

ENGL 3764: Technical Writing (Online)

Summer II (July 7 - August 15, 2015)

Instructor: Lenny Grant, ABD

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Webex: <http://www.eng.vt.edu/cgep/webexinfo> (login forthcoming)

Office Hours and Email

I will be available on Webex: Mondays from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM; Tuesdays 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM; Thursdays 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM. I am also available by appointment.

I will do my best to respond to emails that I receive during the day (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM) within three hours. I do not respond to emails on Sundays.

Course Text (Required)

Markel, Mike. (2013). *Practical Strategies for Technical Communication*. Bedford/St. Martins.

[<VT bookstore link>](#) [<Amazon.com link>](#)

Overview

English 3764, Technical Writing, is an introduction to the principles and processes of effective written communication of technical information. It is also a course about collaboration and about *some* of the ways that writing can affect change. In this course you will learn and apply strategies for analyzing various communication situations, understanding and writing for specific audiences, evaluating online content, and composing technical discourse including designing visual information. The assignments include practice in

- analyzing a variety of print-based and online documents
- composing effective instructions, correspondence, proposals, reports, and presentations
- collaborating remotely with team members

The summer version of this course requires you to work at a brisk pace. Do not be discouraged, though. You will accomplish a great deal in a relatively short span of time.

Course objectives

Upon successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Analyze the rhetorical situation, including the problem that creates the need for written communication
- Analyze the audience or users of the written communication, including knowledge, experience, and work environment; consider needs of global audiences and people with disabilities
- Conduct research appropriate to workplace problem solving, such as literature review, evaluation of online resources, interview, and site inspection
- Interpret research findings with understanding of ethical and human implications
- Select and apply appropriate ways of ordering information for specific effects, including hierarchical, chronological, and spatial arrangements
- Use conventions of various workplace genres, such as proposals, instructions, correspondence, reports, and slide decks, with understanding of how the genre conventions can be used as heuristics and as principles of arrangement
- Manage writing projects by planning and completing tasks according to a schedule
- Collaborate with classmates in planning, researching, writing, revising, and presenting information
- Write accurately and clearly
- Apply principles of effective visual design for print and electronic presentation
- Present technical information orally

Assignments

To achieve our objectives, you will complete a range of assignments on your own and in teams. Detailed assignment sheets will be provided for each learning task. Here is a concise list of assignments and their values for your final grade.

Assignment	% of Final Grade
Homework Assignments. (<i>10 assignments x 1.0 points each</i>)	10%
Group Project Proposal	15%
Document Analysis	20%
Instruction Set	25%
Group Project Report	30%
TOTAL	100%

Course Policies

This is a course about writing and technical communication. Anyone who writes is a writer, just as anyone who shares technical content with an audience is a technical communicator. Writing is one of the few things that no one can be too good at. I encourage you to consider yourself a writer and technical communicator because I consider everyone in this class to be writers and technical communicators. Regardless of your past history with writing, this course is another opportunity for you to become a more effective writer.

Attendance

Regular attendance in English 3764 is mandatory, even during online sessions. I have developed the course so that you have readings and assignments Monday through Thursday. This will give you Friday through Sunday to work on larger projects.

Collaboration

For collaborative projects, you will need to be in contact with other members of your team. I will assign all teams. I suggest using the collaborative technologies available to you: email, Google drive, and Scholar. You may agree with your team to use other technologies and software, but it is up to you to negotiate collaboration. I leave it up to you because people have different communication styles and out of class commitments. Your mission is to complete a project professionally. I am forcing you to become friends. I strongly discourage you from using Facebook or other social media that you use for personal purposes to communicate with your team members.

Submitting Assignments

All assignments must:

1. Be submitted on the due date specified on the course schedule
2. Be submitted via the Assignments tab on our course Scholar site
3. Contain your last name and the name of the assignment. For example:
Grant_homework1.doc or Grant_proposal.pdf

If you experience difficulties submitting an assignment, please let me know immediately. I will help you to resolve the issue. Please see the late work policy below.

General Questions and Extra Help

Please feel free to ask me questions of clarification. If you need additional guidance on an assignment, contact me as early as possible before the assignment's due date.

Grading Criteria

In general, I will grade homework assignments according to the three Cs: Completeness, Content, and Correctness. **Completeness** means all aspects of the assignment have been fully addressed. **Content** refers to the overall quality of the assignment you submit, the ideas and development of the deliverable. **Correctness** is the overall mechanics of the assignment, including grammar, spelling, formatting, and delivery.

For major assignments—group proposal, document analysis, instruction set, and group project report—I will use the rubric attached at the end of this syllabus. A note on how the rubric works: On each of the assessment domains you can score five possible points. There are eight domains, so you can score up to 40 points. To arrive at your numerical and letter grades, I divide the points you earned by 40. For example, if you score a 37 on an assignment. I divide 37 by 40 to arrive at a number grade of 92.5. See the Grading Scale below for conversion of numerical grades to letter grades.

Grading Scale

A	93.0-100 points	C	73.0-76.9
A-	90.0-92.9	C-	70.0-72.9
B+	87.0-89.9	D+	67.0-69.9
B	83.0-86.9	D	63.0-66.9
B-	80.0-82.9	D-	60.0-62.9
C+	77.0-79.9	F	59.9-0.0

Late Work

Meeting deadlines is a vital aspect of succeeding in your studies and in your career. Since this course is condensed for the summer session, deadlines will be treated firmly and late assignments will be heavily penalized. To help you develop deadline management skills, all assignments are to be submitted on time. Assignments that are 1 minute to 24 hours late will docked a full letter grade. That is, an A- assignment will receive a B- if it is one day late. Any assignments more than 24 hours late will receive an F. Should you have mitigating circumstances that prevented you from submitting an assignment on time, let me know. I will handle these situations on a case by case basis.

Special Accommodations

My aim is to make this course as accessible as possible for all students.

Students with registered disabilities who may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. For more information on registered disabilities, visit <http://ssd.vt.edu>

Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to me. (statement adapted from http://mentalhealth.va.gov/studentveteran/docs/ed_syllabus.html) For more veterans resources at Virginia Tech, visit <http://www.veterans.vt.edu>

Please let me know immediately of anything that happens during this class that makes our learning environment uncomfortable.

Academic Honesty

According to the Constitution of the Virginia Tech Honor System:

The Honor Code is the University policy which expressly forbids the following academic violations:

- 1. Cheating -- Cheating includes the actual giving or receiving of any unauthorized aid or assistance or the actual giving or receiving of any unfair advantage on any form of academic work, or attempts thereof.*
- 2. Plagiarism -- Plagiarism includes the copying of the language, structure, ideas and/or thoughts of another and passing off same as one's own, original work, or attempts thereof.*
- 3. Falsification -- Falsification includes the statement of any untruth, either verbally or in writing, with respect to any circumstances relevant to one's academic work, or attempts thereof. Such acts include, but are not limited to, the forgery of official signatures, tampering with official records, fraudulently adding or deleting information on academic documents such as add/drop requests, or fraudulently changing an examination or other academic work after the testing period or due date of the assignment.*

Therefore, the student body at Virginia Tech will not tolerate any violation of the Honor Code. All students, upon admission to this University, have pledged to abide by the Honor Code. Any student found by the appropriate forum within the Honor System to have violated the Honor Code shall be deemed guilty as charged. (http://filebox.vt.edu/users/chagedor/biol_4684/honor.html)

You will be held to this standard for all assignments and other aspects of this class. If you have any questions about whether something you are doing for an assignment may be a violation of the Honor Code, ASK ME FIRST. You are better off asking for permission from me rather than forgiveness from the Honor Court.

Grading Rubric

SCORE 1-5 (see scoring below)	1	2	3	4	5	Notes
<p>Problem Statement Does this document articulate why the writer is writing at this point in time? Is the specific writing task addressed?</p>						
<p>Objective of document What is the reader outcome from the document? What should the audience know, believe, or do as a result of reading the document? Other possible considerations for objectives: individual versus group/department/institution; short-versus long-term; stakeholders; recommendations and consequences.</p>						
<p>Audience Is the document appropriate for the intended audience? Has the writer made an effort to show what the reader can gain (or lose)? What does the audience need to know and what is already known? Are demographic factors relevant?</p>						
<p>Communication strategy Does the document provide a strong argument and sufficient use of evidence? Are the sources (if relevant) credible and adequate to persuade the audience?</p>						
<p>Structure Is the structure (arrangement of arguments) appropriate to meet the intended objectives? (Some examples of structure: inductive versus deductive, chronological, descriptive, facts versus analysis.) Are the ideas organized logically? Does the document have effective opening and closing statements? Is a follow-up step, if needed, included?</p>						
<p>Document design Is the document design appropriate for task, objectives, and audience? Are formatting (subheads, list, paragraphing) and visual (exhibits, tables, charts) elements used effectively? Or are these elements absent when they should be present? Is the appropriate citation style (if relevant) followed?</p>						

<p>Style Does the writing flow and have a rhythm? Is the writer making suitable syntactic choices (for example, active versus passive voice)? Is the style (formal versus informal) appropriate for task, objectives, and audience? Does the document confirm to conventions for the particular genre and/or discipline?</p>						
<p>Correctness Are there problems with standard American usage (grammar, punctuation, and mechanics)? Are there apparent lapses in proofreading? Do errors interfere with meaning?</p>						
<p>TOTAL</p>						

Scoring:

5=Exceptional

4=Good

3=Adequate

2=Limited

1=Poor

Preliminary Course Schedule

Week		Assignment
Week 1		
Jul 7, 2014	CH 1: Introduction to technical communication	
Jul 8, 2014	CH 4: Analyzing your audience and purpose	
Jul 9, 2014	CH 9: Writing Correspondence	HOMEWORK
Week 2		
Jul 13, 2014	CH 6: Writing for your readers	
Jul 14, 2014	CH 3: Writing collaboratively and using social media	
Jul 15, 2014	CH 11: Writing Proposals	
Jul 16, 2014	CH 5: Researching your subject	Assign Group Project Proposal
Week 3		
Jul 20, 2014	CH 2: Understanding ethical and legal considerations	
Jul 21, 2014	CH 7: Designing documents and websites	
Jul 22, 2014	CH 8: Creating graphics	
Jul 23, 2014		Assign Document Analysis
Week 4		
Jul 27, 2014	CH 10: Writing job application materials	HOMEWORK
Jul 28, 2014	TBA	
Jul 29, 2014	TBA	
Jul 30, 2014		Assign Group Project Report
Week 5		
Aug 3, 2014	CH 14: Writing definitions	
Aug 4, 2014	CH 14: Writing instructions	
Aug 5, 2014	CH 14: Writing Manuals	
Aug 6, 2014		Assign Instruction Set
Week 6		
Aug 10, 2014	CH 15: Making oral presentations	HOMEWORK
Aug 11, 2014	TBA	
Aug 12, 2014	TBA	
Aug 13, 2014	TBA	
Aug 14, 2014	TBA	
Aug 15, 2014	FINAL EXAM	