The general purpose of this course is to prepare you for communications (primarily writing) that you will do in your career. The specific goal, however, is to assist you in developing strategies for:

- planning, drafting and revising your writing;
- writing for a variety of audiences;
- writing in group situations;
- creating on-line and/or oral presentations;
- designing your documents visually; and
- editing and reviewing the work of others

The semester will be divided into four parts, and for each part you will be required to write one or more documents aimed at appropriate audiences. You will be given a detailed assignment sheet at the beginning of each project, but here is a summary of what to expect:

I. Writing Career Documents: Resumes and Cover Letters

To begin the semester, you will write a résumé and two cover letters. In addition to creating two different types of documents that everyone will need for internship or job searches, this assignment will serve as an introduction to audience analysis, document design, and peer response.

(≈ Aug 28 — Sept. 13: 15%)

II. Writing for Users: An Instructions Case

For this project you will create three documents — a proposal memo, a set of instructions, and a user testing report.

(≈ Sept. 18 — Oct. 9: 15%)
III. Writing a Document Cycle: A Team Approach

The purpose of this project is to investigate a problem in an organization or community and then develop a "communication solution" for that problem. The cycle you produce will include a problem statement, a short proposal, a progress report, a final communication product, and an oral presentation. You will be working in teams throughout this project. 

(Oct. 11 — Nov. 30: 35%)

IV. Putting It Together: Developing a Persuasive Portfolio

To end the semester, you will put together a representative portfolio of your semester's work. You will also be required to present your portfolio orally during one of the final classes.

(Dec. 3 — Dec. 13: 20%)

Attendance, Evaluation and Materials

In addition to the above assignments, you will be evaluated on your performance as a member of the class. The expectation here is that you will participate in class discussions, attend class regularly and participate fully in group projects. However, if you are sick or have a previously arranged commitment let me know in writing. In the case of a previously planned commitment, just give me a short memo explaining the conflict in advance. Consistent lack of attendance can result in the loss of a letter grade over the semester.

(15 weeks / 15%)

Required Texts and Materials

Writing for the Technical Professions by Kristin R. Woolever. Longman Publishers. 
The Mac is Not a Typewriter by Robin Williams. 
Photocopying of various assignments, handouts.
HU 3120 Technical Communication
Class Schedule Draft — Fall, 2001
134 Walker

Part I (15%) Writing Career Documents: Résumés and Cover Letters
Tues, 8/28 — Introductions and document design principles
Thurs, 8/30 — Bring to class: two job ads in your field
Tues, 9/4 — Due: drafts (2 copies of each) of application letters for peer review
Thurs, 9/6 — Due: final drafts of application letters. Bring to class: two copies of a résumé
Tues, 9/11 — Due: draft (2 copies) of résumé
Thurs, 9/13 — Due: final draft of résumé. Form groups

Part II (15%) Writing for Users: An Instructions Case
Tues, 9/18 — Quiz on readings and class discussions
Thurs, 9/20 — Bring to class: instructional text for analysis
Tues, 9/25 — Due: Proposal Memo
Thurs, 9/27 — Draft instructions (in class)
Tues, 10/2 — Due: Set of instructions. Discuss usability
Thurs, 10/4 — Workshop usability test and plan
Tues, 10/9 — Due: User test results and revised instructions

Part III (35%) Writing a Document Cycle: A Team Approach
Thurs, 10/11
Tues, 10/16
Thurs, 10/18
Tues, 10/23
Thurs, 10/25
Tues, 10/30
Thurs, 11/1
Tues, 11/6
Thurs, 11/8
Tues, 11/13
Thurs, 11/15
Thanksgiving Recess, 11/16-11/26

Part IV (35%) Putting It Together: Developing a Persuasive Portfolio
Tues, 11/30
Thurs, 12/1
Tues, 12/4
Thurs, 12/6
Tues, 12/11
Thurs, 12/13
Final Exam Period 12/17-12/21

Parts iii and iv are incomplete. These will be filled in when our projects become more fully defined. I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus to benefit students and the structure of this class.
Application letters, also called cover letters, are closely related to the resume in purpose (to get an interview), but there are differences in form, content and style. These differences have much to do with the way letters are read, and the tradition they are a part of. In a nutshell, here are some characteristics of application letters, and guidelines for writing them.

They differ from resumes because they:

- are read in a "linear" fashion,
- follow a fairly strict format (block),
- are specific in content and more elaborative,
- are usually rewritten to suit different readers (ads).

Application letters should:

- be 'eloquent,'
- use proper jargon (but not too much of it),
- strive to use specific examples (avoid generalities, in other words),
- be 'complete' about who you are,
- elicit a response from the reader.

Application letters should not:

- directly mimic the organization or content of the resume,
- sound boastful,
- use many visual emphasis conventions (highlighting),
- be 'chatty,'
- be overly clever (unless you can get away with it).

Your assignment is to draft an application letter for each of the job advertisements you brought to class. The letters should pay particular attention to the specific needs of the audience as indicated by the job ads. They should strive to be on one page, but going on to a second page is acceptable if you have enough to say without being wordy. In addition, these letters should follow the format of the block style discussed in class (see sample in Woolever).
Application Letter Response

Writer ____________ Responder ________________

- Audience Awareness/Level of Information
  Does the writer introduce him/her self or orient the reader in an appropriate manner? Are appropriate keywords used? Is the level of info and development adequate for the reader? Are there enough good examples? Are the examples compelling?

- Organization
  Does each paragraph treat a single topic? Is there a consistent organizational pattern to the paragraphs? Does the organization highlight the strengths of the writer? Is there a consistent internal paragraph organization/flow?

- Diction/Tone
  Is jargon used? Is the jargon too heavy or high-level? Is the tone chatty/stuffy?

- Conventions
  Correct spelling/grammar? Is the letter format correct/consistent? Typos?
Diagnostic Survey for 3120 students

Your completion of this survey will help me finalize the design of the course. I would like you to reflect and then answer the questions thoroughly. I’ve listed the questions together, so that you can answer them in the space below and on the back. Feel free to use another sheet of paper, or type out your answers. Don’t hesitate to format your response in paragraphs; as you can see the questions are grouped according to themes. Thank you.

Name: __________________________

Major (write out): __________________________

1. Why are you taking this course?
2. What writing courses have you taken since your junior year in high school?
3. What do you expect to learn from this course?
4. In your opinion, what are the qualities of an excellent college course?
5. Are there any communication modes or types of writing that you would like to work on especially?
6. Do you consider yourself a writer?
7. Do you think of yourself as a leader or supportive team member?
8. What do you think makes group work successful?
9. What kinds of group projects have you been a participant in—what was your role?
10. What are your short term and long term goals, and how will technical and scientific communication fit into your future (please be specific even though this question is largely speculative).