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WRIT 121.01: Introduction to Technical Writing

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Introduction to Technical Writing

WRIT 121

SYLLABUS: SPRING SEMESTER 2022

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Office hours: MTR 12:30-2PM, or appt.

1) **Required materials**
- *The Essentials of Technical Communication,* by Tebeaux and Dragga, Oxford University Press, 4th ed. 2018
- *Little Brown Compact Handbook,* by Jane E. Aaron, Pearson, 10th ed.

2) **Course description**

      Students focus on writing simply, clearly, correctly, precisely, and concisely. They hone those skills through in-class and homework exercises, then put them to use writing and revising short papers. Organization and editing are requirements to succeed in this course. Offered every term, this class is an introduction to technical writing situations that integrate text, design, and graphics. Emphasis is on evidence-based, informative writing that uses design and graphics to visually represent logic and organization. Course focuses on writing as a process and includes student self-assessment. Major assignments include a pure technical document, exploration of credibility in a debate format, and public science writing. Students are expected to write without major faults in grammar or usage and to have basic computer literacy.

      This course is for students who want to ready themselves for writing within the two-year programs here at the Missoula College. WRIT121 is a basic 100 level writing course that requires successful passing of the Writing Placement Exam or successful completion of a composition course. Since writing is a process, one that takes time and

often requires revision, students will need to be self-motivated and self-disciplined to work through the material in a timely fashion.

3) **Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts

- Formulate and express written opinions and ideas that are developed, logical, and organized

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose

- Revise written work based on constructive feedback and write collaboratively

- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively and ethically

- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions

- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

- **Submit a writing sample to the UDWPA**

4) **Course Objectives**

- Introduction to constructed text that accurately communicates technical information using appropriate technical writing constructs, document design, and graphic placement within technical formats.

- An awareness of both academic and technical writing genres and how the writing situation shapes the document.

- Introduction to a writing process that includes revising and editing.

- Introduction to The Little, Brown Compact Handbook to gain control of punctuation, grammar, syntax, and spelling.

5) **Workload and Expectations Overview**

This course focuses on the kind of writing that fills manuals—description, instruction, and analysis—as well as power point presentations and public policy analysis. We will read and discuss technical documents as well as materials about technical writing. We place a special focus on audience as evidenced in this quote from the Society for Technical Communicator's Code of Ethics: Technical writers "… satisfy the audience's need for information, not the writer's own need for self-expression." This kind of writing is all about the reader.

All writing classes address **writing conventions**. Sentence level issue exercises address punctuation, syntax, and basic sentence structure/mechanics problems. *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*, is an invaluable tool for completing this work, and I recommend that you keep this book to use in other classes. Line editing of technical documents is essential to this course, so WRIT121 is also an excellent opportunity to hone your editing skills.

All papers include revision modules, where we work the **writing process** to better understand how we compose, and to learn once again that nothing is neat and tidy about writing and revising. Because the audience is so important in technical writing, we need feedback from an audience to make our documents more accessible to that same audience. Students will be expected to apply their knowledge of correct sentence mechanics, strong technical text, graphic placement, and design features in all written assignments.

Required readings are found on Moodle and in your texts. They will require critical reading skills and are part of the daily assignments. The **in-class or group projects** are designed to help build a writing community. We never write alone, and technical writing especially needs input from others. We often use small groups to help each other think through writing problems and acquire ideas from each other. The **public policy paper** provides an opportunity to explore a subject and present that subject in a technical style. Readings will be available on Moodle. Lastly, you will have an opportunity to **synthesize your writing knowledge**, both the already acquired and the new, and to articulate a new understanding of writing that is broader and more inclusive. Your time in this course is an opportunity to build bridges between all of your writing classes.

6) **Requirements**

- **Attendance:** Student participation is measured by not only your presence in class and on Moodle but also the assignments you submit and your contributions to regular discussion groups and debates. In these groups, answers like "I agree" or "Ditto" are not acceptable. Really talk to each other. In addition, we will have editing workshops that are a large part of your grade.

- **Readings:** You must read materials before the class for which they're assigned and be ready to discuss them. I will have lessons that walk you through some of the material, but ultimately you are responsible for text exploration. Read critically and constructively. Learn to zero in on what text is relevant and what text is just noise.

- **Strict deadlines for writing assignments (exercises, papers, and other homework):** You must finish writing assignments by the due date. I will not accept papers after that date unless you had a legitimate emergency AND told me about it before the due date has passed.

7) **Conduct**

- From the vice president for student affairs: "All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All

  students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online here."
- All work you turn in must be *your own*. UM's Student Conduct Code forbids: "representing someone else's words, ideas, data, or materials as your own (plagiarism)";
- *NOTE: "copying from another student's paper* or, without authorization, giving information to another student or *collaborating with one or more students on assignments*";
- "knowingly submitting false, altered, or invented information, data, quotations, citations, or documentation";
- "knowingly helping or trying to help another student commit academic dishonesty"; and
- *NOTE:* submitting work you – or another student – turned in for another class *(including another section of Technical Writing).*

8) **For tutoring:** www.umt.edu/writingcenter

9) **For students with disabilities:** Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me or Disability Services for Students (DSS). The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and DSS. "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult https://www.umt.edu/dss/.

10) **Grading:** Your grade for the semester will be based *largely* on this point system:*

Memos/Emails (4)	200
Discussion Forums	150
Caption Yourself	50
Tabular Analysis	50
Designing Instructions/How-to paper/Process Analysis	125
Press Release	50
Debate (Collaborative Power Point)	100
Public Policy Analysis	75
Tabular Team Member Evaluation	100
Application letter (aka final exam w/exit interview)	100

Total: **1000**

 * **These assignments and the point distribution are tentative; values may change as assignments are added, subtracted, or revalued**.