English 3359: Technical Writing
Fall 2013 Course Syllabus
(Online)

Instructor and Course Information_____

Instructor*:* Mr. Craig Wynne
E-mail*:* cwynne@utep.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 3-4 p.m. in the University Writing Center or online by appointment (please set this up at least 24 hours in advance)

Course Description_____

This online course introduces you to technical writing principles, methods, and genres needed to communicate your professional knowledge to others. We will study technical writing from a *rhetorical* and *design* perspective. That is, we will examine how technical writers strategically construct user-knowledge through discourse and multimodal design. The "technical" components of our course will come from open-source or commercial computer software that you research, analyze, and use for your final presentation. Although this is an on-line course, you will be required to produce documentation as individuals and in teams. You will also "present" your research to me individually during finals week.

Please note*:* **This online course is not self-paced. For this reason, familiarize yourself with both the policies and procedures in this syllabus and the assignments and due dates outlined in the course schedule. If you have questions about the syllabus, assignments, or due dates, please contact me as soon as possible.**

Course Objectives_____

In this course, you will

- Practice technical writing principles, methods, and genres
- Think rhetorically and meta-cognitively
- Analyze and design technical documents for different audiences
- Conduct primary and secondary research
- Sharpen your writing and revising technique
- Work collaboratively in teams

Required Texts and Software_____

We will use the following text this term:

- *Technical Communication Today*. Richard Johnson-Sheehan. 4th ed. Longman, 2011

Storage and Backup_____

This course depends on computer-mediated writing. Most of the work you will do requires interfacing with technology. Therefore, save and back-up digital assignments frequently.

Course Assessment and Calculation of Final Grades_____

The course grade is determined using a total points-system. To determine your average, add up the total points you earned on the assignments completed to that point, and divide this by the total number of points possible for those assignments. For example, if you earned 300 points out of a total of 400 points for the assignments, your grade would be a 75%.

Grading criteria for each assignment will be presented in assignment handouts posted in the "Assignments" folder on the Course Content page.

A tentative grading schedule follows but may be adjusted. Students must earn a "C" to pass the course.

Assignments	Point Value
• Participation (Discussion Board Posts Activities – see course schedule for due dates and times)	300 points
• Job Application Portfolio	400 points
• Team Proposal	200 points
• Team Instructional Documentation	300 points
• Team Analytical Report	400 points
• Team Presentation	300 points
• Team Member Participation Assessment	200 points
• Reader-Response Journals (ten total at 40 points each out of 11– due to Blackboard every Sunday at 9 p.m.)	400 points
Total Points:	2500 points

Attendance

Logging in regularly is a must for an online course. I recommend logging in at least once per day, as there may be updates. If logging on is a problem, you may wish to consider withdrawing and enrolling in a face-to-face section. Missing more than three weeks' worth of postings will result in automatic failure of the course, regardless of your progress on major assignments. **I do not drop students; if you wish to withdraw, you must do this yourself.** Students who do not log on or post anything onto Blackboard by the end of Week Two (September 8 at 9 p.m.) will be dropped from the course – no exceptions!

Assignment Descriptions _____

This course requires that you complete the following assignments. Refer to the course calendar for due dates.

Discussion Board and Activity Posts

You must post to the discussion board by the dates indicated in the modules.

Discussion board posts are formal, electronic writing assignments, so you do need to attend to sentence and paragraph construction as well as to spelling and grammar. In addition, you will need to format your writing for the online environment by writing multiple, short paragraphs. A good rule of thumb is to keep your paragraphs under five sentences or under seven lines long.

In addition, discussion board posts ask you to either respond to a formal prompt or to find an issue in the reading that interests you and to critically comment on it and to discuss it with other students on your team. Posts should be between 250-300 words.

Reader-Response Journals

Each week, you will write a response (250 words minimum) to the readings in the textbook, most of which will consist of textbook exercises. They should: 1) cover all of the readings; 2) demonstrate that you've read and comprehended the material in the text; and 3) consist of your own thoughts and reactions to the text. They should NOT: 1) be a mere summary or regurgitation of the material in the text. I want YOUR thoughts on what you're reading! There are a total of eleven, ten of which you will complete. If you wish to complete all eleven, you will receive an extra forty points added to your total course grade. These will be due to Blackboard every Sunday at 9 p.m. and will not be accepted late.

Job Application Portfolio

This portfolio will include a posting for a job position for which you qualify now or will qualify in the future; an analysis of the organization, job position, and audience for the application; a cover letter; and a resume.

Team Proposal
In teams you will choose an open-source or a commercial computer software that you'd like to research, learn, write about, and present on.

Once you research and choose this computer software, your team will write a proposal, following guidelines in a handout posted online, explaining why your team has chosen the software and providing a timeline for completing the work. Teams will be assigned by the middle of Week Four at the latest.

Instructional Document
Once you choose a computer software, your team will be required to create a set of instructions that shows others how to use one of its advanced features. You will need to follow the guidelines provided to you in the course handout posted online.

Analytical Report
In teams, you will write an analytical report that analyzes the software as a system. You will need to follow the guidelines provided to you in the course handout.

Team Presentation
You will present your team analytical report to me during Finals Week, at a time and location to be determined by myself and your group.

Team Member Participation Grade
Because you will be working in teams, you will assess each other's participation and work ethic using a form I will provide to you at a later date. This document will be e-mailed to me by your presentation date.

Submitting Assignments_____

Submit assignments to the "Assignments" link on Blackboard.

Use Microsoft WORD for all documents, and use a *.doc*, *.docx*, or *.rtf* format. Students who submit assignments in other formats (e.g. .lnk, used with UTEP's *MySpace,* or .wps, used with *WORKS)* will receive a zero for the assignment. I cannot open or read these formats.

Late Work/Missed Assignments_____

Late work is not accepted and missed assignments, and discussion board posts cannot be made up.

Additionally, **I will not grade any assignments submitted via e-mail or posted to the discussion area of BlackBoard.** You must submit all assignments to the "Assignments" section under "Course Tools" to receive credit.

Netiquette_____

Since this is also an online course, it is important that you familiarize yourselves with netiquette – or online etiquette. Please review the "The Core Rules of Netiquette" by Virginia Shea at http://www.albion.com/netiquette/. Briefly summarized, these include the following:

- **Rule 1: Remember the Human**
- **Rule 2: Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life**
- **Rule 3: Know where you are in cyberspace**
- **Rule 4: Respect other people's time and bandwidth**
- **Rule 5: Make yourself look good online**
- **Rule 6: Share expert knowledge**
- **Rule 7: Help keep flame wars under control**
- **Rule 8: Respect other people's privacy**
- **Rule 9: Don't abuse your power**
- **Rule 10: Be forgiving of other people's mistakes**

Writing Assistance_____ _____

The University Writing Center (UWC) offers additional writing assistance, including free face-to-face and online tutoring. The UWC is located in the library, Room 227. You can reach the UWC by calling (915) 747-5112 or by emailing http://academics.utep.edu/writingcenter .

I am also available to provide feedback on completed drafts; however, I require 48 hours notice (i.e. If an assignment is due on Wednesday at midnight, submit your request to me through BlackBoard e-mail by Monday at midnight MST).

Technology Assistance_____ _____
If you have difficulty with BlackBoard, please call the HelpDesk, located in the Library Room 300, at the numbers specified below:

- •For on-campus assistance, call 747-4357.
- •For off-campus assistance, call 747-5257.

The HelpDesk provides assistance during the following times and days:

- •Monday-Friday 7AM-8PM
- •Saturdays 9AM-1PM
- •Sundays 12PM - 4PM

You can also e-mail the HelpDesk at **helpdesk@utep.edu**

Accommodations for Disabilities_____
In this class, "disability" refers to any physical, mental, or emotional condition that will prevent you from completing the work on time or to the required standards and will require that I make accommodations for you.

If you have a disability that requires accommodations, contact the Disabled Student Services Office, which will provide you with the proper paperwork. Then, e-mail me as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. You can contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services Office at

Web: http://sa.utep.edu/cass/
Phone: (915) 747-5148
E-Mail: cass@utep.edu

I cannot (and will not) make accommodations for you without the required paperwork from the Disabled Student Services Office.

Academic Dishonesty_____
Academic dishonesty of any kind is unacceptable. According to UTEP policy, academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, and collusion.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is using another person's ideas or words without giving them proper credit. Plagiarism always occurs when students use the "copy" function on computer programs and then "paste" information from one or multiple sites into Word documents without citing sources properly or putting the information in quotation marks. Plagiarism also occurs when students quote, paraphrase, or summarize another person's work without giving correct citation. Plagiarism occurs whether the work is taken from a book, an article, a website, a reader's guide, another student's paper, or any other source. An entire essay is considered fraudulent even if only a single sentence is plagiarized.

Cheating
Cheating is

- • Possessing and/or using unauthorized materials (books, notes, etc.) during a test
- • Copying from the paper of another student
- • Engaging in communication (written, oral, electronic etc.) with other students during a test
- • Falsifying research data
- • Using papers written for other courses in this course

Collusion
Collusion is collaborating with others for the purpose of engaging in academic dishonesty.

Avoiding Academic Dishonesty
There are many ways to avoid academic dishonesty:

- Ask me or a writing center tutor for help.
- Cite properly (For guidance, go to http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)
- Avoid procrastination.
- Develop your own ideas.
- Refuse to help students who engage in academic dishonesty.

Consequences for Academic Dishonesty
If you are suspected of academic dishonesty, I will report you to the Dean of Students. The Dean will conduct an investigation and determine appropriate sanctions. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include a failing grade for the assignment, failing the class, or receiving disciplinary probation and expulsion.

If anything in this syllabus is unclear, please ask questions!

<u>Course Schedule</u>
A tentative reading and assignment schedule follows, but it may be adjusted as
needed. Complete all readings and writing assignments (RRJs, activities/discussion board
postings) by the Sunday after the assigned week. For example, RRJ 1 and the activities
surrounding Module 1 and 2 will be due Sunday, September 1 at 9 p.m.

Abbreviations:
TCT – *Technical Communication Today,* 4th edition
RD – Draft
FC – Final copy
DBA – Discussion board assignment
RRJ – Reader-Response Journal

<u>Week One – August 26-30</u>

Reading Module: 1 – Orienting Yourself to Online Learning

TCT Reading: Chapter 1

Due: RRJ 1 (TCT – page 17, exercise 3); DBA

<u>Week Two – September 3-6</u>

Reading Module: 2 – Introduction to Technical Communication; 3 – Theories of Language and
Audience

TCT Reading: Chapter 2 (RRJ 2 – Page 38, Exercise 1 – It can be in paragraph form, not a memo.)

Assignment Due: DBA/RRJ 2

<u>Week Three – September 9-13</u>

Reading Module: 4 – The Job Search

TCT Reading: Chapter 11 (RRJ 3 – Complete the "Bio" assignment on page 348.)

Assignment Due: DBA/RD of Job Application Portfolio due to peer groups 9/15 at 9 p.m./RRJ 3

<u>Week Four – September 16-20</u>

Reading Module: None

TCT Reading: None

Assignment Due: Comments due on partners' Job Application Portfolio drafts by 9/18 at 9 p.m./FC
of Job Application Portfolios due to Blackboard by 9/22 at 9 p.m.

Week Five – September 23 – 27

Reading Module: 5 – Writing Proposals and Persuasion

TCT Reading: Chapter 8 & 13 (RRJ 4 – Complete the "Write" assignment on page 232. You won't present, but make it about 100 words.)

Assignment Due: RRJ 4/DBA

Week Six – September 30 – October 4

Reading Module: 6 – Working Collaboratively and Ethically

TCT Reading: Chapter 3 & 4 (RRJ 5 – Complete Page 91, Exercise 2 – Just find one example of advertising.)

Assignment Due: RRJ 5/DBA

Week Seven – October 7 – 11

Reading Module: 7 – Technical Style

TCT Reading: Chapter 17 (RRJ 6 – Complete Page 478, Exercise 2)

Due: DBA/RRJ 6

Week Eight – October 14-18

Reading Module: 8 – Understanding Visual Design

TCT Reading: Chapter 18 & 19 (RRJ 7 – Complete page 516, Exercise 1)

Assignment Due: DBA/RRJ 7

Week Nine – October 21-25

Reading Module: 9 – Revising and Editing

TCT Reading: Chapter 20, page 552-565, Appendix A1-A18 (RRJ 8 – Page 571, Exercise 3 – It can be a paragraph, not a memo.)

Assignment Due: DBA/RRJ8/**Team Proposal D1 due to partnered group 10/27 at 9 p.m**

Week Ten – October 28 – November 1

Reading Module: None

TCT Reading: None

Assignment Due: Comments on partnered groups' Team Proposals due to group by 10/30 at 9 p.m.; Team Proposal FC due to Blackboard 11/3 at 9 p.m.

Week Eleven – November 4 – 8

Reading Module: 10 – Instructional Documentation

TCT Reading: Chapter 7 (RRJ 9 – Using the principles highlighted in the chapter, write a short set of instructions on how to do something. It can be anything – making pasta, building a doghouse, anything.)

Assignment Due: DBA/Instructional Documentation RD due to partnered group 11/10 at 9 p.m.

Week Twelve – November 11 – 15

Reading Module: None

TCT Reading: None

Assignment Comments on partnered groups' Instructional Documentation due to partners by 11/13 at 9 p.m.; Instructional Documentation FC due to Blackboard 11/17 at 9 p.m.

Week Thirteen – November 18 – 22

Reading Module: 11 – Analytical Report; 12 – Researching and Managing Information

TCT Reading: Chapter 8, 14, 15, Appendix A24-34 (RRJ 10 – Open topic – Just write about anything that stood out to you in the reading.)

Assignment Due: DBA Response/RRJ 10

Week Fourteen – November 25 – 27

Reading Module: 13 – Presentations

TCT Reading: Chapter 21 (RRJ 11 – Using the principles discussed in the chapter, evaluate a presentation you attended. What made it effective or ineffective?)

Assignment Due: DBA Response/RRJ 11; Analytical Report RD due to partnered groups 12/1 at 9 p.m.

Week Fifteen – December 2 – 6

Reading Module: None

TCT Reading: None

Assignment Due: Comments on partnered groups' Analytical Report due to partnered groups 12/4 at 9 p.m.; Analytical Report FC due to Blackboard 12/8 at 9 p.m.

Week Sixteen – December 9 – 13

Finals Week – Analytical Report Presentations to be completed via Blackboard Collaborate, Skype, over the telephone, or in-person at our mutual convenience