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ENG 3005-600: Technical Communication

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Course Syllabus

Professional Editing

Summer 2021 | (3 credits)

Course Description

English 3005 focuses on communication (written, oral, and visual) created in professional settings. Particular emphasis is placed on adapting communication to specific audiences and purposes. In addition to teaching new content, this course is designed to be a professionalizing experience. For this reason, skills such as collaboration, technology use, and management of deadlines and policies make up an important part of the course. Specifically, by the end of the semester, you will be asked to demonstrate the following primary objectives:

- Adapt common genres of technical communication (proposals, progress reports, reports, instructions, etc) to specific audiences, purposes, contexts, and media
- Critically read and analyze information addressed to readers of differing technical levels
- Use effective collaborative strategies to create a positive work environment and high-quality projects
- Implement basic principles of effective document design to create professional, easy-to-use projects, including quantitative displays of information
- Use revision and editing to improve your own and others' writing
- Write clear, correct sentences

You will also be asked to demonstrate the following secondary objectives:

- Demonstrate awareness of your own ability to successfully approach, adapt to, and complete new (previously untried) communication situations
 - Successfully balance multiple projects and deadlines
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Required Course Materials

Course texts:

- Markel, Mike. *Technical Communication*, 12th edition (provided by TRS)
- Individual articles as assigned (available as PDFs on D2L)

Technology needs:

To complete this course successfully, you will need to have access to the following:

- **Regular access to a computer with reliable internet.**
- **D2L.** We will use a range of features, including email, discussion boards, content, and dropbox.
- **Microsoft Word.** We will use reviewing tools (e.g., track changes, compare documents), table tools, and the chart wizard.
- **Adobe Reader or Adobe Acrobat.** You will need to open and read PDFs.
- **An email account for accessing Google Drive and Hangouts.** We will use Google Drive to complete some team-based assignments; I will also offer video conferencing through Google Hangouts. This collaborative writing and editing software (and others like it) is increasingly used in professional and educational settings. If you do not have a Gmail account or do not prefer to use your regular Google/Gmail address for school-related material, you may use your EIU email address or another account to access Google Drive.
- **A mailing address where you can receive small packages.** For the instructions unit, I will be mailing a small packet of materials to you.
- **Strongly recommended: Webcam and headphones/speakers** that can be plugged into your computer.

If you do not have access to any of the required materials listed above, please contact me right away so we can discuss alternative options. If you're not familiar with the required features of Microsoft Word or Google Drive, you may want to use help menus and internet resources. I am also happy to provide assistance in using any technologies that you struggle with; be sure to make requests for tutorials well in advance of assignment deadlines.

Course Requirements

It is not possible in a single course to learn all of the possible types of workplace communication that you might be asked to produce in your career. Instead, projects will help you make decisions and develop processes--reading, writing, designing, etc.--that could be adapted to multiple genres. Our class, then, won't focus on templates for creating specific types of documents, but the skills and decisions needed to create effective communication. The specific projects for this class will include the following:

Text analysis (primary skill assessed: analyzing presentation of technical/scientific information): You will analyze one or more texts related to a scientific or technical topic. You will write a memo

discussing the document's audience, purpose, and context as well as the techniques used by the writer(s). In a follow-up assignment, you will analyze a data display.

Definition/Description (primary skill assessed: communicating technical/scientific information to nonspecialist audiences): You will select a discipline-specific concept or piece of equipment and create an extended definition of that term using multiple definition techniques.

Proposal (primary skill assessed: communicating change-based communication): You will work independently to develop an idea and write a formal proposal for the major client project

***Instructions (primary skill assessed: communicating procedural information):* You will create and/or revise a set of instructions. You will conduct usability testing on those instructions, leading to further revisions.

***Data display (primary skill assessed: communicating information in graphical form):* You will create a data display of charts, graphs, and tables to represent information most effectively for a target audience.

Sustainability project (primary skills assessed: project management, collaboration, oral communication, and previously learned communication skills): Throughout the semester, you will work individually and in groups to propose and develop the materials for a sustainability campaign to take place for Eastern or the surrounding community. As part of your project, you will write (as an individual) a progress report. You will also co-write a recommendation report and necessary communication documents.

Reading questions/discussion activities/etc: Most reading assignments will include a written component. The written component may be a reading questions, a group discussion on D2L, or a brief application.

*** If you are studying to be a teacher, you have the option to replace one or both of these assignments with classroom / pedagogy-related projects. When you send me your introductory email, let me know if you want to hear more about these possibilities.*

Assessment

Assignments will be graded holistically on content, organization, expression, and correctness as adapted to the audience and context for which you are writing. Each assignment will include specific assessment criteria.

The grade breakdown for assignments is below. Note: I reserve the right to make additions and alterations to this assessment breakdown should the need arise. Students will be informed in class

and in writing prior to any changes being made.

Assignment	% grade
Homework/class activities.	15
Text analysis	10
Definition/Description	10
Instructions	10
Data display	10
Semester project (COVID-19 info)	35
Proposal (individual)	10
Progress report (individual)	5
Final report (group)	20
Collaboration	10

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

90–100	A
80–89.9	B
70–79.9	C
60–69.9	D
59.9 and below	F

Graded assignments earn late penalties of 5% or 2 points (whichever is greater) for every day they are late.

In some cases, a student may receive a "redo" on an individual assignment if that assignment does not meet the minimum requirements for that assignment. The student must then complete the assignment by the assigned deadline to receive a number grade on the assignment.

At the end of the semester, if a student's grade is within 0.9% of the next highest letter grade, I will use the following to determine whether the grade will be rounded up:

- Student met all deadlines for graded assignments. All assignments were complete at the time of submission.

- Student submitted all homework assignments.
 - Student took advantage of optional opportunities to revise or submit drafts for feedback.
 - Student took regular, timely advantage of opportunities for additional practice (e.g., practice exercises, office hour sessions with Dr. F).
 - Student received positive feedback from client and/or peers regarding the *process* of collaboration (e.g., meeting deadlines, communicating frequently, participating in work, helping to minimize conflict)
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Deadlines

Unless noted, homework and graded assignments will be due at 11:59 pm on the deadline indicated in the weekly modules. (Exceptions will be noted on each week's D2L module.) The assignments build on one another, and it's important that you have time to review the feedback for one homework assignment or project before trying the next project. For this reason, please try to meet all deadlines, so I can evaluate the whole class at once. If you are going to be a day or so behind on an assignment, send me a message to let me know when to expect it and then again when you actually submit it, so I can go into the dropbox or discussion board to evaluate it.

Late projects will be docked 5% or 2 points, whichever is greater, per day until they are submitted. Remember that all graded assignments must be submitted in order to pass the course.

Expected Conduct

This class focuses on communicating effectively in professional settings. Communication within many organizations now takes place online, and this class will offer you plenty of opportunity to practice. Participation looks different in an online environment than a face-to-face environment, but active, positive interaction remains an important part of successful classes and professional organizations. To that end, I direct your attention to the following course policies:

- Meet deadlines established for the course, by your client, and by your team.
- Log into D2L at regular intervals (at least four times per week) to see if there are emails, discussion board posts, or assignment feedback that you should respond to. (You may also choose to have email notifications sent to your regular email every time someone contacts you through D2L mail.)
- Write all class correspondence (e.g., emails, discussion posts, text messages) professionally according to the expectations of the business world. Expect to receive feedback from me on the style, tone, content, and organization of your emails, texts, discussion board posts, etc.
- Communicate regularly with teammates, clients, and me. When receiving a message that you cannot address substantively at this time, send an acknowledgment that you have

received the message and indicating when you will respond substantively.

- In this course, you may need to use advanced features of common software such as Microsoft Word and Google Drive, and you may be asked to use programs that are new to you. I will provide links to tutorials and out-of-class assistance at your request, but I expect you to be willing to develop the software skills you need to complete projects effectively.
- All major assignments listed in the table above must be completed in order to pass the course.
- Scholarly integrity and ethics--students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in [EIU's Code of Conduct](#). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards. If you are in doubt of the appropriate way to identify your source, check with me before turning in the assignment. If you have any questions regarding appropriate handling of sources, collaboration, or past work, talk with me before turning in an assignment.

If circumstances arise that may impact your ability to maintain our course policies, address the situation as you would in the workplace—professionally, courteously, and in advance.

Contact Information

My contact information is available on the front page of our course under News.

Writing-Centered Course

Any individual written text-based assignment of 750 words or more may be submitted from this class to the Electronic Writing Portfolio (EWP). Depending on length, the text analysis or proposal assignments may be suitable submissions in this course. If you choose to submit an assignment from this class to the EWP, you must do so by Thursday, July 22.

Information for Students with Disabilities

Most accommodations may be easily met in this class. If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1210, or call (217) 581-6583 to make an appointment.

The Academic Success Center / Writing Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Academic Success Center for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Academic Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call (217) 581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 1336.

Students who would like assistance with writing assignments from this or any other course may meet online with a Writing Center consultant. The Writing Center works with students from all disciplines, majors, and academic backgrounds at any stage of the writing process. To make an appointment for an online session, go to www.eiu.edu/writing.