TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION - HU3120.R03
Summer 2010, Room 144 Walker, MTWR 12:35 - 1:50 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

HU3120, Technical and Scientific Communication, serves advanced undergraduate students who either intend to pursue a career in technical communication or who will use forms of scientific and technical communication during the course of their professional and personal lives: that's you. The general purpose of this course is to prepare you for the kinds of professional communication (primarily writing) that you will do in your career, although the skills that you learn will be applicable outside of your professional community as well. More specifically, this course is designed to assist you in developing strategies for:

- planning, drafting, and revising your writing, individually and collaboratively;
- writing for a variety of audiences and purposes;
- creating online and/or oral presentations;
- designing your documents visually;
- editing and reviewing your own work and the work of others; and
- communicating in an ethically responsible manner

REQUIRED TEXTS

- This syllabus.
- For our main course "text," we will be using Purdue's Online Writing Lab, or OWL: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/.
- Daily readings will be posted as pdfs or links on the course's Blackboard site: www.blackboard.mtu.edu. Make sure you check the "readings and daily assignments" folder regularly for updates. Bring copies of the readings or detailed notes on the readings to class so that you are prepared to discuss them.
- If you would like to purchase a hard copy technical communication handbook for reference, I recommend Kirtin Woolaver's Writing for the Technical Profession (3rd or 4th ed.)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. Marika Seigel
Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Technical Communication
Office: 220 Walker Arts & Humanities Center, MTU
Email: maseigel@mtu.edu
Phone: 906.487.3093
Office Hours MTWR 11:00 - 12:00 & by appointment

BASIC EXPECTATIONS

I expect you to complete all components of the three course projects: Making Information Useful (document redesign and rhetorical analysis); Library Guide Project (usability test plan, guide prototype, progress report, usability report, letter of transmittal; and Job Application Package (two resumes, two cover letters, and rhetorical analysis memo). NB: You must complete all of these assignments to receive a passing grade in the course.

I also expect you to attend class every day, do the reading and other daily assignments and have all course materials with you, and to participate actively in discussion.

Finally, I expect you to be honest, courteous, and professional.
COURSE CALENDAR, SUMMER 2010

The following calendar is meant to give you a rough guideline for what we will cover when in this course. Topics and due dates are subject to change. I will post daily reading and writing assignments to the “Readings and daily assignments” folder in Blackboard. I will post changes to major assignment due dates to the Blackboard calendar. If you are absent, please visit the course site on Blackboard (www.blackboard.mtu.edu) or find out from a classmate what you missed. Absence is not an excuse for failing to complete an assignment.

Week 1

Mon. 05.10: Introductions. What is technical communication?
Tue. 05.11: Introduce first assignment: Making Information Useful. The rhetorical situation.
Wed. 05.12: Visual rhetoric and document design. Discuss interview questions for Library Guide Project.
Thu. 05.13: Typography.

Week 2

Mon. 05.17: Rough draft workshop. Making Information Useful assignment (bring rough draft to class).
Tue. 05.18: Making Information Useful assignment due; Introduction to instructions & usability.
Thu. 05.20: Form groups. Heuristic evaluation of current guide.

Week 3

Mon. 05.24: Usability research and testing. Discuss/analyze interview data.
Tue. 05.25: Usability, continued. Best practices for instructions.
Wed. 05.26: Group work: begin work on prototype, test plan.
Thu. 05.27: Usability test plan due (group assignment).

Week 4

Mon. 05.31: No class: Memorial Day.
Tue. 06.01: Library Guide prototype due. Testing.
Wed. 06.02: Testing. Discuss rhetoric of reports.
Thu. 06.03: Progress report due (individual assignment). Group work.

Week 5

Mon. 06.07: Discuss letter of transmittal. Rough draft of usability report due.
Tue. 06.08: Group work.
Wed. 06.09: Rough draft of letter of transmittal due.
Thu. 06.10: Group work.

Week 6

Mon. 06.14: Client presentations. Final draft of usability report, letter of transmittal, and guide prototype due.
Tue. 06.15: Introduce Job Application Package.
Wed. 06.16: Bring in two job ads & list of skills/qualifications. Discuss resumes.
Thu. 06.17: Resumes, continued. Introduce cover letters.

Week 7

Mon. 06.21: Cover letters, continued.
Tue. 06.22: Rhetorical analysis memo.
Wed. 06.23: Rough draft workshop. Job Application Package.
Thu. 06.24: Job application package due. Course wrap-up and evaluations.
UNIVERSITY POLICY

Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance with the University's policies.

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

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 (487-3310).

You can find more information about these University policies here:

- Academic Integrity:
  https://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/deas/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

- Affirmative Action:
  http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aao/

- Disability Services:
  http://www.admin.mtu.edu/rel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability

- Equal Opportunity Statement:

ATTENDANCE & TARDINESS POLICY

I expect you to attend class every day, to be on time, and to have your textbook, syllabus, and all your work with you. Because this class is so dependent active and engaged discussion, it is crucial that you attend every class period and that you are prepared to discuss the reading. If you are sick or have a previously arranged commitment let me know in writing.

In addition to affecting your participation grade, consistent lack of attendance ("excused" or "unexcused") can result in a lowered overall course grade, up to and including an F. I will notify you if your overall grade is in danger due to excessive absence. NB: If you are texting, surfing, reading the newspaper, etc., during class, I will consider you to be absent. When you are in my class, I expect you to be present and engaged. You are responsible for any homework assigned and due on days you are absent.

In this course, as in the working world, you must turn in your work on time. All projects are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated on the syllabus or given in class. Assignments turned in late will be penalized 1 letter grade per day (B to C, BC to CD) unless you have made other arrangements with me in advance.
GRADING

When grading each of your assignments, I will ask one overriding question: "Does this document do its job successfully?" That is, would your communication have the intended effect on the reader you are addressing?

I will, of course, recognize the difference between a competent performance (a "C") and good and excellent performances ("B" and "A"):

- **A excellent** – the work is of near professional quality. The document meets all the objectives of the assignment and exceeds many. The content is mature, thorough, and well-suited for the audience; the style is clear, accurate, and forceful; the information is well-organized and formatted so that it is accessible and attractive; the mechanics and grammar are correct.

- **B good** – the document meets the objectives of the assignment, but it needs minor improvements in style; or it contains easily correctable errors in grammar, format, or content; or its content is superficial.

- **C competent** – the document needs significant improvement in concept, details, development, organization, grammar, or format. It may be formally correct but superficial in content.

- **D marginally acceptable** – the document meets some of the objectives but ignores others; the content is inadequately developed; or it contains numerous or major errors.

- **F unacceptable** – the document does not have enough information, does something other than the assignment required, or it contains major errors or excessive errors.

Your final grade will be determined by the grades you receive on written and in-class assignments as well as on class participation, according to the following weighting:

- Making Information Useful: 15%
- Library Guide Project: 45%
- Job Application Package: 20%
- Class participation/daily work: 20%