

## Technical Writing (English 3305) | Fall 2017

Instructor: Erin Kathleen Bahl  
Time: T/TH 9:35-10:55  
Room: 308 Denney Hall  
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### Course Description

This course is designed to improve the communication skills and career prospects of three groups: (1) science and engineering majors preparing for technology-focused careers, (2) humanities majors interested in exploring career options in technical communication, and (3) students of any major who want to enhance their marketability by learning about workplace writing.

The projects for English 3305 are not like the projects of most university courses. You will produce documents for real clients and real situations. As your professor, I will evaluate your work, but any evaluation will be based on how well your documents meet the needs of your internal and external clients. Your internal clients include me (your “manager”) and your classmates (your “coworkers”).

### What is technical communication?

Technical communication is the transmission of complex information from one party to another. Technical communicators create documents that explain ideas and present arguments for both specialist and non-specialist readers.

Technical communication encompasses a variety of written genres including memos, letters, manuals, proposals, policies, procedures, documentation, and work logs. Technical communication also includes spoken forms of communication: speeches, briefings, consultations, knowledge-transfer sessions, etc.

The scope of technical communication as a field continues to widen as technology changes the way we communicate. Email, online help systems, websites, documentation databases, object-oriented documentation, and other technology-driven genres have provided and continue to provide resources and challenges for technical communicators.

## What do you need to know?

You **do not** need an extensive background in science, technology, or writing to do well in this course. You **do** need to be willing to read and think and write about technical information.

Working individually, in small groups, and as a class, you will produce documents that demonstrate your credentials (such as résumés) and documents that demonstrate your technical and rhetorical proficiencies (such as reports and instructions). Throughout the semester, you will produce a variety of other documents, including training materials and usability testing plans.

## What do you need to have?

- A storage device (e.g. flash drive and/or portable hard drive)
- Alred, Gerald, Charles Brusaw and Walter Oliu. Handbook of Technical Writing. 11th ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015.

## How do I calculate your final grade?

### Individual Grades

Information Design Exercises (2 @ 5% each)	10%
Fact Sheet	10%
Application Package (Cover Letter + Resume)	10%
Progress Reports (2 @ 5% each)	10%
Professionalism, Participation, and In-Class Assignments	15%

### Group Grades

Methods Presentation	10%
Wayfinding Instructions	10%
Wayfinding Signage Redesign	10%
Wayfinding Report	15%

Grades are assigned according to the following scale:

Grade:	E	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A
Starting %	0	60	67	70	73	77	80	83	87	90	93

## How are the major projects assessed?

Assignments are generally graded according to five criteria:

- (1) meeting the technical requirements;
- (2) rhetorical sensibility (understanding of audience, purpose, and constraints);
- (3) document organization and design;
- (4) clarity in thought and style; and
- (5) appropriate use of grammar, mechanics, and other discourse conventions.

## How will you succeed in this course?

### *Attend class regularly*

- Because several major assignments are collaborative, class attendance is crucial not only to your success in this course, but also to that of your classmates.
- Absences due to sanctioned religious holidays, documented college functions, documented illness, or emergency will be excused. I ask that you email me as soon as possible to provide an explanation for your absence.
- You will be allowed up to three unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Each unexcused absence after three will result in a lowering of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. If you miss more than nine classes, you will most likely fail the course, unless you have made responsible arrangements to address the problem.

### *Attend class on time*

- You are expected to arrive to class on time. I often give directions and important updates during the first several minutes of class, so it is important that you come to class on time and prepared to begin the day's work.
- Repeated lateness will be treated as absences. Every two unexplained late arrivals (or early departures) will convert to 1 unexcused absence.

### *Turn work in on time*

- Assignments are due by the day/time indicated on the assignment sheet.
- If you need an extension on an assignment, you must contact me prior to the deadline. To ask for an extension, please come talk to me or send me an email detailing the reason for the extension and when you expect to complete the assignment. I will work with you to agree on a reasonable deadline.
- Assignments turned in late without prior permission (or documentation that would excuse an absence) will be marked down by one full letter grade for each day they are late.

### *Participate actively and professionally*

- You are expected to come to class prepared. Consult the course schedule and daily modules on Carmen for class readings and assignments.
- You are expected to participate in all group and individual activities by contributing to conversation, listening actively, and completing in-class assignments.
- You are expected to use technology (lab computers, phones, etc.) professionally. While I have no problem with the use of personal devices in class, I expect you to stay on-task (doing course-related work) during class time.
- You are expected to treat your fellow classmates with respect.
- You are expected to participate actively and professionally in all group assignments. This includes maintaining strong communication with your group outside of class.

### *Turn in work that is your own*

- Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. It is a serious academic offense that can result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct and failure for the course. Please remember that at no point during the writing process should the work of others be presented as your own. Be in the habit of crediting your sources.

## What additional resources are available?

### *The Writing Center – [cstw.osu.edu/writing-center](http://cstw.osu.edu/writing-center)*

- The Writing Center offers free consultations and writing groups to all members of the Ohio State community. They offer help with any type of writing at any stage of the writing process.
- The center offers online and face-to-face appointments in Smith Lab as well as short walk-in sessions in Thompson Library.

### *Student Advocacy Center (SAC) – [advocacy.osu.edu](http://advocacy.osu.edu)*

- The SAC helps students navigate Ohio State's structure and resolve issues they encounter at the university. They aim to empower students to overcome obstacles to their growth both inside and outside the classroom.
- Contact the SAC by email ([advocacy@osu.edu](mailto:advocacy@osu.edu)) or phone (614-292-1111).
- The SAC is located in 001 Drackett Tower.

### *Office of Student Life Disability Services (SLDS) – [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu)*

- The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options.
- To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.
- Contact SLDS via email ([slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu)), by phone (614-292-3307), or in person (098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue)

### *Counseling and Consultation Services (CCS) – [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu)*

- CCS provides comprehensive individual and group mental health services to currently enrolled undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. They also work with spouses/partners of students who are covered by the Comprehensive Student Health Insurance.
- Contact CCS by phone (614-292-5766) or in person at the Younkin Success Center (4th floor).

## Tentative Schedule for English 3305

This table provides a tentative overview of the topics and major deadlines for English 3305: Technical Writing. Always check Carmen for daily reading assignments. If aspects of this schedule ever conflict with other information on Carmen, the other information on Carmen should be followed first.

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
1  August 22/24	<p>Introduction to the class "Five Steps to Successful Writing"</p> <p>Rhetorical situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"<a href="#">Rhetoric and Experience Architecture</a>"</li> </ul>	<p>Plain Language – Part 1</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal Plain Language Guidelines parts I and II (Carmen)</li> <li>"Plain language" HTW pp. 399-401</li> <li>Dam Safety Plastics example</li> </ul> <p><b>Due by 8/25: Team Participation Survey</b></p>
2  August 29/31	<p>Plain Language – Part 2</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Voice" HTW pp. 572-575</li> <li>"Nominalizations" HTW p. 361</li> <li>Federal Plain Language Guidelines, parts III a (sections 1 &amp; 2) and III b (all sections)</li> </ul>	<p>Plain Language – Part 3</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Conciseness" HTW pp. 91-94</li> <li>Federal Plain Language Guidelines, part III a (section 3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Due by 9/1: Formatting Exercise (IDE #1)</b></p>
3  September 5/7	<p>Instructions and Procedures</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Instructions and Documentation" from <i>Technical Communication Today</i> (Carmen)</li> <li>Review Fact Sheet Assignment</li> </ul>	<p>Instructions and Procedures</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Politics of the Interface" (Carmen)</li> <li>ODNR Fact Sheet</li> </ul> <p><b>Due by 9/8: Plain Language Exercises (IDE #2)</b></p>
4  September	Résumés and Cover Letters	Résumés and Cover Letters

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
12/14	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Application cover letters" Handbook of Technical Writing (HTW) pp. 36-41</li> <li>• "Letters" HTW pp. 316-321</li> <li>• "Résumés" HTW pp. 484-503</li> <li>• Résumé and Cover Letter Assignment Sheet</li> </ul>	<b>Due by 9/15: ODNR Fact Sheet</b>
5 September 19/21	Résumés and Cover Letters	Résumés and Cover Letters  <b>Due by 9/22: Application Package</b>
6 September 26/28	Introduce Wayfinding Assignment UX vs. Usability Research Methods (introduce teams + presentation topics)  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Design of Everyday Things</i>, Chapter 1 (Carmen)</li> <li>• "Usability Testing" (HTW pp. 558-60)</li> <li>• "LRR for Engineers" (Carmen)</li> <li>• [Intro to <i>Rhetoric and Experience Architecture</i>]</li> </ul>	Slideware  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Presentations" HTW pp. 408-417</li> <li>• "<a href="#">Effective Infographics</a>" by Geoff Hart (Carmen)</li> <li>• "<a href="#">Picture This</a>" by Molly Bang (Carmen)</li> </ul> <b>Prepare presentations for next week</b>
7 October 3/5	Research Methods Presentations (Survey, Observation, Field Notes)	Research Methods Presentations (Think-Aloud, Interviews)
8 October 10/12	Hands-on UX Testing  Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "GoPro as an Ethnographic Tool" (Carmen)</li> <li>• "Designing Situated Sound for the iPhone" (Carmen)</li> </ul>	<b>Fall Break [no class]</b>

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
9  October 17/19	Intro to Zoom Cams  Report Writing  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Reports" HTW p. 469</li> <li>• "Test reports" pp. 544-545</li> </ul>	Wayfinding Practice  <b>[Erin gone for conference—meet outside of class with team]</b>
10  October 24/26	Wayfinding: Fieldwork/Participation/Analyses	Wayfinding: Fieldwork/Participation/Analyses  <b><i>Due by 10/27: 1-page progress report</i></b>
11  Oct/Nov 31/2	Wayfinding: Fieldwork/Participation/Analyses	Wayfinding: Fieldwork/Participation/Analyses  <b><i>Due by 11/2: 1-page progress report</i></b>
12  November 7/9	Instruction Writing  Studio session	Instruction Writing  Studio session
13  November 14/16	Signage redesign  Studio session	Signage redesign  Studio session
14  November 21/23	Report Writing  Studio session	<b>Thanksgiving [No class]</b>
15  November 28/30	Report Writing  Studio session	Report Writing  Studio session
Finals	Lightning Presentations  Evaluations	<b><i>Due by 12/7:</i></b>  <b><i>Wayfinding Instructions</i></b>

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
December 5/7		<b>Wayfinding Redesign</b> <b>Wayfinding Report</b>