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COURSE DESCRIPTION
In HU333, Introduction to Technical Communication, we will study the genres of technical communication and will practice writing a variety of documents, including memos, letters, résumés, instructions, definitions, descriptions, and reports. Topics include analyzing audience, establishing a clear purpose, gathering appropriate materials, revising and editing, and designing documents.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
This course will provide you with an introduction to the tools and resources available to you as a technical communicator. This course will also provide you with a space to learn about the different modes and functions of technical communication and allow you to practice writing in these modes. This should better prepare you for the technical communication you will do in your other courses and in the workplace.

In this course, you will learn to:
• understand the basic characteristics of a variety of technical documents (including memos, letters, reports, instructions, descriptions, Web pages, etc.)
• write clearly and correctly and about technically complex subjects for different audiences and different rhetorical situations
• assemble, organize, interpret, and report information
• select an appropriate style, design, form, and tone in which to report information

REQUIRED READINGS

Readings on reserve at the J. Robert Van Pelt Library.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS
• letters and memos .............................................. 20%
• background/informational report .......................... 20%
• résumé and cover letter assignment ...................... 15%
• recommendation report ....................................... 25%
• oral presentation ................................................ 10%
• assessment letter ............................................... 5%
• additional miscellaneous assignments .................... 5%
ATTENDANCE

If you are absent, you miss valuable class time and will have difficulty keeping up with the pace of the class. As emergencies do arise, you will be allowed two unexcused absences, but you will still be responsible for obtaining the notes and completing the work for that day. A third unexcused absence will make a difference in your final grade. Excused absences are allowed in cases of serious illness, the death of a family member, or official university activities. It is important, however, that you email or call me in advance to let me know that you will be absent.

COURSE SCHEDULE

* assignments are due on the dates they are listed under
* please note that I reserve the right to change the syllabus whenever necessary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>WORK DUE</th>
<th>IN CLASS ACTIVITIES</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Nov 30</td>
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| Dec 2 |      | • Handbook, ix–xxiv; technical writing style (577–578); style (564–567); purpose (495); readers/audience (507–508); English, varieties of (192–194); idioms (262–264); jargon (303); organization (411–412); introductions (296–299); conclusions (111–114); outlining (413–417); abstract words/concrete words (11–12); vague words (604); word choice (619–620); ambiguity (42–43); coherence (82–82); emphasis (190–192); point of view (442–444); garbled sentences (235–236); sentence construction (540–547); sentence faults (548–550); sentence variety (551–554); parallel structure (424–426); paragraphs (418–423); unity (602–603)  
• memo #1 (see assignments section) | • introduction/go over syllabus  
• what is technical communication?  
• elements of technical communication  
• clear and effective writing |
| 2    | Dec 7  |          |                     |
| Dec 9 |      | • Reserve, “Understanding Audiences”  
• Handbook, correspondence (121–135); memorandums (354–358); acknowledgment letters (14); complaint letters (99–100); refusal letters (511–512); inquiry letters and responses (275–279); reference letters (509–511); email (186–187)  
• Reserve, “Reading Scientific and Technical Texts”  
• letter #1 (see assignments section) | • audience  
• memos and letters  
• email  
• editing and polishing  
• reading scientific and technical texts  
• technical definitions  
• technical descriptions |
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Dec 3</td>
<td>* Handbook, process explanation (453); technical manuals (575–577); instructions (280–282)</td>
<td>technical instructions</td>
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<td>Dec 16</td>
<td>* Handbook, reports, (514–515); formal reports (223–231); research (515–518); feasibility reports (208–213); investigative reports (299–300); progress and activity reports (453–456); test reports (582–584); trip reports (598); trouble reports (599–601); trade journal articles (590–595); interviewing for information (291–293); listening (334–335); documenting sources (168–179); bibliography (59–60)</td>
<td>distribution of Meyers-Briggs</td>
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<td>* claim letter (letter #2; see assignments section)</td>
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<td>* completed Meyers-Briggs</td>
<td>reports</td>
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<td>* recommended reading: Handbook, methods of development (359–360); division and classification (164–168); general to specific development (236–237); increasing order of importance (269–270); spatial method of development (559–560); sequential method of development (554–555); chronological method of development (76–77); comparison method of development (98–99)</td>
<td>* creating Web pages</td>
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<td>* response to claim letter (letter #3; see assignments section)</td>
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<td>WINTER BREAK</td>
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<td>Jan 6</td>
<td>* Handbook, collaborative writing (82–85)</td>
<td>* discussion of report #2</td>
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<td>* report #1 (see assignments section)</td>
<td>* collaborative work</td>
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<td>Jan 11</td>
<td>* Handbook, résumés (522–533); application letters (47–51); job search (305–310); interviewing for a job (293–296); acceptance letters (13–14)</td>
<td>* interpretation of Meyers-Briggs</td>
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<td>Jan 13</td>
<td>* letter of application and résumé or personal statement (see assignments section)</td>
<td>* résumé, job search, interviewing</td>
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<td>Jan 18</td>
<td>* Reserve, “Identifying Cultural Bias”</td>
<td>* international issues in technical communication</td>
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<td>Jan 20</td>
<td>* Reserve, “Ethical Reasoning in Technical Communication: A Practical Framework”</td>
<td>* ethical issues in technical communication</td>
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<td>* memo #2 (see assignments section)</td>
<td>* designing and reporting visual information</td>
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<td>8 Jan 25</td>
<td><strong>Handbook</strong>, design and layout (151–158); format (231–232); headers and footers (254); headings (254–258); indexing (271–274); glossary (237–238); appendix/appendixes/appendices (47)</td>
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<td>Jan 27</td>
<td><strong>Handbook</strong>, abstracts (8–10); executive summaries (200–205); <strong>memo #3</strong> (see assignments section)</td>
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<td>9 Feb 1</td>
<td><strong>draft of recommendation report</strong> (see assignments section)</td>
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<td>conferences and project work</td>
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<td>giving presentations</td>
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<td>11 Feb 15</td>
<td>discussion of assessment letter</td>
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<td>Feb 17</td>
<td><strong>recommendation report</strong> (see assignments section)</td>
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**assessment letter due Monday, February 21 by 5pm**

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**MEMO #1** (1–2 pages; due Tuesday, December 2)

Write a memo to me and describe your previous experience writing technical documents. Provide an overview and include examples. You might also consider picking a specific document you produced and describe the steps you went through to produce it. Also note what you expect or hope to learn about technical communication in this course.

**LETTER #1** (1–2 pages; due Thursday, December 9)

You have applied to work at a company offering a position in your field. You have already sent the personnel director your résumé and a cover letter explaining your interest in the position. The director calls you to schedule an interview, but asks that you send a letter explaining your experience with technical communication in your field. (Note: I recommend that you build off of the memo you wrote to complete the Memo #1 assignment, but be aware that this document is for an entirely different audience and purpose, and be sure to shape your document appropriately.)

**LETTER #2: CLAIM LETTER ASSIGNMENT, PART I** (1–2 pages; due Thursday, December 16)

A claim letter documents a problem with a specific product or service purchased and shows that you deserve appropriate compensation. In this assignment, request specific action to solve a problem. You can decide who you are (e.g., average...
joe consumer, head of a department that uses the product, etc.) and why you're writing this letter (i.e., what product you purchased, what went wrong, and what you want).

Although your letter will more than likely be funneled through a customer service department, write this letter to the manager who will review your request and who has the authority to act on it. The goal of this letter is to use facts to persuade your reader to give you what you want. Remain factual in your claim letter. Don't get angry or emotional, as facts, not feelings, get results.

1. In paragraph 1, briefly describe the purchase. Provide the date, place, item, and cost of purchase. Add information about salesperson, delivery, installation, etc., as needed to support your claim.

2. In paragraph 2, explain what went wrong in a factual way that shows that you were not to blame. If you are requesting damages, be sure to include estimates and documentation.

3. In the next paragraph(s), be very specific (but reasonable) about what you want and when you want it. If you want a full cash refund and additional money for damages, say so. Don't let the reader decide what you should receive. Close your letter in a brief but positive way.

Document your letter with a list of receipts, warranties, estimates, photographs, or other evidence to support your claim. (You do not need to provide such materials; only list them on the enclosure line.) You should also refer to your evidence in the letter itself. Submit two copies on the due date.

LETTER #3: CLAIM LETTER ASSIGNMENT, PART II (1–2 pages; due Tuesday, December 21)

For this assignment, you will respond to another student's claim letter. You will role play the person to whom the letter is addressed. You will respond to their claim letter, making your decision to either accept or decline their request based on the information they provide. Submit two copies of the response letter and attach the original claim letter.

BACKGROUND/INFORMATIONAL REPORT #1 (1500–2000 words; due Thursday, January 6)

In this report, you will investigate the role(s) of technical communication for professionals in your field. Your report should rely on information obtained from interviews of instructors and/or professionals and analyses of trade journals, newsletters, or other publications. You should interview at least one individual (instructor or professional) and you should browse through at least two years' worth of a publication specific to your field.

In your informational report, first introduce your field, then explain what you learned in the interview and in your periodical review, and then provide a strong conclusion regarding the role of professionals in your field where technical communication is concerned. Provide charts, figures, and images where appropriate. I — a technical communication instructor from a Humanities Department — will be your audience for this report.

Questions to ponder include:

• What do professionals in your field write? What types of writing can you expect to do in your field? How much writing can you expect to do in your field?
• What do professionals in your field read? Why are these documents, journals, etc., important? Why would a professional in your field choose to read the publication you chose to review?
• Who does most of the published writing (i.e., appearing in journals, trade magazines, and newsletters) in your field? What are their credentials? What are their positions?
• Has the reading and writing required of a professional in your field changed over the past 10 years or so? Has the importance of technical communication changed in the past 10 years or so?
• Where do you see yourself fitting in this field? What position would you ideally hold? How would you define your role as a technical communicator in this field and in this position?
RÉSUMÉ AND COVER LETTER or PERSONAL STATEMENT (due Thursday, January 13)

Résumé
This assignment has multiple steps:
1. Perform a search for a job you are interested in applying for. You may stop by the Career Center and investigate there, head directly to the Web sites of companies you are interested in, or you may search the Web for specific job postings. Make sure to print out a copy of the job description you choose to respond to and submit it with your résumé and cover letter.
2. Tailor your résumé to the job description.
3. Write a cover letter to accompany your revised résumé. Presume the audience of the cover letter (if not noted on the job description) to be the Personnel Director of the company you are applying to.
Submit all three documents together in a folder on the day they are due.

Personal Statement
This assignment has multiple steps:
1. Perform a search for a graduate school you are interested in applying to. You may stop by the library and do research using the manuals they provide, or you may head directly to the Web sites of universities you are interested in applying to. Make sure to print out a copy of the application requirements for the university you choose to respond to and submit it with your personal statement and cover letter.
2. Write or tailor your personal statement to the department or university’s requirements.
3. Write a cover letter to accompany your revised personal statement. Presume the audience of the cover letter to be the admissions committee of the department you are applying to.
Submit all three documents together in a folder on the day they are due.

MEMO #2: PROPOSAL (1–2 pages; due Tuesday, January 18)
NOTE: Please read the “Recommendation Report” assignment before writing this proposal.
Each group should write a memo to me in which you propose the topic of your group’s final report. The focus of a proposal is to persuade someone to follow a plan or course of action. Proposals, then, are responses to a request for services or your perception of a need.
Your group’s proposal should indicate what you intend to focus on in your final report. What problem or concern are you addressing? Who does this problem or concern affect? You will be expected to demonstrate in your proposal that your topic is worthy of attention. Your proposal should also describe the context for your proposed document — who your audience is, why you’re creating the report, etc. The purpose of the proposal is to convince me that the topic you’ve selected for your formal report is appropriate and that you have thought through its various components.
Your group’s proposal should include the following sections: statement of purpose (or problem), objective, methods (include what tasks each group member will perform), and justification.

MEMO #3 (2–3 pages; due Thursday, January 27)
For this assignment, find a pamphlet, brochure, or flier related to your department or a group in which you are a member. Otherwise, a variety of brochures are available in the Office of Student Affairs and the Counseling Center.
For whatever brochure you choose to analyze, you are to assume that a colleague of yours has approached you to help him better design a brochure he has created. Make assumptions about his department, his role, and his audience based on the brochure itself. Write a memo to him suggesting changes in design, layout, and graphical content based on what you can assume about his department and his audience. Analyze the brochure using the guidelines for design and layout we discussed in class and that are included in the course readings. Make specific suggestions to your colleague as to how he might better design the brochure.
Questions to ponder include:

- What kind of literacy skills might the audience have? Is the design and layout too simple or too complex for certain readers?
- Are any of the graphics or general design features unnecessary? Do they clutter the document? Would they confuse the reader?
- Could any of the graphics or figures included be better presented in a different format?

RECOMMENDATION REPORT (2500–3500 words; first draft due Thursday, February 3; final draft due Thursday, February 17)

In this report, you will investigate a problem, research it, and suggest recommendations to those making the decision as to how to address the problem.

In your report, answer one of the following questions:

- Will X work for a specific purpose? (Feasibility)
- Will X work better than Y for a specific purpose? (Comparative analysis)
- Why does X happen, and what can be done about it? (Cause-effect analysis)

Your group should come to a consensus regarding the focus of this report. Choose a reasonable, local issue to address in this report. For example, trying to assess whether or not socialized health care would benefit the United States is far too big a topic. Something more reasonable might be suggestions to deal with Michigan Tech’s parking problem, the feasibility of constructing a walkway over highway 41, comparing one method of tutoring students in a math class to another method, or increasing participation in a particular student activity (e.g., USG).

Your report should focus on a specific problem or concern, should include appropriate references, and should propose a plan of action to address or remedy this problem or concern. Include appropriate visuals and/or graphics and references.

Your audience depends upon the problem you choose to address (e.g., consumers of a certain product, upper-level managers at a specific industrial setting, a director of a lab in the Mechanical Engineering–Engineering Mechanics Department, etc.).

Each student in the class must also submit a separate short memo to me describing your participation in the group work. Specifically, what did you contribute? What was your role in the group? What tasks and/or responsibilities did you take on for this project? What section(s) of the report did you write?

ASSESSMENT/RECOMMENDATION LETTER (due Monday, February 21 by 5pm)

The Undergraduate Catalog offers the following description of HU333:

The forms of technical and science writing, including theory, practice in writing reports, proposals, instructions, and specifications; and the use of graphics in various forms. Recommended for engineering students who desire a technical writing course.

Reflect on the specific course goals described in this syllabus and reflect on the description of the course provided above. Establish your own criteria for assessing the course and write three letters, one each to the following people: Robert Johnson, Chair, Department of Humanities; Dickie Selfe, Director of HU333; and me. In the letter, analyze the course using the criteria you have established and explain how the course has prepared you to be a successful technical communicator in general or a successful technical communicator in your field or discipline.

After analyzing the course using the criteria you have established, you will make recommendations to me (the teacher of record) and to the administrators listed above concerning how you would like to see the course changed to better meet the needs of future students.