CSK 302 - Technical Writing & Communication

Instructor: Dr. Tara Rider
Office Location: Chemistry Building, 370B
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays – 11.30-12.30 and by appointment.
Email: tara.rider@stonybrook.edu

Technical Writing is a field and a profession with a unique history and distinctive practices. While few students will become professional technical writers, you will become professionals possessing specialized knowledge and information. To convey your knowledge to diverse audiences in unique settings necessitates that you become accomplished technical communicators. As technical communicators, you will craft messages using ever changing and increasingly powerful, integrated and convenient media. This course will prepare you to communicate knowledge and information through various means to audiences of experts, professionals and laypersons. We will discuss and practice principles and procedure of technical writing including attention to analyzing audience and purpose, organizing information, designing graphic aids, and writing such specialized forms as abstracts, instructions, and proposals.

REQUIRED TEXTS: Assorted handouts, readings and postings on Blackboard

RECOMMENDED TEXT: The Elements of Technical Writing by Robert Bly

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
By the end of the course, the student will demonstrate:
1. The ability to act ethically in their role in the communication situation.
2. The ability to act critically as they apply principles taught in the course to communication situations.
3. Evaluate the rhetorical context of a given writing situation and write accordingly. Included in this evaluation are adapting to the communication situation by analyzing the audience, the writer's role, and the appropriate ethical dimensions.
4. Apply concepts of information design. These concepts include effective ways to design documents for print, web, and other electronic means of communication in order to construct documents meaningful to the audience.
5. Effectively create standard formats used to construct meaningful documents. These formats include genres such as various kinds of reports, sets of instructions, letters and memos, and various electronic genres.
6. Use visual items in effectively constructing meaning in communication situations. These items include, but are not limited to, tables and graphs, photographs, drawings and schematics, and various electronic creations such as screen captures.
7. Effectively negotiate the process of completing technical documents. These processes include planning, drafting, editing and revising to quality standards, and, where appropriate, usability testing, research methods and appropriate citation of sources.
8. Create clear, concise technical documents that effectively use style and grammar and information structure in ways that create meaning with the reader.
9. Collaborate effectively in various writing situations, including planning, creating, managing, evaluating, editing and revising document production.
10. Research a topic, with appropriate disciplinary inferences, and develop a well-written, grammatically appropriate grant proposal.
11. Research a topic and develop an oral argument and organize supporting details to be presented orally. The oral presentation with the use of appropriate media will be evaluated by peers and instructor based on an established criteria.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. PARTICIPATION – 30% OF FINAL GRADE
   a. Attendance -- 15% of your final grade. You will have TWO excused absences to allow for illness or another pressing matter. All other absences are unexcused. In case of prolonged illness or absence for a serious reason, please contact me. Tardiness beyond 5 minutes is considered an absence unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. The course follows the university policy for absences due to university sanctioned events. No absences are allowed during final presentations.
   b. Participation in discussion and group work -- 15% of your final grade. This will include students taking on different group roles, as indicated by the instructor, as well as contributing orally to the class.

2. ASSIGNED READINGS, WRITTEN HOMEWORKS, AND QUIZZES -- 45% OF YOUR FINAL GRADE.
   a. NO late homeworks. NO emailed homeworks will be accepted unless otherwise specified. HOMEWORKS ARE TO BE TYPED. No handwritten homeworks will be accepted. There are NO makeup quizzes or homeworks. All homeworks and quizzes are equally weighted unless otherwise specified.
   b. The way you format your assignments will be part of your grade. All assignments are expected to be submitted without spelling and grammar errors. If you have an excessive number of errors in your assignment, it may be returned to you for revision without a grade on it and you must turn in a revised version to receive partial credit.
   c. Team Based Work: Team-based assignments will be graded in such a way as to reflect your individual contribution to the project as observed by me and reported by your team members as well as based on overall performance.

3. FINAL PROJECT – 25% You will receive more detailed directions on this project later in the semester.

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

(Subject to change)

Week 1: August 30 & September 1
   Introduction to technical communication
   The Communication Process
   The Writing Process
   Clarity, Conciseness, & Accuracy

Week 2: September 8 (No Class 9/6)
   Routine Correspondence
   Audience Recognition

Week 3: September 13 & 15
   Cross-cultural Issues
   Organization

Week 4: September 20 & 22
   Ethics

Week 5: September 27 & 29
   Social Media
Week 6: October 4 & 6
Document Design
Technical Descriptions and Process Analyses
Instructions, User Manuals, and Standard Operating Procedures
On-line help and Web sites

Week 7: October 11 & 13
Resumes
*** October 14 – Deadline for NYS Voter Registration ***

Week 8: October 18 & 20
Cover Letters

Week 9: October 25 & 27
Communicating Effectively to get a job
Communicating to Persuade

Week 10: November 1 & 3
Proposals & Grants

Week 11: November 8 & 10
One-on-One meetings

Week 12: November 15 & 17
One-on-one meetings

Week 13: November 22 (No class 11/24)
Presentations

Week 14: November 29 & December 1
Presentations

Week 15: December 6 & 8
Presentations

There is no final exam.

THE USUAL DISCLAIMER.....

Class Participation: Regular attendance is essential for the successful completion of this course. All students are expected to attend every class session in its entirety and are responsible for all that transpires in class whether or not they are in attendance. For the course to function properly, students must complete the required weekly readings and be willing to participate in the class discussions. Your in-class performance will comprise a full thirty-five percent of the total grade. You are advised to exchange contact information with one or more of your classmates in case you miss class.

Blackboard: You can access class information, documents, and assignments on-line at: http://blackboard.sunysb.edu You should be sure to consult it at least once a week; ideally, you would log on before every class. Blackboard will be used to post class-related announcements. It is your responsibility to make sure that the email you check is the one you have marked as preferred on SOLAR so that you will receive copies of announcements. If you used Blackboard during the previous semester, your login information (Username and Password) has not changed. If you have never used Stony Brook's Blackboard system: for help or more
information see: http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/helpdesk/docs/blackboard/bbstudent.php For problems logging in, go to the helpdesk in the Main Library SINC Site or the Union SINC Site, you can also call: 631-632-9602 or e-mail: helpme@ic.sunysb.edu

Email: Faculty may ONLY communicate with you via your official College email account. If you choose to forward your official college email to another off-campus account, faculty are not responsible for any undeliverable messages to your alternative personal accounts.

Papers: Papers should be double-spaced, Times-New Roman, font size 12. Margins should be 1”. Your papers are to be turned in, on time, during class. Do not stick papers in mailboxes or under doors -- you do so at your own risk. KEEP A COPY OF EVERYTHING THAT YOU TURN IN; it will be your responsibility to produce it if somehow it is lost or stolen from the pile. Lateness will be penalized.

Writing Center: If you need assistance in writing papers, please contact your instructor as well as SBU’s Writing Center: http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/writrhet/writing_center/writing.html

Tests: If you are forced to miss an exam or paper because of an emergency, you must inform the instructor by e-mail or telephone of this fact. In order to receive the opportunity for a makeup, you must document the emergency.

Notice Concerning Disabilities: If you have a physical, psychiatric/emotional, medical or learning disability that may have an impact on your ability to carry out the assigned course work, please contact the staff of the Disabled Student Services (DSS) Office, 128 Educational Communications Center, 632-6748, 632-6749/TDD. DSS will review your concerns and determine, with you, what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation of disability will remain confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following web site: http://www.ehs.sunysb.edu and search Fire safety and Evacuation and Disabilities.

Academic Integrity: Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person’s work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

Academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

Plagiarism is using others’ ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. Students are continually engaged with other people’s ideas: they read them in texts, hear them in lectures, discuss them in their classes, and incorporate them into their own writing. As a result, it is very important that each student give credit where it is due. Plagiarism, intentional or unintentional, is considered academic dishonesty and all instances will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use another person’s idea, opinion, or theory; any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings, or any other pieces of information, that are not common knowledge; quotations of another person’s actual spoken or written words; or paraphrase of another person’s spoken or written words. Citing all sources and putting direct quotations in quotation marks are required. For further information on plagiarism, go to http://www.wpacouncil.org/positions/WPAplagiarism.pdf or ask the instructor.
Critical Incident Management Initiative: Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students’ ability to learn. Stony Brook expects students to maintain standards of personal integrity that are in harmony with the educational goals of the institution; to observe national, state, and local laws and University regulations; and to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people.

NO SMOKING in the classroom including Electronic cigarettes and water pipes.

Classroom Policy: Students are expected to follow the Stony Brook Code of Conduct while in the classroom. If you are not familiar with the Code you can find it at:

Behavior that is disruptive to the function of the class, other students, or the instructor will not be tolerated. Poor class behavior or violations to the Code of Conduct will lead to removal from the class, possible withdrawal, or suspension. Food is not permitted in class. Beverages are OK, but please bring a container the can be closed to reduce spills. If a spill occurs please clean it up immediately.

Cell Phone and Electronic Devices: Use of cell phones, blackberries, iPods, MP3 players, and other audio and telecommunications devices is strictly prohibited during class. The only exceptions are through permission granted by the instructor for special purposes. During regular class sessions, cell phones must be either in ‘vibrate mode’ or turned off. Calls cannot be answered. Text messaging is not allowed during class. Cell phones must be turned off and enclosed in a case, book bag, briefcase, or the like during tests and exams. YOU are responsible for ensuring this policy is followed. Students MAY NOT have cell phones, electronic dictionaries, calculators, pagers or other “information rich” devices (anything that can receive and/or store many pages of text) in their possession during tests and exams.

Assessment of Student Performance: Homework assignments, examinations, and term papers should be evaluated and returned promptly. Written comments, explaining the instructor’s criteria for evaluation and giving suggestions for improvement, should be provided.

Instructors are responsible for providing students with appropriate and timely notification about their academic performance in a course. An examination or other assessment measure should be administered, graded, and returned to students before the end of the ninth week of classes.

Examinations and term papers submitted at the end of the term should be graded and either returned to students or retained for one semester.

Any change to the course grading policy during the semester must be announced and made available to all students enrolled in the course. Assigning additional work to individual students who wish to improve their grades, during or after the semester, is prohibited.

Instructors must observe the Final Examination Schedule available at http://www.stonybrook.edu/registrar. Instructors of courses taught on the semester schedule may only give a unit exam in class during the last week of the semester if a final examination is also given during the Final Examination Period.

Instructors must observe state laws, federal laws, and University policies regarding accommodations as noted in the Bulletin (e.g., student participation in University-sponsored activities or equivalent opportunity/religious absences). Accommodations such as make-up exams, assignments, or other coursework that fall outside of the purview of these laws and policies are at the discretion of the instructor.

Professional Conduct and Interaction with Students: Instructors must report all suspected occurrences of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary Committee (for classes in the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business,
School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, and School of Journalism) or the Committee on Academic Standing and Appeals (for classes in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences).

Instructors should always be aware that in teaching and advising they represent the University. They are bound by the University’s sexual harassment policies. Instructors are also bound by University policies that prohibit any consensual relationships with students that might compromise the objectivity and integrity of the teacher-student relationship. Examples include romantic, sexual, or financial relationships.

Instructors should strive to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of students’ examinations, homework, and final grades.

In dealing with students, instructors should be polite, helpful, and fair. They should take into account the wide range of cultural factors and physical challenges that can affect learning, and should attempt to help students overcome any disadvantages.

***ANYONE CAUGHT TEXTING WILL BE DEDUCTED HALF AN ABSENCE***

**Grading Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-100 percent</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92 percent</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89 percent</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-86 percent</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82 percent</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79 percent</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-76 percent</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72 percent</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69 percent</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63-66 percent</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-62 percent</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59 percent</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LINK TO US ON FACEBOOK AT:**

HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PAGES/TECHNICAL-COMMUNICATION-WRITING/243958382429269