

English 2311: Introduction to Technical Writing

Instructor: Ms. Akshata Balghare

Email: akshata.balghare@ttu.edu

Office: English and Philosophy #459

Office Hours: M 10am-1pm

Office Phone: 806.742.2501

Technical writing is kind of a misnomer for what we will do in this class. Writing is certainly involved; however so is utilizing design, image, media, and other communication skills. We will learn to communicate effectively by using strategies closely linked to the workplace. We will learn some new terms and will use familiar terms in new ways but, most importantly, we will think about writing and communication differently from how you may have considered them in the past. We will learn to view technical writing as a means for *solving communication problems*. We will use writing and documents to “get work done,” whatever your field or discipline.

Students completing ENGL 2311 successfully should be able to do the following:

- Analyze the audience, purpose, and context of technical communication projects, including cultural and ethical considerations
- Create technical documents of varied genres to solve practical problems
- Write effective technical prose
- Create documents and graphics using principles of effective information design
- Collaborate on technical communication projects
- Critically evaluate and choose technologies and tools that are appropriate for technical communication projects.

Methods of Assessment

Your grade will be a result of formal and informal assessments.

Formal methods of assessment

You will complete four major units and produce a variety of technical documents that solve problems and improve situations through communication. Your work will be evaluated for appropriate rhetorical responses to particular audiences, purposes, and situations. At least one technical document you produce will focus on communicating with intercultural audiences, and you will complete at least two collaborative assignments that require you to manage a communication project with a team of other students. Your technical documents will be evaluated for correctness and appropriate technical style as well as successful visual communication, including usability, typographic clarity, and effective graphics.

Informal methods of assessment

You will complete in-class and homework assignments, including quizzes. You may complete some of these activities as practice or as preparation for formal assignments. These activities may include peer-review; usability testing; style, editing, and grammar exercises; and analyses of technical graphics and typography. You may also complete exercises and hold discussions about ethical dilemmas in workplace writing. You may complete exercises and hold discussions about different approaches to communication between cultures, such as localization and globalization.

Required Textbook and Materials

1. Baehr, C. (2019). *The Agile communicator: Principles and practices in technical communication* (3rd ed.). Dubuque, Iowa. ISBN: 9781524979232.
 - a. \$63 (e-book rental from KH at www.kendallhunt.com/agile_communicator) and \$94 (e-book rental at TTU Bookstore)
 - b. \$126 for new print copies
2. Microsoft Office - available at the [Advanced Technology and Learning Center \(ATLC\)](#)
3. Adobe Acrobat Reader- available at the [Advanced Technology and Learning Center \(ATLC\)](#)
4. External storage device such as a flash drive, cloud storage, etc.
5. TTU email account and access to TTU Blackboard

Grading Procedures

For information on grading procedures, please see [the English Department's Grading Procedures memo](#).

- **Assignments** will be graded with the English 2311 Grading Rubric to grade all major assignments out of a 100 scale.
- **Participation** (in-class activities and homework) will be graded as credit or no credit. If you are in attendance, have your work completed on time, behave professionally, and follow instructions, you will receive credit. If you have not followed one of the criteria above, you will not receive credit.
- **A passing grade** for the course (C or above) is only possible if all major assignments are completed.
- **Late Work** is only accepted for major assignments and will only be accepted up to 48 hours after the original deadline, with a penalty of one letter grade. Homework, in-class participation assignments, and quizzes will not be accepted late.
- **Group Work** is required throughout the term for some in-class exercises and at least two of the major assignments. **Because your input is essential to the success of the entire group, your attendance is essential.** Not participating in group activities both in and out of class meetings may lead to a lowered grade for the specific assignment.

Revising Assignments

Most major assignments may be revised and resubmitted. In these instances, your initial grade(s) may be increased based on quality of revision. I will not lower grades for revised assignments. No assignment may be formally revised more than once, and all revisions must be submitted within 14 calendar days after receipt of initial grade. No revisions are possible on the final reflective assignments or oral presentations.

To submit a revised assignment:

- Review feedback left on BlackBoard by the instructor
- (Optional) E-mail, attend office hours, or set up an appointment with the instructor if there are any questions or concerns on feedback.
- Complete the **Revision Request Form** located on BlackBoard. In the event of group assignments, make sure all members of the team sign off on revisions before they are submitted
- **E-mail** me the Revision Request Form and revised assignment
- Revised grades will be e-mailed to members of the team as well as posted on BlackBoard

Assignment Distribution

The following table outlines the general structure of the class, the various required major assignments, and the weight each will play in determining your course grade.

| Unit | Major Assignments* | Group or Individual | Weight |
|--|---|---------------------|---|
| Communication Problem #1: Creating a Professional Profile | Two professional profile documents (print resume; electronic resume; cover letter; online professional profile, such as LinkedIn; interview; thank you letter, etc.) | Individual | 100 pts. Total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 pts. • 10 pts. • 40 pts. 40 pts. |
| Communication Problem #2: Ethically redesigning a visual for a global audience | Visual redesign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design concept • Information architecture • Redesign | Individual | 100 pts. Total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 pts. • 25 pts. • 50 pts. |
| Communication Problem #3: Working as a team to solve a complex communication problem | Short project proposal , outlining case solution/proposed deliverable | Group | 100 pts. |
| | Progress reports (one each week for four weeks) | Group | 100 pts. total (20-25 pts. each) |
| | Oral presentation | Group | 150 pts. |
| | Final deliverable (deliverable may vary by groups) | Group | 200 pts. |
| Communication Problem #4: Assessing your work and revising your resume | Final reflection (same as before) and resume revision | Individual | 150 pts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 pts. (reflection) • 50 pts. (revision) |
| Participation/ In-class work | | Individual | 100 pts. |
| TOTAL | | | 1000 pts. |

*Information about major assignments (listed in Communication Problems 1-4) and participation criteria is available on Blackboard under its respected unit content folder.

Course and University Policies

Please familiarize yourself with the following policies set by the university and the English Department.

Always backup your electronic files. Best practice is to store digital files in at least two locations. Develop a strategy for consistently and frequently backing up your digital files, whether that is through a cloud service like Dropbox or Microsoft OneDrive, a flash drive, or another mechanism. A lost file or a crashed computer is not an excuse for late work in this class.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and/or misrepresenting facts (see [Academic Integrity](#)). Should the instructor discover evidence that a student has engaged in Academic Dishonesty, [according to OP 34.12](#), the instructor will refer the case in question to the Office of Student Conduct where the case will be reviewed and disciplinary action will be determined. For the first offence, the instructor will recommend failure of the assignment with no possibility of revision or resubmission. For the second offense, the instructor will recommend failure of the course. Please review [Academic Integrity: Student Handbook](#) and the [Department of English Ethics Policy](#) for more information.

Accommodations

University policy states: Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note: instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact [Student Disability Services](#) in West Hall or call 806-742-2405.

Attendance Policy

Students may be absent for three class meetings without penalty. After your third absence, your final grade will be penalized half a letter grade (5%) for each absence. It is up to my discretion whether an absence is excused or unexcused except in the observance of religious events (OP 34.19) or university business or university-sponsored trips (OP 34.04). Full text of these policies are available on the course's BlackBoard under "University Policies."

If you have a circumstance, such as an extended illness, which prevents you from attending class regularly, you must provide documentation, are encouraged to discuss the circumstance with the instructor and the Dean of Students' office, and consider taking an incomplete in the course. The five unexcused absences can cover illness, family illness, out of town trips, appointments, family situations, etc. But five absences are all you get; make sure to use them wisely.

You cannot make up participation assignments for missing class unless you have a university-sanctioned excused absence. **If you are more than 15 minutes late for class, you will be marked absent.** For every three tardies, you will receive one absence.

Class Calendar

The class calendar is available on Blackboard and is the “official” calendar. Scheduled reading and assignment due dates may shift over the course of the semester; therefore, you should check the calendar often for updates. Reading assignments marked as “AC” are from the course textbook. All other readings will be made available on Blackboard.

E-mail Correspondence

Whenever possible, please meet with me during office hours to discuss your questions and class work. I will answer questions via e-mail, usually within 48 hours. I will only respond to e-mails Monday through Friday before 5:00 pm. E-mails received Friday evening through Sunday and student holidays will be answered on the next working business day. In the subject line of any e-mails, please include “2311,” as I prioritize answering student e-mail.

Electronic Devices in the Classroom

Laptops, tablets, smart phones, etc., can be incredibly useful for this class, and I encourage you to utilize them during our class sessions. Please use these devices in a professional and respectful manner. Accepting phone calls, texting, snapchatting, checking social media, etc., in class shows a lack of professionalism that would be frowned upon in the workplace. *Think of these items as professional tools and use them respectfully.* As a matter of respect to your peers, please make sure all devices are silent. **Wearing headphones/headsets will not be allowed inside the classroom.**

Classroom Civility

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom may result in a directive to leave class. Please review the English Department’s [Ethics in English: A Guide for Students](#).

LGBTQIA Support

I identify as an ally to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) community, and I am available to listen and support you in an affirming manner. I can assist in connecting you with resources on campus to address problems you may face pertaining to sexual orientation and/or gender identity that could interfere with your success at Texas Tech. Please note that additional resources are available through the Office of LGBTQIA within the Center for Campus Life, Student Union Building Room 201, www.lgbtqia.ttu.edu, 806.742.5433.

TTU Resources for Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Violence

Texas Tech University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from gender and/or sex discrimination of any kind. Sexual assault, discrimination, harassment, and other Title IX violations are not tolerated by the University. Report any incidents to the *Office for Student Rights & Resolution*, (806)-742-SAFE (7233) or file a report online at titleix.ttu.edu/students. Faculty and staff members at TTU are committed to connecting you to resources on campus. Some of these available resources are:

- **TTU Student Counseling Center**, 806-742-3674, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/>. (*Provides confidential support on campus*).

- **TTU Student Counseling Center 24-hour Helpline**, 806-742-5555 (*Assists students who are experiencing a mental health or interpersonal violence crisis. If you call the helpline, you will speak with a mental health counselor*).
- **Voice of Hope Lubbock Rape Crisis Center**, 806-763-7273, www.voiceofhopelubbock.org (24-hour hotline that provides support for survivors of sexual violence).
- **The Risk, Intervention, Safety and Education (RISE) Office**, 806-742-2110, www.rise.ttu.edu (*Provides a range of resources and support options focused on prevention education and student wellness*).
- **Texas Tech Police Department**, 806-742-3931, <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/ttpd/> (*To report criminal activity that occurs on or near Texas Tech campus*).

2311 Rubric

A = 90-100%; B = 80-89%; C = 70-79%; D = 60-69%; F = 59% or less

| Category | Excellent | Good | Average | Weak | Failing |
|------------------|--|--|--|---|---|
| Audience | 40 points* Excellent match of document to audience needs An ethical approach to the communication situation | 32 points Adequate match of document to audience needs An ethical approach to the communication situation | 24 points Some mismatches of document to audience needs An ethical approach to the communication situation | 16 points Significant mismatches of document to audience needs Questionable ethics | 8 points Failure to match audience needs Unethical aspects |
| Design | 20 points Excellent match of design elements to document genre Effective use of design principles such as repetition, alignment, contrast, and proximity Clear, readable typography Excellent and ethical use of graphics | 16 points Good match of design elements to document genre Good use of design principles Clear, readable typography Good and ethical use of graphics | 12 points Adequate match of design elements to document genre Implementation of design principles in most areas A few problems with typography Adequate and ethical use of graphics | 8 points Poor match of design elements to document genre Poor implementation of design principles Significant problems with typography Poor use of graphics or graphics with questionable ethics | 4 points Failure to match design elements to document genre Lack of implementation of design principles Problems with typography that defeat usability Lack of required graphics or unethical graphics |
| Structure | 20 points Follows structural conventions for the genre | 16 points Follows structural conventions for the genre | 12 points Follows structural conventions for the genre | 8 points Fails to follow some structural conventions for the genre | 4 points Fails to follow significant structural conventions for the genre |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| | <p>Uses clear headings and transitions</p> <p>Arranges parts logically</p> <p>States the purpose clearly</p> | <p>Uses mostly clear headings and transitions</p> <p>Arranges parts logically</p> <p>States the purpose mostly clearly</p> | <p>Uses a few unclear headings and transitions</p> <p>Includes a few minor illogical arrangements</p> <p>States the purpose, but not clearly</p> | <p>Uses ambiguous or non-descriptive headings and transitions</p> <p>Includes significant illogical arrangements that cause difficulty in reading</p> <p>States the purpose in a way that confuses the reader</p> | <p>Fails to use headings and transitions successfully</p> <p>Arranges parts illogically</p> <p>Does not state the purpose</p> |
| Style & Editing | <p>10 points</p> <p>Clear and succinct prose</p> <p>Excellent matching of level of formality and technicality to audience</p> <p>Gender- and culture-appropriate language</p> <p>No grammatical, mechanical, or typographical errors</p> <p>Errors do not affect usability</p> | <p>8 points</p> <p>Almost always clear and succinct prose</p> <p>Good matching of level of formality and technicality to audience</p> <p>Gender- and culture-appropriate language</p> <p>1-3 grammatical, mechanical, or typographical errors</p> <p>Errors mildly affect usability</p> | <p>6 points</p> <p>Somewhat unclear or wordy prose</p> <p>Mostly good matching of level of formality and technicality to audience</p> <p>Gender- and culture-appropriate language</p> <p>4-5 grammatical, mechanical, or typographical errors</p> <p>Errors affect usability</p> | <p>4 points</p> <p>Significantly unclear or wordy prose</p> <p>Clear mismatches of level of formality and technicality to audience</p> <p>Some problems with sexist or racist language</p> <p>6-7 grammatical, mechanical, or typographical errors</p> <p>Errors distract or unintentionally amuse users</p> | <p>3 or 2 points</p> <p>Unclear and wordy prose throughout</p> <p>Extensive mismatches of level of formality and technicality to audience</p> <p>Significant problems with sexist or racist language</p> <p>8 or more grammatical, mechanical, or typographical errors</p> <p>Errors make the document fail in its goals</p> |

| Assignment Completion | 10 points | 8 points | 6 points | 4 points | 2 points |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
| | Fulfills assignment precisely and fully | Fulfills assignment description | Fulfills assignment description | Does not adequately fulfill assignment | Does not fulfill the assignment |
| | Includes all parts of the assignment | Includes all parts of the assignment | Missing one or more minor parts of the assignment | Missing a significant part of the assignment | Missing multiple significant parts of the assignment |
| | Complete and appropriate citation of sources | Complete and appropriate citation of sources | Incomplete or inappropriate citation of sources | Incomplete or inappropriate citation of sources | Incomplete or inappropriate citation of sources |

* Points depend on the weight for each individual assignment. The first score is for a 150-point rubric and the second is for a 100-point rubric.

Significantly poor performance in any one or more of these areas can merit a further lowering of the entire grade for the assignment.

Class Calendar

This class schedule provides an overview of course topics, readings, and due dates for major course assignments. General due dates are as follows:

- Reading assignments are due before class begins on the day designated. Readings designated “AC” are from the course textbook. All other readings will be available via Blackboard.
- **Bolded** assignments represent major assignment due dates. Major assignments are due in Blackboard or via email as designated in final column of schedule.
- *Italicized* assignments represent work that needs to be posted blackboard before class begins.
- Regular font assignments represent work that needs to be produced for class discussions/activities.

This schedule is subject to change and **the official class calendar will be the calendar on Blackboard** (which will be updated throughout the term).

| Week | Date | Date/Class topic | Required reading (before class) | Assignments due |
|---------------|------|--|--|--|
| Week 1 | 6/4 | Understanding class requirements. Becoming an agile communicator and solving communication problems | | |
| | 6/5 | Introduce CP1: Creating a professional profile, managing and planning a communication project | AC Chapter 1: Introduction to agile communication and workplace processes; syllabus | Bring questions about syllabus and schedule |
| | 6/6 | Managing and planning a communication project | AC Chapter 16: Professional profiles and job search materials | Bring a write-up with list of things you might include in a resume or job profile based on your work experience and education. |
| | 6/7 | Managing and planning a communication project | Process in technical communication: Ch. 2 of book <i>Technical communication: a practical approach</i> , Pfieffer & Adkins (reading on BlackBoard) | Bring questions about CP#1 |
| Week 2 | 6/10 | Managing and planning a communication project | AC Chapter 5: Conducting research | <i>CP#1 document plans due to Blackboard by midnight</i> |
| | 6/11 | Managing and planning a communication | AC Chapter 3: Document planning and genres | |

| | | | | |
|---------------|------|--|---|--|
| | | project; wrapping up CP1 | | |
| | 6/12 | Communicating ethically and knowledgeably: Using research to learn about global audiences; and introducing CP2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read this webpage: http://techcomm.wikidot.com/chapter:1-ethics-and-rhetoric-cultural-considerations Read St. Amant's "When culture and rhetoric contrast" article (reading on BlackBoard) | |
| | 6/13 | Communicating ethically: designing visual information | AC Chapter 9: Designing visual information | Bring an example of design/infographic/video that you might want to change or improve (group task) |
| | 6/14 | Analyzing legacy document and planning CP#2 project | AC Chapter 12: Instructional documents | Final draft of CP#1 documents due to Blackboard by midnight as a PDF or as a link in the "submission text" textbox. |
| Week 3 | 6/17 | CP#2 workshop and peer review session | | <i>Document plan and paper prototype of CP#2 due by end of day to BlackBoard</i> |
| | 6/18 | CP#2 workshop if needed; CP#2 Project Debriefing (Process Maturity)/Introduction to Communication Problem CP#3 and sample case study | | |
| | 6/19 | Team development and project planning/case study selection | AC Chapter 2: Project planning and User analysis Chapter 4: Managing teams and improving processes | Final draft of CP#2 due in Blackboard by midnight as a PDF |
| | 6/20 | Conducting project research and determining your CP#3 communication solution | Read through case study files on BlackBoard | |
| | 6/21 | CP#3 proposal workshop: benchmarking research and proposal planning | AC Chapter 14: Proposals | <i>Progress report #1: Email</i> |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|------|---|--|--|
| Week 4 | 6/24 | CP 3: Workshopping solution | | <i>Progress Report #2: GANTT chart (due in class)</i> |
| | 6/25 | CP 3: Workshopping Solution | AC Chapter 11: Status and progress reports | |
| | 6/26 | CP 3: Workshopping Solution | | Short project proposal due to Blackboard by midnight as a PDF |
| | 6/27 | CP 3: Workshopping Solution | | <i>Progress Report #3: Voicemail</i> |
| | 6/28 | CP 3: Presenting your communication problem & presentation workshop | AC Chapter 17: Presentations | <i>Progress Report #4: in-class round table (in class)</i> |
| Week 5 | 7/1 | CP 3: Class presentations | | CP#3 oral presentation due |
| | 7/2 | CP 4: Reflecting on your work | | CP #3 Final deliverable due to Blackboard by midnight as a PDF, link, or otherwise appropriate file |
| | 7/3 | | Work Day | |
| | 7/4 | Extended office hours | Work Day | |
| Finals Week | 7/8 | No class meeting | Office hours by appointment | CP4 and all remaining revisions due to BlackBoard before end of day (11:59pm) |

Important Dates

Last day to drop a course without academic penalty: June 7

Last day to drop a course with an academic penalty: June 24

Final Note

I expect students to be proactive in their learning for this class—this means coming to class prepared, being willing to ask questions, and contacting me as soon as there's any concerns or obstacles with either the course content or academic performance. I am always willing to help students with moving forward in the course. I look forward to working with you all this semester!