

English 393 Fall 2016 – 0201/0303

Course: English 393 / Technical Writing

Instructor: Joan Mooney

Meeting times:

0201: 10-10:50 a.m. MWF, Mitchell Art-Sociology (ASY) 3221

0303: 11-11:50 a.m. MWF, Tawes (TWS) 0234

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Office: Tawes 1226

Office Hours: 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday and Wednesday, and by appointment.

ELMS site: Log in at <https://myelms.umd.edu/>

Professional Writing Program Website:

<http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/professionalwriting>

Course description and goals:

The goal of this course is to help you become better communicators in the workplace. Writing is a big part of what you'll learn, but you will also work on oral communication and research. The skills you learn here will help you in grad school applications, in job applications, and on the job. Just about every job requires writing; being able to communicate well in writing and orally with your fellow workers will help you throughout your career. Therefore it is in your own best interest – for your grade in this class (see below) and for the rest of your career – to fulfill all the class requirements.

The best way to become a better writer is to write. So you'll be doing a lot of writing for this class, both in the classroom and outside. One reason you will do writing assignments in class is that an important part of writing on the job is working collaboratively – so you'll be working with your classmates on critiques of each other's writing. Revision of your own drafts will also be emphasized. Most papers will be subject to peer editing, and you will be required to hand in both the draft and the final version of most papers.

The writing you'll do for this class is different from the writing you've done the rest of your academic career. Technical writing doesn't just mean writing computer manuals or instructions for assembling a piece of lab equipment. But it's much more practically oriented than the papers you've done for your other classes. An important part of this and all classes in the Professional Writing Program tailoring each document you write to the intended audience, who will not always be the instructor. You will be required to write a minimum of 25 pages (about 6,250 words) of original writing for this class; see section on Grading for a list of assignments.

This is not a lecture class. The format will be a combination of class discussion; in-class exercises, individual or in small groups; occasional in-class writing, and peer editing of assignment drafts.

In this class, you will learn how to:

- Analyze different professional rhetorical situations and produce appropriate texts in response.
- Understand the stages of good professional writing: planning, drafting, revising and editing.

- Identify and carry out the appropriate research methods for each writing task.
- Practice the ethical use of sources and citation conventions appropriate to each genre.
- Write for different audiences and design or adapt texts based on the audience's familiarity with the subject.
- Demonstrate competence in standard written English – including grammar, sentence and paragraph structure and coherence – and be able to use that knowledge to revise texts.
- Produce cogent arguments that identify arguable issues, reflect the degree of available evidence and take account of counter-arguments.

Requirements

Textbooks

Practical Strategies for Technical Communication, Mike Markel (2nd ed.), Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016. **ISBN:** 978-1-319-00336-4. We will use it all semester, so you will need a copy. You can get the earlier edition, but it is your responsibility to check to make sure you are reading the same assignment as everyone else. You can also rent an online version at a lower cost:

Or you can rent the book from the university bookstore.

Recommended:

- *The Elements of Style*, William Strunk and E.B. White. This is a straightforward, inexpensive guide to good writing and is widely available. Second hand copies are fine; try Amazon or Powells.com.
- *A Pocket Style Manual*, Diana Hacker (7th ed.), Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. **ISBN:** 978-1457642326. A useful guide to grammar, style and syntax.

Although you are not required to buy these books, they are both strongly recommended. You will be expected to be knowledgeable about the material they cover on grammar, syntax, and punctuation, and to demonstrate that knowledge in your own writing. Some of that material, but not all, will be covered in class and in the textbook.

Portfolio

You will also need a sturdy pocket folder that will hold all your papers, including assignments, outlines, drafts, and graded papers. I will collect it once or twice during the semester and at the end of the semester and can return it (if requested) any time after grades are posted.

Course policies

Communication with the instructor: If you have a question or need to miss class for a reason listed below, please email me. I will respond within 24 hours on weekdays, longer on weekends. In the subject header, put the subject of your query, such as "Question about resume assignment." E-mails to me for this class should be treated as professional, on-the-job emails. We will discuss professional e-mail etiquette in class.

Attendance and class participation: An important part of this class is class participation. The more students who are engaged with the class, the better the class will be. Therefore attendance is required, as in all Professional Writing Program courses. But your class participation (professionalism) grade isn't based only on showing up. Other elements that go into it include

being on time and prepared for class (having done the reading and being prepared to discuss it), participating in class discussions, treating classmates with respect and courtesy, not texting or surfing the Web in class, and having assignments ready at the beginning of class. You may not leave and return to class except for an emergency phone call. (See below under “Emergencies.”) Doing so will hurt your professionalism grade.

You are allowed up to three classes’ worth of absence for any reason, whether planned (your sister’s wedding) or unplanned (car trouble). **If you have more than three unexcused absences, your professionalism grade will be affected.** If you miss six classes for any reason, your success in the class will be jeopardized. You will not be able to make up for a grade any work done during classes you have missed (except for excused absences; see below). **If you miss a class, it’s your responsibility to ask a classmate about what you missed; don’t email me to ask for a summary of the class.**

For useful information on the University’s policies on academic integrity, special needs, diversity, sexual harassment and several other issues, visit <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>. A couple of the more important ones are summarized below.

Excused absences: Let me know immediately if a religious observance, mandatory attendance at a University event, illness of yourself or a family member, or death in the family will prevent you from coming to class. Documentation is required for all excused absences. **If you have an anticipated excused absence, let me know in writing by the end of the schedule adjustment period or at least two weeks in advance.**

Absence due to illness: Students are expected to **inform the instructor *in advance* of medically necessary absences, or as soon as possible afterward.** Once during the semester, the student may present a self-signed note documenting the date of the missed class and testifying to the need for the absence, providing the date does not coincide with a major assessment or major assignment (all assignments worth 10 percent or more, as detailed in the Grading section of the syllabus). This note must include an acknowledgement that (a) the information provided is true and correct, and (b) that the student understands that providing false information to University officials is a violation of Part 9(h) of the Code of Student Conduct. The university’s policies on medical and other absences can be found at:

<http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540>

Prolonged absence or illness preventing attendance from class requires written documentation from the Health Center and/or health care provider verifying dates of treatment when student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Absence due to religious observance will not be penalized. However, it is the student’s responsibility to **notify the instructor before the end of the drop/add period (September 12)** about any religious observance absence(s) for the entire semester.

No matter what the cause for absence, you will be responsible for making up the work you missed. If a paper is due on a day you know you will be absent, you will need to hand it in **before** the class. If a hard copy is assigned, you will need to hand in a paper copy on time.

Otherwise, it will be considered late and will be penalized accordingly (see section below on late assignments).

Lateness: If you arrive halfway through the class or later, you will be considered absent. If you come more than 10 minutes late to two classes, that is the equivalent for grading purposes of missing an entire class. Let me know by email as early in the semester as possible if you know you will have to be a few minutes late on a regular basis because you are coming from across campus. Do not disrupt the class when you enter, and remember that you are responsible for the time missed. No one should regularly be more than five minutes late.

Assignments: Written assignments are the core of the class. Deadlines should be taken seriously, as they most certainly will be in the workplace. Papers are due in hard copy at the **start** of class on the due date. **Emailed assignments will not be accepted except by special arrangement.** Grading will be based not only on content, but also on format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Proofread your papers carefully before turning them in; proofreading errors will affect your grade. For each assignment, you will hand in your draft, peer review sheets, and final version. Demonstrating substantial revision is an important component of your grade on each assignment. Be sure to back up all assignments. Telling me your hard drive ate your homework is no better an excuse than saying the dog ate it. If you have computer problems and can't turn in an assignment, it will be considered **late**.

You should expect to spend two to three hours of study outside of class (writing papers, reading and research) for every hour of class.

Grading: Here's the breakdown of how the work will count toward your final grade:

Resume and cover letter	10%
Proposal for final project	10%
Technical definition	10%
Instructions	10%
Memo describing oral presentation	5%
Oral presentation on final project	10%
Final project	30%
Quizzes and homework assignments	5%
Professionalism	10%

Grading for this class is on a letter system. A more detailed explanation of grading will be given out in the first two weeks of classes.

The paper's style and format should be tailored to the audience in each case. The audience will differ, but it will **not** always be the instructor. The citation style guide you choose will also depend on the audience – for instance, APA for psychologists, MLA for linguists. If you choose a style guide and use it consistently, you will be fine.

Drafts must be handed in with the final assignments. **If a draft is not completed in time for peer editing in class, the final paper will be marked down half a grade** (for example, from B+ to B).

Peer editing: Five percent of the grade for each assignment will be based on your peer editing of a classmate's paper. To get a passing grade for peer editing, you should give a detailed

and thoughtful critique of your classmate's paper, with suggestions for improvement. Specific guidance will be given with the assignments that include peer editing.

If you have questions about a grade, you must wait 48 hours from the time you get your graded paper. After that, you can make an appointment to discuss it or come see me during office hours.

Late assignments: A paper will be marked down one letter grade for every class day it is late. For instance, a paper due Monday that comes in any time from after class Monday until in class Wednesday and would otherwise be a B would be marked down to C.

Rewrites: A rewrite is permitted for any paper during the semester with a grade of C or below, up **through the technical definition**. A rewrite is **required** for any paper receiving a grade of D or F. The exception is any paper – chiefly the resume – that received a low grade solely or mostly because of proofreading errors. If your paper is in that category, see me for an individual assessment.

First, take your paper with the assignment sheet to the Writing Center. Then write me a one-half to one-page, single-spaced memo discussing what you learned in your visit to the Writing Center, explaining your plan for rewriting the paper. Hand in that memo at the **next class** after you receive your original paper back. The rewrite is **due one week after the original paper was returned**, along with the original paper with my comments and a one-half to one-page, single-spaced reflective memo detailing lessons learned in the rewrite that you plan to incorporate in future papers. The second memo should be more detailed than the first. Make sure the two memos discuss global issues and don't just say, "I will correct the spelling and grammar errors." The final grade will be an average of the grades for the original and the rewrite, **including the memos**. These memos should be thoughtfully constructed and should not just repeat the comments I have written on your paper or be an afterthought. **Rewrites will not be accepted more than one week after the original paper is returned.**

Electronic devices: I expect attentiveness and participation during class. That means all cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off before class begins. You should not expect to communicate with anyone outside the classroom during class.

Emergencies: If you have an emergency, such as an illness in the family or a babysitter who needs to call you, you should explain the situation to me before class begins and put your phone on vibrate. When the call comes through, excuse yourself and leave the classroom quietly to take the call. Such emergencies should be rare exceptions.

Penalties: The use of electronic devices during class will affect your professionalism grade. Repeated use will result in a failing grade for professionalism. **The only exception** will be for students with a documented disability who need to rely on a laptop or other electronic device to take notes.

Resources: The University has two free resources that are there to help you:

The **Writing Center** (<http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter>) can help you with grammatical errors and improving your papers. I strongly recommend you take advantage of this resource for individual help with your assignments. To receive extra credit for going there, you

should write a short memo to me (two to three paragraphs) before the next class explaining what you learned from the visit and how you can apply what you learned to future writing projects. The **Career Center** (<http://www.careers.umd.edu/>) can help you with job search advice, career counseling, and other career-related questions.

Another useful resource is Purdue University's **Online Writing Lab**, <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>, which offers good information, with exercises, on a wide variety of writing topics. If I write on your paper a comment such as, "You need to work on commas," you are expected to use one of these resources to learn to use commas more effectively.

Emergency protocol: Check the ELMS site to find out how the course will be continued if the university is closed for an extended period.

Course evaluations are a part of the process by which the University of Maryland seeks to improve teaching and learning. Your participation in this official system is critical to the success of the process, and all information submitted to CourseEvalUM is **confidential**. (Instructors can only view group summaries of evaluations and cannot identify which submissions belong to which students.). CourseEvalUM will be open for you to complete your evaluations at the end of the semester. Go directly to the website www.courseevalum.umd.edu to complete your evaluations.

Incompletes: The mark of "I" is an exceptional mark that is an instructor option. It is given only to a student whose work in a course has been qualitatively satisfactory, when, because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student's control, he or she has been unable to complete some small portion of the work in the course. In no case will the mark of "I" be recorded for a student who has not completed the major portion of the work of the course.