Syllabus: HU3120 (Technical and Scientific Communication)

Instructor: Jingfang Ren
Office: Walker 325
Time: T TH 2.05-3.20pm
Location: Walker 120A
Phone: 487-3134
Office hours: T W TH 9.30-11.00am or by appointment
E-mail: jren1@mtu.edu
Class mailing list: hu3120-r06-L@mtu.edu

Course Information

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. More specifically, this course is designed to assist you in developing skills and strategies in the following categories:

Communication in context
- Analyze professional and cultural contexts to determine how they shape the various purposes and forms of your writing
- Write to the different levels of technical expertise of a range of audiences and stakeholders to foster technical and/or scientific understanding in a variety of media and genres

Project management
- Understand, develop and deploy various strategies for planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing documents both individually and collaboratively
- Select and use appropriate communication technologies that effectively and ethically address professional situations and audiences

Teamwork
- Work with colleagues in F2F and networked environments to determine roles, assign tasks, as well as manage team conflicts
- Respond to the work of others and incorporate peer feedback in revision

Visual design
- Interpret and argue with visual design
- Ensure the technical accuracy and effectiveness of visual content

Required Materials
Readings and handouts (print or PDF) provided by instructor
USB flash drive (or any portable device of your choice that serves similar purposes)

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 Dean of Students (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your academic advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office at 487-3310. For more information, see http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aaop/

Class Policies and Requirements

Attendance

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 an email explaining the circumstances with supporting documents when applicable (e.g., letter from your coach, doctor’s note, invitation for on-site 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 other students about in-class work missed when you are absent or come to see me during my office hours.

Late Work

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 document cycle.

Teamwork

Teamwork 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. When I assign a team project, I will ask individual team members to complete a Peer Collaboration Evaluation Form, which will be used to help determine your contribution grade for a particular team project.

Revision

You are encouraged to revise and resubmit your work for further evaluation or grade change. I may also revise the syllabus and other course materials 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 can’t make my regularly scheduled office hours (T W TH 9.30-11.00am), just email me to set up an appointment, and I’ll try my best to accommodate your schedule.
Summary of Major Projects and Assignments

This semester is divided into three (3) major project cycles, and for each cycle, you will compose documents aimed at specific audiences. I’ll give you a separate handout for each cycle as we proceed through the semester, but here is a summary of what to expect:

**Cycle I: Career documents (individual; 200 pts)**
To begin the semester, you will create three critical documents that everyone will need for internship or job searches. This cycle also introduces you to audience analysis, document design, and peer response. For this cycle, you will create a generic resume, a customized resume, a job application letter (aka cover letter), and an oral presentation.

**Cycle II: Illustrated instructions (team; 300 pts)**
This cycle allows you to examine with a concrete physical example how Audience, Purpose, and Context shape your writing processes and products. Further, it introduces you to two important aspects of technical and scientific communication: cross-functional teamwork and working with/for users. For this cycle, you will create a project proposal, a user and task analysis grid, lo-fidelity prototypes of your document, a complete set of instructions with illustrations (pre-user test version), and periodic team progress reports.

**Cycle III: User test report (team; 350 pts)**
Cycle III is based on and continues the work produced in Cycle II. It provides an opportunity for you to interact with users, test the usability of the illustrated instructions you created previously, and use user feedback to improve your work. For this cycle, you will create a project planning memo, a packet of user test materials, a user test report detailing test results, a post-user test version of illustrated instructions, an oral presentation, and periodic team progress reports.

In addition to the major document cycles, you will also complete some smaller assignments throughout the semester, including the following:
- Presentation on assigned readings (in pairs; 50 pts)
- Participation and in-class writing (individual and cumulative; 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.

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 10pts for each day (anytime past 5:00pm) of the due day. Use the table below to convert points to letter grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Conversion</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>935-1000 pts</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>865-934 pts</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>795-864 pts</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>725-794 pts</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>665-724 pts</th>
<th>CD</th>
<th>595-664 pts</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>540-594 pts</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Don’t go there...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Grade Conversion | A     | 935-1000 pts | AB | 865-934 pts | B   | 795-864 pts | BC | 725-794 pts | C   | 665-724 pts | CD  | 595-664 pts | D   | 540-594 pts | F   | Don’t go there... |