Welcome!

Technical Communication is a professionally-oriented and theory-based writing course where students will develop individual processes for composing technical reports and documents. These processes will include assembling, organizing, drafting, and revising technical information for the production of written documents and oral reports suitable for internal usage and public dissemination. Along the way, students will critically investigate scholarship of Technical Writing, and the related disciplines and fields of Rhetoric & Composition, design (industrial, visual, web, interior), and medical rhetoric*. In order to demonstrate understandings of the concepts introduced by the course readings and to cultivate an environment of interdisciplinary collaboration, students will read, writer, research, and present on theories and pedagogies of writing from 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, let's work to make this class fit your professional and academic goals.

DETAILS & EXPECTATIONS

Preparing Yourself to Work
Each week, you will need to read, write, and participate in class discussions and activities. If you do not prepare yourself for each week of work, you won’t be able to constructively contribute to this class, and you may not receive credit for that portion of that assignment or coursework. Similarly, being present for class does not simply mean responding to questions and turning in work; in order to "be present," you must be engaged in and contributing to all discussions and
activities with insight and thoughtfulness.

Accessibility
If you have a documented condition or different ability that will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as we have outlined and/or you need special accommodations/assistance because of the disability, please contact immediately the Student Accessibility Services, University Center Rm. 108 (Edinburg) or Cortez 129 (Brownsville). 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 SAS. You can contact SAS at ability@utrgv.edu and (956) 665-7005. I am happy to work with you and Student Accessibility Services to ensure that your experiences in this class are equitable.

Academic Support
As a student at UTRGV, there are many resources available to support your academic development. For this course, the Writing Center will be particularly valuable as you work through all stages of your writing process: invention, drafting, feedback, revision, editing. You will also consult the Library's online databases to find secondary sources to support your work. The Hauser Lab is a place of practice and support for students looking to improve their oral presentation skills, and The Learning Center provides disciplinary tutoring on a range of subjects. In addition, as a member of this course, you will have the opportunity to interact with other members of the UTRGV community, including staff from the Center for Online Learning and Teaching Technology and consultants from the Writing Center. These colleagues will be joining our Blackboard space and are available resources to support your learning.

Writing, Response, Revision
Through whole group online discussions and small group draft sharing, we will investigate a variety of topics, starting with tekhne, 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. Additionally, this course is based in 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 provided by the course readings.

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, your anticipated major area of study.

Writing, Revision, Feedback
It shouldn’t come as a surprise to you to find out that successfully navigating this class will involve a lot of writing on your part. Upper division courses are like that. Writing, too, serves 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. By
composing in a variety of modes, that you will be able to articulate your ideas to the widest
range of audiences.

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 and effective 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 seek out feedback from peers, colleagues, and
advisors. For this class, this means you interact with me and your peers, individually and in
small groups, 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 change 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, identify meaningful quotes and concepts, and prepare yourself to talk about, question,
and respond to what you have read.
All assigned readings for this course will be free to access via the course Blackboard space...
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.

**Technological Access, Resources**
- UTRGV e-mail account and ID – This will be needed for email correspondence and to access
  the course Blackboard space.
- Computer access for out-of-class work – A laptop, tablet, or cell phone... each of these are
  useful tools for accessing and participating in this course.
- Social Media (optional) - Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Google.
- Internet access from home, if possible – Or, at the very least, a plan for how you can access the
  web 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 and to potentially receive student discounts.
- You should have access to 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; you already have a OneDrive account (via myUTRGV).

**Assignment Sequence**

Your written work is a reflection of your capabilities and efforts, and written assignments will comprise 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 text (or a desirable grade). Your written documents should have appropriate margins, spacing, pagination, and formatting. Your productions in electronic and other media should be well-designed. 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 midnight of the due date (see course calendar).

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

Give that this is an online course, the discussion board on this Blackboard will serve as the primary space for class discussion and interaction. The class discussions are designed to help you learn to improve your writing and expand your critical thinking. In addition, discussion threads will be used to ask and answer questions, exchange drafts, and hash out ideas for major projects. Participation will be assessed for both quantity (how much you contribute to each discussion) and quality (how well you contribute). Students are expected to participate in all discussions and draft exchange activities. Failure to adequately participate during any given class discussion – hybrid, individual, whole group or small group – will result in no P/D points being earned for that discussion.

**Quizzes (20 points – 2%)**

During the course of this semester, you be assigned two quizzes worth 10 points each. These quizzes will be found on the course Blackboard space. Quizzes are intended to be low-stress assessments aimed at monitoring self-motivated reading habits and out-of-class participation.

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

This assignment is designed to help you learn how to lead a scholarly discussion in an online environment. Collaborating in small groups of disciplinary peers, students will
prepare questions, quotes, and topics for their peers to respond to on the discussion board. This experience will also help you develop interactive and instructional skills that will transfer to other educational and professional contexts.

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. Students will be expected to follow accepted email format whenever initiating communications with their instructor, including, but not limited to, scheduling individual 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 and predict 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 identified academic or professional discourse community for its discursive and rhetorical features. In terms of form, this assignment most resembles a traditional, scholarly essay that you should be familiar with from English 1301 or other writing-intensive course you may have taken. 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.

Instructions Document and User Test (200 points – 20%)

This is your main writing and design assignment for this course, and it is likely the most accurate manifestation of what you and your disciplinary peers have in mind when you think of "technical writing." Often--but not exclusively--composed as a set of step-by-step instructions, the Instructions Document is where you identify an exigency articulate a techne that your identified audience/patient/client. Fundamental objectives of this assignment include promoting autonomy (both in terms of the end-user learning the new skill as well as with their being able to complete the task with only the instructions), and
author function (wherein the end-user will intuit that someone was responsible for writing the instructions, but they will not be concerned with the specifics of authorship).

The Instructions Document will itself account for 150 points of your grade, with the User-Test accounting for the remaining 50 available points.

**Remix Video (50 points - 5%)**

Students will remix a found video (commercial, trailer, music video) to repurpose the original genre or message into something different.

**Multimodal Interdisciplinary Remix Instructions (100 points – 10%)**

Compose a multimodal discourse – 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.

**After-Action Reports (50 points each, 100 points total – 10%):**

Following the Instructions Document and Multimodal Remix projects, students will complete an individual reflection and rhetorical analysis of their writing process.

**Remix Proposal Presentation (50 points – 5%)**

Your final exam for this class will be in the form of a small group multimodal "presentation," where you will post your Multimodal Remix Instructions to the discussion board for peer assessment and scoring your work. Students will collaborate as a whole group to create norms for this assignment. For this assignment, you will also be required to evaluate your peers' projects.

**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.

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, writings, blog posts & comments, homework, etc.), and assign scores based on participation. Available points will be determined as the quotient of participation points available for that day and the number of distinct activities for that class meeting, weighted for time and effort.
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, 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), assignment abbreviation (this will be announced with each assignment), due date
For example: randall.monty01 ID 08.17.17

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 August TBD, 2017. 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.

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.

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.