



# Technical **COMMUNICATION**

Spring 2016 | 3373-001 | Dr. Estee Beck

Cover Photo: "Letters"

Description: Image of wooden letter blocks, two-row stacked, upon a light to medium transparent colored brown surface

## COURSE INFORMATION

Dr. Estee Beck  
Carlisle Hall 525  
estee.beck@uta.edu

### *Office Hours:*

MWF, 10:00-10:45am, Fine Arts Building Einstein Bros.  
MW, 2:00-3:00pm  
or by appointment

### *Class Information:*

ENGL 3373-001-LEC, Regular  
FA 404, MWF 11:00-11:50am

## DESCRIPTION

As a pre-professional, learning how to develop appropriate, timely, and persuasive documentation prepares you for the fast-paced demands of an employer, colleagues, and clients. Although any style of writing takes a lifetime to develop, learning the key elements of professional documentation will enhance and shape how people make critical decisions or make changes in habits. This course will expose you to the professional and technical situations you may encounter in a workplace setting and prepare you to perform audience analyses, usability testing, persuasive communication, tailored documentation, and most importantly how to write with clarity, concision, style, and appropriate tone. Prerequisite: ENGL 1301, ENGL 1302

## OUTCOMES

- Recall general technical writing characteristics by developing technical documentation
- Describe the benefits and constraints of an informational document for an intended audience through informal usability testing
- Demonstrate persuasive communication techniques in technical writing documentation
- Develop abilities to differentiate genre conventions for specialized and general audiences by tailoring professional documents
- Design and revise documentation for clarity, concision, style, and tone from peer review feedback

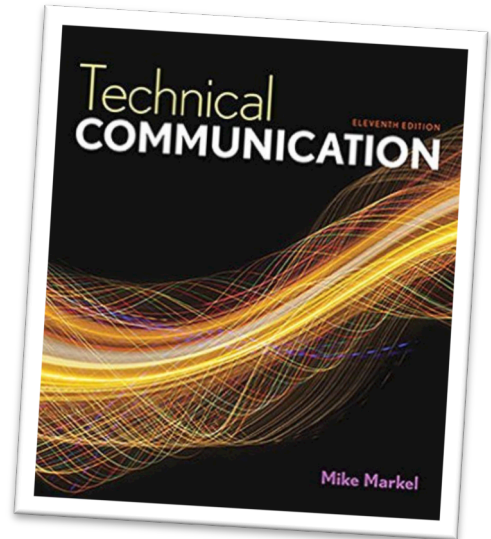
## TEXTBOOK

**Required:** Mike Markel's *Technical Communication* in the 11<sup>th</sup> edition.

You do need the 11<sup>th</sup> edition.

*Please note: This book is on course reserve in the Central Library. This means you are responsible for all course assignments since you have access to the book via course reserve.*

The image (Figure 2) to the right is the book cover for the 11<sup>th</sup> edition. Set against a black background are the words “Technical” and “Communication” in different typefaces, with technical in sentence case and communication in all caps upper-left justified. In the lower third of the image appears a yellow, gold, and orange design of an electrical current in a small wave formation. Lower right justified is the author’s name in a medium purple color.



## MATERIALS

You will need access to:

A desktop, laptop or tablet, the Internet, UTA Blackboard, MavMail, and a Word processor, preferably Libre Office but Microsoft Office is okay. You will also need the ability to read and save PDF documents.

All assignments will be electronic as will the grading. If you happen to need to print materials for the course, then you’ll need access to a printer and/or money for printing.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Audience Analysis (100 pts.)

This project covers how to informally and formally report on the primary and secondary audiences of a specialized and general website. This project helps you with critical analysis of audience and genre characteristics. The deliverable for this project is informational report describing and explaining the rhetorical strategies each site uses for their target and secondary audiences. [major assignment]

### Résumé & Cover Letter (100 pts. for each document/200 pts. total)

Using job boards in your profession, you will develop a résumé and cover letter for a specific job advertisement using non-template materials. This project prepares you for precision in technical documentation as well as document design. [major assignment]



### Instructions & Usability Testing (100 pts. for each document/200 pts. total)

You will develop step-by-step instructions for a target and secondary audience on how to complete a task. Additionally, you will perform usability testing of the instructions to ensure the instructions are clear and concise. This project will help prepare you for designing persuasive documentation. The deliverable for this project is one set of instructions and a memo outlining the usability testing. [major assignment]

### Process Description (100 pts. for each document/200 pts. total)

This project will help prepare you to develop materials related to describing and writing a process description of a procedure. You will need to demonstrate the difference between instructions and process in this assignment. Additionally, you will perform usability testing of the process description to ensure the instructions are clear, concise, with appropriate style and tone. The deliverable for this project is one process description and one informal report outlining the usability testing. [major assignment]

### Learning Reflection (100 pts. total)

During the final week of the course, you will write a 2-3 page alphabetic essay on what you've learned from the course. You will assess your own learning and also provide the grade for the learning reflection. The deliverable format for the essay is APA documentation with technical documentation principles embedded in the essay.

### Final Examination (100 pts. total)

During the finals of the course, you will complete a multiple-choice examination that reviews the course content.

### Activity Quizzes (10 pts. each x 10)

The design of this course is a “flipped classroom” or “experiential” learning where I am your guide or facilitator in your learning process. As the instructor of record, I will not prepare formal lectures on the assigned readings. Instead, you will participate in beginning of the class activity quiz, where you will answer five quiz related items about the reading, and then fill in comments on areas from the reading you'd like to discuss during the “lecture” time. I will use your comments to create on-demand lectures of what is of interest to you and/or the class.

### Activity Based Work (10 pts. each x 10)

Throughout the semester, there are activities to complete individually or in teams from the course textbook. These will be graded based on full completion of the activity. You may choose to opt out of one (1) of the activities with no penalty to your final course grade.

## GRADING

I expect you will track your grades over this fall semester course. This means at any given moment, you should know your course standing. If your performance drops below satisfactory levels, and you do not want to repeat this course or receive an unsatisfactory grade, you must seek guidance from student support services or me.

Additionally, I provide grading rubrics for all [major assignment] I grade so that you have opportunities to ask clarification questions about how I will assess your work before you submit your work to me. There may be a time when an area of growth presents that is not accounted for in the rubric. While I will not assess you for something that's not in the rubric, I may comment upon those areas of growth.

I will calculate your final course grade based on the following scale:

900 – 1,000 points =	A
800 – 899 points =	B
700 – 799 points =	C
600 – 699 points =	D
599 and below =	F

You'll note that the course has a total of 1,100 points. The extra "100" points are weighted. These are points to use in case you miss a quiz, an activity or perform below expectations on a major assignment. The final course grade is capped at 1,000 points.

For activities and quizzes, I will have these items graded and returned to you within one week. For all [major assignment] course projects, I will have these graded and returned to you in two weeks.

## course policies

### ATTENDANCE & TARDINESS

- Six unexcused absences, subsequent absences result in reduction of final course grade by 50 points for each additional absence
- Any tardiness (10 minutes or more) to class results in a recorded absence
- Excused absence only covers missing class, not items due during class

The University of Texas at Arlington does not have a university-wide attendance policy and leaves matters of attendance to the discretion of the instructor of record. Since this is a 16-week undergraduate level course with in-class workshops, quizzes, and projects, I expect you will attend every class. I do track attendance.

If you have an emergency, hospitalization, work-related scheduling conflict, home-based illness or psychological barrier to attending class, you have a bank of six unexcused absences for the semester with no questions asked. However, upon the seventh absence, which is the equivalent of missing two weeks and one day of scheduled class meetings, your final course grade will result in a 50-point deduction for each additional absence. For example, student "x" has a final course grade of 836 points and missed 8 classes; the final course grade for student "x" would be 736 points.

There are only two exceptions to this absence policy: any university excused absence (university authorized absence; military service; observance of religious holy days) and any catastrophic event (using more than the four unexcused absences), both to which we must

discuss by appointment or via office hours (not immediately before, after or during class time).

Additionally, an excused absence only covers missing class, not any items due during the excused absence, which means you'll need to submit work before, not after, the deadline.

Any lateness (tardy) of ten minutes or more to class will be recorded as an absence. So, please, for your sake and your peers, please don't be late to class.

## LATE WORK

- 24 hours in advance = auto extension | within 24 hours = maybe | late with no notice = I will not accept

I do not accept late work without prior communication. If you anticipate that you need an extension, you do need to notify me 24 hours in advance of the deadline via my university email address or in person. I will be happy to grant an extension if you do so. If you email me within 24 hours of the deadline, I will consider the extension request. I may or may not grant the extension; it depends on the circumstances. If you do not communicate that you need an extension, fail to meet a deadline, and attempt to submit work after the deadline, I will not accept your work. It's really simple: I am happy to help you, but please give me notice so we can negotiate an extension that helps you succeed.

If approved late work is submitted after grading, the turn around time for grading will be approximately one month.

## EMAIL

- Will respond MWF during office hours, and until 5pm on MW.

I make it a policy to respond to student emails within 24 hours from Monday to Friday. For this regular term, I will respond to student emails MWF during office hours and until 5pm on MW. If you send me an email outside of my email hours, please know that I will respond during the next time of email hours. Additionally, if you send an email a half hour/minutes before class begins, chances are I will not have time to read the email before class.

Due to FERPA and the nature of being a public employee, I do not respond to any emails that contain direct reference to student educational records, e.g., grades. If you do want to discuss your grade, please email me to request a meeting or just stop in during office hours.

Additionally, I only respond to student emails that use UTA's official email.

## TECH USE

- Yes, you can if you do so responsibly | Cords are safety concerns

I encourage the use of smartphones, texting, and social media use in our class, as long as you do so in a responsible, respectful, and non-distracting manner. However, if you are using these digital tools at the expense of holistically paying attention and engaging in the material, and the use affects your learning and work, we will talk privately about discontinuing usage during class. Additionally, please bring digital devices fully charged as plugging in devices with cords is a safety concern. I will ask you to [re]move any cords that are potential safety hazards to yourself and/or others.

## INCLUSIVITY

I support an inclusive learning environment where diversity and difference are respected. In turn, I expect you to respect differences and show resilience in understanding other perspectives, behaviors, practices, and beliefs that may be contrary to your own. If there are moments where inclusivity is not honored, we will discuss the event(s) either as a class and/or privately to learn from each other.

## EXTRA CREDIT AND MAKEUP WORK

Because the course grade is already weighted, I do not offer extra credit. I also do not offer makeup work.

## EXPECTATIONS

Beyond the time required to attend each class meeting, students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least an additional five (5) to ten (10) hours per week of their own time in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, preparing documents, etc.

university policies  
(from 2015-2016 university syllabus template)

## DROP POLICY

Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the

result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

## ADA ACT

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA). All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

## TITLE IX

The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to upholding U.S. Federal Law "Title IX" such that no member of the UT Arlington community shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. For more information, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).

## HONOR CODE

Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence. I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

## MAVMAIL

UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding



financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation.

Information about activating and using MavMail is available at

<http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

## SFS

At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

## EMERGENCY

Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

## STUDENT SUPPORT

UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

*As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course. I will give verbal, print, and electronic announcements/updates in class and to the course web spaces of any schedule adjustments in a timely manner.*

For this course, it is your responsibility to keep track of what's expected in class, and what we're working on next time and in the upcoming weeks. This means you need to review the course routinely, including multiple times a week.

## WEEK 1

FOUNDATIONS

### wed 1.20.16

Student introductions  
Pass out syllabus & course schedule  
Lecture: Overview of the course

#### *Next Time*

Read syllabus & course schedule to prepare for quiz

### fri 1.22.16

Quiz #1: Syllabus & course schedule  
Activity #1: Write about your relationship with business writing, & what you already know about the course learning outcomes

#### *Next Time*

Read: Chapter 1, p. 2-16 &  
Complete: Exercise #1 as an individual activity [have some kind of prepared notes] & be prepared to discuss in groups Monday

## WEEK 2

Ethics

### mon 1.25.16

Quiz #2: Chapter 1  
Lecture: Introduction to technical writing via student responses in quiz  
Activity #2: Share prepared notes in small groups

#### *Next Time*

Read: Chapter 2, p. 17-40

**weds 1.27.16**

Quiz #3: Chapter 2  
Lecture: Understanding ethical and legal considerations via student responses/quiz

*Next Time*

Read: Chapter 3, p. 41-56

**fri 1.29.16**

Lecture: UTA policy on plagiarism  
Demo: Microsoft Word tips  
Workshop: Microsoft Word

*Next Time*

Read: Chapter 5, p. 82-113

## WEEK 3

*Audience*

**mon 2.1.16**

Quiz #4: Chapter 5  
Lecture: Audience analysis & purpose via student responses/quiz

**wed 2.3.16**

Activity #3: In a 4-person team, begin exercise #4, p. 113

**fri 2.5.16**

Submit: Activity #3 via Blackboard (only one person per team submits)  
Review: Audience Analysis assignment

*Next Time*

Find: Two websites to review  
Begin: Reading and analyzing  
Read: Chapter 17, p. 446-465

## WEEK 4

*Informational Reports & Drafting*

**mon 2.8.16 [Online Class]**

Quiz #5: Chapter 17\* Complete quiz after reviewing online lecture  
Lecture: Writing informational reports (online)

Work: On preliminary writing of the audience analysis at home

**wed 2.10.16**

Review: Sample informational reports in small groups

Work: On preliminary writing of the audience analysis at home

**fri 2.12.16**

In-class writing for audience analysis

*Next Time*

Continue: Writing audience analysis

Read: Chapter 7, p. 146-167

Read: Chapter 11, p. 249-259

## WEEK 5

*Design & Drafting*

**mon 2.15.16**

Quiz #6: Chapter 7 & 11

Lecture: Document design via student responses/quiz

*Next Time*

Read: Chapter 11, p. 260-280

Continue: Writing of the audience analysis at home

**wed 2.17.16**

Review: Sample documents for design principles

In-class design time for audience analysis

Finish: Writing the audience analysis & bring 2 documents for peer review

**fri 2.19.16**

Peer review: Audience analysis

*Next Time*

Complete: Revisions of audience analysis from peer review

Submit: Final draft of audience analysis to Blackboard by 11am Monday

## WEEK 6

*Intro to Job Materials*

**mon 2.22.16**

Lecture: Recap audience analysis assignment & discuss writing with precision

*Next Time*

Read: Chapter 15, p. 386-418

Activity #4: Complete #1, p. 416 via a one page memo & submit to BlackBoard (see p. 372 for how to write a memo)

**wed 2.24.16**

Quiz #7: Chapter 15 (continued on next page)

Lecture: Job materials via student responses/quiz

**fri 2.26.16**

Explore: Sample job materials (résumé/cover letter) in small teams  
Review: Résumé & Job Materials Assignment

*Next Time*

Read: Chapter 9, p. 193-213

## WEEK 7

### *Job Materials*

**mon 2.29.16**

Discussion: Templates vs. no templates  
Workshop: Job materials/in-class designing & writing

Continue: Writing job materials at home

**wed 3.2.16**

Workshop: Job materials/in-class designing & writing

(Continue: Writing job materials at home

**fri 3.4.16**

Workshop: Job materials/in-class designing & writing

Continue: Writing job materials at home

*Next Time*

Have 4 first drafts of résumés & cover letters for peer & teacher review available  
Monday (the drafts for Estee to review need to be in print [non-electronic] form)

## WEEK 8

### *Peer Review of Job Materials*

**mon 3.7.16**

Lecture: Overview of peer review process for job materials  
Begin: Working on peer review

*Next Time*

Activity #5: Finish peer reviews and bring to class for peers

**wed 3.9.16**

Exchange: Peer review & begin revisions of materials

Continue: Working on revisions of materials



**fri 3.11.16**

Revision workshop

*Next Time*

Finish: Job materials & upload to Blackboard by Sun at 5pm

**[Week 9: University Spring Vacation March 14-March 19]**

## WEEK 10

*Intro to Instructions*

**mon 3.21.16**

Lecture: Recap previous assignment & overview next assignment

Demo: On the importance of clear and concise instructions

*Next Time*

Read: Part of chapter 20, p. 551-567

Read: Part of chapter 8, p. 171-179, 182-183

**wed 3.23.16**

Quiz #8: Parts of chapter 20 & chapter 8

Lecture: Instructions & persuasive communication via student responses in quiz

**fri 3.25.16**

Explore: Sample instructions from a variety of sources

Activity #6: Explore ineffective instructions in pairs & discuss how to make effective

*Next Time*

Decide: On the instructions you want to develop for this assignment

## WEEK 11

*Instructions*

**mon 3.28.16**

Demo: Estee will review how to develop instructions, how to write persuasively, and how to write with concision and clarity with small hands-on demo

*Next Time*

Read: Chapter 12, p. 295-310

**wed 3.30.16**

Lecture: Creating & labeling graphics

Activity #7: Brainstorming workshop for instructions (ideas, what to write about) & run ideas by Estee

**fri 4.1.16 [Last Day to Drop Class]**

In-class drafting of instructions

*Next Time*

Continue: Working on instructions at home (be near finished Monday)

## WEEK 12

*Instructions & Usability*

**mon 4.4.16**

Lecture: Designing usability testing

Review: Sample usability testing memos

*Next Time*

Design: A brief usability test for your set of instructions

**wed 4.6.16**

Workshop: Design usability test

Continue: Reviewing sample usability testing memos

*Next Time*

Activity #8: Bring instructions & usability test to class for in-class testing or arrange for out-of-class testing if needed

**fri 4.8.16 [Arrange for substitute]**

Estee may be in Houston for a conference/meeting

Conduct: Usability testing in-class

*Next Time*

Revise: Instructions from usability testing

Finish: Usability testing memo & submit final project via Blackboard by Monday at 11am

## WEEK 13

*Process Descriptions*

**mon 4.11.16**

Experience: Videos of process descriptions

Lecture: Differences between process descriptions & instructions

*Next Time*

Read: Part of chapter 20, p. 534-551

**wed 4.13.16**

Quiz #9: Part of chapter 20

Lecture: Process descriptions via student responses in quiz

**fri 4.15.16**

Activity #9: Review sample process descriptions & instructions in small groups

*Next Time*

Begin: Brainstorming ideas for the process description

## WEEK 14

*Process Description*

**mon 4.18.16**

Individual writing time of the process description

*Next Time*

Continue: Developing the process description

**wed 4.20.16**

Individual writing time of the process description

*Next Time*

Finish: First draft & develop usability testing protocols

**fri 4.22.16**

Individual writing time of the usability protocols

*Next Time*

Have process description & usability testing protocols ready for in-class usability testing

## WEEK 15

*Process Description*

**mon 4.25.16**

In-class usability testing

*Next Time*

Revision: Process description

**wed 4.27.16**

In-class writing of usability testing results

*Next Time*

Finish: Process description & usability testing & submit via Blackboard by Friday at 11am

**fri 4.29.16**

Lecture: Recap of process description (continued on next page)

*Next Time*

Read: PDF on learning reflections available via Blackboard

## WEEK 16

### *Learning Reflection*

**mon 5.2.16**

Quiz #10: Learning reflection PDF  
Begin: Writing learning reflection

Continue: Working on learning reflection essay

**wed 5.4.16**

Activity #10: Small group discussion of learning outcomes  
Continue: Working on learning reflection during class

*Next Time*

Finish: Learning reflection essay & submit via Blackboard by Friday at 11am

**fri 5.6.16**

Lecture: Overview of the course, discussion of final examination

## FINAL

### *Examination*

**wed 5.11.16**

11:00-1:30 final examination

Image credits:

*Figure 1.*

by Flickr user "Susanne Nilsson" - Flickr image stream: "infomastern."

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<https://www.flickr.com/photos/infomastern/14151710281/>

*Figure 2.*

by Bedford/St. Martin's

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