English 621-001 (Fall 2024)
Technical Writing for Graduate Students

Professor:	Dr. Jerry Paris
Office:	Cullimore 416
Office Hours:	Tues. 2:30-3:30pm; Thurs. 2:30 – 3:30pm . or by appt.
	(appointments may be in person or via Zoom)
Email:	paris@njit.edu
Course location:	Central King Building (CKB) G-17A)
	On the lower floor
Course Schedule:	Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-2:20 p.m.

Course Description

This course will help you develop and refine your oral and written communication skills. Topics covered include writing and reviewing academic journal articles, dissertation writing, grant proposals, job applications and resumes, slide and poster design, incorporating visuals in journal articles, and writing instructional manuals. The course is designed for PhD students whose first language is not English, but it is also open to master's students and native English speakers who want to improve their academic writing.

The approach is practical. Your major project in this course will be drafting and revising a document that furthers your graduate education. This may be part of your dissertation, an article, a grant proposal, etc. The course will often take the form of a workshop. You will receive feedback from your peers as well as from the instructor (via writing consultations). We will also work on correcting grammar and refining style as appropriate to your discipline. Special attention will be paid to the organization of your writing.

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course.

Learning Outcomes

1. Become aware of the conventions of different genres of academic writing (literature review, annotated bibliography, conference paper, etc.)
2. Learn the stylistic principles of clear technical writing.
3. Make substantial progress on a project that is central to your research (an article, part of your dissertation, a grant application, etc.) and revise for content, style, and grammar.
4. Give substantial feedback to your peers through comments in Google docs and in live (in-class) workshops.
5. Practice collaborative work habits necessary for effective cooperation on grants, papers, and reports.
6. Communicate in writing, clearly and concisely with scholars outside of your field of expertise (your major)
7. Identify patterns within your writing (this includes proofreading for grammatical errors as well as structure and style).
8. Give two oral presentations to an audience of peers; respond to questions in a professional, confident manner.

Important Notes:
- The class schedule is subject to change. I will always notify you in advance of any change.
- You are responsible for checking your email and the Canvas page for updates.
- I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours.
- **Policy on Late Assignments:** The general policy is the following: For each day (not class period) the assignment is late, the grade will drop by half a letter grade. If you have some extenuating circumstance, please let me know.

ChatGPT (and other Generative AI)

In this class, we will spend some time discussing generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard, Bing, etc.) and I will give you some assignments that involve the use of these tools. However, the primary goal of this course is to help you become a stronger writer. For that reason, any use of ChatGPT or other generative AI is prohibited unless it is built into the assignment. **Any use of generative AI without the explicit permission of the instructor in advance will be considered a violation of academic integrity and referred to the Dean (see the academic integrity policy below).**

Please note that Grammarly uses AI.

It is also important to recognize that generative AI is limited and unreliable. If you ask ChatGPT to produce a bibliography, for example, it will invent citations. As a researcher, you cannot rely on these programs! Further, ChatGPT (and other generative AI) is a large language model (LLM) that does not produce original material. It need not be up to date. Rather, it is trained on existing data and tends to produce uninteresting text. Its ability to help you become a stronger thinker or researcher is limited.
As generative AI is so new, we are learning about it together. Do not hesitate to bring up any questions or concerns.

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"
All assignments submitted shall be considered "graded work" and all aspects of your coursework

are covered by the Code on Academic Integrity. All projects and homework are to be completed individually unless otherwise specified.

A Note on the Use of Technology

We will often work on writing and editing in class, so you should bring your laptop to class. However, I expect you to be focused on the work for our class. If I notice you are distracted, on your phone, or doing work for other classes, your participation grade will be significantly lowered.

Special Needs

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a documented disability, please see me as early in the semester as possible to discuss the necessary accommodations and/or contact Student Disability Services at 973-596-3420.

Required Materials

Caplan, Nigel A. *Grammar Choices for Graduate and Professional Students*. University of Michigan Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-472-03731-5 (you will receive a copy of this text at no cost)
Note: We do not have time in the class to do many grammar lessons (and that is not the focus of the class). However, I will occasionally have you do exercises from this book in class. I will assign others for homework. I will also give you an answer key so you can use the book for self-study.

All other material will be made available through Canvas.

Other Resources:

- Completed dissertations from NJIT graduate students: https://digitalcommons.njit.edu/dissertations/ Note that there are a number of other valuable resources on this page as well.
- Strunk, William Jr. *The Elements of Style*. Originally published in 1860. Available in hard copy at the NJIT library.
- Krathwohl, David R.; Smith, Nick L. *How to Prepare a Dissertation Proposal: Suggestions for Students in Education and the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2005. Available in hard copy at the NJIT library.
- *Federal Plain Language Guidelines*. Freely available from https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/
- Glasman-Deal, Hilary. *Science Research Writing for Non-Native Speakers of English*. 2010. Imperial College Press. ebook available via the NJIT l

- Heard, Stephen B. *The Scientist's Guide to Writing*. 2016. Princeton University Press.
- **Forvo** https://forvo.com/ Allows you to type in words to hear pronunciations
- *The New York Times* Free subscription available through NJIT:
  https://researchguides.njit.edu/nytimes

Description of Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Grading Scale

A = 90-100	B+ = 87-89	B = 80-86	C+ = 77-79	C = 70-76	D = 60-69	F = 0 – 59

ASSIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION	PERCENTAGE OF FINAL GRADE
Major project	This should be a project central to your graduate program. It could be a literature review, journal article, dissertation proposal, grant proposal, part of your dissertation, conference paper, a paper on a subject you are studying now, etc. **The minimum length for this project is 10 double spaced pages or 4,000 words.** You will draft and closely revise this document so that you have polished work by the end of the semester.	40%
Proposal and annotated bibliography	Related to your major project.	15%
Short writing assignments (article abstracts, other short assignments, grammar/style exercises, etc.)	Assigned throughout the semester; may include article abstracts, reflections on your writing, cover letters and other parts of the academic dossier, progress report, etc. Assignments will always be posted to Canvas.	25%
Presentations	One brief oral presentation on genre conventions/writing craft/revision and a longer final presentation based on your major project. The final presentation will be a multimedia presentation. Part of your grade will be based on your ability to field questions spontaneously. This will help you prepare for future professional presentations as well as your dissertation defense.	10%

	Presentations will be explained in greater detail later in the semester. The professor may include other brief presentations if time allows. These would be factored into this portion of the grade.	
Peer review and discussions + Class participation	You will do peer review for various assignments during the semester both through Google docs and orally. Your feedback should be substantial and constructive. Giving feedback will help you improve your own writing	10%

Class Calendar

The instructor reserves the right to modify class topics. Changes for assignments and due dates will be announced in advance.

Week 1 (Tues, Sept 3; Thurs, Sept 5)
Introduction to course and to your peers
Choosing a major project
NDA (nondisclosure agreement: signed by students and advisors)
In-class writing
Homework: Read "Writing as Thinking" (on Canvas)

Week 2 (**Tues, Sept 10; Thurs, Sept 12**)
Mon., Sept 9: Last Day to Add/Drop a Class (If you drop after this date, you get a "W" for the course.
Precision in language; writing manuals/in-class technical writing exercise.
Discussion of "Writing as Thinking"
Writing proposals: Proposal assigned

Week 3 (**Tues, Sept 17; Thurs, Sept 19**)
"The Science of Scientific Writing" (Gopen & Swan, 1990)
Note: This article contains a great deal of information about clear writing style. I do not expect you to absorb it all at once. Rather, we will use this article as an introduction and break down the ideas throughout the semester
Literature Reviews
Overview of the genres of academic writing
Visual Communication: Effective slide and poster design
Presentation assigned: genre/craft analysis

Week 4 - Tues, Sept 24; Thurs, Sept 26)
Thurs, Sept 26: Proposal due. Do not write this as an essay. Follow the formatting of a proposal.
How to read like a writer (reading with attention to craft)
Analysis of "Language and Thought in LLMs"
ChatGPT: discussion and in-class exercise
Dissertation proposals

Week 5 - Tues, Oct 1; Thurs, Oct 3
Avoiding plagiarism and self-plagiarism
Paraphrasing

Week 6 - Tues, Oct 8; Thurs, Oct 10
Begin presentations: Genre and craft awareness/the revision process
Writing abstracts
Annotated bibliography due major project

Week 7 - Tues, Oct 15; Thurs, Oct 17
Combining clauses
Making your writing more concise

Week 8 - **Tues, Oct 22; Thurs, Oct 24**
Writing workshop
In-class writing/editing
Caplan Ch. 6: Hedging, Boosting, and Positioning

Week 9 - Tues, Oct 29; Thurs, Oct 31
To be announced.

Week 10 - Tues, Nov 5; Thurs, Nov 7
Dossiers for the academic job market: cover letters and CVs

Week 11 - Tues, Nov 12; Thurs, Nov 14

Partial draft major project due Thurs. Nov 14

Revision workshop

Individual writing conferences

s

Week 12 - Tues, Nov 19; Thurs, Nov 21

Monday November 18 : Last Day to withdraw from a course

CVs vs. resumes

Cover letters

Research statements

Peer review due/major project

Week 13 - Tues, Nov 26

Writing Workshops/Revision exercises

Thursday, Nov 28 / Thanksgiving- NJIT Closed

Week 14 – Tues, Dec 3; Thurs, Dec 5

Presentations on major project

Week 15 – Tues, Dec 10 Last Day of Class (Wed, Dec 11 is the last day of all classes)

Final version major project (written portion) due Wed. --- Presentations on major project

Course wrap-up; reflections on how to be a good editor of your own work; review of proofreading strategies.

* There is no final exam in this course *