**Welcome!**

In this professionally-oriented writing course, students will develop individual processes for composing technical reports and documents. This will include assembling, organizing, drafting, and revising technical information for the production of written documents and oral reports suitable for internal use and public dissemination.

In addition, students will critically investigate scholarship of Technical Writing, as well as the related disciplines and fields of Rhetoric and Composition, Design (industrial, web,
interior), Medical Rhetoric, and Occupational Therapy*. In order to demonstrate understandings of the concepts introduced by the course readings, and to cultivate an environment of interdisciplinary collaboration, students will develop and present on theories and pedagogies of writing relating to their own disciplinary areas of interest.

This course is designed to help students mature as professional communicators through a variety of technical discourses. If approached with thoughtful consideration and unflagging effort, the skills learned in this course can transfer to areas both academic and professional.

Thanks,

RWMonty

*This course section fulfills the Technical Writing requirement for a BSCS degree, application to the OT MA program, and other programs at UTRGV. Whatever area of study or career path you find yourself on, we can tailor aspects of this class to align with your goals.

DETAILS & EXPECTATIONS

Preparing Yourself to Work
Be on time for the start of each class meeting, and bring your course readings and anything you need to do your writing work to class every day. If we start an activity and you don't have the necessary materials or walk in late, you won't be able to constructively contribute to the work, and you may not receive credit for that portion of that assignment.

Accessibility
This class is designed with the goal of providing accessibility for all students. If you have a documented condition or ability that may make it difficult for you to carry out the work as we have outlined and/or you need special accommodations or assistance because of the disability, please contact immediately the Disability Services Office (DSO), University Center Rm. 322. Appropriate arrangements and accommodations can be made. Verification of disability and processing for special services, such as note takers, extended time, separate accommodations for testing, is required and will be determined by DSO. Consult DSO Coordinator at (956) 316-7005. Additionally, I am willing to work with you to help make this class meet your needs, so long as you feel comfortable in this regard.

Support Services
This is a writing intensive course, and writing, of course, is a collaborative process - even if you'll be individually assessed on your writing. Fortunately, the UTRGV Writing Center offers tutoring, instruction, and support for all things writing based. Best off, it’s free (or, more accurately, you’ve already paid for it). It can be found in STAC 3.119 (Edinburg) and UBLB 3.206 (Brownsville). In addition to face-to-face consultations, the Writing Center offers feedback through Skype meetings and asynchronous consultations. Contact the Writing Center at wc@utrgv.edu for more info.

For those aspects of your life that cause your difficulty or pause, UTRGV offers counseling services for all of its students. Balancing work, personal life, and school can be stressful, so seek support as it’s needed. You can reach the UTRGV Counseling service at counseling@utrgv.edu.

Rhetorical Writing
Through in-class and online discussions, we will investigate a variety of topics, starting with techne, and moving on to technology in the workplace, Internet texts, visual rhetoric and design, remix, and others from related areas of interest that you may hold. Importantly, this course is based on praxis, the intersection of theory and practice. This concept will lead us as we critically analyze and produce technical documents, primarily through in-class discussion and exercises derived from simulations or “cases” provided by the textbook and other reading materials.

Individual Topics
In order to complete the various tasks and assignment for this course, you will focus on one the following individual topics during the course of this semester: your current major area of study, your anticipated professional field, your current work or volunteer field, or your anticipated major area of study. This will result in each student in the class having a slightly different focus. However, this individual differentiation will allow the whole group to maintain a focus on the rhetorical writing and technical communication aspects of the class.

Writing, Revision, Feedback
It shouldn’t come as a surprise to find out that successfully navigating this class will involve a lot of writing on your part. Upper division courses are like that. Through composing in a variety of modes, that you will be able to articulate your ideas to a wide range of audiences. Our writing will also serve an epistemological function – writing isn’t just how to show what you’ve learned, but it is the exacting process through which you create meaning. In other words, you learn by writing.

One of my main goals when I teach is to help students develop a sense that writing is a work of process. That is, impactful writing begins well before you type your first word of a given composition, and it continues until well after you’ve typed your last. To help make
your writing the best that it can be, you should expect to meet with me and your peers, individually and in small group, at various points during the semester. While I will not assign grades to each stage of the writing process, you will be required to rethink and revise parts or all of every piece of writing based on the feedback you get. As you work on your drafts, you will need to keep track of the feedback you receive, as well as the revision and editing changes you make, with each successive draft. In doing so, you will create a track record of your work that spans the entire course and semester.

In spite of our better efforts, it can be difficult to estimate your course grade throughout the semester. If you’d like to have an idea of where you stand after you’ve completed a substantial amount of writing and revision, please make an appointment to meet me outside of class, and I will review your work with you and give you a better sense of where you are, grade-wise. It will be entirely your responsibility to set up a meeting if you’re curious or concerned, and it’s important that you not wait until the last week or so to start asking about grades. At that point, it will likely be too late for you to do what needs to be done to significantly raise your overall course grade.

Course Readings, Discussions
This is an upper-division course, and as such, you will be expected to read and respond to a considerable amount of scholarship and popular media, and then to contribute to discussions related to these readings. Simply scanning over an assigned reading will not be sufficient, rather, you will be expected to peruse each reading thoroughly and carefully, take copious notes, and prepare yourself to talk about, question, and respond to what you have read.

All assigned readings for this course will be free and easy to access (via the course wiki)... so you got that going for you. If at some point you are asked to assign a supplemental reading to the class, you should be sure to prioritize accessibility along with disciplinary usefulness.

Each assigned reading must be completed by the first class meeting of the week specified in the course calendar, which is available on the wiki. This goes for whole group and hybrid course meetings, synchronous and asynchronous. Most frequently, we will meet and discuss the course readings during the regularly scheduled class time. Often, we will meet online (via the course wiki and Twitter). At times, we may meet in some other campus space entirely.

Technological Access, Resources
- UTRGV e-mail account and ID. These will be needed for email correspondence, access to the course Blackboard, and to sign up for the Hauser Lab.
- Computer and internet access for in-class work. If you have a laptop, tablet, or smartphone, please bring it with you to class.
- Social Media. Twitter (essential); Instagram, Snapchat, Google, Skype (optional)
- Internet access from home. Or, at the very least, a plan for how you can access and use the internet when not on campus.
- Software, such as PDF X-Change Viewer, Adobe Acrobat, or some other program that will allow you to view (and ideally, take notes on) PDFs.
  - Some sort of digital image manipulation software, such as Photoshop, GIMP, or Paint.NET, would be useful, too.
  - Check the bookstore for software, receive student discounts.
- You should have some sort of means to save your electronic work, such as a reliable pin drive, or an account with a web-based cloud service (such as Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.).

**Assignment Sequence**

Your written work is a reflection of your capabilities and efforts, and written assignments will comprises the majority of your final grade. You are therefore expected to produce high-quality, sophisticated documents. Neatness, visual appeal, and mechanical and grammatical correctness are important, although they do not alone guarantee a well-made document (or a desirable grade). Your written documents should have contextually-appropriate margins, spacing, pagination, and formatting. Similarly, your productions in electronic and other media should be well-designed and end-user compatible. In short: take pride in your writing, and aim to produce professional quality work.

Assignment descriptions and rubrics, including those collaboratively composed by the students themselves, will be available on the course wiki. All assignments are due by posting online to the appropriate wiki page by 11:30pm of the due date (see course calendar).

**Participation & Discussion (200 points – 20% of your final grade)**

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in all discussions, activities, and workshops. The class discussions will help you learn to improve your writing, often through guided discussions of a sample student project (sometimes yours, sometimes one written by a classmate, sometimes examples gathered from outside sources). This is part of the work of the course. Thus, you need to be in class on time, with the readings and your work completed, ready to participate and contribute.

In addition, it is vital that students check and participate in the online environment consistently as it is an integral part of the course. (I've been told that I assign more hybrid and out-of-class work than some completely online courses.) On occasion, students will be asked to meet on hybrid days to participate in library research, technology workshops, presentations, or other activities their instructor might need them to be physically present for. Participation in-class and
online (i.e.: Blackboard and Twitter) is mandatory. The activities included in this category ensure that students learn the material and help them to compose effective projects. Additionally, students will participate in national discussions related to course themes topics by composing original texts and disseminating them through appropriate communicative venues. Failure to adequately participate during any given class day – hybrid, individual, whole group or small group – will result in no P&D points being earned in addition to the student being marked absent.

**Quizzes (20 points – 2%)**

During the course of this semester, you be assigned two quizzes worth 10 points each: One based on this syllabus, one based on the remix readings. Quizzes will be found on the course Blackboard space. These quizzes are intended to be low-stress assessments aimed at monitoring self-motivated reading habits and out-of-class participation. You will be allowed two attempts to complete each quiz.

**Disciplinary Discussion Lead (80 points – 8%)**

Objectives for this assignment include diversifying content delivery and facilitating peer-to-peer instruction, both of which will improve whole group interactions. In addition, this assignment is designed to help you learn how to compose and deliver effective and informative presentations. Collaborating in small groups, students will prepare an in-class presentation and interactive lesson based on an assigned weekly topic. Additionally, student presenters will assign supplementary reading content, and lead class discussions both in class and online. One week prior to your scheduled presentation, you will participate in a practice session with a speech coach at UTRGV’s Hauser Communication Research Lab, ELABS 172 (formerly ARHU, née COAS). This experience will also help you develop presentation skills that will transfer to other educational and professional contexts. Small groups will be assessed using a single-point rubric.

**Email Memo (50 points – 5%)**

Email remains a fundamental method of communication in professional contexts. In order to help us better understand and internalize the purpose and functions of this form, we will analyze the professional email memo as a genre for its rhetorical and technical features within different disciplines. Students will be expected to follow accepted email format whenever initiating communications with their instructor, including, but not limited to, scheduling individual and group meetings, following up on assignment revisions, or asking questions.
Audience Analysis (25 points each, 50 points total – 5%):

Having a sense of the goals, values, and biases of your potential audiences can be useful knowledge when composing effective and efficient communication. Through these invention activities, you will analyze, predict, and invent various potential audiences for your projects. Students will complete one analysis worksheet for both the Instructions Document and Multimodal Remix projects.

Genre Analysis (100 points – 10%)

Students will analyze a text-based, written genre from their academic discourse community for its discursive and rhetorical features. This project consists of three parts: First, analyze a disciplinary discourse for its genre characteristics. Next, collaborate in small group to establish disciplinary norms for the genre. Last, compose an analytic report of your findings. With this assignment, we will emphasize foundational aspects of academic essay writing, including theory building and writing to learn.

OT Students: Employing a subjective, objective, assessment, and plan format to document notes is the preferred method for recording information relating to patient encounters. In order to better understand this genre, students will research, analyze, and report on sample SOAP notes, focusing on the genre’s discursive and rhetorical features.

Text-based Instructions Document: User Test Design, User Test (200 points – 20%)

You will plan, write, and test a technical document for a patient/client that will instruct the on how to complete a task, develop a skill, or learn content related to your discourse community. This project will be the most writing-intensive assignment for this course, and thus will require significant planning, drafting, feedback, revision, and editing components. Students will be expected to theorized, discuss, and apply concepts of end-usability and author function throughout this process.

Multimodal Interdisciplinary Remix Instructions (150 points – 15%)

Compose a discourse consisting of multiple modes – instructional video series, podcast, board game, etc. – that demonstrates for and teaches end users how to complete a task related to your Instruction Documentation. The mode you choose will be decided by your group, but it should be based on an identified rhetorical situation, and it should result in a product that is not readily available to public consumers. Groups will design individualized assessment rubrics based on norms established by the whole group.
Individualized Professionalization Project (75 points - 7.5%)

Students will select and design (or redesign) some aspect of their professional portfolio, such as a CV, personal website, admissions essay, graduate school application, or something else they determine to be beneficial to their professional development. Students should be able to identify and rationalize how specific theories and concepts from class readings and discussions informed their work.

Reflections (25 points each, 75 points total – 7.5%):

Three times during the semester, following the completion of the Instructions Document, the Multimodal Interdisciplinary Remix Instructions, and the Individualized Professionalization Project assignments, students will complete a brief reflection essay detailing and explaining their writing and revision processes. Reflections should incorporate and make direct references to relevant course readings, theories, and discussions.

Remix Proposal Presentation (50 points – 5%)

Your final “exam” for this class will be in the form of an in-person, whole group, multimodal presentation. For this presentation, you will pitch your Multimodal Remix Instructions to an audience of your peers, who will assess and score your work. Students will collaborate as a whole group to create norms for this assignment. Small groups will be assessed using a single-point rubric, but bonus points for this assignment will be awarded based on a whole group vote.

Assessment

Scoring
You may have noticed that the possible points for the assignments and activities listed in the section above add up to more than 100 points. In fact, there will be a total of 1000 possible points available to you over the course of this semester, and this move has more meaning than simply adding a zero. What this change does is provides me with a better way to organize and track student data, while providing you with a greater assurance that you will be assessed and credited for each task you are asked to complete. Additionally, this system helps ensure that individual assignments are valued to be commensurate with the work required to complete them. In other words, assignments that require more time and effort are worth more points.

In order to ensure that you receive proper credit for your day-to-day efforts in this course, I will periodically evaluate everything else you do for class (reading responses,
workshops, in-class writings, blog posts & comments, homework, etc.), and assign scores based on participation.

This will allow me a chance to let you know how you’re doing in different areas and how you can improve throughout the semester. At the end the semester, there will be a total number of possible points. Your specific grade will be determined by what percentage of the total points you have accumulated:

- 1000-900 total points; 90-100% of total possible points = A
- 899-800 total points; 80-89% of total possible points = B
- 799-700 total points; 70-79% of total possible points = C
- 699-600 total points; 60-69% of total possible points = D
- 599-0 total points; 0-59% of total possible points = F

Formatting
In order to ease the peer review and submission processes, please use a font and text size that will make it easier for your readers to print and respond to your work. Additionally, when submitting drafts to your instructor, please save and submit your rough drafts in one of the following formats: DOC/DOCX, RTF, or shared via Google Docs.

Submitted final drafts should be saved as PDF, JPEG, or some other final and universal format.

When you save your drafts, use the following naming convention: UTRGV username (your email address before the @ sign), short name for the assignment, due date
For example: randall.monty01 Instructions 03.17.16

You will earn individual scores and a cumulative grade based on your work. Quantity, while important, is no substitute for quality. In other words, simply completing an assignment will not guarantee a certain result – you must produce work befitting an upper-division student.

A note on grades
Meeting course and assignment requirements will result in the student earning an average grade for this course, as in "C" or "B," not "A." Likewise, coming to and participating in every class meeting, and submitting every assignment on time, are not acts that earn extra credit; those are expected by you enrolling in this course. A higher grade of "A" will be based on the distinctive quality, development, and reflective nature of your work, as well as your ability to guide a piece of writing through the various stages of a writing process and your willingness to peer review and explore new readings, genres, and techniques.

GOALS & OUTCOMES
Departmental Goals: Student Learning Outcomes for English (SLOs)

● SLO1—Students will articulate the historical, theoretical, cultural, and/or personal significance of language and literature.
● SLO2—Students will analyze and interpret a variety of texts, using a range of theoretical approaches and disciplinary modes of inquiry.
● SLO3—Students will demonstrate a broad and foundational knowledge of the traditions of American, British, Ethnic, and/or World literatures by critically situating specific works of literature within these traditions.
● SLO4—Students will write coherently and demonstrate a consistent use of the conventions of a variety of genres, including, but not limited to, the academic essay.
● SLO5—Students will apply appropriate research methodologies to understand and/or illuminate specific questions about language and literature.
● SLO6—Students will demonstrate information literacy through the use, analysis, and evaluation of appropriate resources, including, but not limited to, those found in electronic databases and websites.
● SLO7—Students in certification tracks will demonstrate knowledge and skills in the areas of writing, literature, reading, oral communication, media literacy, and English language arts pedagogy.

Course Evaluations
Online evaluations for this course will be available November 18-December 8, 2016. Around that time, you will receive an email notifying you that the evaluation period has begun. You will be able to access the evaluations for all of your courses on your myUTRGV homepage. I greatly value the input of the students in my classes, so please make an effort to provide your considerate feedback for this course, your instructor, and the institution.

Changes to the Syllabus
This syllabus represents a plan for this semester. While the rules and regulations will remain consistent, individual assignments and dates may be modified depending upon the individualized nature and progression of this course section. If you’ve made it this far into the syllabus, please email me a picture of a dinosaur.

POLICIES & RESOURCES

Attendance
“The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of absences. When, however, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of ‘DP’ or ‘DF’ (HOP 5.2.4).

If a student is absent for any combination of more than three (3) whole group class days, hybrid assignments, or group or individual meetings, they will have difficulty passing the
course or earning a high final grade. If these absences occur prior to the university’s stated drop date, the student may be dropped from the class.

**Late Work**
Late work makes life hard for all of us (you, me, your peers, the program, the department, the institution, the local flora and fauna, etc.), so you should expect and prepare to turn in all assignments by their due dates. Assignments submitted after their due dates may not be accepted. If you know of an upcoming absence, make arrangements to complete and turn in your work early. The hybrid nature of this course allows for some flexibility with regards to participating in class, even when a student is not physically present, but persistent tardiness will only inhibit learning.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Statement (department approved)**
Dishonest acts, such as plagiarism (using words or a specific author’s ideas from another source without acknowledging the source) or collusion (having other people write parts of your paper for you), may result in an “F” on the assignment and may lead to a disciplinary hearing conducted through the office of the Dean of Students, which could result in suspension or expulsion from UTPA (this policy is consistent with the Student Conduct Code printed in the UTPA Student Guide). If you have questions about whether your use of other sources (such as books, websites, friends, writing center tutors) is fair or not, please ask before turning in the work that you have a question about.