TechnicalWriting(ENGL3764)

Course information:
T/Th 12:30-1:45 p.m.
McBryde 302
Spring 2011

Instructor: Mrs. Patriarca
Office: Shanks 239
E-mail: aspatria@vt.edu (preferred contact)
Phone: 231-5824
Office Hours: Tuesday, 3-4:30 (in office and on
                Scholar Chat); by appt.

Course Texts:
Gurak, L. J., and Lannon, J.M. *Strategies for technical communication in the workplace.* New York: Pearson Longman, 2010. ISBN 978-0-205-69824-0.

Other short readings as assigned by instructor (available in Scholar Resources)

Course Description:
Technical Writing is an introduction to written, oral, and visual communication in the workplace that is designed for non-English majors. The primary goal of this course will be rhetorical awareness rather than a mastery of every convention or genre which you might be required to write during your career. Please keep this goal in mind as we move through the course because we will be covering a lot of material in a short amount of time. Through individual and collaborative projects, you will practice researching, designing, and evaluating appropriate documents and presentations.

Course Objectives:
The objectives for this course are guided by the ABET learning outcomes for accredited programs in engineering and technology:

ABET outcome G: An ability to communicate effectively
- Write for a variety of audiences, purposes, and professional contexts
- Design effective and professional documents and presentations
- Recognize, analyze, and compose a variety of workplace genres

ABET outcome D: An ability to function on multidisciplinary teams
- Communicate and negotiate within groups
- Develop collaborative strategies for responding to rhetorical situations
- Produce collaboratively authored documents and presentations

ABET outcome F: An understanding of professional and ethical responsibility
- Understand the role of technical communication in the workplace
- Identify and respond to cultural considerations within the workplace
- Identify and respond to the ethical complexities of workplace communication

Grading Scale:

A: 100-93	B+: 89-87	C+: 79-77	D+: 69-67	F: 59-0
A-: 92-90	B: 86-83	C: 76-73	D: 66-63	
	B-: 82-80	C-:72-70	D-: 62-60	

Major Projects:

The following assignments and activities will make up your grade for the course:

    15% – Assignment 1: Technical Description (Individual)
    20% – Assignment 2: Instructions (Individual)
    10% – Assignment 3: Project Proposal (Individual)
    35% – Assignment 4: Recommendation Report and Presentation (Group)
    20% – Professionalism/Homework

Turning in your work:

You will upload all of your homework and major assignments to your Scholar Drop Box before class begins, unless otherwise stated in class. The file name should include your name, the assignment name, and the version of the assignment (example: *Patriarca_Assignment1_final*).

Collaboration:

One of the major assignments in this course requires collaboration. Although it is often easier to complete a project individually, collaboration encourages you to combine resources to create documents that are more effective and sophisticated than you might be able to do on your own. Successful collaborative projects require what may be an unfamiliar approach: rather than attempting to divide the work equally, collaborators must recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses. In the workplace, collaborative teams often designate roles early in the project that allow different people to be in charge of different things (coordination, research, editing, designing) while also agreeing that the entire group needs to work together to develop, monitor, and complete the product.

Revision:

You have the option to revise one of the first three major assignments. If you choose to do so, you will be required to revise the original document significantly – thorough proofreading alone does not count. I will evaluate the revision according to how significant *and effective* the revisions are. These revisions are due by the end of our scheduled exam time.

Professionalism:

Because this is a course in professional writing, I will hold you to professional standards, including attending class and group meetings, participating in discussions, turning in all projects by their deadlines, and using technology appropriately. In the workplace, your level of perceived professionalism can affect your performance evaluations and your pay. Likewise, your level of professionalism will affect your grade in this class. I expect you to be in class on time and prepared with drafts, readings, or other out-of-class assignments. Excessive absences or coming to class unprepared will affect this portion of your grade. If you must be absent for any reason, you should let me know (preferably via e-mail) BEFORE class, just as you would in a professional position. Absences without serious, documented cause can affect your final grade:

- If you arrive late or leave early, you will be marked tardy, and 3 tardies equal 1 absence.
- If you must be absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from another student or the course's Scholar site.
- You do not earn credit for any homework/in-class assignments missed or collected if you are absent.
- If you turn in a major assignment late without working out a prior arrangement with me, you will lose half a letter grade for every day it is late.

Part of professionalism is ensuring that you are always prepared, especially for the inevitable technology failure.   I strongly recommend that you maintain hard- or soft-copy back-ups of all important files. Virginia Tech's Filebox

offers 30 MB of online storage space, and other services like Dropbox offer 2GB or more for free.

Contacting the instructor:
If you need assistance with your writing for this course, have questions about assignments that are not answered by the course's Scholar site, or must be absent for some reason, please contact me via e-mail (aspatria@vt.edu). I usually check my e-mail daily during the week and at least once during the weekend, so you should receive a response within 24 hours. For more complicated matters, I recommend making an appointment to see me in my office.

Campus resources:
Writing Center: Located in 340 Shanks Hall, the Writing Center is an excellent place to get feedback on your writing. Their phone number is 231-5436, and they are open Monday through Friday (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). You can call ahead for an appointment or walk in. If you go, bring a copy of your paper and a copy of the assignment sheet.

InnovationSpace: Located in 1140 Torg Hall, InnovationSpace offers help with and access to creative technologies. Like the writing center, you can walk in or schedule an appointment. Their phone number is 231-4826, and they are open Monday through Wednesday (10 a.m. to 8 p.m.), Thursday through Friday (10 p.m. to 6 p.m.), and Sundays (1 p.m. to 8 p.m.).

Academic dishonesty:
Plagiarism is a serious academic offense that can lead to failure of the course and expulsion from the university. Plagiarism includes any of the following: quoting (or copying in the case of a graphic or visual) directly from any source of material without appropriately citing the source and identifying the quoted material; knowingly citing an incorrect source; using ideas (i.e., material other than information that is common knowledge) from any source of material without citing the source and identifying the borrowed material.

Plagiarism is unacceptable. If you plagiarize in a paper, you will be reported to the VT Honor Review Board. If it is ruled to be plagiarism, you will receive a "0" for that paper. If it happens a second time, you will receive an "F" for the course.

Accommodations:
If you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability (learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological, physical, etc.), if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

Principles of community:
Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university, committed to teaching and learning, research, and outreach to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community. Learning from the experiences that shape Virginia Tech as an institution, we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflect bias and exclusion. Therefore, we adopt and practice specific principles that are fundamental to our ongoing efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all its members. Visit the website for the full list of principles: http://www.vt.edu/diversity/principles-of-community.html.

ENGLISH 3764 Calendar:

This calendar reflects major assignments and readings for the course. Readings are due on the day they are listed. In-class and homework assignments may not be listed on the syllabus but will be assigned during class. Any changes to the calendar will be announced in class and on the Scholar site.

Abbreviations: *STCW = Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace (textbook); A1, A2, A3, A4 – Assignments 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively*

UNIT 1: Introduction to Technical Communication, Audience, & style

Week 1   **Tuesday, Jan. 18:** In class: course and class introductions. Discussion on technical communication. Style Exercise.
                Thursday, Jan. 20: Read *STCW* Ch. 1 (Introduction to Technical Communication). Discussion response due to Scholar. Introduce Assignment 1.

Week 2   **Tuesday, Jan. 25:** Read *STCW* Ch. 3 (The Research Process in Technical Communication) and review links under Wikipedia Resources. In class: Brainstorm topics. Style Exercise.
                Thursday, Jan. 27: Read *STCW* 12 (Descriptions). Discussion response due to Scholar. In class: Reader Analysis Chart. Discussion of chapter.

Week 3   **Tuesday, Feb. 1:** Read *STCW* Ch. 6 (Writing with a Readable Style). Style Exercise.
                Thursday, Feb. 3: Read *STCW* Ch. 18 (Digital Communication). Discussion response due to Scholar. Model peer revision strategies.

Week 4   **Tuesday, Feb. 8: Draft of A1 due** (1 copy uploaded to Scholar, 1 e-copy for class). Peer review. Bring laptops or you will not be able to participate.
                Thursday, Feb. 10: Peer review assignment due. Discussion response due to Scholar.

UNIT 2: Document design and Usability

Week 5   **Tuesday, Feb. 15:** Read *STCW* Ch. 13 (Instructions and Procedures). **A1 due.** Style Exercise. Introduce Assignment 2 (Instructions).
                Thursday, Feb. 17: Bring in examples of documentation. Discussion response due to Scholar.
Week 6   **Tuesday, Feb. 22:** Read *STCW* Ch. 7 (Using Audience-Centered Visuals). Style Exercise.
                Thursday, Feb. 24: Read *STCW* Ch. 8 (Designing User-Friendly Documents). Discussion response due to Scholar.

Week 7   ***Monday, Feb. 28: Last day to drop course without grade penalty.***
                Tuesday, March 1: Read *STCW* Ch. 4 (Designing and Delivering Usable Information). Style Exercise (Origami Exercise).
                Thursday, March 3: 1st Draft of A2 due. Peer review. Bring laptops or you will not be able to participate. Discussion response due to Scholar.

Week 8   **Spring Break – have a great week!**

Week 9   **Tuesday, March 15: **** Read *STCW* Ch. 9 (Resumes and Other Employment Materials).Style

Exercise.
Thursday, March 17: 2nd **Draft of A2 due.** Discussion response due to Scholar.

UNIT 3: TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION AND PERSUASION

Week 10   **Tuesday, March 22:** A2 due. Introduce A3 (Project Proposal) and A4 (Recommendation Report).
Style Exercise. Brainstorm topics.
Thursday, March 24: Read *STCW* Ch. 17 (Proposals).

Week 11   **Tuesday, March 29:** Read *STCW* Ch. 2 (Teamwork, Ethics, Persuasion, and Global Issues in
Technical Communication). Style Exercise.
Thursday, March 31: A3 (Project Proposal) due. Meet in groups to discuss topics.

UNIT 4: Collaboration and Reporting information

Week 12   **Tuesday, April 5:** A4 group decisions and planning due. Begin research.
Thursday, April 7:. Research day.

Week 13   **Tuesday, April 12:** Read *STCW* Ch. 16 (Formal Reports). Style Exercise.
Thursday, April 14: Read "E-mail Is Not a Tool for Revision" and *STCW* Ch. 15 (Informal Reports),
focusing on progress report section. Sign up for A4 (Group Presentation) day and time. Meet in
groups. Progress reports.

Week 14   **Tuesday, April 19:** Read *STCW* Ch. 14 (Summaries). Practice writing executive summaries/abstracts
in class.
Thursday, April 21: A4 (Recommendation Report) 1st Draft Due. Discussion response due to
Scholar. Bring laptops or you will not be able to participate.

Week 15   **Tuesday, April 26:** A4 (Group Presentations), Day 1.
Thursday, April 28: A4(Group Presentations), Day 2.

Week 16   **Tuesday, May 3:** A4 2nd Draft Due. In-class peer review. Bring laptops or you will not be able to
participate. Evaluations. Last day of classes.

Exam   **Saturday, May 7 (1:05 p.m.-3:05 p.m.):** A4 (Recommendation Report) due. Optional major
assignment revisions due.