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COM 313-452, 454, 458: Technical Writing

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New Jersey Institute of Technology
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
COM 313 – Technical Writing

Professor Wilson

Email: gwilson@njit.edu

Office Hours: By appt on [Zoom](#); **Wednesday 12-2:30 P.M.**

COM 313 - Technical Writing:

Prerequisites: ENGL 102 with a grade of C or higher, and one History and Humanities GER 200 level course with a grade of C or higher. An advanced writing course. Combines current theory with actual practice to prepare students as technical writers. Analyze complex communication situations and design appropriate responses through tasks that involve problem-solving, rhetorical theory, document design, oral presentations, writing teams, audience awareness, ethical considerations, and gender equity issues. This course satisfies the three-credit 300 GER in History and Humanities.

A statement on care:

For many students, college is a time of high stress. Studies have shown that college students often neglect to care for themselves due to factors like deadlines, pressure to achieve high grades, and difficulty with time management. Recent studies show that high school and college students increasingly struggle mentally and emotionally. It is imperative to your well-being that you make time to care for yourself. Taking care of yourself can include (but is not limited to): eating regularly, drinking water, getting enough sleep, talking with a professional about your feelings, writing about your feelings, taking time to walk outside, exercising, spending time talking with a friend, and taking time out for yourself. Please take care of your mental, physical, and emotional health. You know what your body needs; I encourage you to advocate for yourself and your access needs¹. I encourage you to communicate your access needs to your professors so that we can better support your wellness. Please also familiarize yourself with the resources available at NJIT: <https://www.njit.edu/counseling/>

Course Goals:

- To learn to communicate clearly in writing and in oral presentations.
- To learn types of technical writing: instructions, procedures, proposals, etc.
- To learn professional features of MS Word, screen capture tools and basic digital media.
- To increase awareness of race, gender, and accessibility issues in technical writing.

Learning Outcomes:

¹ Access needs: anything a person requires to participate in their environment or a community or to engage with an idea, function, or activity.

1. Write and revise various types of professional technical communications to produce a set of technical documents demonstrating your ability to write clearly and accurately in a concise, professional style.
2. Read and interpret material on technology and explain the ideas, issues, and problems involved in writing about technology and workplace writing.
3. Demonstrate information literacy: the ability to formulate appropriate questions, find, select, assess, and analyze information sources, both print and electronic, from the open web and/or the NJIT Library, and synthesize, credit, and integrate those sources in your own work.
4. Develop collaborative work habits, including those necessary for effective cooperation with other students and instructors.
5. Identify your own strengths and weaknesses in writing.

Required Textbook:

No textbook is required for this course. All readings are available on Canvas.

A note on reading:

Writing well depends upon reading well. The course texts will provide you with ideas and arguments, concepts, and key terms. They will prompt thought as you agree, disagree, or qualify ideas. The readings enlarge the context for our discussion. And they illustrate choices other writers have made as they compose. Writing and reading are interdependent practices, and you will move between the two regularly throughout the course.

Grading Procedure:

This class will utilize a [grading contract](#). You can find the grading contract under the “Getting Started” module on Canvas. Students should be sure to complete the corresponding Contract Grading discussion board during the first two weeks of the course. If students have questions about the grading contract or about how they will be evaluated in the course, please schedule an office hour meeting with me or reach out via email.

Grading Scale:

A = 100-90	B+ = 89=87	B = 86-80	C+ = 79-77	C = 76-70	D = 69-60	F = 59-0
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Assignments/Assignment Policies:

Modules: All assignments are located under modules. You should refer to the module to complete the readings/presentations/videos and the graded assignments. Assignments are expected to be handed in weekly. I will not accept all work in bulk at the end of the semester.

Announcements: Be sure to read the weekly announcements, as they will be used to communicate important, timely information about the course.

Informal Discussions/Notice and Focus/Minor Assignment: Discussion Board questions are posted on Canvas. The questions/discussion items are designed to stimulate your critical thinking and foster discussion among the class and fellow students. Minor assignments will also be categorized under this heading.

Informal discussion and minor assignment responses must be comprehensive (aim for 150-300 words) and well-written; students should be sure to fulfill the requirements being posed. You may want to use MSWord to prepare your draft discussion and to spell-check your work before it is posted on the Discussion Board. All NJIT students have [access](#) to MSWord.

Notice and focus responses should aim for about 100-200 words.

If you take material from a book/magazine/newspaper or from the Internet, provide a reference at the end of your discussion. If you “copy and paste” material from a document or from the Internet, you must enclose the material quotation marks and follow it with an MLA formatted reference; however, copy and paste must be kept to a minimum—you should prepare the bulk of your discussion using your own words. If you paraphrase material, you can place the reference (author and title of a book/article; Internet address) at the end of your discussion.

Using outside sources without references is considered plagiarism, as is using work from a prior term or different course without instructor approval.

Major Assignments: There are a variety of written assignments assigned throughout the term. Each project targets a particular skill associated with technical writing. Assignment requirements are outlined in the respective assignments and modules. All major assignments must be turned in to pass the course.

Collaborative Work: Students will be expected to work in groups or with a peer at various times throughout the semester. There will be a peer review conducted on Canvas. If there are any questions/difficulties with these assignments, please reach out ASAP.

Extensions: For major assignments, students can hand in the assignment **within 48 hours after the deadline** without penalty. As long as the assignment is submitted within 48 hours after the deadline, students will not be penalized. I will not accept late major assignments after more than two weeks from the due date. Minor assignments and discussion boards can be submitted late without penalty, but students should aim to submit their late minor and discussion board assignments within no more than two weeks from the due date. **Consistent late submissions may result in an extended conversation with the instructor.**

Assignments for the week are due on Sunday at midnight. However, I understand that sometimes other things get in the way. I am willing to grant extensions when they are needed. The extension is not an issue; lack of communication is. There will be no extensions on the final revised proposal.

All assignments should be typed and proofread for grammar and spelling errors.

This course moves fast. It is expected that you complete assignments weekly. If you experience an illness or emergency, please contact me as soon as you are aware that there will be an issue. We will then work out a plan to ensure your completion of the course that works for you.

Missing/Late Work: I will email students bi-weekly to remind them of any assignments that they are missing. Submitting assignments late can result in a lower final grade based on the grading contract.

Classroom Decorum:

In this class, we may discuss topics that are sensitive to others. Further, you will be required to share your work with others. This is a collaborative classroom and a classroom where I expect students to support each other. I strive to ensure my classroom is an inclusive and respectful environment, I will do my part in creating that environment, and I ask that you all do your best as well. Rude comments or remarks will not be tolerated in the classroom; everyone will be treated with respect. Please be sure you are communicating respectfully with your peers, and remember to consider your values and ethics when conversing.

With that being said, in order to do the work of this class, you will be required to engage new, complex, and sometimes controversial ways of thinking about ideas and concepts that are rarely engaged --language, politics, ethics, etc. I take seriously bell hooks' call to "**critically examine our world, our lives**" because "**genuine learning requires of us a constant open approach, a willingness to engage invention and reinvention, so that we might discover those places of radical transparency where knowledge can empower**" (Teaching Critical Thinking 187). Your time in college will introduce you to many unique perspectives and identities. Remember it is crucial to understand that your perspective is only one of many possible world views; confronting this reality can present an emotional challenge. In this course, I expect students to continually reflect on their emotional and intellectual work as they critically consider their perspective and worldview. I expect students to remain open to different perspectives, ideas, theories, methods, and ways of writing and to view knowledge and learning as a source of power that can create and shape new worlds. You will be expected to articulate your awareness of your emotional and intellectual process on a regular basis in your writing.

Accessibility:

I am committed to ensuring this course is inclusive and accessible to all students. At the beginning of the semester, you will be asked to fill out an access survey where you can articulate

any accommodations or access needs you may require or desire. I will do my best to meet your access needs throughout the semester based on your responses. If you encounter any barriers (physical, mental, or emotional) as the semester progresses, please let me know so we can determine the best course of action together. I am happy to discuss solutions to any design limitations to the course. Bear in mind that while the university asks for documentation for disabilities and accommodations, I do not, and I am willing to do my best to meet individual needs. You are welcome to contact the disability resource office to begin this conversation or to establish accommodations for this or other courses. You can also reach out to me privately if going through disability services isn't currently an option. I welcome feedback that will assist me in improving the usability and experience for all students. As a classroom community, I hope that we can work together to create an accessible space.

If you get sick at any point during the semester, please reach out as soon as possible. If you need to quarantine or isolate, please let me know if you need any extensions. If you are having issues with the design of the course or the technology itself, please reach out to me. All of this to say, I can't read your mind; I'm willing to work together to make this course beneficial to you; Please keep open lines of communication to ensure we can have the best semester.

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability, documented or undocumented, please see me as early in the semester as possible to discuss the necessary accommodations, and/or contact Student Disability Services at 973-596-3420.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center (G17 Central King) is available for 45-minute individual and group appointments with professional writing tutors both onsite and online. This resource is indented to help you improve your communication and writing skills. Tutors can help with planning assignments, improving your writing, refining an essay or multimedia project, or other communication-based needs. For more information, please visit <https://njit.mywconline.com>

Email Policy

If you need to get a hold of me email is my preferred method. **I will respond to your emails within 24 hours (I don't check email from 6 p.m.- 9 a.m.)**. Please plan accordingly. If I do not respond in 24 hours, please feel free to email me again. Remember to maintain an appropriate tone in all school-related correspondence. This means to include an appropriate SUBJECT line, your NAME, and class in all emails.

Intellectual Property

Original class materials (handouts, assignments, tests, etc.) and recordings of class sessions are the intellectual property of the course instructor. You may download these materials for your use in this class. However, you may not provide these materials to other parties (e.g., web sites,

social media, other students) without permission. Doing so is a violation of intellectual property law and of the student code of conduct.

Land Acknowledgement

NJIT is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Lenni-Lenape people. Lenni-Lenape literally translates to “Men of Men” but is taken as “Original People.” (<https://nanticoke-lenape.info/history.htm>)

NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity:

The New Jersey Institute of Technology is an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge through teaching and research. We expect our graduates to assume positions of leadership within their professions and communities. Honesty in your academic work will develop into professional integrity.

The NJIT Code of Academic Integrity embodies a spirit of mutual trust and intellectual honesty that is central to the very nature of the university and represents the highest possible expression of shared values among the members of the university community.

All assignments submitted shall be considered "graded work" and all aspects of your coursework are covered by the Code on Academic Integrity. All projects and homework assignments are to be completed individually unless otherwise specified.

The full text of the NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity can be found at www.njit.edu/education/pdf/academic-integrity-code-pdf.

“Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:

<http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. **Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university.** If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu”

COM 313 Course Calendar

Online

COM 313: Technical Writing

Week 1

Due

- Review the Introduction to Technical Writing
 - Watch “Day in the Life of a Content Designer”
 - Watch "Documents I've Created as a Technical Writer"
 - Watch “How to Become a Technical Writer”
 - Complete “informal” discussion board introduction and thinking about technical communication
 - Complete “informal” discussion board memo assignment
 - Complete work rituals minor assignment
-

Week 2

Due

- Review Writing process lecture
 - Review genre lecture
 - Read “Disrupting the Past to Disrupt the Future”
 - Read “Validating the Consequences of a Social Justice Pedagogy”
 - Complete notice and focus
 - Complete informal assignment
 - Complete informal discussion board
-

Week 3

Due

- Review audience analysis
 - Read “Personas”
 - Read “A Day in the Life”
 - Read “Empathetic User Design”
 - Read “Empathy”
 - Complete “informal” technical writing analysis
 - Complete notice and focus
 - Create a student user persona
-

Week 4

Due

- Review Design and Readability
 - Read User experience
 - Read UX design
 - Read user-centered design
 - Read design ethics
 - Watch How to write your UX design case study
 - Compose informal discussion
 - Compose notice and focus
-

Week 5

Due

- Review rhetorical concepts
 - Read The Rhetorical Work of Youtube’s Beauty Community
 - Compose a case study
 - Compose notice and focus
-

Week 6

Due

- Review professional communication
 - Review discourse communities
 - Read Openly-Trans Youtubers and Gender Affirming Garments
 - Watch Dad How Do I?
 - Watch Selena Gomez Chef
 - Compose a how-to-tutorial
 - Compose informal discussion board
-

Week 7

Due

- Review ethics in technical writing
 - Read wicked problems
 - Listen to Benjamin Evans
 - Compose identify a problem
 - Compose notice and focus
-

Week 8

Due

- Review document design
 - Review accessibility web resource
 - Review image descriptions
 - Read The Rhetorical Possibilities of Accessibility
 - Compose presentation assignment
 - Compose notice and focus
-

Week 9

Due

- Review Information literacy
 - Review citations and plagiarism
 - Review intellectual property and plagiarism
 - Read progress reports
 - Watch Media Literacy
 - Compose notice and focus
 - Compose progress report
-

Week 10

Due

- Review Employment materials
 - Review preparing job application materials
 - Watch Job Recruiter Critiques
 - Review sample job application packets
 - Review career planning resources
 - Complete major assignment the job application package
-

Week 11

Due

- Read NYT on AI
 - Read lost in translation
 - Listen to Summer lopez
 - Listen to Seath Earley
 - Compose AI essay
-

Week 12

Due

- Watch data justice
- Review data justice lab
- Review global data justice

- Watch the age of surveillance capitalism
 - Read data aggregation and data mining
 - Read algorithmic surveillance
 - Read internet surveillance
 - Read location data
 - Compose informal discussion board
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Week 13

Due

- Watch Tiktok creators education about disability
 - Watch Breaking Barriers
 - Read How Content Practitioners Can Help with Disaster Response
 - Compose informal discussion board
-

Week 14

Due

- Review How to write a policy brief
 - Review UNC policy briefs
 - Review best practices for policy briefs
 - Read gun control and gun rights a conceptual framework for analyzing public policy issues in tech comm
 - Compose policy brief
-