

English W234-01I: Technical Report Writing

Fall 2008

Dr. Suzanne Kesler Rumsey
Assistant Professor
Department of English & Linguistics
Classroom Medical Building 043
Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne
260-481-6770 | rumseys@ipfw.edu

Technically trained individuals should not be considered educated regardless of the depth of their technical capability if they cannot communicate, both orally and in writing, their technical findings, thoughts, and philosophy to others around them

Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (2000)
<http://www.abet.org>

English W234, Technical Report Writing, has two purposes: (1) to help you develop communication skills you will use in the future, and (2) to enrich your understanding of the roles that writing and reading play in activities outside school. In other words, W234 is a course to help you write in a variety of situations – especially the workplace – and to a variety of readers. This course is also an imperative part of engineering and technology education as defined by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

Course Outcomes

Students who complete W234 should be able to demonstrate their competence in four areas:

- **Rhetorical Knowledge**, including the ability to focus on purposes and audiences in academic, workplace, and civic settings; to respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations; to adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality; to write in technical writing genres.
- **Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing**, including the ability to use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating; to manage a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources; to integrate one's own ideas with those of others; to understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power within academic, workplace, and civic settings; and to recognize the importance of professional organizations.

- **Writing Processes**, including the use of multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text; the development of flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading; learning to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing one's own part; participation in collaborative and social processes and genres that require the ability to critique one's own and others' works; and using a variety of technologies to address a range of situations.
- **Knowledge of Conventions**, including the ability to follow common formats for different kinds of technical genres; to increase knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics; to practice appropriate means of documenting one's work according to workplace and professional standards; and to control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Required Text

Johnson-Sheehan, R. (2007). *Technical Communication Today*. 2nd Ed. New York: Pearson/Longman.

Assignments

Exercises and projects in this course are designed to help you meet the six objectives listed in the previous section. Your work on those assignments will be evaluated using a numerical system which will eventually be converted to a letter grade. Table 1 below describes the projects you will complete during the semester. Major projects often have several parts, so be sure to consult each project assignment page for details.

Assignment	Purpose	Percentage
Netiquette Email	To establish guidelines for professional communication; to open lines of communication between professor and student	5 %
Introduction Memo	To learn formatting of memorandum; to foster learning community within the classroom	
Job Search Project Investigative Report Rough Draft Resume and Cover Letter Rough Draft Final Draft of Entire Project Reflective Memo	To learn about the role of writing in the job search; to practice research skills; to practice document design and writing for workplace settings	20 %
Instructions Project	To learn principles of documentation and the writing of	

Document Plan Rough Draft Evaluation Plan Rough Draft Instructional Text Rough Draft Final Draft of Entire Project Reflective Memo	instructions; to apply those principles to an actual case	25 %
Proposal Project Project Plan Rough Draft Formal Proposal Rough Draft Final Draft of Entire Project Reflective Memo	To define a real need or opportunity and to propose a plan for addressing it	25 %
Peer Reviews	To help classmates develop their written projects, and to gather feedback on yours	25 %
Quizzes	To reinforce course concepts; to practice skills needed for the major projects	
Short Exercises and Discussion Boards		

Letter grades are equivalent to the following:

A = 90 – 100 %

B = 80 – 89 %

C = 70 – 79 %

D = 60 – 69 %

F = 59 % and below

Specific criteria for each project will be discussed at appropriate times throughout the semester. **You must submit at least one version of each project in order to pass the course.**

Preparation & Deadlines

Class projects require your active participation; it is important that you complete exercises, quizzes, and assignments, and respond to your classmates in the discussion board in a timely manner.

Just because we are online does not mean you should not attend or address the procedures of the class. Everyone must participate for the class to function in this space, so please set time aside to take care of class work. I know it sounds weird, but you can still miss too much time even online, resulting in missing assignment deadlines and important announcements.

The class runs on a Monday/Wednesday schedule. In other words, most deadlines fall on Mondays, and Wednesdays by midnight.

Late Work

I reserve the right to refuse to read exercises and projects submitted late. If I do accept late work, it is subject to a deduction. No work will be accepted more than one week later than its scheduled due date.

Office Hours

I will hold office hours:

Mondays 2 to 3 p.m. and 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Wednesdays 3 to 5:30 p.m.

You are welcome to come see me “in person” during these times. But, in general, the best way to contact me is via email at rumseys@ipfw.edu. I check my email several times a day during the work week. Emails received over the weekend or overnight may not be read until the morning of the following business day.

Ethics and Plagiarism

The IPFW 2006-2008 Undergraduate Bulletin describes plagiarism as “a form of cheating in which the work of someone else is offered as one’s own. The language or ideas thus taken from another may range from isolated formulae, sentences, or paragraphs, to entire articles copied from printed sources, speeches, software, or the work of other students” (272). To borrow someone else’s writing without acknowledging that use is the worst form of academic dishonesty, which can result in failure for the course as well as sanction from the University. (See the section entitled “Academic Honesty” in the bulletin.) The “ghost writing” of a paper also can lead to sanction from the University. That is, you should never do someone else’s homework for them.

You must do your own original work in this course--and to identify that portion of your work which is collaborative with others, or borrowed from others, or which is your own work from other contexts. **Whenever you quote passages, borrow graphics, or use ideas from others, you are legally and ethically obliged to acknowledge that use, following appropriate conventions for documenting sources.**

You may revise work that you have done or are doing in other courses as long as it meets the following conditions: (1) it is your own work, (2) you plan an extensive revision for this course, and (3) you have informed, and have received the approval of, your instructor. If you have doubts about whether or not you are using your own or others’ writing ethically and legally, ask your instructor.

I reserve the right to make changes and updates to this syllabus throughout the semester. You will be notified of all changes in writing.