Michigan Technological University  
HU 2600  
Introduction to the Field of Scientific & Technical Communication  
Fall Semester 2008

Instructor: Ann Brady, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Rhetoric & Technical Communication
Director of STC/A Program

Extension: 7-2066
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Office Hours: T Th: 2-3:00, W: 11:00-noon in 329A Walker Arts & Humanities, and by appointment
Course Hours: T Th: 12:35-1:50 in Walker 134

Required Texts: A Strategic Guide to Technical Communication (Graves & Graves)
Selected Readings

Course Description: HU 2600 is designed to broaden your understanding of scientific and technical communication. Grounded in the study of rhetoric, the course not only prepares you to write effectively in a variety of contexts, but also to be aware of the social and ethical responsibilities you must consider in the workplace.

Course Goals: Scientific and technical documents include a wide range of subjects, goals, information sources, readers, and circumstances that lead to their preparation. To be successful as a writer in the many genres that comprise the field, you need to be rhetorically informed and thus able to assess your audience and identify your own purposes.

The course has two goals. First, it introduces you to the field of scientific and technical communication; it demonstrates how technical communication differs from the conventional writing that is typically taught in high school and college. Secondly it teaches you how to think rhetorically and to produce transactional documents—that is documents that are designed to get things done.

Course Requirements:

1. Readings: I expect you to read the texts assigned in the syllabus before the class session and to actively and thoughtfully discuss the topics for a given session. Additional readings may be assigned during the semester for which you will be responsible.
2. **Written assignments:** Although I may modify the assignment topics and due dates during the semester, I plan for five different types of written assignments.

First, I'll ask you to interview someone who writes or designs as a professional communicator or as part of their job and report your findings in a memo.

Second, I'll ask you to do a rhetorical analysis.

Third, I'll ask you to review or produce a piece of science writing.

Fourth, I'll ask you to write a formal report. Here, I'll ask you to identify an organization to which you belong and do an assessment report of its communication functions.

Finally, I'll ask you to begin your STC/A portfolio.

In this class, your documents will typically go through a cycle that includes pre-writing or a proposal, a peer-reviewed rough draft, comments from me, and a final draft accompanied by a self-assessment memo.

- Proposals will indicate your audience, purpose, goals, and concerns.
- Peer reviews are essential since they prepare you for the collaborative and critically demanding work of document production, both in the classroom and the workplace. Since the reviews are a privilege and a responsibility, use them well. Come prepared, be clear, specific, and complete in your assessment of your peers' work, and demand the same for your own.
- I'll review your work by email using the comment function. That means that you'll need to send me your drafts as word.doc attachments and then look for my response in your inboxes.
- Self-assessments will indicate what you like about what you produced, what you'd change about it, and what you've learned.
- Final drafts should come in clipped together with working drafts and peer reviews. This allows me to take a look at the work you've done in the document cycle, not just the last draft of your work.

Keep a digital copy of each assignment you complete.

3. **Teamed oral reports and individual abstracts:** You'll be asked to investigate a particular niche in the profession that is described in the text by Lutz and Storms (on reserve in the library) or that you are interested in investigating (i.e. web design). If you use topics from Lutz and Storms, your investigation and report should begin with this text but should go beyond it using the additional resources at the end of each chapter to reinforce or amplify what you have to say. If you choose a topic not in Lutz and Storms, you should have access to information similar to what they present. In your oral report, you should introduce
the professional area, explaining its applications, responsibilities and
employment outlook. The presentation should not exceed 20 minutes; you should
plan to devote 5 minutes of this time to audience questions. You should include
one visual, although not necessarily PowerPoint. Finally, you should plan to
submit a summary of your presentation on the day of your talk.

4. Portfolios: Throughout the semester, you should keep a running file of your
work, which will serve as the basis for two portfolio pieces you will turn in at the
end of the semester. In November, I’ll ask you to choose one document you’ve
produced in this class, revise it, and write an accompanying introduction in which
you reflect on the piece and what you’ve learned as a result of working on it.

Professional writers use their portfolios to showcase their best work for possible
employers and for professional awards. You’ll begin yours in this class, watch it
grow as you advance through the program, and present it as part of your
capstone before you graduate.

5. Academic honesty: Unless the assignment calls for a collaborative effort, I
expect that the work you submit to me will be yours. If you are referring to or
using other sources, acknowledge them, using proper form. Evidence of copied
or plagiarized work is cause for serious disciplinary action by the University.

6. Attendance: I expect you to attend every class meeting, ready to participate
fully and thoughtfully. If you miss more than three of our classes, I will drop your
final grade. If you miss six, I will fail you. If you must be absent, please contact
me via e-mail or speak with me in person.

7. Grading: You can earn an A or B in this class if you complete all assignments
and reach deadlines, do quality work, and demonstrate genuine commitment.
You’ll earn a C if you meet deadlines with satisfactory effort or if some of your
assignments are incomplete. You’ll receive a D or F if your assignments are
poorly executed or overdue, or if your attendance, participation, or effort is
unsatisfactory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral reports on STC niches</td>
<td>05%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio presentation</td>
<td>05%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional practices</td>
<td>05%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio self-assessment letter and revision</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhetorical analysis</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science writing piece</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMRD report</td>
<td>25%</td>
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If you have questions about your grade at any time during the semester, let me
know so that we can discuss it.
8. **MTU Policies:** Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or the Affirmative Action Office, at 487-3310.

9. **Grading standards:**

   A (truly excellent). A work is an example of highly effective professional writing. It makes its purposes clear, reflects concern for its audience’s needs and responses, and is detailed, persuasive, effectively organized, exhibits appropriate format and tone, and is grammatically correct.

   B (very good). B work is effective and would succeed in most professional communication circumstances. It may lack the polish or effectiveness of an A.

   C (satisfactory). C work is effective though it lacks features necessary to succeed completely with a professional audience. Its purpose may not be entirely clear, it may not be effectively organized, it may not exhibit an appropriate tone or format, or it entails grammatical errors that make it difficult to read or understand than necessary.

   D (poor). D work does not communicate effectively for several reasons. It may display an inadequate understanding of purpose or audience. It may lack information or be unpersuasive. Its organization may be confusing or misleading, and its tone or format may be inappropriate. It may be difficult to understand or contain serious errors in grammar.

   F (unacceptable). F work does not satisfy the requirements of the assignment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Meets assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Most aspects</td>
<td>Significant gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Interestingly and clearly advanced</td>
<td>Clearly advanced</td>
<td>May be good but only implied</td>
<td>Ambiguous or absent, generic or trite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Valid and sufficient support provided</td>
<td>Some gaps or weak support</td>
<td>Some support, but weak or not clearly relevant</td>
<td>Poor support or connections not shown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>Original and creative</td>
<td>Demonstrates thought</td>
<td>Conventional or generic</td>
<td>Superficial or incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Logical ordering</td>
<td>Establishes and follows a pattern</td>
<td>Generally follows a pattern; some gaps</td>
<td>Unapparent pattern or hard to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraphs</td>
<td>Coherent and unified</td>
<td>Usually coherent and unified</td>
<td>Some incoherent or not unified</td>
<td>Incoherent or lacking unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>Provided as needed</td>
<td>Provided as needed</td>
<td>Sometimes missing</td>
<td>Enough missing to cause confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Sentences</td>
<td>Correct, with some variety</td>
<td>Correct, but elementary</td>
<td>Surface errors, such as comma splices or fragments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correct and varied, according to meaning</td>
<td>Correct, with some variety</td>
<td>Correct, but elementary</td>
<td>Surface errors, such as comma splices or fragments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Some debatable word choices</td>
<td>Frequent misuse of words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Very few mistakes</td>
<td>Misspellings confuse meaning</td>
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