

# ENG W421—Technical Writing Projects

## Spring 2009

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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>

### Course Goals

English W421 has both long-term and short term goals. The long-term goal is to help you develop and practice types of communication skills you will use during your career, much like W234, Technical Report Writing. In this way, W421 plays an important part of your technology education as defined by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). The short-term goal is to help you produce the types of texts required during a significant design project to be undertaken during the current semester. For many of you, this will be your engineering senior design project or a work-related project for your current employer.

### Course Objectives

Students who complete W421 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 and speak in technical genres (e.g., proposals, reports, specifications, technical descriptions, and oral presentations); and to understand and integrate graphics and visuals as part of an argument.
- **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 using databases and other resources to

find, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize 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—both face-to-face and virtual; and to recognize the influence of professional organizations.

- **Writing Processes**, including the use of multiple drafts to create and complete a effective final 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 collaborate and to produce texts for various media.
- **Knowledge of Conventions**, including the ability to adapt visual and textual elements for different kinds of technical genres (both print and digital); 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.

## Assigned Text

Alred, Gerald J., Charles T. Brusaw, and Walter E Oliu. *Handbook of Technical Writing*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 2006. ISBN: 0-31243613-0

I'd like to point out that this is NOT the newest version of the handbook. I opt to use the older edition in order that you may find used copies.

## Recommended Texts

I encourage you to subscribe to the online text *Professional Writing Online 3.0* by James Porter, Pat Sullivan, and Johndan Johnson-Eilola. There are several ways to get this online text. First, may go directly to [www.pearsonhighered.com/pwo](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/pwo) and follow the links to the subscription page. It is \$48.00 there. Second, you might go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and find either new (\$42.00) or used (\$30.00 and up) copies.

I will be building my lecture notes from this text. It is a well written, easy to understand book that addresses most of the genres we will be studying in class this term.

## Projects and Points

Specific criteria for each project will be discussed at appropriate times throughout the semester. **Note: you must submit at least one version of every project in order to pass the course.** Students earning at least 90% of the total points possible at the end

of the semester will earn an A; those earning at least 80% of the points will receive a B, at least 70% merits a C, and at least 60% of the points is a D.

Project	Purposes	Percentage
Proposal	To propose a project for W421; to argue for its suitability; to set a schedule for it's completion.	15%
Progress report	To update your instructor and classmates on the status of your project	15%
Oral Presentation	To demonstrate your project and highlight its strengths.	10%
Final Report and Portfolio	To justify your project, explain the reasoning that went into its design, and share your results.	35%
Homework	To contextualize and explore professional writing within the engineering field.	25%

Details about each project, and templates, can be found on our class website.

## Attendance

Our scheduled class times are either:

- Monday (section 1) from 6 to 7:15 p.m. in Neff B27, or
- Tuesday (section 2) from 6 to 7:15 p.m. in Neff B39.

Class attendance is important because each week I will discuss a different genre of technical writing, and your homework assignment for that week is to write in that genre. There are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences; either you are here or you are not. You get two “freebies,” but after that your final grade will be lowered by 3% for every absence.

Spring term often has weather issues. Should the campus be closed because of poor weather, I will post a PowerPoint lecture to our web space in lieu of class lecture.

## Office Hours

Because our meeting times are only once a week, I will have a greater number of office hours. Feel free to stop by my office in CM 043 during these “open” hours:

- Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Of course you may contact me directly to set up an appointment. My contact information is listed above.

I strongly encourage you to meet regularly with me to discuss portions of your ongoing work. Your success in this class is heavily dependent upon your ability to manage your own time and work independently. Regular meetings with me may help you avoid procrastination.

## Homework Assignments

This course is a hybrid of in-person and online work. In addition to in-person class time, there are online assignments and deadlines that you will need to be aware of. Our class website is on blackboard (formerly WebCT) and can be found at <http://elearning.ipfw.edu/>.

A note about file attachments: some of the documents you'll be producing will have images and therefore will be larger files. I would recommend that you either make your files .pdf before you send them to me or compress the file in a .zip. For .pdf files, I have Adobe professional so I can still comment on them. Generally .zip files work ok too.

Online Reading: Some weeks, in eLearning, I will provide articles or suggested websites pertaining to a given genre. These articles and websites are a \*starting place\* for your weekly homework assignments. They are meant to help you begin to define a particular genre and as samples, but you will still need to do your own searching and reading each week.

Online Writing: Each week you have a homework assignment about the genres we discussed in class and that you read about in the posted articles. These assignments must follow the guidelines posted on the website. These assignments are to be submitted Fridays by midnight (11:59 p.m.) to my email account at [rumseys@ipfw.edu](mailto:rumseys@ipfw.edu).

**You MUST have in your subject heading “W421 Homework” so that your mail is filtered into the correct spot.**

## Print Based Assignments

Three times during the semester you will turn in larger, print-based, written products. Details about each one follow:

Proposal: This document is comprised of “Planning Genres”

- Introductions
- Objectives
- Statement of need/purpose
- Statement of solution

- Trade off studies
- Gantt charts
- Market analyses
- Specifications (general ones)

You will compile and revise homework assignments from the prior weeks into a cohesive proposal. This document is to be printed and handed in during class. It is due Monday, February 16 (section 1) or Tuesday, February 17 (section 2). **Keep all copies of your work for your final portfolio.**

Progress Report: This document is comprised of “Interim Genres”

- Feasibility reports/studies
- Implementation plans
- Evaluation plans (how you plan to test...)
- Cost/benefit analysis
- Personnel and qualifications

You will compile and revise homework assignments from the prior weeks into a cohesive progress report. This document is to be printed and handed in during class. It is due Monday, March 16 (section 1) or Tuesday, March 17 (section 2). **Keep all copies of your work for your final portfolio.**

Final Report and Portfolio: The final report is comprised of “Summative Genres”

- Results
- Methods
- Testing
- Executive summaries
- Abstracts
- Project management reports
- Transmittal letters
- Conclusions

You will compile and revise homework assignments from the prior weeks into a cohesive final report. This document is to be printed and handed in during class.

**Along with your final report, you will submit a portfolio of all previous homework assignments, your proposal and your progress report.** Please put the entire semester’s work into a three ring binder with your name clearly visible on the front cover. It is due Monday, April 27 (section 1) or Tuesday, April 28 (section 2).

## 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.

## Ethics and Plagiarism

You are expected to act ethically, both toward your classmates and your instructor. In addition to acting honestly, ethical behavior toward classmates involves contributing your fair share to group exercises and projects and addressing one another respectfully (both face-to-face and online). Ethical behavior toward your instructor involves speaking honestly and submitting your own work.

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.

## Using Work from Other Courses

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
3. you have informed, and have received the approval of, your instructor