English 297: Introduction to Professional Writing
Fall 2015

Monday and Wednesday, 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m., Tawes 0224

Instructor: Dr. Scott Wible
Email: swible@umd.edu

Tip for effective email use:
(1) Begin the subject line with “ENGL 297”
(2) Complete the subject line with a concise phrase describing your question or concern.

Office: 1220C Tawes Hall
Office Phone: 301-405-3760
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Additional physical and virtual office hours by appointment (skyp: scottwible)

Course Description
This class introduces you to the rhetorical principles and professional practices of professional writing, particularly the research, writing, communication, analytical, and technological skills you’ll need to succeed within the Professional Writing minor and in your professional and technical communication careers after graduation. You will also learn how core concepts such as culture, rhetoric, and technology relate to the work of professional writing, and you will begin to use and apply this knowledge as you begin to compose the kinds of documents; analyze and manipulate the design principles and rhetorical moves; and experiment with the digital tools, research skills, and writing strategies that mark effective professional writing practice in today’s information economy. Finally, you will develop the self-reflection, visual design, and digital composing skills needed to publish a writing portfolio that showcases your professional writing competencies and projects your professional writing identity.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students should be able to do the following:

• Understand how various organizations and industries define professional writing.
• Discuss what kinds of roles and what types of activities professional writers perform within various organizations and industries.
• Discuss how core concepts such as culture and technology relate to the work of professional writing
• Summarize the kinds of documents; rhetoric and design principles; and digital tools, research skills, and writing strategies that professional writers should be familiar with.
• Identify and analyze patterns in one’s own writing practice and in the writing and communication practices of organizations or communities in which one works.
• Use problem-solving methods from the fields of professional writing studies and rhetorical studies to invent or redesign texts and communication tools and to manage individual and collaborative writing projects.
• Design and compose a writing portfolio that showcases the student’s professional writing competencies and projects a distinct professional writing identity.
Course Texts

Social Justice Statement
The University of Maryland is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Accessibility Statement
The University of Maryland is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the university’s programs or services, contact the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) as soon as possible. To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with DSS. The DSS works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission. For further information about services for students with disabilities, please contact the DSS.

Office of Disability Support Services
0106 Shoemaker Building
301-314-7682
dissup@umd.edu
http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/

I assume that all of us learn in different ways, and that the organization of any course will accommodate each student differently. For example, you may prefer to process information by speaking and listening, so that some of the written handouts I provide may be difficult to absorb. Please talk to me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them. If you do not have a documented disability, remember that other support services, including the Writing Center and the Learning Assistance Services Center (http://www.counseling.umd.edu/LAS/), are available to all students.
Grades
When grading each of your assignments, I will ask one overriding question: “Does this document do its job successfully?” The “job,” or purpose, of each document will be explained on the individual assignment descriptions that appear later in this syllabus, and we will spend ample time in class discussing how you can create a rhetorically successful text for each assignment. I will use the following criteria to evaluate your major writing projects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Exemplary work. The text demonstrates originality, initiative, and rhetorical skill. The content is mature, thorough, and well-suited for the audience; the style is clear, accurate, and forceful; the information is well-organized and formatted so that it is accessible and attractive; genre conventions are effectively used; mechanics and grammar are correct. The text is well-edited, well-written, well-argued, and well-documented and requires no additional revisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good work. The text generally succeeds in meeting its goals in terms of audience, purpose, and rhetorical skill without the need for further major revisions. The text may need some minor improvements in content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Satisfactory work. The text is adequate in all respects, but requires some substantial revisions of content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics; it may require further work in more than one area. For instance, central ideas may generally be apparent, but may often lack adequate explanations, rhetorical analysis, or documentation necessary for different audiences and purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory work. The text generally requires extensive revisions of content, presentation, writing style, and/or mechanics. The writer has encountered significant problems meeting goals of audience, purpose, and acquiring command of rhetorical principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failing work. The text does not have enough information, does something other than is appropriate for a given situation, or contains major and pervasive problems in terms of content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics that interfere with meaning. A failing grade is also assigned to plagiarized work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your final grade will be determined by the grades you receive on written and in-class assignments, according to the following weighting:

1. Weekly Reading Responses/Discussion Board Posts (20% of final grade)
2. Exploratory Essay (5%)
3. Team Charter (2.5%)
4. Team Schedule (2.5%)
5. Letter of Inquiry (5%)
6. Proposal for the Ethnographic Research Project (15%)
7. Ethnography of a Professional Writer (30%)
8. Annotated Research E-Portfolio, with Reflective Essay (15%)
9. Participation (5%)
I will use the following grading scale to calculate your grade for each assignment and the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attendance**

You are expected to attend class every day, and you should also have the *Solving Problems in Technical Communication* book (or notes on the week’s assigned reading) with you. An occasional absence is perhaps understandable, but habitual absence is inexcusable. *For any unexcused absence after three, you will receive an F for “Class Participation.”*

I will follow the University of Maryland Faculty Senate’s policy on “excused absences” such that legitimate reasons for missing a class include regularly scheduled, University-approved curricular and extracurricular activities; medical illness; and religious observances.

**Missing Class Due to Illness**

Regular attendance and participation in this class is the best way to grasp the concepts and principles being discussed. However, in the event that you must miss a class due to an illness, the policy in this class is as follows:

- For every medically necessary absence from class, you should make a reasonable effort to notify me in advance of the class. When returning to class, bring a note identifying the date of and reason for your absence and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate.
- If you are absent more than 2 times for the same illness, upon returning to class, bring documentation signed by a health care professional. Please note that this documentation should not disclose any details of your illness; it should only note that your illness prevented you from participating in class on the days noted.

**Requirements**

You will be expected to

- attend all class meetings, prepared for work (see “Attendance” below);
- participate in class discussions;
- complete both in-class and out-of-class writing exercises;
- participate in all draft workshops;
- draft, write, and revise each course writing project;
- submit all work on time, on the hour/day it is due (see “Promptness” below).

*Please note:* Passing the course requires timely completion of all of the assignments, long and short, in-class and out-of-class.

**Writing Project Standards**

In this course, I will hold you to the professional standards that prevail both throughout the university and within the field of science and science communication.

*Promptness.* In this course, as in the working world, you must turn in your work on time. All major writing projects, reflective writing pieces, and homework activities must be submitted by the beginning of class on their respective due dates. Unless you have made arrangements
with me in advance, major writing projects turned in late will lead to the grade for that assignment being lowered one full letter grade (e.g., A becomes a B, B becomes a C, and so on).

*Development.* In all the writing you do for this course, strive to compose “substantive” writing. You should make your argument and your purpose clear to readers and, where appropriate, provide convincing evidence, concrete details, and relevant examples.

*Rhetorical Strategy.* Throughout this course, you will be learning various rhetorical theories and techniques for persuading your audiences, from composing effective *logos, ethos*, and *pathos* appeals to creating a specific sentence-level style and tone. Your formal writing projects should reflect your efforts to apply these theories through your planning, drafting, and revising process.

*Appearance.* All work should be neatly prepared on a computer using spacing and design techniques that are conventional for the genre. Whether it is a essay, proposal, wiki entry, electronic portfolio, or email, your communication should exhibit appropriate format.

*Grammar, Spelling, Proofreading.* At work, even a single error in spelling, grammar, or proofreading can jeopardize the effectiveness of some communications. Grading will reflect the seriousness with which these matters are frequently viewed in the working world. If you would like special assistance with these skills, I can recommend sources for extra help.

**Expectations**
In addition to the requirements outlined above, you are expected to work until the class period has ended; to complete all reading and writing assignments on time; to help your classmates learn by your participation in class discussions and group activities; to spend at least six hours per week out of class for research, writing, and class preparation; and to be courteous and considerate.

**Conferences**
Meet with me when you have questions about an assignment, when you would like to try out some ideas before a document is due, when you have questions about a comment, or when you want to know where you stand in the course. You should also see me to get help with particular writing-related problems or to resolve differences about grades. Finally, I am open to your suggestions for improving the course, so please discuss with me your ideas about how the course is going. If you cannot make my scheduled office hours and would like to meet with me, we can work together to find a convenient time for conferencing.
Undergraduate Writing Center
Please consider taking your ideas and your written work to the Writing Center, where trained peer tutors will consult with writers about any piece of writing at any stage of the writing process. The Writing Center is located in 1205 Tawes Hall. You can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in three different ways:

- **Phone**: 301.405.3785
- **Email**: writadmin@umd.edu
- **Scheduling Website**: http://rich65.com/umd/

For more information about Writing Center programs as well as for materials to help you negotiate various stages of the writing process, visit the center’s website: <http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter>.

Academic Integrity
The University of Maryland defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity; respect other students’ dignity, rights, and property; and help to create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. For university procedures that I intend to follow when addressing academic dishonesty cases, please consult the University of Maryland’s Student Honor Council webpage: <http://www.shc.umd.edu/SHC/Default.aspx>.

Code of Academic Integrity and the Honor Pledge
The University of Maryland is one of a small number of universities with a student-administered “Code of Academic Integrity and Honor Pledge” <http://www.orientation.umd.edu/VirtualFolder/academicintegrity.pdf>. The code prohibits you from cheating, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without permission of both instructors, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures.

Following University Senate recommendations, I ask you to write the following signed statement on each major writing portfolio you submit for this course:

> “I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

You may choose not to write the pledge, but in such an event, I will want to discuss with you your reasons for declining. Please note that compliance with the Code is administered by the University of Maryland Student Honor Council, which strives to promote a “community of trust” on the College Park campus.
Assignment Descriptions

Your major research project for this semester will involve your detailed, “in-the-field” study of a professional writer or a professional in your field who does a significant amount of writing and communication in his or her job. Ideally, this professional will be someone who works at UMD or in the surrounding College Park community or Washington metropolitan area. The writing assignments described below are designed and sequenced to move you through the process of deepening your understanding of professional writing practices; exploring possible research topics; contacting a research subject; defining your research questions and data collection methods; setting and maintaining a research and writing schedule; delivering an ethnographic report that describes and analyzes this professional writer at work; and reflecting on the process of reading, researching, and writing that you used to produce this report.

List of the Major Writing Assignments

1. Weekly Reading Responses/Discussion Board Posts (20% of final grade)
2. Exploratory Essay (5%)
3. Team Charter (2.5%)
4. Team Schedule (2.5%)
5. Letter of Inquiry (5%)
6. Proposal for the Ethnographic Research Project (15%)
7. Ethnography of a Professional Writer (30%)
8. Annotated Research E-Portfolio, with Reflective Essay (15%)
9. Participation (5%)

1. Weekly Reading Responses/Discussion Board Posts (20%)
Each week, you will compose two entries for our online class discussion board in Canvas: (1) A 250-word response to the following questions about that week’s reading(s) in Solving Problems in Technical Communication. Post your response to the discussion thread that I have created for that particular week on our course Canvas page. (2) A 100-word post that either responds to one of your classmate’s posts or builds on our in-class discussion from the previous class meeting. All posts are due by 2 p.m. on the assigned date (see course schedule). The aim of these online discussions will be to deepen our thinking about theories and methods of professional writing, both in terms of how you can put them to use in your own academic and professional lives and how you can use them as theoretical lenses for analyzing the professional writing practices that you examine in your ethnography project.

Week 1: Conduct an Internet search for technical writing blogs. Choose a blog post or article that interests you and discuss its contents with your classmates. How might the information you gathered from the article help you develop professionally?

Week 2: Document a day in your life as a writer, using a visual format like a flowchart that allows you to show the flow or sequence of actions. Then, write a 250-word essay that analyzes your visualization, considering in particular any or all of these questions: What parts of this flow or sequence do you see as constituting a successful pattern? What aspects would you like to repeat each time you write? What aspects would you
recommend to others, and why? What aspects constitute patterns you’d like to change or avoid next time?

Week 3: As preparation for your on-site ethnographic research of a professional writers and the organizational culture that the writer works within, visit a department or locale on campus and take fieldnotes. Copy and paste them or take a photo and upload it to the discussion board (using the Embed Image tool).

Week 4: Corporate authors often face the challenge of “speaking with one voice” when they collaborate on documents and presentations. However, a corporate group’s multiple voices and perspectives are often valuable. Can organizations achieve a unified voice without sacrificing the value of having diverse perspectives? If so, how? Analyze a variety of pages and documents available on a corporate website. Annotate rhetorical moves that establish a voice and identity for the corporation as well as any moments of heteroglossia. Evaluate the effectiveness of the corporate voices, making recommendations for improvement.

Week 5: There is a lot of discussion in Chapter 13 about reviewing and testing and revision. Don’t technical communicators usually write a draft, have it reviewed once, make a few corrections, and then send it to production or straight for dissemination to the audience? Why would a project require multiple reviews and rewrites?

Week 6: As Clay Spinuzzi contends in his contribution to Solving Problems in Technical Communication, successful technical communicators not only possess competencies in writing, editing, and designing documents but also possess analytical skills necessary to examine and understand how specific contexts affect the ways that writers strategize and execute these composing activities. This week’s discussion board post gives you an opportunity to develop these skills in analyzing how contexts influence professional writing practices. The prompt has two parts.

A. For Monday’s post: Select some task that you often perform—at work, while studying, in a campus organization, and so forth. Sketch out a Communication Event Model (see Spinuzzi’s discussion in SPTC, Ch. 11) showing the different texts that you have to receive, produce, alter, and hand off during this task. Compare your sketch with those created by at least two of your classmates. After you have done so, compose a 250-word post describing the differences and similarities you see and explaining why these differences or similarities likely appear.

B. For Wednesday’s post: Take the same task and sketch a Genre Ecology Model showing the different texts that support it. Compare your sketch with those created by at least two of your classmates. After you have done so, compose a 250-word post that addresses these two questions: What are some of the hidden “helper” genres that make your task successful? How does your diagram differ from others, and what is the significance of those differences?

Week 7: Knowing your audience is one of the most important things in technical communication. What are some possible approaches to learning about audience? What can you do when you aren’t able to talk directly with the members of an audience? What might be some other ways to find out about the people who will use what you write?

Week 8: What types of ethical principles are embedded in the Code of Student Conduct here at the University of Maryland (http://osc.umd.edu/OSC/OCJ.aspx)? Should these be followed to the same degree in all situations? Why or why not?
Week 9: Think about a tool that you use in class or at work (e.g., email, a course management system, an inventory control system). With whom do you interact through that tool? How does the tool mediate that relationship? What kinds of identities are associated with the users of that tool (e.g., a course management system assumes teachers and students)? What kinds of values are associated with those interactions?

Week 10: As a technical communicator, how would you respond if faced with a situation in which no obvious genre exists, or the genre implied in a situation does not seem to support your rhetorical purposes?

Week 11: Find a short example of poor information design. Make an electronic version of the example so you can upload it to the discussion board for your classmates to see. Write a brief post that first analyzes the stakeholders for the example and their likely purposes for using the communication, and then, drawing on information design research and the heuristic in figure 16.2 in Karen Shriver’s chapter (p. 398) as a framework, evaluates why the information design is inadequate. As you discuss the example, identify the specific visual or verbal features that make the design poor.

Week 12: What different views of writing have you encountered in your academic education (or, if relevant, your work, internship, or extracurricular experiences) so far? Have different instructors provided differing perspectives—or have they conveyed one consistent view? Be sure to describe particular moments, events, or cases that provide evidence of differing views of writing and communication.

Week 13: Choose a location on campus on in town that has importance for the community. (The location could be important because of a historical incident, for example, or because it is a popular gathering site.) Imagining that you could use any available new-media technology, use the heuristic in Chapter 17 to sketch three differing site-specific approaches you could use for informing a local, popular audience about the site. You will need to study the site by going there and observing how people use the site, and you will need to consider the kinds of emotional engagements you think the audience should develop with the site, given your purposes. Consider podcasts, touch screens, interactive projection systems, and so on.

Criteria for Evaluating Weekly Discussion Board Posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Superior performance in the discussion board writing shows a clear initiative to learn through analyzing the major readings in the course. Each entry is posted on time and with attention to detail. Each discussion board post presents a fully developed discussion, complete with specific examples and descriptive details. Each post not only describes key passages from the reading but also analyzes it, providing a new perspective or insight on some relevant aspect of professional writing theory and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Strong performance in the discussion board writing demonstrates active engagement in your learning for the course. Each entry is posted on time and with attention to detail. Each discussion board post presents a fully developed discussion of the relevant reading, complete with specific examples and descriptive details. The entries do not always analyze the reading, though, and they do not always add new perspective or insight on some relevant aspect of professional writing theory and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Satisfactory performance in the discussion board writing demonstrates consistent, acceptable written work. You completed all of the required posts, and most of these entries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
were posted on time. Each discussion board post presents an adequate discussion of the reading, one that give readers a basic understanding of the text. Most entries, though, could be more fully developed with thoughtful analysis and supporting details.

D Weak performance in the discussion board writing demonstrates inconsistent written work. Some entries are not posted; others are not posted on time. The entries that are posted give readers only a basic description of the reading. Most posts lack details, and they provide only a superficial analysis of the relevant reading for the course.

F Unacceptable performance in the discussion board writing shows ineffectual work. A majority of your entries have not been posted on time, if at all. The posts that do appear give readers little or no understanding of the reading you have done for the week. Entries contain few details and no analysis of the readings for the course.

2. Exploratory Essay: Writing in the Professional Workplace (5%)
In this short essay (500 words), probe the connections been writing and the discipline you currently study or the profession you hope to work in after graduation. You may want to analyze a particular type of writing that interests you (say, for example, professionals or companies that use social media writing or blogging); a particular type writing life (such as freelance journalists, telecommuters, or collaboration); a specific industry (publishing, public policy, marketing, translation); a particular job (e.g., laboratory technician or a public relations specialist); or a particular type of document (television scripts, white papers, business reports, alumni magazine).

Describe this writer or writing in detail, focusing on questions such as Who does this type of writing? Who do they write it for? What purpose does the writing serve, both for the writer and for the readers?

In addition to this description, explain why this particular type of writing or writer interests you: What do you already know about this type of writer or writing? What intrigues or intimates you about this writing or writer? What would you like to know more about?

It might seem early, but now is a good time to begin thinking about your major research and writing projects for this course, so please choose to explore a type of writer or writing that you think has enough depth to research and write about for the next three months. The idea here is for you to take up the topic we began discussing on day one—what are the types of writing we do in our daily lives, and what’s the purpose or significance of that writing—and to begin asking that question of a specific profession or professional context.

3. Team Charter (2.5%)
As Joanna Wolfe explains, a team that spends time at the beginning of a project “discussing goals, expectation, and team norms can save substantial time and stress later on in the project.” This assignment aims to give you the time and space to have such a focused discussion. You will create a brief, relatively informal document that describes your larger, “big picture” goals and priorities for the collaborative research and writing projects and also describes the norms or expectations for group activity that you can use to resolve any problems or confusion that might arise later in the project. This project gives all team members a chance to explain their goals,
expectations, and commitment level to the project, and it gives the team a chance to talk about how to resolve or work through or around any differences before work begins on the project.

Your team charter should include your description and explanation of the following:

1. Overall, broad team goals for the project
2. Measurable, specific team goals
3. Each team member’s personal goals
4. Individual level of commitment to the project
5. Other information about team members that may affect the project
6. Statement of how the team will resolve impasses
7. Statement of how the team will handle missed deadlines
8. Statement of what constitutes unacceptable work and how the team will handle it.

Please draw on Joanna Wolfe’s *Team Writing*, Chapter 3, “Getting Started with the Team Charter,” to frame your group discussions about these subjects and to guide your drafting of the team charter.

Your team itself is the primary audience for this document, as you will be composing a document that gives focus and direction to your research and writing activity and a document to which you can return to resolve problems if and when they occur. I will be your secondary audience in my role as “manager” overseeing all of the team projects in this course. I will want to see that you have taken this planning process seriously; I will want to see that each team member has thought honestly about and openly discussed those issues that will focus the team’s work and that could help the team to anticipate and resolve problems that might arise in its collaboration this semester.

4. Team Schedule (2.5%)
While the team charter assignment is important almost as much for the conversations it prompts your group to have as for the document that results from these discussions, the task schedule likely will be the most important document for organizing and guiding your team’s research and writing activity this semester. The task schedule helps your team to plan the details of its project to ensure there are no surprises at the end, and it helps the team stay on track by documenting who will do what and when. Creating a task schedule also helps your group to make sure that it leaves plenty of time for the review and substantive revision of major writing projects. Finally, composing a task schedule can help your group to ensure that the labor of the project has been divided equitably among the team members.

For this project, then, compose a document that does the following:

1. Identifies major tasks the team will have to perform along the way of creating the major project.
2. Assigns tasks to the team members according to a particular guiding logic (e.g., expertise, motivation, learning goals).
3. Schedules the tasks, allowing sufficient time for each task while also ensuring there is time for fellow team members to review and respond to major tasks.
4. Balances the workload, assigning value to individual tasks and calculating the overall value of each team member’s tasks in order to ensure an equal division of labor.
Please draw on Joanna Wolfe’s *Team Writing*, Chapter 4, “Getting Started with the Task Schedule” (pp. 40-48), to frame your group discussions about the task schedule and to guide your drafting of this important document.

As with the team charter, your team itself is the primary audience for the task schedule, so compose it in a format that makes the most sense to your team members and that will be usable to all team members as you refer back to it throughout the semester. I will be your secondary audience in my role as “manager” overseeing all of the team projects in this course. I will want to see that you have created a sensible, feasible plan that includes ample time to complete the major projects and allows sufficient time for peer review; that you have assigned tasks and distributed your work load according to a particular guiding logic; and that you have created your schedule in a format that is clear and easily readable for all team members through the rest of the semester.

5. **Letter of Inquiry (5%)**

Once your team has identified a writer(s) whom your team would like to study for your ethnographic research project, you will compose a *letter of inquiry* that you send to this person in order to express your interest in studying the writer and to provide details about the exact nature of your research project. The purpose of this letter of inquiry is to persuade the individual to respond to your inquiry (that is, to get in touch with you) and to allow you to study him or her writing in the workplace. The most persuasive case will be one that convinces the reader that you have an explicit purpose for your research and a clearly defined, well-reasoned method for conducting your study. You will want to explain exactly what the writer would be asked to do if participating in the research project; this explanation might include the extent to which you would be observing the writer at work, interviewing him or her, or asking the writer to do activities that fall outside of his or her job description (e.g., recording activities and thoughts in a writing log, duplicating materials). Your letter should inform the writer about your desire to share your data and your analysis with him or her through the course of conducting your research and writing up your ethnographic project. You also will want to use your letter to describe what you hope to learn from this study and convey how your research project might benefit the writer her or himself.

6. **Proposal for the Ethnographic Research Project (15%)**

While your team’s letter of inquiry presented the potential research subject with a general description of your project design, you will need to define the project in more specific terms before beginning the actual work of collecting and analyzing data. Your audience for this proposal will be me, who will teach and supervise you through the research and writing process, and your team itself, as you likely will re-read this proposal several times as you conduct and refine your research project.

Writing a formal proposal for your ethnographic project will prepare your team for its research task because it helps you to clarify what specific questions you want to try to answer through your research project; how, when, and where you will collect your data; how these data collection methods will help you to answer your research questions; how you will interact with
the research subject during both the data collection and data analysis phases of the project; and most importantly, how your team will organize and coordinate its collaborative research and writing activity.

**Introduction:** Provide a summary or overview of your proposed ethnographic research project.

**Research Question(s):** Here you should describe the question(s) about professional writing practice that pique your interest and that you want to try to answer through your ethnographic research. You can draw on the writing you did in your regular writing activities, although you will want to adapt them so that it reflects your current thinking and so that it fits the specific rhetorical purpose of this section. In short, the purpose of this section is to state, in clear terms, both the questions that you want to explore through your research project and the significance—for professional writers in general or yourself and your colleagues in particular—of discovering answers to these questions.

**Research Subject:** Describe the type of work that this professional writer does in his or her job and the type of organization in which the writer works. Also, explain why it makes sense for you to study this particular subject, given your research questions.

**Data Collection Methods:** Being as specific as you can, list the sources of data you will gather as well as your plan for gathering them. For example, will you only collect documents that the writer composed through the process of writing a specific genre (say, for instance, a grant proposal), or will you collect a wider range of texts? Will you rely primarily on comments the writer makes about her or his work in interviews and a writing log, or will you also observe the writer at work in order to compare what you learn from these different data sources? What types of interviews will you conduct (e.g., semi-structured, stimulated elicitation, discourse-based) and what specific kinds of information will you hope to gain from this interview? You will want to collect multiple sources of data, but you will also need to keep in mind the constraints you and your research subject face in terms of time, resources, access to technology, and the scope of your research question. Finally, you will want to use this section to explain why these particular data collection methods are ones that will help you to answer your research question.

**Data Analysis:** Explain what you will be doing with the data you collect in order to make sense of it and use it to answer your research question. Your discussion in this section, then, will depend in large part on the research questions you posed, the research subject you have chosen to study, and the data collection methods you have chosen to pursue. For example, if you want to know more about how a professional writer creates an *ethos* of technical expertise in a document written to engineers, you might examine the writer’s email and letter correspondence with these engineers and look specifically at word choices this writer makes to create a confident tone or at passages where this writer incorporates factual data to support his or her argument. While the focus of your analysis might shift as you gather data through the research process, you still will benefit from
specifying the analytical focus you want to bring to your research question and data collection methods.

Schedule of Work: Create a working calendar that sets deadlines for completing major steps of this research process. Obvious events to include on this calendar might be dates for conducting interviews, transcribing interviews, collecting writing samples, conducting field visits, and composing the progress report. You will also benefit from inserting into your schedule deadlines for “planning” types of events, such as setting a deadline for contacting the research subject to arrange an interview, as well as for ongoing types of activities, such as analyzing the data you collect through the course of the research process rather than waiting until all of the data has been gathered. Finally, be sure to include in this schedule your personal drafting and revising deadlines for composing the final ethnographic report.

7. Ethnographic Report (30%)
Your major research project for this semester will involve your team’s close study of a professional writer on UMD’s campus or in the surrounding College Park community or greater Washington/Baltimore metropolitan area. The purpose of this study will be to explore how the professional writer manages writing or other communication projects in his or her daily work. For example, you might explore how a business creates its “ethos” in its correspondence with clients and with the press; you might study how a grant writer experiments with the organization of proposals in order to create rhetorically effective documents; you might analyze the sentence-level style decisions that a writer makes to create different kinds of tones when writing to different audiences; or you might explore how and why a professional writer chooses to deliver a document in one medium rather than another. No matter how you end up focusing your ethnographic research and your final report, your general goal is to study how a particular Professional Writer writes within the context of his or her workplace, and to represent this writing process to readers who could not be there with you as you observed the writer in his or her normal workspace, interviewed the research subject about his or her writing practices, and read through various documents the professional writer composed.

As you identify potential research subjects, you can define the term “Professional Writer” broadly so that you might study someone whose work aligns with your particular academic interests or professional goals. For instance, a student majoring in Professional Writing and Advertising might want to study a professional who works as an advertising copy writer, while someone interested in grant writing might look to study an employee at a local non-profit organization. While the person you study does not necessarily need to define his or her job as “professional writing,” the activity of writing should be a major aspect of this person’s daily work.

Through the course of the semester we will be reading about, discussing, and practicing different types of research methods you can employ in order to study your professional writing subject. These different methods include collecting and analyzing samples of writing, observing the writer on-site, and interviewing the writer, and they all fall under the broad heading of “ethnography,” which is a genre of writing that employs these various fieldwork methods toward
the ends of creating a description and analysis of a person within his or her own working environment. In the case of your research project, you will be describing the work that a particular individual does in his or her organization; taken together your ethnographies will help us, as a class, to better understand the practice of Professional Writing.

For your final project, then, you will draw upon all of the research methods and theories about writing we study this semester as you deliver your research findings to a specific set of audience members: to me, your instructor; to your classmates; and possibly to your research subject. In general terms, the rhetorical purpose of your ethnographic report will be to present an answer to the initial research question that gave shape to your project. Writing ethnography is a different type of activity than writing a traditional academic essay, in large part because of the ethical demands posed by working with “real” research subjects and because of the unique nature of working with primary data that you collected rather than secondary sources your gathered from the library. Even as ethnographic writing poses unique challenges, however, it still requires you to apply rhetorical principles in order to compose an effective report, so you will be drawing on rhetorical concepts we discuss this semester as you decide how to construct **logos**, **ethos**, and **pathos** appeals within your text and how to create an effective arrangement and style for your report.

**8: Annotated Research E-Portfolio, with Reflective Essay (15%)**

As the course description and goals suggest, your major writing projects this semester aim not only to deepen your understanding of professional writing but also to develop your research skills, which you will no doubt put to use in your career as a professional writing or editor. To keep track of your developing research skills, you will keep a working portfolio that contains artifacts you collected or created as you worked on your ethnography. Your portfolio will also contain annotations for each artifact that describe your research process and analyze what each artifact demonstrates about your learning how to conduct research and how to incorporate this research into your ethnographic report. In short, your research portfolio not only illustrates your research process but also makes an argument about you as a researcher, identifying your strengths in terms of planning and executing your research project.

The four key aspects to producing a successful research portfolio entail **collecting**, **selecting**, **reflecting**, and **projecting**.

- **Collecting.** Like a scrapbook, your research portfolio can contain a wide variety of artifacts that you collect or create during your research process, from interview transcripts, photographs, and fieldnotes to any written texts your research subject shares with you. As you collect, reread, and rearrange materials in your research portfolio through the course of the semester, you will look for potential patterns and structures that can become the focus of your ethnographic project.

- **Selecting.** The materials you collect in your research portfolio do not just sit there once you put them into it. Instead, you select materials from these artifacts and incorporate them into your ethnography. For example, you might select fieldnotes describing a workspace that you use in your ethnography to help readers visualize where your
research subject works. Or you might select quotes from interview transcripts that enable your readers to understand the research subject’s perspective on a particular aspect of a writing project. Your annotation for each artifact should describe the significance you perceive in it and explain how and why you did (or didn’t) put the text to use as you drafted and revised your ethnographic report.

- Reflecting. Periodically during the semester, you will take time to review the material you have gathered in your research portfolio and analyze the significance of each artifact for your developing ethnographic project. You will write a reflective note for each item you include in your portfolio as well as, at mid-term and the end of the semester, a short essay to explain themes and patterns in the data you’ve collected as well as major developments in your research and analytical skills.

- Projecting. Since you will be creating, reading, and reflecting on your research portfolio throughout the semester, you will be able to project where you are headed in your ethnographic research and writing project and how you are deepening your knowledge of professional writing and editing.

You will submit your research portfolio, with reflective annotations and a more extended piece of reflective writing, at two different points during the semester.

1. At the mid-point of your research process (Week 9), you will submit your research portfolio, with annotations for each document included in it and a 1-page reflective memo about your reading, writing, and research processes as you work on your ethnography. In short, you will use your memo and the accompanying portfolio artifacts to assess your research to that point and to project the reading, writing, and research you still need to do to produce your ethnography. I will provide an evaluation of your work at this midpoint of your research project and provide suggestions for you as you continue work on your project.

2. At the end of the semester, you will write a 3-page reflective preface for the final submission of your research portfolio. The final portfolio will give you a chance to present and analyze the development of your research process through the semester.

Evaluation of these two submissions will determine your portfolio grade for the course (15%).
### 9. Participation (5%)

Your participation grade for the course will be based on the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td><strong>Superior participation</strong> shows initiative and excellence in written and verbal work. The student helps to create more effective discussions through her or his contributions. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. Interaction and collaboration with peers is tactful, thorough, specific, and often provides other students with a new perspective or insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td><strong>Strong participation</strong> demonstrates active engagement in written and verbal work. The student plays an active role in the classroom but does not always add new insight to the discussion at hand. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. Interaction and collaboration with peers is tactful, specific, and helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory participation</strong> demonstrates consistent, satisfactory written and verbal work. Overall, the student is prepared for class, completes assigned readings and writings, and contributes to small group and large class discussions. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time. Interaction and collaboration with peers is tactful and prompt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td><strong>Weak participation</strong> demonstrates inconsistent written and verbal work. The student may be late to class, unprepared for class, and may contribute infrequently or unproductively to classroom discussions. Reading and writing assignments are not turned in or are insufficient. Interaction and collaboration with peers may be lacking, disrespectful, or off-topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td><strong>Unacceptable participation</strong> shows ineffectual written and verbal work. The student may be excessively late to class, regularly unprepared, and not able to contribute to classroom discussions or small group workshops. This student may be disruptive in class. Reading and writing assignments are regularly not turned in or are insufficient. The student has a pattern of missing class, being completely unprepared, or being disruptive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## English 297: Introduction to Professional Writing

### COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Topics: Course overview. Personal introductions.</td>
<td>Topics: What are the boundaries, artifacts, and identities of technical communication? How can technical communicators develop as both students and professionals? Composing the Exploratory Essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/31 &amp; 9/2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing Due: Discussion board post #1 (due 9/2, 2pm). NOTE: Discussion #1 response due 9/4, 2pm).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LABOR DAY. NO CLASS.</td>
<td>Topics: What are the work patterns of technical communication? Composing the Exploratory Essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/7 &amp; 9/9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing due: Discussion board post #2. NOTE: Discussion #2 response due 9/11, 2pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/14 &amp; 9/16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reading Due:* *SPTC*, Ch. 1 (Selfe and Selfe), pp. 19-49, and Ch. 4 (Cook *et al.*), pp. 98-120.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td>Reading Due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Writing due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/2</td>
<td>Topic: Rhetorical Theory in Professional Writing (cont.). Peer review writing workshop.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing due: First draft of Professional Writing Ethnography. Response to Discussion #12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>No Class.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thanksgiving Recess.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/30&amp; 12/2</td>
<td>Writing due: Second draft of Professional Writing Ethnography. Discussion board post #13.</td>
<td>Writing due: <strong>Professional Writing Ethnography due Friday, December 4, at 5 p.m.</strong> Response to Discussion #13.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: <em>SPTC</em>, Ch. 17 (Wysocki), 428-53.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/7&amp; 12/9</td>
<td>Writing due: First draft of Professional Writing E-Portfolio.</td>
<td>Writing Due: <strong>Annotated Research E-Portfolio and Reflective Essay due Friday, December 11, at 5 p.m.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: <em>SPTC</em>, Ch. 8 (Mehlenbacher), 187-208.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>