

Fall 2024

## COM 313-461: Technical Writing

Jake Slovis

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**COM 313 Technical Writing**  
**Section 461**  
**Asynchronous Online Course**  
**Fall 2024**

Instructor: Jake Slovis  
Email: [Slovis@njit.edu](mailto:Slovis@njit.edu)  
Office: Cullimore 115 D  
Office Hours: Monday 5:30 – 6:30 and Tuesday 12:30 – 1:30

**Prerequisites:** HUM 102 with a grade of C or higher, and one History and Humanities GER 200 level course with a grade of C or higher.

**Catalog Description:** 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.

**Course Description:** In this section of COM 313, you will learn to create, adapt and revise technical documents for both expert and non-expert audiences. Since many of you have different professional goals and interests, this course will focus on transferable analytical and writing skills rather than addressing every convention and genre that you might encounter in your professional lives. This means that we will spend much of our time investigating the social context surrounding pieces of writing and consider how authors use deliberate rhetorical strategies to communicate meaning within these texts. The course will also focus on the writing process, asking you to brainstorm topics, write drafts, and revise based on instructor or peer feedback.

This is an **asynchronous online** course, which means that lectures and assignments will be distributed on Canvas, and all coursework will be completed online by the due dates provided. To make sure that the course is interactive, I will include online forums, offer online office hours, and incorporate peer or instructor review sessions on formal writing assignments. The course will also incorporate lecture notes, videos, and PowerPoint to help make it more dynamic.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

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 in workplace writing.
3. Demonstrate information literacy: the ability to formulate appropriate questions, find, select, assess, analyze information sources, both print and electronic, from the open web and/or the NJIT Library, and to 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 Texts:** Articles and links available on Canvas. These materials will generally be posted at the beginning of the week (Monday), although on some occasions I will post course materials up to a week ahead of time. If you have any questions about these materials, feel free to reach out to me.

**Participation and Low-Stakes Writing Assignments:** Participation will be evaluated based on your active involvement in online discussions and your submission of low-stakes writing assignments. Each week, students will be asked to write responses to readings, videos, and participate in discussion forums. All of these materials will be available on Canvas.

Low-stakes writing assignments will not receive a formal letter grade. Instead, they will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- *Satisfactory* work demonstrates a thoughtful response to writing prompts and is turned in on time. You will receive full credit for satisfactory work.
- Work that is *Marginal* is submitted on time but is either seriously underdeveloped or only responds to part of the prompts. You will receive half credit for Marginal work.
- *Unacceptable* work ignores instruction or is submitted well after the due date of the assignment.

Please be aware that these low-stakes assignments and your participation on discussion forums will combine to make up 25% of your final grade. They will represent the usual types of work given in face-to-face classes, such as group discussions, peer reviews and in-class writing assignments. It is therefore imperative that you demonstrate consistency in these assignments and submit them on time. Late assignments will be assessed as follows:

- Work submitted within one week of the due date will be evaluated for partial credit.
- Work submitted over a week late will receive no credit.

As a general rule of thumb, I will post readings and guidelines for low-stakes assignments on Monday evenings. Along with these materials, I will post instructions on how to complete assignments. **Typically, there are two dates for various low-stakes assignments throughout the week—Thursday at midnight and Sunday at midnight.** However, depending on the module, these specific due date times might vary. In addition to these assignments, you will receive an overall participation grade based on your consistency in participating in our online community.

Please let me know if my instructions for the course materials require further clarification. I will do my best to respond to your questions promptly.

**Conferences:** I will hold online one-on-one student conferences near the middle and the end of the semester. These conferences will allow me to meet with you, offer direct feedback, and answer any of your questions before submitting high-stakes assignments. I ask that all students meet with me at least once throughout the semester. Conferences will be held remotely.

**Formal Projects:** You will have four formal projects. These assignments will be evaluated according to the rubric on this syllabus and will be given a letter grade. Full details on these projects will be uploaded to Canvas.

**Grade Breakdown:** The four formal projects will combine to make up 75% of your grade. Each one of these projects will focus on an aspect of technical writing that we will discuss in the course. The grade breakdown is as follows:

- Project 1— Website Analysis 20%
- Project 2— Instruction Set 15%
- Project 3— Discourse Analysis 10%
- Project 4— Analytical Report 30%
- Low-Stakes Assignments and Participation— 25%

Individual and group work will be evaluated according to the following grading scale:

A = 100-90.00	B+ = 89.99-87.00	B = 86.99-80.00	C+ = 79.99-77.00	C = 76.99-70.00	D = 69.99-60.00	F = 59.99-0
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**All work must be submitted by the last day of class. Makeup work will not be accepted after final grades have been submitted.**

**Midterm and Finals:** There is no scheduled midterm or final exam for this class.

**Grading Rubric for Formal Projects:**

**A/A-**

The project responds to all parts of the assignment with depth and demonstrates a nuanced understanding of audience awareness and organization. At the sentence level, the project demonstrates strong facility with language, uses effective vocabulary, and demonstrates a strong control of the mechanics of Standard English. Finally, the project is well developed, and incorporates outside sources (if needed) in an effective manner.

**B+/B/B-**

The project addresses all parts of the assignment and demonstrates a solid understanding of audience awareness. While organized, the assignment shows less development and insight than an A paper, particularly in its attention to detail. The project shows good control of the mechanics of Standard English and incorporates outside sources (if needed) with success, and demonstrates good sentence variety and sentence clarity.

**C+/C/C-**

The project responds to most of the assignment adequately but may be somewhat limited. The project shows a competent understanding of audience awareness and organization; however, it may be somewhat superficial. The project is thinly developed and inconsistent. While the project shows satisfactory facility with language, it may demonstrate limited control of grammar, syntax and sentence variety.

**D+/D/D-**

The project does not respond to all parts of the assignment and is underdeveloped. The project lacks an understanding of audience awareness and is disorganized at the paragraph level. The project demonstrates weak facility with language and is unclear at the sentence level to the point where it interferes with meaning and sentence sense.

## F

The project fails to accomplish its designated task, adapt to its audience, or develop key ideas. The project is unfinished and missing several parts of the assignment.

**Please Note:** I do not give extra credit, particularly for those who have failed to fulfill the participation aspect of this course. Writing courses are process oriented, which makes regular participation essential to academic growth.

**NJIT University Statement on Academic Integrity** – 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](mailto:dos@njit.edu)

### **Artificial Intelligence:**

This class follows the following guidelines from the NJIT University Code of Academic Integrity:

“Artificial intelligence usage is not permitted in this course. The expectation of this course is for students to work through the course without assistance from any type of artificial intelligence to better develop their own skills in this content area. As such, artificial intelligence usage is not permitted throughout this course.”

**Accessibility Needs:** Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a documented disability, please see your instructor as early in the semester as possible to discuss the necessary accommodations, and/or contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services at 973-596-5417.

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

### **Important Dates:**

Sept	2	Labor Day. University Closed
Sept	3	First Day of Classes
Sept	9	Last Day to Add/Drop a Class
Sept	9	Last Day for 100% Refund, Full or Partial Withdrawal

Sept	10	W Grades Posted for Course Withdrawals
Sept	16	Last Day for 90% Refund, Full or Partial Withdrawal - No Refund for Partial Withdrawal after this date
Sept	30	Last Day for 50% Refund, Full Withdrawal
Oct	21	Last Day for 25% Refund, Full Withdrawal
Nov	11	Last Day to Withdraw from Classes
Nov	26	Thursday Classes Meet
Nov	27	Friday Classes Meet
Nov	28	Thanksgiving Recess Begins. No Classes
Dec	1	Thanksgiving Recess Ends
Dec	11	Last Day of Classes

### **Course Schedule:**

**Please note:** All readings and low-stakes assignments will be posted to Canvas. This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please rely on Canvas for updates on these materials.

Week	Topic
Week 1 9/3	Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• Introduction Forums</li> <li>• Low-Stakes Assignment – Why technical writing?</li> <li>• Read “About Technical Writing”</li> </ul>
Week 2 9/9	The Writing Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• <b>Website Analysis Project introduced</b></li> <li>• Read “Shitty First Drafts” and participate in forum</li> <li>• Read “The Writing Process” and participate in forum</li> </ul>

Week 3 9/16	<p>Writing is Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• Read “Men’s Men and Women’s Women” and participate in forum</li> <li>• Read “Reflecting the Style of a Discourse Community” and participate in forum</li> <li>• Watch review of “The Writing Process”</li> </ul>
Week 4 9/23	<p>How Rhetorical Situation Defines Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• Complete “10 Best Assignment”</li> <li>• Review sample letters and participate in forum</li> </ul>
Week 5 9/30	<p>Communicating Across Different Contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• Watch “Rethinking Rhetoric” and participate in forum</li> <li>• Read “Face-to-Face Writing Courses Are Superior to Online Courses” and participate in forum</li> <li>• <b>Website Analysis Project Due 10/6</b></li> </ul>
Week 6 10/7	<p>Writing Choices and Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• Read “Writing for Your Readers” and participate in forum</li> <li>• Read “The Ethics of Style” and participate in forum</li> <li>• <b>Instruction Set Project introduced</b></li> </ul>
Week 7 10/14	<p>Ethics and Clarity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• Read “Editing for Readable Style” and participate in forum</li> <li>• Read “Communicating Ethically” and participate in forum</li> <li>• Complete “Recipe Assignment”</li> <li>• Sign up for one-on-one conference via Google calendar</li> </ul>
Week 8 10/21	<p>Instruction Sets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review sample instruction sets and participate in forum</li> <li>• Watch instruction set review video</li> <li>• <b>Mid-Semester Conferences. Please sign up for a time slot to meet for one-on-one sessions.</b></li> <li>• <b>Recommendation Report Project introduced</b></li> <li>• <b>Discourse Analysis Project introduced</b></li> </ul>
Week 9 10/28	<p>Clarity and Style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read “The Philosophy of Recipe Writing” and participate in forum</li> <li>• Review sample recommendation reports and participate in forum</li> <li>• <b>Instruction Set Project Due 11/3</b></li> </ul>
Week 10 11/4	<p>Recommendation Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• Read “Analytical Reports” and participate in discussion forums</li> </ul>
Week 11 11/11	<p>Research Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• Watch “Discourse Analysis and Report Models”</li> <li>• Read “Citing Sources” and participate in forum</li> <li>• <b>Discourse Analysis Due 11/17</b></li> </ul>
Week 12 11/18	<p>The Power of Technical Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read/watch required materials outlined in module lecture notes</li> <li>• Read “A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing” and participate in forum</li> <li>• Complete recommendation report update</li> <li>• Sign up for one-on-one conference via Google calendar</li> </ul>
Week 13 11/25	<p>End of Semester Conferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conferences. Please sign up for a time slot to meet for one-on-one sessions.</b></li> </ul>
Week 14 12/2	<p>End of Semester Conferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conferences. Please sign up for a time slot to meet for one-on-one sessions</b></li> </ul>
Week 15 12/9	<p><b>Final Recommendation Report Project Due 12/11</b></p>