.
8. As a side note: The Department of Writing & Rhetoric wants students to know about the **Linda K. Shamoan Scholarship for Public Writing**, given annually in the spring to a student who has engaged the public in a successful writing project. Here are the award criteria: *"An award for a sophomore or junior who is committed to public writing/community action and who has a deep understanding of rhetoric as a social good. This student will have demonstrated a willingness to go outside of the classroom and use his or her writing to change actual rules, ordinances, or laws."* While the amount of the award varies, recent past winners have received \$300. We ask faculty to nominate students for their outstanding work in public writing, and while those who complete WRT 303 (Public Writing) are automatically good candidates for this award, it can also be awarded to students in other courses who meet the criteria above.

Grading

Assignments will generally be graded on a 1 – 5 range (5 being superior). Grades will be based on the general criteria below and on the specific criteria discussed for each assignment.

The following general criteria apply:

- How effectively does the document accomplish its intended task?
(This may include meeting reader's needs, meeting organizational goals, providing a sound rationale and thorough treatment of the topic, and providing useful and accurate information.)
- How well constructed is the document?
(This refers to orderly and coherent presentation of material, effective design and formatting, appropriate use of visuals, and professional style and tone.)
- How effectively was the document produced?
(This relates to the quality of planning, collaboration, research, drafting, editing, and proofreading.)

Document Design

We are expected, of course, to produce good-quality professional documents. A part of that quality is the appearance of the work. Assignments should be computer-generated, of course. Our documents should have appropriate margins, spacing, and formatting for the type of work represented, with no obvious typos and the like on final versions.

Side Note: Production Lab

The Production Lab located on the fourth floor of Roosevelt Hall is available in the Fall and Spring semesters. The Lab offers high level design equipment, with one-on-one instruction in its use, and printing is free. Consider visiting!

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**Prof. Joseph Szpila
Summer 2020**

General Syllabus

WEEK I: June 22 - 28

Personal Introductions

Chapter 1: Introduction to Technical Communication

Due: 6/25

Chapter 2: Meeting the Needs of Specific Audiences

Project (p. 33)
GENERAL

Due 6/28

Chapter 3: Persuading Your Audience

Due 6/28

Projects (p. 60)
TEAM (done individually) or GLOBAL #1

Chapter 6: An Overview of the Technical Writing Process

WEEK II: June 29 – July 5

Chapter 14: Memos

Due 7/2

Writing Project:

Write a Memorandum Report to our WRT332 class. In it, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of E-mail as a communication channel. Provide some good advice for effective E-mail practices in professional settings.

Type out your response. Use a Memo format:

TO: WRT332/2001 CLASS

FROM: YOUR NAME

DATE: July 2, 2020

SUBJECT: (Provide appropriate SUBJECT line)

Then type out the body of your memo. (Think of this message as a short REPORT, and format accordingly.)

- Chapter 4: Weighing the Ethical Issues
- Chapter 5: Teamwork and Global Considerations
- Due 7 / 7 (Tues.) Chapter 16: Workplace Letters
- Projects (p. 377 - 78)
Choose ONE:
#3 (a, b, OR c), #4, or TEAM (work individually) or
Write a letter to President Dooley, assessing the pros and cons of remote learning

WEEK III: July 6 - 12

- 5 - 7 Chapter 21: Informal Reports
- Due 7 / 12 Writing Project:
Write the Analytical Report or Proposal (Handout)
Use a Memo format (as in the previous report)
- Chapter 8: Evaluating and Interpreting Information
- Due 7 / 23 Chapter 22: Formal Analytical Reports
- Project:
A Topic for a Formal Report
GENERAL p. 150, Do a – g)
- 21 Chapter 9: Summarizing Research Findings and Other Information
- 26 Chapter 13: Designing Pages and Document

WEEK IV: July 13 - 19

- Chapter 23: Proposals
- Chapter 12: Designing Visual Information

- Due 7 / 16
- Projects
GENERAL (p. 289)
Choose ONE:
#5, or #8 (For #8 do ONE of these: a, b, c, OR d)
- Chapter 18: Technical Definitions
- Chapter 24: Oral Presentations and Webinars
- Due 7 / 19
- Chapter 19: Technical Descriptions, Specifications...
- Projects (p. 454)
GENERAL #1 or 2; or TEAM (Do solo) #2 (p. 455)

WEEK V: July 20 - 26

- Due 7 / 21
- Chapter 20: Instructions and Procedures
- Projects
GENERAL #4 (p. 487): Just submit the instructions
or GENERAL #5
- Due 7 / 26
- Chapter 17: Resumes and Job-Search Materials
- Writing Project:
- Design a Resume & Application Letter
(Directed to an actual job posting)

FINAL GRADES DUE: July 31