

English 2338-700: Technical Writing

The University of Texas at Arlington

Instructor: Dr. Yuejiao Zhang

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Office hours: Carlisle Hall 623, TR: 12:30-2:00 p.m., & by appointment

Course description:

This class is an introduction to the discourse conventions of technical communication. Students will become familiar with and aware of the major components of technical writing and the practices within the field. The class will provide students the opportunity to both analyze and practice the techniques they are studying, from analyzing website design and email conventions to writing résumés and instructions.

Required materials:

- Laura J. Gurak and John M. Lannon, *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace*, 2nd edition, Pearson (2013), ISBN: 978-0-205-24552-9
- MyTechCommLab online access (comes with the textbook if you buy it at the UTA bookstore); there is a link on the Blackboard site that allows you to access MTCL with your access code
- A usage handbook. Suggested handbook: Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, 7th edition, Bedford (2006), ISBN: 978-0-312-60143-0
- A UTA email address that you check **daily**

Course goals:

In this course, you will learn

- The difference between technical writing and essay writing
- What the types of documents produced in a business setting are
- To assess your audience's needs for a document or a presentation
- To design and produce documents that meet your intended audience's needs
- To design and deliver effective presentations
- To present technical information to a non-technical audience
- To structure documents for maximum clarity and readability

Your responsibilities:

Because learning is not a passive process, you must actively participate in this online course in order to do well in it. To this end, it is your responsibility to:

- Complete the readings, MyTechCommLab diagnostics and exercises, quizzes, discussions, and assignments on time; **no late work is accepted.**
- Check your UTA email daily. This is how your instructor and coach will get in touch with you, and you are responsible for reading and being familiar with the information in the emails we send.
- Contact your coach if you have a situation that affects your participation in class. You are responsible for keeping track of the due dates.

- Communicate your concerns in a timely manner. The time to talk about your grade is *before* the end of the course. Keep an eye on your overall grade (in the “Your Grade” column on Blackboard) so that you know where you stand.

Submission policy:

- See the syllabus and the content area for each unit for a list of your weekly tasks.
- You must complete all assignments and quizzes by the due dates. **No late work is accepted in this course except in the most unusual circumstances.** (Should you have an **emergency** and need to turn in work late, contact your coach. He or she *may* decide to allow you to submit your work late with a daily point deduction [10 points per day]).
- Each week, your work is due by 11: 59 pm on the Sunday of that week (with the exception of Week 5, which ends on a Friday).
- You must submit your assignments by uploading them on Blackboard. Neither your coach nor your instructor will accept work over email. Assignments incorrectly posted or submitted to the wrong location in Blackboard will not receive credit. As such, please be mindful that you are submitting your work to the correct location and that you have carefully reviewed the directions for submitting assignments on Blackboard.

Grade distribution:

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| MyTechCommLab exercises | 10% |
| Discussion posts | 15% |
| Quizzes | 10% |
| Assignments for Units 1, 2, 3, and the Handbook Test | 30% |
| Résumé (Unit 4 Assignment) | 20% |
| Written Instructions (Unit 5 Assignment) | 15% |

Scale for final grades:

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|-------------------|---|---|
| 90 to 100 percent | A | Excellent work that exceeds expectations |
| 80 to 89 percent | B | Good work that is above average |
| 70 to 79 percent | C | Competent work that exhibits skill mastery |
| 60 to 69 percent | D | Work that does not meet the requirements of an assignment |
| 59 to 59 percent | F | Work that misses the boat entirely |

At the end of the semester, we will round up your averages from the hundredths place, so that an 89.46 becomes an A.

Academic integrity:

It is the philosophy of the University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved with academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. According to the Regents' Rules and Regulations, Series 50101, Section 2.2, "Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts."

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's work or ideas as your own, **whether it's intentional or not**. Copying or paraphrasing passages from another writer's work without acknowledging that you've done so is plagiarism. Allowing another writer to write any part of your assignment is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. If your coach or instructor suspects you of plagiarism, your instructor will get in touch with you and share her suspicions with you. You will have the opportunity to accept or deny responsibility for the charges, and if you deny responsibility for the alleged plagiarism, you will have your case tried by the Office of Student Conduct. Whether you accept or deny responsibility, your instructor will file a report with the Office of Student Conduct. Should you accept responsibility for plagiarism or be found responsible by Student Conduct, **the academic penalty for plagiarism in this course is a zero on the assignment**. The Office of Student Conduct will implement further penalties (usually disciplinary probation).

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center, Room 411 in the Central Library, offers guidance to UT-Arlington students on writing assignments. Appointments are for 45 minutes. Students must register with the Writing Center before making appointments and should bring a printed copy of their assignment sheet, any instructor or peer comments, and their draft to the appointment. You may register and schedule appointments and find many other valuable resources and information online at <http://www.uta.edu/owl>.

Even as a Distance Education student, you may register and schedule appointments online at <http://uta.mywconline.com>. If you live outside the DFW area and cannot come to campus (or simply prefer not to), then choose an online-enabled session when you make your appointment.

Please note that Writing Center consultants assist students with writing development, from understanding an assignment and brainstorming ideas or revising an early draft, to polishing a final document. However, the Writing Center is not a document editing service; consultants will not identify or correct every grammar or spelling error, nor will they rewrite student assignments. They focus on improving writing skills and helping students become better editors of their own writing, which includes learning to identify and correct their own grammar, punctuation and editing errors.

In addition to one-on-one consultations, the Writing Center will offer grammar workshops periodically throughout the semester. During these workshops students will focus on identifying

and correcting one of the most common grammar errors and then will participate in a Consultant-led revising and editing session. For more information on these sessions, please see the Writing Center calendar at <http://www.uta.edu/owl>.

Students with disabilities:

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Your responsibility, if you have a disability, rests with informing me of your need for accommodation and providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. For information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations, please visit uta.edu/disability. You can also visit the Office for Students with Disabilities in Room 102 of University Hall or call them at 817-272-3364.

Student support services available:

The University of Texas at Arlington supports a variety of student success programs to help you connect with the University and achieve academic success. These programs include learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally-funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at 817-272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.

Drop policy:

If you choose to withdraw from the course for any reason, you must follow the University procedures for doing so. It is your responsibility to execute these procedures correctly and within the deadlines. I cannot and will not drop anyone for any reason from this course. However, I may strongly recommend that you drop if you are significantly behind on completing the required assignments. In her welcome letter, your coach will inform you of the semester's drop deadline, and your instructor will remind you of the deadline as it approaches.

Five-Week Technical Writing Schedule

Please note that you should complete each week's activities by 11:59 pm Central Time on the Sunday of that week, with the exception of Week 5, which ends on a Friday.

Unit 1, Week 1: Introduction to Technical Writing

1. Watch the Course Introduction Video (click on the tab on the left hand side of the Blackboard site).
2. Make sure you read the syllabus and contact your coach or instructor with any questions.
3. Read Chapters 1 and 2 of *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace*; you do not have to complete the Applications section at the end of the chapters, this week or any week.
4. Complete and contribute to this week's discussion on the main discussion board (click on the "Discussions" tab). This week and every week, you need to write a post and then comment on two other posts.
5. Take Quiz 1.
6. On MyTechCommLab (MTCL), complete four exercises for credit: Avoiding Plagiarism Tutorial (APA) Overview, Practice-Books (this exercise and the next two exercises help you practice APA citation), Practice-Periodicals, and Practice-Electronic Sources. **You can get to these exercises easily by clicking on "MyTechCommLab Student Calendar" from the MyTechCommLab area on Blackboard.**
7. Complete and submit the Unit 1 Assignment. Ask your coach if you have any questions about submission.

You should complete all of these activities by 11:59 pm on the Sunday of Week 1.

Unit 2, Week 2: Research, Audience, and Ethics

1. Read Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace*; remember, you don't have to complete the Applications section at the end of the chapters.
2. Complete and contribute to this week's discussion on the main discussion board (click on the "Discussions" tab). This week and every week, you need to write a post and then comment on two other posts.
3. Take Quiz 2.
4. Take the Grammar/APA Exam on Blackboard; you may use your handbook to take the test.
5. On MTCL, take Grammar Self-Assessment Diagnostic 1 for credit.
6. Complete and submit the Unit 2 Assignment: Research, Email, and Ethics. (You'll need to jump ahead a little in the textbook and read pp. 367-71 for this assignment.). Ask your coach if you have any questions about submission.

You should complete all of these activities by 11:59 pm on the Sunday of Week 2.

Unit 3, Week 3: Writing, Visuals, and Document Appearance

1. Read Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 of *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace*; you don't have to do the exercises in Chapter 7, but you may.

2. Complete and contribute to this week's discussion on the main discussion board (click on the "Discussions" tab). This week and every week, you need to write a post and then comment on two other posts.
3. Take Quiz 3.
4. On MTCL, complete the Visual Rhetoric tutorial (it has five parts: Elements of Visual Rhetoric, Need, Purpose, Audience, and Context) and complete at least two exercises recommended by the grammar diagnostic you took last week for credit.
5. Complete and submit the Unit 3 Assignment: Design. Ask your coach if you have any questions about submission.

You should complete all of these activities by 11:59 pm on the Sunday of Week 3.

Unit 4, Week 4: Varieties of Documents

1. Read Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 of *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace*; you do not need to complete the "Let's Get Started" sections unless you want to.
2. Complete and contribute to this week's discussion on the main discussion board (click on the "Discussions" tab). This week and every week, you need to write a post and then comment on two other posts.
3. Take Quiz 4.
4. On MTCL, complete Grammar Self-Assessment Diagnostic 2 for credit.
5. Complete and submit the Unit 4 Assignment: The Résumé. Ask your coach if you have any questions about submission.

You should complete all of these activities by 11:59 pm on the Sunday of Week 4.

Unit 5, Week 5: Digital Media, Netiquette, and Oral Presentations

1. Read Chapters 19, 20, and 22 of *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace*.
2. Complete and contribute to this week's discussion on the main discussion board (click on the "Discussions" tab). This week and every week, you need to write a post and then comment on two other posts.
3. Take Quiz 5.
4. On MTCL, complete at least two exercises recommended by the grammar diagnostic you took last week for credit.
5. Complete and submit your final assignment, the Written Instructions project. Ask your coach if you have any questions about submission.

*You should complete all of these activities by the last day of the course, which is a **Friday**.*