Syllabus: HU3120 (Technical and Professional Communication)

Instructor: Jingfang Ren  
Office: Walker 325  
Time: T TH 3.35-4.50pm  
Phone: 487-3134  
Location: Walker 120A  
E-mail: jren1@mtu.edu  
Prerequisite: UN200  
Course/lab fee: $ 55

Office hours: T W TH 9.30-11.00am or by appointment

Course Information

Course Description

The general purpose of this course is to prepare you for the kinds of professional communication 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

Student work products (exams, essays, projects, etc.) may be used for purposes of university, program, or course assessment. All work used for assessment purposes will not include any individual student identification.

Michigan Tech has standard policies on academic misconduct and complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For more information about reasonable accommodation for or equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at (906) 487-2212 or go to http://www.mtu.edu/provost/faculty-resources/syllabus-policies/
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
If you’d like to hold an individual conference with me about an assignment or about other aspects of this class, see me in Walker 325. 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 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.

Other Assignments
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.

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points Range</th>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>AB</td>
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