SYLLABUS FOR
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION
HU3120, SECTION 4—SPRING 2009

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INSTRUCTOR
Diane Keranen
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Office: Walker Arts & Humanities Center room 312
Phone: 487-3235
Office hours: 11:00-12:00, M-W; and by appointment
Class meets: 1:00-1:55, M-W
Classroom: Walker Arts & Humanities Center, room 114
Computer lab (cltl): Walker Arts & Humanities Center, room 113
Class email list: techcomm4-1
Class blog: hu-thirtyonetwenty

I reserve the right to revise the syllabus, course schedule, projects, and assignments.

REQUIRED MATERIALS
JOURNAL—this can be a small notebook, loose-leaf paper, or even scrap that you can keep track of and bring to class for short reflective, in-class writing assignments.

PROJECT RINGBINDER(s)—a 1.5”-2” hard-cover, 3-ring binder and divider tabs for all projects (or a smaller 3-ring binder for individual projects for storing project data, files, drafts, etc. and for handing in projects). This is a utility binder that will see a lot of use. It doesn’t have to be pretty, it needs to be durable and easy to use.

PORTFOLIO BINDER & DIVIDERS—Wait until after midterm assessments before purchasing a final portfolio binder & dividers because you need to make some careful choices about how to present your work before knowing what will work for you (or if you even need them at all!).

A COURSE DESCRIPTION
HU3120 is a course in rhetoric and recognizes that communication ‘best practices’ are not universal but are, instead, dependent on the audience, situation, and purpose for getting things done. This course will familiarize you with some of the communication demands of the professional workplace and challenge you critically consider, evaluate, and determine the technical communicator’s responsibilities to stakeholders in the rhetorical situation. This course will also provide opportunities that will challenge you to demonstrate you can meet these demands.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO PASS THIS CLASS
First, you are expected to engage the content of the course and be attentive to all of your communications whatever form they take: expressing your ideas in class; responses to colleagues; body language in the classroom; emails to me and to the class list; etc.

Second, you will need to demonstrate proficiency in five broad areas: reading, critique, assignments & projects, reflection, and social practices. Basically, they entail the following:

1. READING
You will be assigned a variety of readings to help you accomplish the goals of this class. Readings will be assigned as needed to help you develop stronger technical communication strategies, critical thinking, and resourcefulness. Among the strategies the readings will help you develop are how to better: plan, draft, and revise written, visual, and/or spoken texts; evaluate and determine the most appropriate research for a rhetorical situation; provide critique of communication strategies; receive and evaluate critique and make improvements to texts you produce; develop control over document structure and content (written, visual, and spoken); participate in a creative design team; recognize genres; write for a variety of audiences; and write in group situations.

2. CRITIQUE
You will analyze real world texts that have been used to get things done (and some that have failed to do so). Fluency in recognizing and applying communication strategies is required to do well in this class. Effective listening skills must also be demonstrated.

3. ASSIGNMENTS & PROJECTS
You are expected to use the strategies learned through class readings and critique in all assignments and projects in the process of completing the assigned work of this class. The major project cycles include:
- Career Documents
- Recommendation Report Cycle
- Writing and Designing Technical Information
- Describing & Summarizing Technical Information
- Professional Presentation
- Course Portfolio
Keep all copies and versions of your work: planning notes, drafts, mock-ups, finals, etc. Keep everything!

4. REFLECTION
To help you better understand what you're doing well, what you're doing less well, what you feel safe doing, where you can improve, and how to improve, you'll be required to write a reflection letter. This letter is a required component of your work and will be graded.

This writing will be useful to you as you write your reflection letter for your course portfolio.

5. SOCIAL PRACTICES
Be in class, contribute constructively to class discussions, engage productively in class and in peer groups, do your best for your group, ask questions, etc.—basically, participate productively and constructively in this class. This comes out of engaging with the class and discussing relevant, productive, and socially responsible ideas and bringing relevant, productive, and socially responsible ideas into the conversation. This is the purpose of the "Journal." This writing will be useful to you as you write your reflection letter for your course portfolio.

EVALUATION OF YOUR WORK
I’ll be up front about the questions I’ll be asking myself when I evaluate your work. But, for now, know that I will be asking these types of questions:
- Would this work be appropriate in a professional setting?
- Does this work demonstrate the student is attentive to the rhetorical situation, audience, and purpose for this project?
- Does this work demonstrate effective and appropriate use of visuals?
- Does this work demonstrate the student can incorporate relevant and compelling research?
- As the boss, would I be impressed/satisfied/disappointed/fun off to be handed this project?
- Is this work free from mechanical, spelling, and grammatical errors?

GRADING
You must finish all assignments and turn in a complete portfolio to fulfill the requirements and receive a passing grade in this class. Worked another way, if you do not complete all assignments and turn in a complete portfolio, you will not receive a passing grade in this class.

Letter grade scale:
- A-Excellent/exceptional (100-95%)
- AB-Very good (94-90%)
- B-Good (89-85%)
- BC-Above average (84-80%)
- C-Average (79-75%)
- CD-Below average (74-70%)
- D-Inferior (69-65%)
- F-Failure (64-0)

PORTFOLIO (printed version & PDF version)—for more detailed information, see the assignment sheet for this project (TBA), but for now know that for each project you work on, you will receive critique and feedback. Your final portfolio will be built from the work you’ve done during the semester, any handouts you’ve received from your colleagues and from me. You will receive a mid-term assessment and final grade on your portfolio.

SOCIAL PRACTICE—Social practice includes such things as attending class prepared to contribute and by contributing constructively to class discussions, fulfilling your responsibility to engage in group, asking questions in class, answering questions in class, etc. Participation in class will help you and everyone in the class team, remember, and apply the concepts of this course. Social practice grades can be significantly affected by attendance, so make sure to read the attendance policy below. Social practices grades are also closely tied to timely completion of work. We will carry out peer feedback sessions that will be guided by me, but provided by you and your colleagues. We will discuss your feedback and critiques in class. Not being present and prepared for peer feedback sessions will result in a 3% reduction to your social practices grade. You will receive a mid-term assessment and final grade on your social practices.

Grade breakdown by %: portfolio—60%, social practices—40%

MAKING UP FOR MISSED DEADLINES
Be sure to have your work done on the due dates. Because critique and feedback are part of in-class activities, you’ll need to be on time to participate and get feedback you need if you’re not prepared. So it’s a double-whammy if you don’t get done on time. If you miss deadlines, you will be responsible for forming an assessment group of your class peers. This will require you to develop a very persuasive argument to convince your colleagues to give you some of their time to catch you up.

If you miss deadlines for reasons out of your control, come talk to me so we can work out a reasonable course of action to catch you up. Reasons such as sleeping through your alarm or forgetting the due date or not getting back from out of town do not fall into the "out of your control" category.

WHERE TO GO FOR EXTRA HELP
If you haven’t already, check out the Michigan Tech Writing Center. It’s located in Walker, room 107, and their hours are posted. You are expected to write at a level reflecting the clarity, coherence, and competence of an upper-level college student preparing to enter the workforce. The Writing Center’s mission is to work with the faculty and staff to address the challenges of learning and communicating in complex and rapidly changing environments. Take your assignment sheet with you when you go for coaching. The Writing Center is an excellent resource, so check them out early in the semester. Visit them on the web.

POLICIES
ATTENDANCE
I expect you to hold yourself accountable for your decision to seek a Bachelor’s degree and to follow through on that choice. If you miss class, inquire to the class email list to find out what you missed, or ask your peers to fill you in. Do not email me to ask if you missed anything important, because I can tell you now that the answer is “yes.” This is not a lecture course so you will be missing out on interactions that can not be replicated outside of class. If you have extraordinary circumstances, then, of course, meet with me to discuss how to catch up.

Attending class means you need to bring three things: your person, your thinking, and your participation. Attending class physically is only worth partial credit. If you come to every class during the semester but do not participate in discussion and activities, you will only earn half of the social practice credit (should be a third, but I give a bonus for perfect attendance, keep reading).

I allow three missed classes. Use them frugally. If you must miss class for a planned event (grant write, interview, etc.) it counts as one of these three misses. After the three are used up, each absence will result in a 5% reduction.
to your social practice percentage. For example, if you're on track for earning all 40% for social practices, and you miss a fourth class, your 4% drops to 35% maximum possible credit. The count starts on the first day of class. A week to the wise (so do not squander your three missed classes. I do not require written excuses. You're either in class or your not. If you have extraordinary circumstances, then, of course, meet with me about how to catch up.

An attendance record will be kept by requiring you to sign each class day's attendance sheet. This will be the record of your physical attendance, so remember to sign in. If you forget to sign the attendance sheet, it counts as an absence.

For perfect attendance, you'll earn a half letter grade increase in your final grade in this class (portfolio grade + social practice grade + 1/2 letter grade).

EMAIL
Do email me if you have questions about your progress in the class. I check my email frequently, but allow at least a full business day for me to get back to you.
Do email the class list if you have something constructive to add to our class discussion, but didn't think of it in time to share it in class. This counts as social practice.
Do not email me any homework unless you check with me first or if the assignment sheet specifies an email to me.

You will have ample opportunity to hand in the work I ask you to hand in.

PERSONAL INTEGRITY
By default, I respect each of you as thoughtful, respectful, motivated adults, and I expect the same in return. You've done what it takes to be able to take this class, and I've done what it takes to be able to teach this class. We have plenty of history and situational context to rely on as a basis for success allowing us to work together to make this a great class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Face it, college is hard work. You're an adult and here by choice, so don't cheat. It's not valued here. It's not valued elsewhere. Plagiarism and cheating are not only dishonest, but they also cheat you out of learning—the primary reason you are here. Take a moment to learn more about your university's commitment to academic integrity at its Academic Integrity Resource Center.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
Michigan Technological University is committed to equal opportunity. Take a moment to learn more about your university's commitment to Educational Opportunity.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
The Affirmative Programs Office (commonly called the Affirmative Action Office, or AAO) facilitates Michigan Tech's development of an environment that is free from prejudicial discrimination or harassment and that is conducive to learning and individual growth for all campus members and visitors. Take a moment to learn more about your university's commitment to Affirmative Programs.

I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE SYLLABUS, COURSE SCHEDULE, PROJECTS, AND ASSIGNMENTS.