

English 393: Technical Writing  
Online sections 9002, 9003, and 9004  
Michelle Von Euw  
Fall 2016  
Syllabus & Course Policies

**Syllabus/Schedule**

**Week One: Introducing the Class**

*August 29-September 2*

**Readings & Videos:** **Read/View by Monday**

**View** Introduction Fall 2016

**Read** All items in I-V in [Course Introduction & Administration](#); All items in [Instructions](#) Module, including "[How to Write Guides for Busy, Grouchy People](#)," Jerz's Literary Weblog; [Instructions](#), Online Technical Writing

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Update** Your photo on Canvas to reflect a recent picture of you

**Update** Your bio on Canvas to reflect a brief, professional introduction **and** your preferred email address

**Update** Your name on Canvas to reflect the name you prefer to be addressed as by classmates, UTAs, and Michelle

**Complete** Survey One: Introduction

**Submit** Your unedited pre-semester resume

**Follow up Responses:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Post** Considering Professional Communication

**Post** Found Examples of Bad Instructions

**Week Two: Instructions Group Assignment; Introduction to Audience-Based Professional Documents**

*September 5-September 9*

**Readings & Videos:** **Read/View by Monday**

**View** Instructions; The Cover Letter

**Read** All Items in [Audience-Based Documents #1: The Cover Letter](#) Module; Sample Job Descriptions "[I Won't Hire People Who Use Poor Grammar](#)," Harvard Business Review; "[Your Resume vs. Oblivion](#)," The Wall Street Journal; "[My Personal Formula for a Winning Resume](#)," LinkedIn; "[Job Search Letters](#)," Purdue University Online Writing Lab

**Review** Instructions Module

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Submit** Job Description

**Post** Pod Introduction

**Post** *Instructions: Initial Memo (one memo per pod)*

**Follow up Responses:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Submit** Pod Instructions draft

**Complete** Survey Two: Instructions & Cover Letter

### **Week Three: Writing an Audience-Based Cover Letter**

*September 12-September 16*

#### **Readings & Videos: Read/View by Monday**

**Review** Audience-Based RCL Module

#### **Initial Responses: Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Submit** Establishing Expectations

**Submit** Part One of Cover Letter [Invention Worksheet](#)

**Post** Exercise: Three ways to Improve your cover letter (step one)

**Submit** Usability test of Instructions (pod assignment)

#### **Follow up Responses: Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Submit** Part Two of Cover Letter Invention Worksheet

**Post** Exercise: Three ways to improve (step two)

#### **Formal Assignment #1: Post by Friday at 9PM**

**Submit** *Instructions Assignment (Group assignment: one final submission per pod)*

### **Week Four: Cover Letter Draft Workshop; Introducing the Semester-Long Research Project**

*September 19-September 23*

#### **Readings & Videos: Read/View by Monday**

**View** Admin Module: [Otis College: Peer Writing Review Process](#); [Peer Editing: How to Edit Essays by Other Writers](#); Topic Selection/Research Module: [Topic Selection Online](#)

**Read** Admin Module: "Peer Review: Looking at Texts from a Reader's Point of View" adapted from the Purdue University Online Writing Lab; "[How to Conduct Collaborate Peer Review of Writing](#)," Chisholm;

Topic Selection/Research Module: Potential Topic Examples; "[Possible Student Projects](#)," Office of Sustainability; "[Readers and Context of Use](#)," Pearson (*pages 38-43*); "[Engagement: Address your Audience's Needs, Values](#)," The Word Factory

#### **Initial Responses: Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Submit** Cover Letter Draft attached to Approved Job Description

#### **Follow up Responses: Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Submit** Feedback for two assigned classmates using CL Draft Worksheet

**Post** Analysis of a Project Topic (Audio response to Voice Thread)

### **Week Five: The Semester-Long Project**

*September 26-September 30*

#### **Readings & Videos: Read/View by Monday**

**View** UTA video on topic selection hints

**Review** Topic Selection/Research Module

**Read** "[Types of Technical Documents](#)," McMurrey, Online Technical Writing; "[Magnetic SwipeCard System](#)

[Security," Ramsbrock et al;](#) ; ["Course Related Guide: Professional Writing," University of Maryland University Libraries PWP Guide](#) (Required menu items to read: Researching a Topic; Finding Information; Scholarly vs. Popular Sources)

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Post** Three potential topics

**Complete** Survey Three: Topic Selection

**Follow up Responses:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Post** Responses to classmates' topics

**Complete** Initial research into the viability of your favorite topic ideas; topic post revision, if needed

**Formal Assignment #2: Post by Friday at 9PM**

**Submit** Audience-Based Cover Letter

**Week Six: Topic Selection; Proposal Introduction; Audience**

*October 3-October 7*

*\*\*Topic approval will begin on Monday and continue throughout the week. Ideally, every student will have an approved topic by Friday.*

**Readings & Videos:** **Read/View by Monday**

**View** Proposal Video

**Read** Proposal Module, Proposal Assignment Sheet; Proposal Examples; "[Tech Writing Handbook](#)," Wiens, Kyle & Julia Bluff, chapters 2, 3, & 4

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Complete** Survey Four: Proposal

**Submit** Topic Exercise

**Follow up Responses:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Complete** Peer Review of Topic Exercise

**Week Seven: Primary & Secondary Research; Audience**

*October 10-October 14*

**Readings & Videos:** **Read/View by Monday**

**View** Primary Research Video

**Read** Topic Selection & Research Module: Primary & Secondary Research page: Survey/Interview Questions Worksheet; MLA Style Guide & Annotated Bibliography; "[Conducting Primary Research](#)," Purdue University Online Writing Lab (All Relevant sub-pages); "[Research Overview](#)," Purdue Online Writing Lab (All Relevant sub-pages); "[Evaluating Sources](#)," Purdue University Online Writing Lab (All Relevant sub-pages)

**Review** Proposal Module: "[Tech Writing Handbook](#)," Chapters 2, 3, & 4

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Monday at 9PM**

**Submit** Topic Ready for Approval Memo

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Post** Citation from one scholarly secondary source for your Project

**Post** Draft Survey or Interview Questions; Source description  
**Complete** Survey Five: Research

**Follow up Responses:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**  
**Post** Draft Survey or Interview Questions; Source description

**Peer Review:** **Submit or Post by Friday at 9PM**  
**Submit** S/I Questions feedback for your classmates  
**Post** Description of approved topic for Pod (*you can only post after your topic has received approval*)

**Week Eight: Audience Descriptions; Introduction to Definitions**  
*October 17-October 21*

**Readings & Videos:** **Read/View by Monday**  
**View** [Definition Video](#)  
**Read** Definition Module, including: [Extended Definition](#), Online Technical Writing; [How to Write an Extended Definition](#), Richard Corning, Western Oregon University; [Audience Analysis](#), Online Technical Writing; Definition Assignment Sheet

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**  
**Respond to** Voice Thread Definition  
**Complete** Survey Six: Definition  
**Submit** Mid-semester Self-Assessment

**Follow up Responses:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**  
**Respond to** Classmates' posts on Voice Thread Definition  
**Post** Potential Definition Terms

**Formal Assignment #3:** **Post by Friday at 9PM**  
**Submit** S/I Questions

**Week Nine: Proposal Draft Workshop; Definition Audience Descriptions**  
*October 24-October 28*

*\*\*Two drafts will be submitted this week, beginning on Monday. Deadlines will therefore occur on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Draft assignments will be made for on-time submissions of correct drafts Monday and Wednesday evenings.*

**Draft #1:** **Submit or Post by Monday at 9PM**  
**Submit** Proposal Draft of Context, Audience, Sources sections **only**  
**Submit** Questions to UTA audiences

**Draft #1 Feedback:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**  
**Submit** Feedback for two assigned classmates using the Proposal draft worksheet  
**Post** Feedback on Potential Definition Terms

**Draft #2:** **Submit or Post by Wednesday at 9PM**  
**Submit** Proposal Full Draft

**Draft #2 Feedback:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**  
**Submit** Feedback on full draft

## **Week Ten: Introducing the Final Project; Definition Work**

*October 31-November 4*

**Readings & Videos:** **Read/View by Monday**

**Read** Final Project Module, including samples of successful full projects

**View** Final Project Video

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Submit** Definition: First sentence of Definition

**Follow up Responses:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Post** Definition feedback to classmates

**Formal Assignment #4:** **Post by Friday at 9PM**

**Submit** Proposal

## **Week Eleven: Outlining the Final Project; Resume Writing; Definition Drafts**

*November 7-November 11*

**Readings & Videos:** **Read/View by Monday**

**Review** Final Project Module

**View** The Resume Video

**Read** Audience-Based Application Documents Module: The Audience-Based Resume; "[Writing an Effective Resume](#)," p. 1-17, Engineering Co-op & Career Services; "[Resumes & Vitas](#)," Purdue University Online Writing Lab (*Resumes 1; Resumes 2; Resume Design; Resume Workshop; Resume Samples*); "[The Biggest Mistakes I See on Resumes, and How to Correct them](#)," LinkedIn

**Review** "[I Won't Hire People Who Use Poor Grammar](#)," Harvard Business Review; "Your Resume v. Oblivion," The Wall Street Journal; "[My Personal Formula for a Winning Resume](#)," LinkedIn

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Submit** Definition draft

**Follow up Responses:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Post** Resume Advice

**Post** Definition draft feedback

**Project Outline:** **Post by Friday at 9PM**

**Submit** Final Project Outline Worksheet

## **Week Twelve: Final Project work; Resume Draft Workshop**

*November 14-November 18*

**Initial Responses:** **Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Submit** Resume draft

**Follow up Responses:** **Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Post** Resume draft feedback

**Formal Assignment #4: Post by Friday at 9PM**

**Submit** Definition

**Week Thirteen: Thanksgiving Week**

*November 21-November 25*

**Initial Responses: Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Submit** Completed Primary Research

**Week Fourteen: Final Project Draft Workshop**

*November 28-December 2*

*\*\*Two drafts will be submitted this week, beginning on Monday. Deadlines will therefore occur on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. In addition, the Resume final version will be submitted Friday.*

Draft #1: Submit or Post by Monday at 9PM

**Submit** Sections of final project draft as indicated on ELMS

Draft #1 Feedback: Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM

**Submit** Feedback for two assigned classmates using the final project draft worksheet

Draft #2: Submit or Post by Wednesday at 9PM

**Submit** Sections of final project draft as indicated on ELMS

Draft #2 Feedback: Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM

**Submit** Feedback on Draft 2

**Formal Assignment #5: Post by Friday at 9PM**

**Submit** Resume

**Week Fifteen**

*December 5-December 9*

**Initial Responses: Submit or Post by Tuesday at 9PM**

**Submit** Complete draft of final project

**Follow up Responses: Submit or Post by Thursday at 9PM**

**Post** Feedback to classmates' drafts

**Submit** End of Semester Self-Evaluation

**Week Sixteen: Submitting the Final Project**

*December 12*

**Formal Assignment #6: Post by Monday at 9PM**

**Submit** Final Project

## **Course Policies: Description, Course Policies, and Objectives**

### **Class Description and Objectives**

Welcome to Technical Writing online! You are part of the innovative approach to writing courses that's currently being undertaken at the University of Maryland. While you will be completing the same type of work and benefiting from the same knowledge and approach to professional writing that your peers in traditional classroom settings will be, all of our requirements will be done online and all of our meetings will be virtual.

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 – learning how to present 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 class stresses the key skills that highlight a successful professional technical communicator. Specifically, we 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. Instead of sections, this course will be divided into **pods** – you'll be working with approximately 5-7 other students throughout the semester.

You can expect to:

- Analyze a variety of professional rhetorical situations and produce appropriate texts, adapting the text to the knowledge base of the audience
- Produce persuasive texts that reflect the degree of available evidence and take into account counter arguments
- Understand and practice the skills needed to produce competent, professional writing including planning, drafting, revising and editing
- Identify and implement appropriate research methods for each writing task
- Practice the ethical use of sources and the conventions of citation appropriate in your field
- Improve competence in Standard Written English (including grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, coherence and document design) and use this knowledge to revise texts

### **Weekly Schedule**

We will follow a regular weekly schedule of deadlines and deliverables to help shape the semester. Generally, you'll complete readings and videos on Mondays; you'll post initial assignments on Tuesdays, give feedback and complete follow-up work by Thursdays, and submit major work on Fridays. Please make sure to download and carefully consult the class syllabus, located here.

### **Class Function: How does this online only section work?**

As this is an innovative approach to writing courses here at the University of Maryland, this is bound to be a new experience for most if not all of you. Please make sure to watch the Introduction video closely for the specifics regarding the functioning of this particular class.

### **Required Course Materials**

All course material is located on the ELMS Canvas course website. Classwork for the semester is divided into seven modules: the first houses all Administrative files, from the Introductory video to Peer Review materials. The next six are topic-specific relating to the work you'll be doing throughout the semester.

While there are no required textbooks, I highly recommend that you obtain an updated grammar/style guidebook to help you identify proper citations and to assist with your grammar, diction, and syntax issues (e.g., *The Everyday Writer, A Writer's Reference*).

As this is an online class, regular, trusted internet access and the appropriate technology to complete all work is required. You'll need to provide an email address that you check daily. Make sure to identify an electronic space (such as a folder) devoted to your coursework (drafts, final versions), **backed up** either on a separate computer, an external hard drive, and/or on a Cloud-like system.

Finally, you need access to and familiarity with Microsoft Office Powerpoint and Word. University students may download Office software [here](#).

### **Technical Communication: The Literal Side**

As upper-level college students, you've probably already experienced several different types of communication. In the electronic realm, for instance, you have realized that the emails 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, emails sent to your classmates and instructor will use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, as well as proper salutations (you should address me as either Michelle or Professor Von Euw). Emails that follow these guidelines will be answered in a timely fashion during normal business hours.

### **Attendance Policies**

Because this is an asynchronous online course, there are no designated class meeting days, in class or online.

### **Written Assignments**

As assignments will be turned in electronically, please make sure to review all specific formatting requirements for each individual assignment. Please plan document submission in advance because late submissions due to technical difficulties – such as computer failure, corrupted documents, or files that don't follow exact naming directions or contain the proper materials – will not be excused. Late work posted electronically will be subject to a grade penalty of roughly 10 points per day. If you do not turn in every major assignment, you will not earn a passing grade for this course.

### **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 (approximately 6,250 words). The specific breakdown is as follows. Some minor adjustments to the percentages may occur during the course of the semester, and if so, they will be announced & amended here:

#### **Pre-Writing 30 percent**

*Includes:*

- Completing all reading and viewing assignments
- Posting & responding to directed prompts
- Working in pods
- Participating in peer review workshops
- Submitting materials as directed
- Completing all surveys

*The above work must be complete, on time, and correct in order to earn points*



## **Major & Minor Assignments 70 percent**

*Major:*

Project Proposal 20 percent

Final Project 30 percent

*Minor (5 percent each):*

Group Instructions

Cover Letter

Definition

Resume

For more on grades, please see [Grading Policies, Breakdown](#) and the University's description of [undergraduate grading definitions](#).

## **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, and forging signatures. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.shc.umd.edu>. On the final page of every assignment, please include the following signed statement: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment."

Allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Student Honor Council. Please note that ignorance is not an acceptable excuse for violating the Code.

## **Special Needs**

The University of Maryland is committed to providing appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with a documented disability should inform the instructors within the add/drop period if academic accommodations are needed. To obtain an Accommodation Letter prepared by Disability Support Service (DSS), a division of the University Counseling Center, please call 301.314.7682, e-mail [dissup@umd.edu](mailto:dissup@umd.edu), or visit the Shoemaker Building for more information.

## **Emergency protocol**

If the University is unexpectedly closed, due to our unique online platform, our deadlines and responsibilities **will not be suspended**. If the University of Maryland is closed for an extended period of time, our class will continue online.

## **University Course Related Policies**

The University has developed a Guide for students that provides resources and information applicable to all UMD courses. The Guide may be found at this website: <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

## **Copyright notice**

Class lectures and other course materials on this website, on our Canvas page, and discussed/distributed via email

or other means are copyrighted and may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor.

**General Note**

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. For most of you, this class will take a significant amount of time and energy, and you may have inferred from these pages that we have high expectations from you. However, it is likely that an effort on your part to meet – and exceed – the requirements outlined will successfully prepare you for professional communication in the world beyond our online classroom.