

SPRING 2025

TECHNICAL WRITING (COM 313 458) *

Prof. Andres Crespo
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“The shorter and the plainer the better.”
~ Beatrix Potter

“It is my ambition to say in ten sentences what others say in a whole book.”
~ Friedrich Nietzsche

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.”
~ Leonardo da Vinci

Meeting days/times: N/A

Meeting Location: Asynchronous Online (see footnote) *

Office: Cullimore Hall 419

Office Hours: TH 2:00 – 5:00 pm

COURSE OVERVIEW

(Prerequisite: HSS 101): An advanced writing course. Combines current theory with actual practice to prepare students as technical writers. Analyze complex communication situations and design appropriate responses through tasks that involve problem-solving, rhetorical theory, document design, oral presentations, writing teams, audience awareness, ethical considerations, and gender equity issues.

*Course modality: our course is asynchronous online, meaning classes take place on your own time through Canvas' modules. Everyone follows the same deadlines, however.

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COURSE GOALS

- ◆ Write and revise various types of professional technical communications to produce a set of technical documents demonstrating your ability to write clearly and accurately in a concise professional style.
- ◆ Read and interpret material on technology and explain the ideas, issues, and problems involved in writing about technology and in workplace writing.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Develop collaborative work habits, including those necessary for effective cooperation with other students and instructors.
- ◆ Identify your own strengths and weaknesses in writing.

There is NO midterm exam.

There is NO final exam.

TEXTBOOK

The Essentials of Technical Communication 5th Edition, by Elizabeth Tebeaux and Sam Dragga, Oxford University Press; 2020
ISBN-10: 0197539203, ISBN-13: 978-0197539200

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ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

All grading will be done numerically. For instance, if an assignment is worth 10%, it will receive a grade from 1 to 10. These grades will then be added at the end of the semester for the final grade.

FINAL GRADES

A = 94 – 100 B+ = 87 – 93 B = 81 – 86 C+ = 76 – 80 C = 70 – 75 D = 65 – 69 F = 0 – 64

ASSIGNMENTS

| | Assignment Name and Description | % |
|----|--|----|
| #1 | Analyzing Professional Writing – Find one example of professional writing you believe you would struggle with if you had to write it (e.g., a technical memo, SOP, or manual). Analyze its purpose, audience, and effectiveness prior to reflecting on what may challenge you. Document these findings and reflections with a memorandum. | 5% |
| #2 | Resume (Peer Review) – Write a resume with Education and Experience (work or volunteer) as the first two entries. Bring a digital copy to class for peer review. | 5% |
| #3 | Visual Communication Exercise – Find two examples of visual communication (online, in a brochure, in a textbook or article, etc.), one good and one bad. Put them in a Word document with the source (where you found each graphic) and a paragraph on why they are good or bad. | 5% |

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| | Assignment Name and Description | % |
|----|---|-----|
| #4 | First Draft IR (Interview Report) – Interview a classmate using a specific job description. Start with a list of questions and write down the answers. Using those notes, prepare a one-page narrative style report. | 10% |
| #5 | Final Draft IR – After you have received the reviews from your peers and myself, revise the essay. If you don't revise, I'll take points off. | 5% |
| #6 | First Draft Major Project – You can choose to write a report, a proposal or a procedure. This 1 st Draft should be at least 4 double-spaced pages, excluding illustrations. The more finished it is, the more valuable the peer feedback. | 15% |
| #7 | Oral Presentation – Choose any topic - your favorite hobby, your area of expertise, etc. Each presentation should be 5 minutes maximum <i>and will be timed</i> . DO NOT READ FROM SLIDES! Your presentation will be assessed by the entire class and graded by me. | 10% |
| #8 | Final Draft Major Project – Revise your Major Project paper and upload it to Canvas. | 20% |
| #9 | Class Participation – Weekly discussions and short writing assignments. | 25% |

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COURSE SCHEDULE

| Week | Homework | Class Activity | Week | Homework | Class Activity |
|------|---|---|------|--|--|
| 1/21 | Read Chapter 1 Review Syllabus | Intros Week 1 Discussion Analyzing Professional Writing | 1/27 | Read Chapter 2 | Week 2 Discussion Audience Activity |
| 2/3 | Read Chapters 3 & 12 Résumé due 2/9 | Week 3 Discussion Conduct interview | 2/10 | Read Chapter 4 | Week 4 Discussion Oral Presentation (OP) Lecture |
| 2/17 | Read Chapters 5-6 | Week 5 Discussion OP I | 2/24 | First Draft IR due 3/2 Intro to Excel Data Analysis (See Canvas for content) | Week 6 Discussion OP I Continued Draft One Interview Peer Review |
| 3/3 | Read Chapters 7 & 11 | Week 7 Discussion OP I Continued | 3/10 | Read Chapter 8, 9, or 10 (depending on Major Project topic) Final Draft IR due 3/15 | Week 8 Discussion |

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|------|--|---|------|--|---|
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| 3/17 | Spring Recess from 3/16 to 3/22 | | 3/24 | Major Project Proposal due 3/30 Upload pre-recorded 5-minute presentation (PowerPoint and audio for narration) by Thursday – 3/27 | Week 10 Discussion OP II |
| 3/31 | What about emails? | OP II Continued Reverse-engineer a technical document group exercise Email case study | 4/7 | TBD | OP II Continued Major Project Preview exercise (You must have at least a page ready for critique) |
| 4/14 | Major Project Draft 1 due 4/20 | Week 13 Discussion | 4/21 | TBD | |
| 4/28 | Final Draft Major Project due 5/6 | | 5/7 | Final Conferences | |

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AI CHATBOTS

When using AI chatbots for assistance (e.g., research, brainstorming, etc.), you must quote any borrowed material and include a disclaimer at the end, **documenting how the tool aided you in the writing process**. Remember that chatbots sometimes generate fictitious content, including source material.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is systematically organized to give you the best experience possible on Canvas. Once you click on the course, you will find the basic tabs, such as “announcements,” “Syllabus,” and “Grades.” The most important one, however, is the “**modules**” tab. Each corresponding module will be published on a weekly basis and organized in the following manner:

1. Topics Overview
2. Content
 - a. Readings for this week
 - b. Readings for next week
 - c. Extra resources
3. Weekly discussion
4. Weekly writing assignment
5. Review/summary of what we’ve done so far (written by me)

Note that you CANNOT access a currently published module unless you review everything from the previous one.

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ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

I do not accept emailed assignments. Late assignments receive a 10% late penalty for each day they are late; after 3 days, I do not accept the assignment. However, documented emergencies, accommodations, and unprecedented personal circumstances are exceptions to this rule, once the Dean of Students (<https://www.njit.edu/dos/contact.php>) approves it.

PLAGIARISM

No document should go beyond 20% plagiarism rate unless it comes from cited material.

ATTENDANCE

Your attendance will be tracked by your participation. For example, if you did not participate in a discussion entirely and missed the mini assignment on the same week, you will be marked absent. Otherwise, any active class participation on a weekly basis implies to me that you are attending the course.

EXPECTATIONS FOR INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIVENESS

The best way to contact me is via email; you can expect a response within 48 hours. Also, assignments are graded on a weekly basis unless the work is late.

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NJIT UNIVERSITY CODE OF 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: [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](#).

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”

ACCESSIBILITY 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.

THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center (G17 Central King) is available for 45-minute individual and group appointments with professional writing tutors both onsite and online. This resource is intended to help you improve your communication and writing skills. Tutors can help with planning assignments, improving your writing, refining an essay or multimedia project, or other communication-based needs. To make an appointment, please visit <https://njit.mywconline.com>

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