New Jersey Institute of Technology

Digital Commons @ NJIT

Fall 2023

COM-313 (101-103-109): Technical Writing

Andrew McCarthy

New Jersey Institute of Technology

Syllabus for COM 313: Technical Writing
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Sections: online via Canvas (http://canvas.njit.edu)
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Course Description: This is an advanced writing course combining current theory with actual practice to prepare students as technical writers. We will analyze complex communication situations and design appropriate responses through tasks that involve thinking, common sense, problem solving, rhetorical theory, document design, writing teams, audience awareness, and ethical considerations.

Of special import is your major and career choices: You will be challenged to use parlance relating to your chosen field to assess various types of writing and communication models and how they relate to you and your career paths.

Required Course Materials
- TEXTBOOK: IEEE Guide to Writing
- Additional resources available on CANVAS.
- PDF of The Power Broker, by Robert Caro

Learning Outcomes
1. Write and revise various professional technical communications demonstrating your ability to write clearly and accurately in a concise professional style.
2. Analyze and explain how rhetorical principles of audience, purpose, organization/arrangement, and discourse influence writing decisions in technical documents.
3. Read and interpret material about technology and explain the ideas, issues, and problems involved in writing about technology
4. 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.
5. Develop collaborative work habits, including those necessary for effective cooperation with others in a team environment.
6. Identify your own strengths and weaknesses in writing.
7. Establish confidence in the use of writing and editing.

Academic Integrity: "Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. The academic code of integrity policy that is found at: *http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf*. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at *dos@njit.edu*

Students with disabilities: Appropriate accommodations will be made for all students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify me as soon as possible. This information will be kept confidential. For more information, see https://www.njit.edu/studentsuccess/accessibility.

Assignments
Week 1 Introduction
Week 2 Revision for Audience and Purpose
Week 3 Questions for The Bridge article/10%
Week 4 Questions for Chandler article/10%
Week 5 Questions for Lockheed Martin website/10%
Week 6 Questions for research articles on Organizations/10%
Week 7 Questions for Scientific American article /10%
Week 8 Ethics, Big Projects, and Robert Moses/20%
Week 10 Engineering Research Assignment
Week 11 Problem-Solving assignment
Week 12 Career Assessment due using www.bls.gov.
Week 13 Revising assignment due
Week 14 Plans A, B, and C due
Week 15 Final Project due

Grading: Your final course grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

Grade	Final Percentage	Significance
A	90.1-100	Superior
B+	86.7-90.0	Excellent
B	80.1-86.6	Very Good
C+	76.7-80.0	Good
C	70.1-76.6	Acceptable
D	60.1-70.0	Minimum
F	00.0-60.0	Try Again!

Incomplete coursework is a major inconvenience for students and instructors, but things do happen in life. If you are having trouble getting work done, just see me and we can work it out. Legitimate excuses include verified illnesses and family emergencies. If you have questions about the NJIT grading policy, please click here. If you have questions about your responsibilities for course requirements, please click here.

ENG 352 Class Activities
Week 1
Topic: Introduction
Reading:
- *IEEE Guide to Writing*, Introduction, pp. 3-6

Assignment 1:
- **Post on CANVAS a written description of yourself**.
- Answer the following questions and add what you will:

- o   Your name and major
- o   Your goals for work in technical writing this semester
- o   How writing might help you in your career

Week 2
Topic: Audience and purpose
Reading:
- *IEEE Guide to Writing*, Chapter 1, pp. 7-32

Assignment 2
- Rewrite your information about 5 great things to do in your hometown.
  - Write it for an audience of NJIT students architecture majors.
  - Write it to convince your audience that they should visit your hometown.
- Address these questions:
  - Who were you writing to in your Week 1 document?
  - What did you change in this week's revision in order for your document to be effective with NJIT architecture or engineering majors?

Week 3
Topic: Audience, purpose, and organization
Reading:
- Handout on writing approaches
- The Bridge Article

Assignment 3
- Address these questions regarding The Bridge article:
  - Who are the audiences for this article?
  - What purposes does the author have in writing the article?
  - What strategies has the author used to accommodate his audiences and purposes?
  - What kinds of organizing strategies did the author use in this article?
  - In what ways were these organizing strategies effective or ineffective for you?

Week 4
Topic: Audience, purpose, and organization
Reading:
- Handout on organizing strategies posted on course site.
- Chandler, "Validating the Physics behind the MIT-Designed Fusion Experiment,"

Assignment 4
- Address these questions regarding the Chandler article:
  - Who are the audiences for this article?
  - What purposes does the author have in writing the article?
  - What strategies has the author used to accommodate his audiences and

purposes?
- What kinds of organizing strategies did the author use in this article?
- Why do you think the authors made these different choices?

Week 5
Topic: Discourse Communities and Career Choices
Reading
- Lockheed Martin website: https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-us/products/compact-fusion.html

Assignment 5
- Address these questions regarding the Lockheed Martin Compact Fusion website:
  - How would you define "discourse community" according to the concepts in the readings?
  - How would you describe the discourse community in which Lockheed Martin Compact Fusion functions? What information on the website suggests information about this discourse community?

Week 6
Topic: Organizations and You
Reading
Assignment 6
- Address these questions regarding the research articles:
  - Who are the audiences and purposes for these articles?
  - What strategies have the authors used to accommodate these audiences and purposes?
  - In what ways do these authors make different choices that Chandler did?
  - How do these articles fit into the discourse community in which the Lockheed Martin and MIT nuclear fusion projects function?
  - Why are organizations worth joining?

Week 7
Topic: Ethics and Careers/Scientific American
Reading:
- *IEEE Guide to Writing*, Chapter 2, pp. 33-78

Assignment 7
- Address these questions regarding the chapter and assignments:
  - Who are the audiences and purposes?
  - What strategies has the author used to accommodate his audiences and purposes?
  - How does Robert Caro characterize Robert Moses in The Power Broker?
  - Was Moses an effective builder?
  - How was Moses controversial?

Week 8
Topic: Ethics and Big Projects
Reading:
- *IEEE Guide to Writing*, Chapter 3, pp. 85-108

Assignment 8

Please summarize the article in one page and post to CANVAS.

Week 9
Topic: Professional Writing
Write a two-page summary of why you chose your major and career path.

Week 10
Topic: Professional Career Choices
Write a two-page summary of your first job choice and find data on The Bureau of Labor Statistics on where the jobs are in the US for your career.

Week 11
Topic: Professional Organizations
Write a two-page summary of an Engineering Organization that you might be interested in and how it might help you land a position.

Week 12
Edits on Everything

Week 13
Plan A, B, and C

Week 14
Topic: Final Project Due
  Week 15
Topic: Final Report Due

This syllabus and the due date schedule may be revised by the instructor at any time during the semester. All revisions will be reasonable and based on class needs.