

Technical Writing Syllabus



Oregon State
University

For general questions about course content and policies, please post inquiries in the Ask Questions Here discussion board on Canvas so that your classmates may also benefit from the question's answer. For personal inquiries, please email your instructor. You can expect a response in the discussion board or by email in 1-2 business days.

Rich Collins holds an MA in English Literature from Oregon State University and a BA in English with minors in German, Creative Writing, and Film Studies from the University of West Georgia. Rich has worked in a variety of areas in his professional career, starting in retail, volunteering for a year in the nonprofit sector as an MTCC AmeriCorps VISTA, working in the health insurance industry, and, most recently, working in college administration doing marketing and recruitment. Currently he serves as an instructor where he focuses on bringing these experiences into the classroom to work with students in a variety of fields. His own research interests center on twentieth century American literature, but he is equally committed to assisting and guiding developing writers in the classroom.

Course Description

This course will prepare you to produce instructive, informational, and persuasive documents based on well-defined and achievable outcomes. Technical documents are precise, concise, organized, and based on complex information. The purpose and target audience of each document determine the style that an author chooses, including document layout, vocabulary, sentence and paragraph structure, and visuals, among other factors. To this end, this course will teach processes for analyzing writing contexts and producing effective, clean, and reader-centered documents in an efficient manner.

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Participants gain an understanding and knowledge of genres such as reports, feasibility studies, proposals, and specifications. Participants will construct a logical outline of a technical document; write with awareness of expository techniques such as definition, classification, and causal analysis; and design an effective format and layout for a technical publication. A writing project chosen by the participant will be critiqued.

Prerequisites

No Class or Knowledge Required Before Taking This Course

Course Sequencing

Your course may be part of a series of courses that students must complete in a defined order. This section will describe how this course relates to other courses in the program and should be defined by your project manager.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate rhetorical knowledge to create effective technical writing documents for end-users.
- Apply and adapt flexible writing process strategies to produce clear, high-quality deliverables in a multitude of technical writing genres.
- Use professional technical writing conventions of clean and clear design, style, and layout of written materials.
- Gather and apply researched information that is appropriate to your field, as demonstrated by reading and analyzing documents, and citing sources correctly.
- Write clearly, correctly, and concisely.

Course Material

To succeed in this course, you will need reliable internet access, an up-to-date web browser, speakers/headphones, and word processing software (such as Microsoft Word or Open Office). In lieu of a traditional textbook, we have curated an extensive collection of resources from around the web which will be available to you through Canvas.

Course Outline

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Week 1	Topics/Objectives	<p>Key Topics: Technical Writing Fundamentals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is technical writing? • Sentence level editing • What is a Memo? <p>Learning Objectives: After completing this week’s activities, you should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply knowledge of sentence grammar to produce effective, correct, and rhetorically appropriate sentence constructions. (Corresponds with course learning outcomes 1-4) • Identify personal areas for improvement in common grammar, punctuation, and syntax errors. (Corresponds with course learning outcome 4)
	Learning Activities	<p>Concept Lesson 1: What is a Memo? (Mini-lecture on Memos and their design, style, and conventions)</p> <p>Concept Lesson 2: What is Technical Writing? (Video and reading on the defining elements of technical writing.)</p>
	Assignments Due	<p>Comprehension Check: Quiz/self-assessment on common writing errors</p> <p>Deliverable: Write a Technical Memo</p>
Week 2	Topics/Objectives	<p>Key Topics: Instruction Manual: Getting Started</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is an Instruction Manual? • Writing an Instruction Manual Outline <p>Learning Objectives: After completing this week’s activities, you should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the defining features of an Instruction Manual. (Corresponds with course learning outcomes 1-4) • Demonstrate knowledge on how to produce an Instruction Manual for a variety of products and projects. (Corresponds with course learning outcomes 1-5) • Rhetorically analyze a scenario for an Instruction Manual. (Corresponds with course learning outcomes 1-2)

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	Learning Activities	<p>Concept Lesson 3: What is an Instruction Manual? (Mini-lecture on Instruction Manuals, their design, style, and conventions.)</p> <p>Concept Lesson 4: Writing an Instruction Manual Outline (Mini-lecture on how to summarize and envision the Instruction Manual document.)</p>
	Assignments Due	<p>Comprehension Check: Discussion Board on Instruction Manuals that looks at examples and finds issues.</p> <p>Comprehension Check: Imperative Mood quiz.</p> <p>Deliverable: Instruction Manual Intro and Outline</p>
Week 3	Topics/Objectives	<p>Key Topics: Instruction Manual: Finalizing the Document</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What’s in an end-user? <p>Learning Objectives: After completing this week’s activities, you should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit and finish an Instruction Manual document with the end-user in mind. (Corresponds with course learning outcomes 1-5)
	Learning Activities	<p>Concept Lesson 5: What’s an end-user? (Mini-lecture on how to carefully craft a document utilizing clean and clear design, concise writing, and rhetorical awareness.)</p>
	Assignments Due	<p>Comprehension Check: Discussion board on user-centered design</p> <p>Deliverable: Instruction Manual Document</p>
Week 4	Topics/Objectives	<p>Key Topics: Writing a Technical Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a technical description? • What purpose do they serve? • Who are they serving?

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	Learning Objectives: After completing this week's activities, you should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a short technical description of an everyday object with a detailed breakdown of its key components. (Corresponds with course learning outcomes 1-5)
Learning Activities	Concept Lesson 6: What is a technical description and what purposes and end-users do they serve? (Mini-lecture on the defining elements of a technical description and its rhetorical situation.)
Assignments Due	Comprehension Check: Multiple choice and fill in the blank quiz on the defining elements and purposes of a technical description. Comprehension Check: Discussion board on technical descriptions Deliverable: Technical Description Document

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Evaluation and Grading:

All WorkSpace courses are evaluated with the grade option of Pass/No Pass. A student's final grade will be either P (Pass) or NP (No Pass). Under this grading option, student will receive a final grade of P for work that is clearly passing, i.e., which would earn a letter grade of C or better. For work below this level (i.e., equivalent to D or F), student will receive a grade of NP. Courses which are graded NP earn no credit toward graduation. The grades P and NP both appear on your official transcript, but are not calculated in your GPA.

Evaluation of Student Performance Weighted as Percentages of the Total Grade

Comprehension Checks (6)	30%
Deliverable 1: Write a Technical Memo	10%
Deliverable 2: Instruction Manual Intro and Outline	10%
Deliverable 3: Instruction Manual Document	35%
Deliverable 4: Technical Description Document	15%
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	100%

Evaluation Scale

P (Pass) = 70% – 100%

NP (No Pass) = 69% or less

Weekly comprehension checks as “Complete” or “Incomplete.” To receive a “complete,” please refer to the instructions for each assignment. Submissions that fail to answer each question on a worksheet, fail to meet the minimum word count indicated, etc., will receive an “incomplete.”

Rubrics will be provided as appropriate for each deliverable.

Canvas

This course will be delivered via [Canvas](#), your online learning community, where you will interact with your classmates and with course instructors. Within the course Blackboard site you will access the learning materials, tutorials, and syllabus, discuss issues, and display your projects. If you are having problems accessing Canvas [check your computer compatibility](#).

Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, instructors and Disability Access Services (DAS) with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098. WorkSpace seeks to accommodate the diverse experiences and learning styles of the students, and is open to feedback for improving the course, during this quarter and subsequent quarters. To provide direct feedback please email, WorkSpace@oregonstate.edu.

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Expectations for Student Conduct

Student conduct is governed by the university's policies, as explained in the Office of Student Conduct: information and regulations.

In an academic community, students and faculty, and staff each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment, whether online or in the classroom. Students, faculty, and staff have the responsibility to treat each other with understanding, dignity and respect. Disruption of teaching, administration, research, and other institutional activities is prohibited by Oregon Administrative Rule 576-015-0015 (1) and (2) and is subject to sanctions under university policies, OSU Office of Student Conduct.

Academic Integrity — Students are expected to comply with all regulations pertaining to academic honesty, defined as: An intentional act of deception in which a student seeks to claim credit for the work or effort of another person or uses unauthorized materials or fabricated information in any academic work. For further information, visit [Avoiding Academic Dishonesty](#), or contact the office of Student Conduct and Mediation at 541-737-3656.

Conduct in this online classroom — Students are expected to conduct themselves in the course (e.g., on discussion boards, email postings) in compliance with the university's regulations regarding civility. Students will be expected to treat all others with the same respect, as they would want afforded themselves. Disrespectful behavior to others (such as harassing behavior, personal insults, inappropriate language) or disruptive behaviors in the course (such as persistent and unreasonable demands for time and attention both in and out of the classroom) is unacceptable and can result in sanctions as defined by Oregon Administrative Rules Division 015 Student Conduct Regulations.

Netiquette — In an online classroom, your primary means of communication is written. The written language has many advantages: more opportunity for reasoned thought, more ability to go in-depth, and more time to think through an issue before posting a comment. However, written communication also has its disadvantages. This includes a lack of the face-to-face signaling that occurs through body language, intonation, pausing, facial expressions and gestures. As a result, please recognize the possibility of miscommunication and compose your comments in a clear, positive, supportive, and constructive manner. Please be sure to be professional by demonstrating tolerance for diverse points of view and give each other the benefit of the doubt about any unclear intended meanings.