HU4690 (Special Topics): Technical Communication in Global Contexts

instructor: Jingfang Ren  
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Time: T TH 2:05-3:20 pm  
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Location: Walker 143  
E-mail: jren1@mtu.edu  
Office hours: T W TH 3:30-11:30am or by appointment  
Class mailing list: HU4690SP11-L@MTU.EDU

Course Information

Course description
As the world flattens, both economic globalization ("the integration and rapid interaction of economies of other countries") and cultural globalization ("the transnational migration of people, information, and consumer culture") impact the workplace and offer new challenges and opportunities for technical communicators, who often work with and for people from diverse linguistic, cultural, and professional backgrounds. This course offers a space to reflect and act upon these opportunities and challenges in a way that leads to effective, efficient, and ethical communicative practices in the global workplace.

Course goals
Upon completion of this course, you should be able to

- Understand the social, cultural, historical, political, economic, and rhetorical situatedness of all communication practices
- Demonstrate knowledge of globalization, localization, cultural models and schema, plain English, cultural palette, international usability and ethics, contrastive rhetoric, technical translation, and other important issues and topics covered in course readings and class discussion
- Select, analyze, and use relevant research to facilitate understanding and production of "good" technical communication in particular social, cultural, and organizational contexts
- Make effective writing and design decisions for diverse audiences
- Communicate effectively with international audiences

Course Materials

MTU Policies

Academic integrity
Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses. MTU's Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as "knowingly copying another's work or ideas and calling them one's own or not giving proper credit or citation," and the policy covers copying sections or entire papers from printed or electronic sources as well as handing in papers written by students for other classes or purchasing academic papers. Plagiarism and cheating are not only dishonest but they cheat

you out of learning. For more information, see
http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html.

Discrimination
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding
discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If
you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to
education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Dean of Students,
487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your
advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office at 487-3310. For more
information, see
http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aao.

Class Policies and Requirements
You are expected to attend all class meetings and to be in class and ready to
contribute to the discussion at the beginning of class. You may have two (2)
absences for any reason during the semester. Documented, excused absences will
be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and require written explanation of the
circumstances with supporting documents when applicable (e.g., letter from your
coach, doctor’s note, conference itinerary, invitation for job interview). For each
unexcused absence after the first two (2), you will lose 50 points of your final
grade. Even when absent, you are responsible for completing and turning in
assignments when they are due. You may contact another student about in-class
work missed when you are absent or come to see me during my office hours.

Late work
All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated on the
course calendar. Late papers and assignments are generally NOT accepted;
however, personal emergencies will be taken into consideration as long as you
discuss your situation with me in person, by phone, or via email at least 24 hours
ahead of time. In addition, you may use up to one (1) “computer excuse”,
regardless of the situation, to turn in late work.

The late work policy does apply even if you lose your work due to technological failures. You are responsible for keeping complete copies of your
work for the semester. In team writing situations, make sure that all team
members always have the most current version of the document that the team is
working on at any stage of the project cycle.

Collaboration
Collaborative work is a required component of the course. You and your project
team members are responsible for updating one another and me about assignment
development and progress. In addition, you are also responsible for negotiating
together all aspects of your work, including planning, drafting, revising, file
managing, and record-keeping. At the end of the team project cycle, I will ask
individual members to complete a Peer Collaboration Evaluation Form, which
will be used to help determine your collaboration score for a particular team
document.

Revision
You are encouraged to revise and resubmit your work for further evaluation or
grade change. I may also revise the syllabus and course calendar throughout the
semester to better serve your needs.
Conferences
See me in my office (325 Walker) when you have questions about an assignment or when you would like to try out some ideas before a document is due. You should also see me to get help with particular writing problems, to resolve differences about grades, or to suggest ways to improve the course. If you cannot make my regularly scheduled office hours (T W TH 9:30-11:30am), just email me to set up an appointment, and I'll try my best to accommodate your schedule.

Summary of Major Projects and Assignments
- Case analysis and presentation (in pairs; 150 pts)
- International client project (team; 400 pts)
- Annotated bibliography (individual; 200 pts)

Other assignments
In addition to the major projects listed above, you will also complete some smaller assignments throughout the semester, including the following:
- A one-page, single-spaced response paper on a chapter of your choice from Friedman book (individual; 50 pts)
- A one-page single-spaced response paper on ONE assigned article (individual; 50 pts)
- Leadership of class discussion on ONE assigned article (individual; 100 pts)
- Participation and contribution (holistic and cumulative; 100 pts)

Extra credit opportunities (you can only choose ONE):
- Attend an event (e.g., workshop, conference presentation, STC speaker series etc.) that you think would help you develop a better understanding of the theory or practice of scientific and technical communication in global contexts. Write a one-page memo detailing your experience. You are encouraged to share info about such events with other members of our HU4690 community (60 pts)
- Lead class discussion on an additional reading (100 pts)

Grading
Generally speaking, audience, purpose, communication context, design, clarity, and professional ethos are some of the major factors that I take into consideration when grading your documents. For each assignment, I'll use a specific set of criteria that highlight the objectives or goals of that particular assignment, which can be found in the assignment description/prompt.

Grade conversion
The assignments are "worth" the above indicated amounts. In addition, you must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in this course. Late assignments (except the one for which you used your "computer excuse") lose 50pts for each day (anytime past 5:00pm) of the due day. Use the table below to convert points to letter grades.

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