Section Information at a Glance…

Course and section number	English 393, *Technical Writing,* section 0801 (3 credit hours)
Meets…	Mondays, 6:30–9:10 p.m., Tawes 0224
Instructor …	Candace Orsetti
Instructor's office information	Office hours: Mondays, 5:45–6:15 p.m. (Tawes 1226); Thursdays, 12:30–1 p.m. (virtually); and by appointment
Instructor's e-mail address	corsetti@umd.edu

Class Description

The intent of this class is to prepare you for the type of professional communication you are likely to engage in during your first post-college jobs and beyond. This course focuses on technical communication—the presentation of specialized information in an accessible way to a variety of different audiences, but audiences who, no doubt, will expect clarity, accuracy, and professionalism from you. This course is 3 credit hours.

This class stresses the key skills that highlight a successful professional technical communicator. Specifically, we will focus on the process of writing (including the planning, drafting, and revising stages) and look carefully at the work that goes into the final polished product. As collaboration is often a key part of the professional realm, you'll spend much of the semester working with your classmates, which will include participating in brainstorming sessions, providing constructive criticism, and preparing for your final projects together.

Upon successful completion of ENGL 393, *Technical Writing,* you will be able to

- analyze a variety of professional rhetorical situations and produce appropriate texts in response;
- identify and practice the stages required to produce competent, professional writing through planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- determine and implement the appropriate research methods for each writing task;
- practice the ethical use of sources and the conventions of citation appropriate to each genre;
- write for the intended readers of a text, and design or adapt texts to audiences who may differ in their familiarity with the subject matter;
- demonstrate improved competence in Standard Written English, including grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, coherence, and document design (including the use of the visual), and use this knowledge to revise texts; and
- produce cogent arguments that identify arguable issues, reflect the degree of available evidence, and take account of counter arguments.

Course Materials

Textbooks

- *Technical Communication* (11th ed.), Mike Markel. MacMillan, 2015.
  ISBN-10: 1-319-08808-2; ISBN-13: 978-1-319-08808-8 (E-book version is fine)
- *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects* (7th ed.), Martha Kolln & Loretta Gray.
  New York: Longman, 2012. ISBN-10: 0321846729; ISBN-13: 978-0321846723

Grades and How They Are Determined

Your semester grade will be based on a variety of assignments, some individual and some collaborative, accounting for roughly 25 pages of final, polished writing. The breakdown is as follows:

Task	Percent of course grade
Assignment 1: Audience-Based Résumé and Cover Letter	10%
Assignment 2: Project Presentation	10%
Assignment 3: Survey/Interview Questions (in preparation for final project)	5%
Assignment 4: Detailed Project Plan	20%
Assignment 5: Instructions	10%
Assignment 6: Final Project	25%
Homework, in-class activities, quizzes, peer reviews, participation, professionalism	17%
Reflective Writings (three at 1 point each)	3%
TOTAL	**100%**

I will assign a numerical grade (percent) to each assignment, and that value will be weighted according to the grading breakdown above. Note that if you do not turn in every major assignment, you will not earn a passing grade for this course.

Final grades will be determined by the following scale:

	Minus (e.g., A–)		Plus (e.g., A+)
A	90 to 92.9%	93 to 96.9%	97% and above
B	80 to 82.9%	83 to 86.9%	87 to 89.9%
C	70 to 72.9%	73 to 76.9%	77 to 79.9%
D	60 to 62.9%	63 to 66.9%	67 to 69.9%
F	below 60%		

Written Assignments

All assignments completed outside class must be submitted to me in hard copy, through Canvas, or via both avenues. I will specify the required submission mode in advance for each assignment. Assignments must include your name and page numbers where appropriate. Other formatting considerations—fonts, spacing, layout, colors, and more—will depend upon the context, audience, and purpose of each deliverable.

Some assignments will be due on a day that we don't meet as a class, typically Thursday. Your score for an assignment will be reduced by 10 percent for each calendar day past deadline. Thus, a paper due Monday that you submit to me on Wednesday will lose 20 percentage points right off the top, and an assignment due Thursday that you submit the following Sunday will be reduced by 30 percentage points.

Important exception: The penalty for late submission for the final project will be **50 percent per day** past the deadline. Barring a legitimate emergency with verifiable documentation, I cannot accept any final projects more than one day past deadline.

Please do not leave papers with office staff or send me any of the graded assignments by e-mail unless you have made arrangements with me in advance. Please contact me immediately if you find that you need to submit a paper through any means other than the one designated for that assignment.

I understand that mistakes happen, particularly when it comes to technology. Be particularly careful to back up all work both in and out of the classroom; tales of printer problems, crashed hard drives, and laptops that won't turn on will not earn any deadline extensions. Frequently back up work done on any computer, especially if you are working on a laptop or netbook in class.

Homework

Beyond the graded assignments that are listed individually in the grade breakdown, I will sometimes assign homework, usually based on the readings. The purpose of the homework is to help you assess your understanding of the content and to put into practice some concepts we'll discuss in class. I will collect some homework assignments during the semester, without advance notice. The homework will not be onerous—generally just a few questions to ensure that you've grasped the basic ideas covered in the readings. If you've really read the assigned chapters, each homework assignment will take you just a few minutes. Always do your homework, and always bring it with you to class. Homework must be submitted electronically before class or in printed format at the start of class; it will not be accepted in any form after class begins.

Technical Communication: The Literal Side

As upper-level college students, you've already experienced several different types of communication. In the electronic realm, for instance, you have realized that the e-mails you send to your friends from home contain a different level of formality than the ones you'll send to potential employers and future co-workers. In this class, we'll practice becoming adept at communicating with each other in a professional manner. In other words, e-mails sent to your classmates and me will use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, as well as proper salutations. "Text-speak" is not an acceptable form of communication in the context of this class.

I will respond to e-mails and Canvas messages as soon as I can, but sometimes it might take a day or two.

Attendance Policies

Absences: Regular attendance and participation in this class is the best way to grasp the concepts and principles we will be covering in class. If you must miss a class due to illness, the policy in this class is as follows:

1. For every medically necessary absence from class, you must make a reasonable effort to notify me in advance. When you return to class, you must bring a note identifying the date of and reason for the absence, and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate. Providing false information to University officials is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action. The Health Center has an online form (http://www.health.umd.edu/sites/default/files/ClassExcuse.pdf).

2. You will be required to provide documentation signed by a health care professional if
    *   you miss two or more class meetings during the semester; or
    *   you are absent on a day when a graded activity is scheduled or any stage of a paper is due.

Absent such documentation, I cannot accept late assignments without penalty. Again, you must make a reasonable effort to notify me in advance if you know you are going to miss class. Regardless of the reason for an absence, and whether or not you have a documented excuse, you will be responsible for any content covered in class. It's a good idea to arrange in advance to trade notes with a classmate in case the need arises.

Tardiness: In the professional world, tardiness is not tolerated. Late arrivals disrupt class and distract us from our class activities. Please make every effort to arrive on time each night.

Electronic Device Policy

Do not allow cell phones and similar devices to create disruptions in class. Please turn all phones to a fully silent mode—not just to vibrate, as that is still distracting—and put them out of sight before class begins.

Emergency situation: If you are in a potential emergency situation (illness in the family, babysitters who may need to contact you, etc.), explain the situation to me before class begins, put your phone on vibrate, and if a call comes through, excuse yourself and leave the classroom quietly to take the call. Such emergencies should be rare exceptions.

You may take notes or access the e-book using a laptop or tablet-type device, provided that your focus remains on what we are doing as a class. I will immediately and permanently revoke this privilege if I see you abusing it. I will give no warnings.

Academic Integrity and Honor Pledge

The University has a student administered Code of Academic Integrity and Honor Pledge, which prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without permission of both instructors, buying papers, handing in fraudulent documents, forging signatures, and engaging in otherwise dishonest behaviors. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.shc.umd.edu.

Special Needs

If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please see me after class, come to my office during office hours, or send me a message about it by e-mail as soon as possible. If you have a disability and have not yet registered it with Disability Support Services in the Shoemaker Building (301-314-7682), you should do so immediately.

General Note: Tip for Success in This Class and Beyond

To succeed at technical writing requires a mastery of the process of writing: learning and developing skills that will assist you in communicating highly specialized content to a variety of audiences. I expect that for most of you, this class will take a significant amount of time and energy, and you may have inferred from these pages that I have rather high expectations in regards to your dedication to this course.

So what's in it for you, besides a good grade? It is likely that an effort on your part to meet—and exceed—the requirements set forth for you this semester will prepare you for successful professional communication in the world beyond our classroom.

Semester Schedule

- The following represents the potential syllabus of class activities and reading assignments. It is subject to change based on the dynamics of this particular class, as well as the inevitable unplanned events and opportunities. All amendments will be announced in class and/or communicated electronically.
- Homework and other small individual assignments are not listed on the syllabus. It is your responsibility to keep track of those deadlines as they are assigned.

Week	Date	Topic
Week 1	8/29	Introduction and Course Policies; What Is Technical Writing? *This week, read* syllabus; Markel chapters 1–3
Week 2	9/5	Labor Day — no class
Week 3	9/12	Job Application Materials and Processes; Audience and Purpose *Before tonight, read* Markel chapters 5, 14, 15 *Due tonight:* Reflective Writing A; A1 supplements (job ad and current résumé)
Week 4	9/19	Writing Collaboratively; Introducing the Semester Project *Before tonight, read* Markel chapters 4, 6, 7; Kolln *Introduction*, chapter 1 *Due tonight:* Drafts of A1, Audience-Based Résumé and Cover Letter *Due Thursday, 9/22:* Completed A1 peer review (both documents)
Week 5	9/26	About Oral Presentations; Communicating Effectively and Persuasively; Controlling Your Message *Before tonight, read* Markel chapters 8, 21; Kolln chapters 8–10 *Due tonight:* A1, Audience-Based Résumé and Cover Letter *Due Thursday, 9/29:* Three ideas for your final project
Week 6	10/3	Proposals and Reports; Primary and Secondary Research *Before tonight, read* Markel chapters 16–18; Kolln chapter 3
Week 7	10/10	Project Presentations *Before tonight, read* Kolln chapters 6, 7 *Due tonight:* A2, Project Presentations
Week 8	10/17	Strengthen Your Writing: Key Strategies and Habits *Before tonight, read* Markel chapters 9, 10; Kolln chapter 5
Week 9	10/24	Document Design; Word Feature Demo; Project Updates and Plans *Before tonight, read* Kolln chapter 4 *Due tonight:* A3, Survey/Interview Questions *Due Thursday, 10/27:* Take-Home Grammar Exercise; Reflective Writing B
Week 10	10/31	Creating and Interpreting Graphics; Unconventional Accommodations *Before tonight, read* Markel chapters 11–12; Kolln chapter 13 *Due tonight:* Complete draft of A4, Detailed Project Plan *Due Thursday, 11/3:* Completed A4 peer review
Week 11	11/7	Definitions and Instructions; Usability *Before tonight, read* Markel chapters 13, 20 *Due tonight:* A4, Detailed Project Plan
Week 12	11/14	In-Class Usability Testing; Final Project Q&A *Due tonight:* A5, Instructions
Week 13	11/21	Focus on Purpose *Before tonight, read* Kolln chapter 11

Week 14	11/28	In-Class A6 Peer Review; Final Project Q&A *Due tonight:* <u>Complete</u> draft of A6, Semester Project *Due Thursday, 12/1:* Completed A6 peer review; A5b, Memo and revised instructions
Week 15	12/5	PWP Course Evaluations *Due tonight:* A6, Final Project *Due Thursday, 12/8:* Reflective Writing C
Week 16	12/12	Last class meeting: Content TBD