

Welcome

English 3303, Technical Writing, prepares you to write in your profession. In a professional setting, your writing provides readers information they need.


Unlike most academic writing, in which students demonstrate their learning to a professor who already knows the subject, in technical communication the writer is the expert, and the readers are the learners. In professional life, you may be writing for supervisors, colleagues, or customers. You might be explaining a problem, a product, an experiment, or a project. Or you might be writing proposals, studies, or reports. You may be writing a request or applying for a job or promotion. This course teaches you to adapt your writing to different audiences and purposes.

English 3303 can help you develop strategies for making subjects clear to readers who need to understand them. Part of your task is learning to organize information so that readers can locate it easily and quickly, and learning to eliminate distractions that take readers' minds off the topic.

As an oceanographer once told a group of Texas State students, "Not only must your words say what you want them to say; they also must say nothing that you *don't* want them to say."

To communicate effectively with your audience, your writing must meet rigorous editing standards. You will learn to write in a clear, concise style and to present information logically. You will learn to design documents in which format contributes to clarity and efficiency. You will learn to use graphics and deliver oral presentations.

In short, you will learn to communicate effectively, a valuable skill in your professional and personal life.



Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.

– Albert Einstein

This syllabus presents policies common to all sections of English 3303, Technical Writing, at Texas State University–San Marcos. Please read it carefully, and ask your instructor to explain any information that you do not understand.

English 3303 Course Information

Section _____ Room _____

Days _____ Time _____

Instructor _____

Instructor's email _____

Office _____ Phone _____

Office Hours _____

Required Textbooks:



Goals

To communicate effectively and professionally, and to pass English 3303, you must develop the following skills.

Understand the rhetorical situation—

The relationship between writer, reader, purpose, and text

- Analyze and adapt to the needs and expectations of varied readers
- Understand the different purposes for writing

Gather and use technical information

- Search for and evaluate information
- Use and document the findings of experts

Develop an effective writing process

- Meet deadlines
- Seek and make use of constructive advice for improving works in progress
- Revise written work for accuracy, unity, completeness, and coherence
- Edit written work for accuracy, clarity, conciseness, and appropriateness
- Use word processing programs efficiently

Present information effectively

- Design documents effectively
- Demonstrate clear oral communication

Prerequisites

To take English 3303, you must have junior standing or above, and you must have successfully completed English 1310 and 1320, or their equivalents at another campus. Because English 3303 requires writers to focus on current problems and questions in their majors or professional fields, students should complete at least one upper-division course in their major before taking English 3303.



Projects and Activities

Texas State technical writing faculty have compiled the following list of typical assignments and activities for achieving the goals of English 3303. The specific assignments for your section may vary.

Projects for varied audiences and purposes

- Correspondence: letters of introduction, inquiry, application, follow-up, and thanks; preliminary proposal of a research topic, in the form of a memorandum; email messages
- Résumé
- Annotated reference list
- Formal research proposal
- Description of a technical process
- Definition of a technical term
- Abstract or paraphrase of an article from a technical journal
- Memorandum analyzing a graphic
- Progress report
- Feasibility study
- Technical report
- Web site
- Collaborative project
- Oral presentation
- Brochure or pamphlet
- Fact sheet

Activities that teach processes and provide practice

- Meetings in the computer lab **(1)** to learn and practice efficient use of word-processing and graphics programs, the Internet, and email; and **(2)** to draft, revise, and edit documents
- Guided tour of Alkek Library, with focus on access to indexes of technical and professional journals and style guides
- Interview with an expert
- Group revision and editing assignments
- Oral reports to the class on research progress and results
- Editing exercises
- Lecture and discussion related to course objectives



Grading Standards

A

Outstanding work. An *A* document clearly and logically expresses and develops an idea for a particular audience in an interesting way. *A* writing is highly polished and generally contains no errors in the use of English. The professional appearance of *A* work firmly establishes the writer's credibility and allows the intended reader to grasp the point of the document quickly and easily. A manager reading such a document would be highly impressed and would recall the work during performance evaluations.

B

Very good work. A *B* document does a better than average job of expressing and developing an idea in a clear, logical way, and it is well adapted to the needs of its intended readers. *B* writing contains few or none of the common errors in the use of English. The professional appearance of *B* work is generally neat and polished. A manager reading such a document would be fully satisfied with the job.

C

Competent work. A *C* document adequately develops an idea for its intended readers, but does little to create a positive impression on them. *C* writing avoids serious errors in the use of English. The professional appearance of *C* work is acceptable but unremarkable. A manager reading such a document would probably ask that it be revised, polished, or redesigned before sending it outside the department.

D

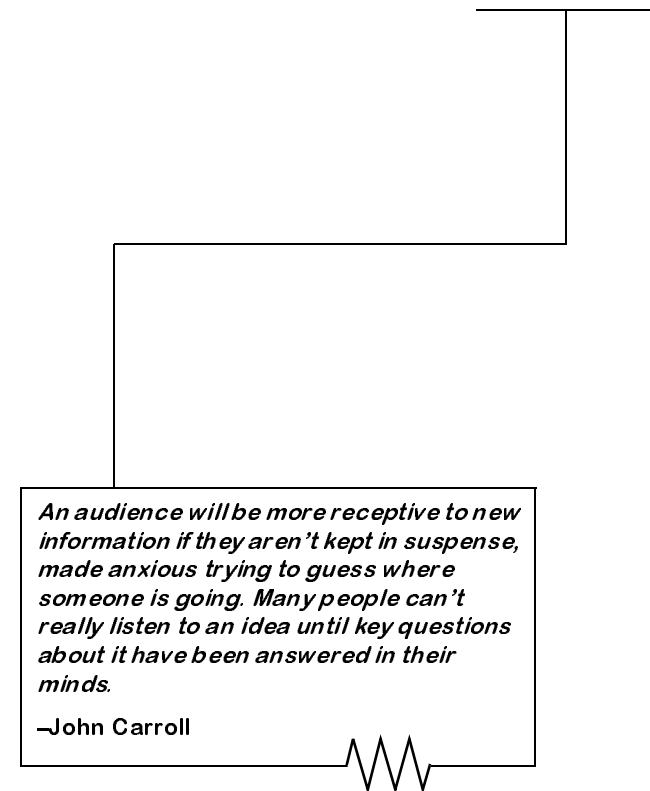
Unsatisfactory work. A *D* document is flawed by one or more of the following: insufficient attention to the assigned task and its audience, poorly developed ideas, inaccurate information, errors in the use of English, inattention to document design. A manager reading such a document would be troubled by its poor quality and would insist on its extensive revision before allowing it to leave the department.



F

Unacceptable work. An *F* document is flawed by one or more of the following: failure to accomplish the assigned task and adapt to its audience, failure to develop an idea, serious errors in the use of English, inappropriate or confusing document design. A manager reading an *F* document would consider replacing the author. Repeated *F*s would mean a pink slip.

These standards have been adapted from Debra Villa's Instructor's Resources for *The Handbook of Technical Writing* (p. 3). They generally follow the criteria presented in the Texas State English Department's First-Year English Syllabus (pp. 7-8). Compiled by Susan Tilka, English Department Technical Writing Instructor.



Professional Ethics/Plagiarism

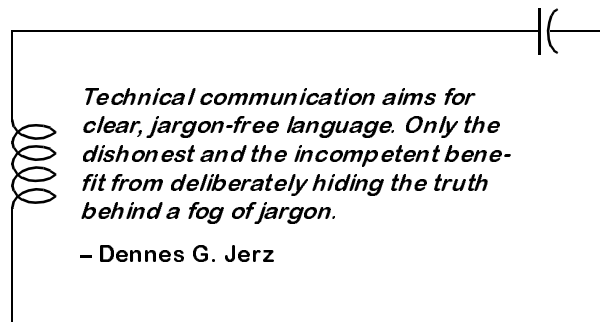
In English 3303, you may study, or become aware of, the ethical standards in your discipline. Such standards give integrity to your discipline and define the responsibilities of employees to their associates and to the public.

Some professions have written codes of conduct; others follow general guidelines common to all professionals.

An ethical concern shared by all disciplines and important in English 3303 is avoiding plagiarism. Plagiarism is using another's words or ideas without citing the source. In technical communication, plagiarism is an ethical and legal concern. If you use someone else's words or ideas, you must cite and document the material accurately. If you receive specific help from someone, you should acknowledge that help.

When a writer plagiarizes, there are serious consequences. If you plagiarize in English 3303, you may fail the course.

For further information about the University's policies on plagiarism, consult the official Texas State student handbook, which contains the student code of conduct.



Help with Writing

At the English Department Writing Center, students can get helpful advice about their work in English 3303. Counselors cannot proofread your documents; however, they can help you during any stage of the writing process—from exploring an idea to polishing the final version of a document. Individual counseling is free to all Texas State students, not merely those who are working on their writing. The Center is supported by student fees, and the Department expects all students to take advantage of its services.

Whether you're seeking help on your own or on your instructor's advice, simply stop by or call the Center to make an appointment.

The Writing Center also offers synchronous, on-line tutoring for all Texas State students with Bobcat Chat. See the Writing Center home page for more information. To connect with Bobcat Chat:

writingcenter.english.txstate.edu/owl/bobcat_chat.asp

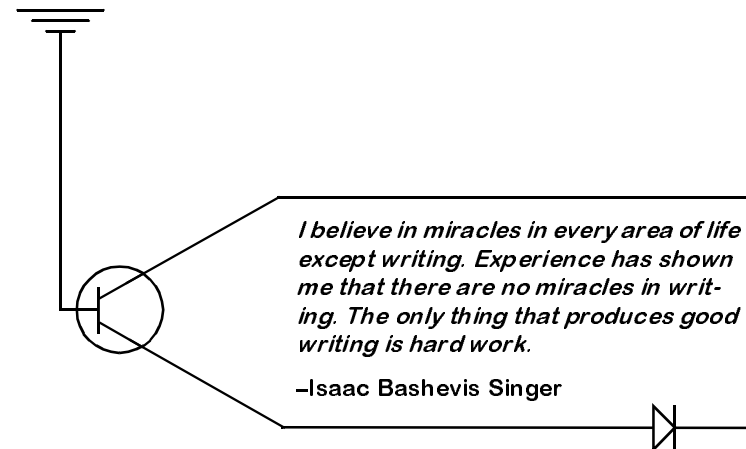
The English Department Writing Center

Director, Nancy Wilson

Flowers Hall G05

512-245-3018

writingcenter.english.txstate.edu/



Technical Communication Computer Labs

Your English 3303 class will meet regularly in a Technical Communication Computer Lab, Flowers Hall G13, 114, or 120. During some of these lab sessions your instructor may coach you and help you solve problems as you write. At lab sessions you may also receive instruction about using the lab server and other electronic communication tools, work on course exercises, respond to classmates' writing, or receive instructions.

No matter which computer system you use outside of class, you must use the Windows-based computers and software in the labs. You also may be required to take your final examination on these computers.

The lab will provide a secure location for saving your files for as long as you are enrolled in the course. Some instructors require students to save all work for the course into these accounts. Please note, however, that any work saved into your server accounts will be deleted after the semester ends. You also may save your work on the Texas State VMS server, which provides 25 mb for students to save their work using their Texas State email address and password.

Because of the danger of viruses, students are not allowed to use their own software in the lab. You may, however, use disks on which you have saved work. The lab staff can help you to convert files. Lab assistants are on duty during lab hours to help solve technical problems.

The lab is open for your use outside of class hours. To determine availability, call the lab or check the schedule posted on the door.

Technical Communication Computer Labs

Director, Laura Adney-Heater
Flowers Hall G13, 512-245-2169
Flowers Hall 114, 512-245-2397
Flowers Hall 120, 512-245-9134
www.english.txstate.edu/labweb/tccl2/



Sample Syllabus

Course Calendar

NOTE: This calendar is subject to change as class needs arise. Be prepared to note changes announced in class or via email.

TC = *Technical Communication*, 7th ed.

Week 1

- Day 1** First class day. Course overview/calendar. Bring TC to class. Assign: Letter of Introduction (due 4th class day).
- Day 2** Guest Lecturer, Ethics in technical writing. Read TC, ch. 2, for this class.
- Day 3** 2 drafts of the letter of introduction due for in-class edits.

Week 2

- Day 4** Letter of Introduction DUE with in-class edits. TC, ch. 2 cont'd. Memo formats discussed. Assign: Memo re ethics in your major field, with attachments, due by end of class the 6th class day.
- Day 5** TC, ch. 17. Discussion of proposal / major project assignments.
- Day 6** Memo re ethics due by end of class.

Week 3

- Day 7** Library tour: meet in Alkek 101. Read TC, ch. 7, before the tour.
- Day 8** TC, ch. 5.
- Day 9** TC, ch. 3; ch. 15, pp. 381-387.

Week 4

- Day 10** Memo re proposal initial ideas and discussion of available resources due by end of class.
- Day 11** TC, ch. 9. Assign: brief description of a technical concept in your field, due the 13th class day.
- Day 12** TC, ch. 10.

Week 5

- Day 13** Technical description due by end of class.



Day 14 Proposal and Major project reviewed: possible document types and their design/content implications. Bring TC to class.

Day 15 TC, App A, pp 592 – 603. Incorporating sources.

Week 6

Day 16 APA style for citations and sources cont'd. Assign: APA worksheet.

Day 17 APA worksheet due by end of class.

Day 18 Proposal workday. Draft of proposal due to instructor by 18th class day.

Week 7

Day 19 Two drafts of proposal due for in-class edits. You must have your drafts to participate in this session.

Day 20 Proposal drafts returned, discussed. Questions re proposal. Bring TC to class.

Day 21 Proposal workday.

Week 8

Day 22 Proposal workday.

Day 23 Proposal workday. **Proposal Packets DUE by 4:00 pm.**

Day 24 Major Projects discussed. Bring TC to class; skim chs. 3, 8, and 19.

Week 9

Day 25 TC, ch. 13.

Day 26 TC, ch. 14. Assign: Memo re possible design elements and graphics for major project, due 28th class day.

Day 27 Workday / consultations for graphics assignment and major project.

Week 10

Day 28 Workday / consultation for graphics assignment and major project. Memo re possible design elements and graphics due by end of class.

Day 29 TC, ch. 11.

Day 30 Two MP drafts-to-date DUE for in-class edits and comments.

Week 11

Day 31 Workday / consultations for major project.

Day 32 Workday / consultations for major project.

Day 33 Workday / consultations for major project.

Week 12

Day 34 Workday / consultations for major project. **Major project packets due by NOON, 34th class day.**

Day 35 TC, ch. 21. Assign: Website + coding document(s) based on your major project. Assign: Memo re initial design and content issues, due via email by 35th class day. Guest speaker: Scott Johnson, English Department Webmaster on html coding.

Day 36 Workday for website. Memo re initial design and content issues due via email by 4:00 pm.

Week 13

Day 37 Workday for website.

Day 38 Workday for website.

Day 39 Workday for website.

Week 14

Day 40 Workday for website.

Day 41 Workday for website.

Day 42 Last class day. Website coding to instructor and website due online by 5:00 pm. Major Projects returned. Final discussed.

Week 15

Final exams: You must write your final with your assigned section.

Note: This sample calendar presents a general idea of what to expect in English 3303. Calendars, assignments, and textbooks for your section may be different.



Resources for Writers

- Make an appointment with the **English Department Writing Center** to discuss your writing. Or visit the Writing Center's Web site and online tutoring option, Bobcat Chat:
writingcenter.english.txstate.edu/owl/bobcat_chat.asp
- Seek advice from the trained technicians or work on the computers in the **English Department Technical Communication Computer Labs**:
FH G13, 245-2169
FH 114, 245-2397
FH 120, 245-9134
- Check out the **English Department Labs** web site
www.english.txstate.edu/labweb/tccl2/
- Visited the **Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC)** for one-on-one tutoring.
Alkek Library, 4th floor, 512-245-2515
- See your instructor (Make an appointment, and take with you graded work and drafts of new assignments.)
- Consult colleagues in your class.

This syllabus was prepared by Melonie (Lonie) McMichael. Thanks go to Lydia Blanchard, Chair of the Department of English; Nancy Grayson, Director of Advanced Studies; and the Professional Writing Committee.



Master of Arts with a major in Technical Communication

Program Philosophy

The M.A. with a major in Technical Communication prepares students to write and communicate effectively in the rapidly changing and expanding technological and professional worlds. With its humanities-based and interdisciplinary curriculum, the program provides students a foundation in technical communication, in theories of rhetoric, composition, literature, and in applications of information technology. In addition, the curriculum allows students to take courses in disciplines outside of English to enrich their communication and technology skills.

What do Technical Communicators do?

Technical communicators work in a variety of businesses, agencies, and organizations and do a wide range of writing, editing, designing, and publishing activities. These activities include documenting computer hardware and software, designing websites, producing multimedia educational training materials, writing governmental policies and regulatory rules, writing grant applications, and publishing brochures, newsletters, and magazines.

For more information, contact:

363 Flowers Hall
601 University Drive
San Marcos, Tx 78666
Ph: 512-245-3733
Fx: 512-245-8546
matc@txstate.edu





Technical Writing Syllabus

Department of English
Texas State University – San Marcos
San Marcos, TX 78666
512-245-2163
www.english.txstate.edu/tech