

New Jersey Institute of Technology
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

COM 313 – Technical Writing

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Office Hours: By appt on [Zoom](#); **2:30-3:30 PM on Wednesday**

COM 313 - Technical Writing:

Prerequisites: ENGL 102 with a grade of C or higher, and one History and Humanities GER 200 level course with a grade of C or higher. 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. This course satisfies the three-credit 300 GER in History and Humanities.

A statement on care:

For many students, college is a time of high stress. Studies have shown that college students often neglect to care for themselves due to factors like deadlines, pressure to achieve high grades, and difficulty with time management. Recent studies show that high school and college students increasingly struggle mentally and emotionally. It is imperative to your well-being that you make time to care for yourself. Taking care of yourself can include (but is not limited to): eating regularly, drinking water, getting enough sleep, talking with a professional about your feelings, writing about your feelings, taking time to walk outside, exercising, spending time talking with a friend, and taking time out for yourself. Please take care of your mental, physical, and emotional health. You know what your body needs; I encourage you to advocate for yourself and your access needs¹. I encourage you to communicate your access needs to your professors so that we can better support your wellness. Please also familiarize yourself with the resources available at NJIT: <https://www.njit.edu/counseling/>

Course Goals:

- To learn to communicate clearly in writing and in oral presentations.
- To learn types of technical writing: instructions, procedures, proposals, etc.
- To learn professional features of MS Word, screen capture tools and basic digital media.
- To increase awareness of race, gender, and accessibility issues in technical writing.

¹ Access needs: anything a person requires to participate in their environment or a community or to engage with an idea, function, or activity.

Learning Outcomes:

1. 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.
2. Read and interpret material on technology and explain the ideas, issues, and problems involved in writing about technology and workplace writing.
3. Demonstrate information literacy: the ability to formulate appropriate questions, find, select, assess, and analyze information sources, both print and electronic, from the open web and/or the NJIT Library, and synthesize, credit, and integrate those sources in your own work.
4. Develop collaborative work habits, including those necessary for effective cooperation with other students and instructors.
5. Identify your own strengths and weaknesses in writing.

Required Textbook:

No textbook is required for this course. All readings are available on Canvas.

Grading Procedure:

This class will utilize a [grading contract](#). You can find the grading contract under the “Getting Started” module on Canvas. Students should be sure to complete the corresponding Contract Grading discussion board during the first two weeks of the course. If students have questions about the grading contract or about how they will be evaluated in the course, please schedule an office hour meeting with me or reach out via email.

Grading Scale:

A = 100-90	B+ = 89=87	B = 86-80	C+ = 79-77	C = 76-70	D = 69-60	F = 59-0
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Labor:**Assignments/Assignment Policies:****Resources:**

Each week, there will be between 4-8 resources that students should review. Resources will be related to the course assignments for the week. Resources may include lecture videos and presentations on topics around technical writing, relevant videos, and example genres.

Readings:

Each week, there will be a list of texts for students to consider. These texts are mainly academic

and are published in technical writing and professional communication journals. Also included under readings are relevant podcasts and videos.

Modules:

All assignments are located under modules. You should refer to the module to complete the readings/presentations/videos and the graded assignments. Assignments are expected to be handed in weekly. I will not accept all work in bulk at the end of the semester.

Announcements:

Be sure to read the weekly announcements, as they will be used to communicate important, timely information about the course.

Informal Discussions/Minor Assignment:

Discussion Board questions are posted on Canvas. The questions/discussion items are designed to stimulate your critical thinking and foster discussion among the class and fellow students. Minor assignments will also be categorized under this heading. Informal discussion and minor assignment responses must be comprehensive (aim for 150-300 words) and well-written; students should be sure to fulfill the requirements being posed. You may want to use MS Word to prepare your draft discussion and to spell-check your work before it is posted on the Discussion Board. All NJIT students have [access](#) to MS Word.

Major Assignments:

There are a variety of written assignments assigned throughout the term. Each project targets a particular skill associated with technical writing. Assignment requirements are outlined in the respective assignments and modules. All major assignments must be turned in to pass the course.

Proposal:

The proposal is a document where you outline the design for a solution to a problem. You will also address the audience and purpose of your design. During week 3, students will be tasked with creating a how-to-video for an audience of their choosing based on a topic they feel confident presenting a tutorial about. Students will view examples of YouTube tutorials, such as the "How to Write a Case Study" tutorial and, in week 2, the "How-to-Tie a Tie" tutorial and Selena Gomez's cooking tutorial during week 3 in preparation. While these tutorials are good examples of how students should compose this assignment, I also suspect that students have their own YouTube tutorials that they may watch, and so, if that is the case (*i.e., you watch makeup tutorials, gaming tutorials, coding tutorials, etc.*) then you may use the content you already enjoy when considering these assignments. In preparation for week 3, when students will be tasked with creating a how-to video, *students will create a proposal that outlines the design students will follow in their tutorial, the problem students have identified, the audience of their tutorial,*

the goals/purpose of their tutorial, and a proposed timeline and plan. Remember that students can choose whatever topic they desire to present on for their how-to-video. Be sure to consider the reading for this week and the usability testing when constructing your proposal (**I encourage you to produce a similar chart outlining the design moves that you intend to use in your tutorial to engage your audience from the reading for this week**). For your proposal, you will create a document with the following categories (**headings are required and should reflect these categories**):

- Problem Statement- summary (this is only a few sentences that outline the issue)
- Introduction/background
What is the purpose of your video?
- Audience of the tutorial- Who is the audience of your tutorial? How do you plan to appeal to your audience? Consider UX design and draw on your discussion board from earlier in the week.
- Project description/ Design of tutorial- What possible designs have you identified? Provide details about the design you think is most productive. What possible complications may arise during the design that you should account for?
- Credentials- Why are you qualified to compose this tutorial?
- Timeline- What is your proposed plan to complete your tutorial by the deadline? Please create a table or graphic to demonstrate your timeline.
- Budget, if necessary
- Conclusion/Goals of the tutorial- What do you hope to achieve through your design for your audience? How?

DIY Tutorial:

During week 3, students will be tasked with creating a how-to-video for an audience of their choosing based on a topic they feel confident presenting a tutorial about. Students will view examples of YouTube tutorials, such as the "How to Write a Case Study" tutorial and, in week 2, the "How-to-Tie a Tie" tutorial and Selena Gomez's cooking tutorial during week 3 in preparation. While these tutorials are good examples of how students should compose this assignment, I also suspect that students have their own YouTube tutorials that they may watch, and so, if that is the case (*i.e., you watch makeup tutorials, gaming tutorials, coding tutorials, etc.*) then you may use the content you already enjoy when considering these assignments. Students should compose a tutorial video according to the genre expectations we've discussed about DIY tutorials. Students should especially consider the audience, purpose, and goals of their tutorial. Students should think about the design choices they are making and why they made those choices as it relates to genre, audience, and purpose. Students' videos should be about 5-7 minutes and need to include either captions or a transcript. Students can use whatever recording platform they prefer; *I recommend your cell phone, zoom, or webex.* Students should upload the file to this submission portal. If there are any issues, please email me the file.

Presentation:

For this assignment, students will create a presentation with a total of 8 slides-- (cover slide + citation slide) an introduction, and a conclusion slide with four informational slides. Students' presentations will provide solutions to the problem within a specific company/organization that you identified during week 3. Since students only have 4 slides of informational content, you'll need to consider how much information you can include. The space restrictions are, therefore, part of the assessment. Based on the problem students identified in week 3, you'll come up with 2-3 possible solutions that could be considered. The goals of this assignment are two-fold: Students learn how to create accessible presentations, **including (1) creating image descriptions. (1)** Students provide solutions to the problem they identified **that consider inclusive design.**

The Job Application:

Students should create a resume based on the work/extra-curricular experience they currently have. While students can choose to tailor their resumes to a job posting that they identify, students shouldn't feel restricted by a certain position while crafting their resumes. However, when crafting their cover letter, students should write their cover letter based on a job posting they find (if you are applying for a position in the future, feel free to use that for company/organization when writing). Students should proceed as if they were applying for the position. The letter should, therefore be addressed to someone in the company who would theoretically read the letter. The letter should be tailored to the position requirements/expectations. Students should make an argument in their cover letter for how their experiences would be beneficial to the position they are applying for. If the experiences aren't exactly translatable, that's part of learning how to write a cover letter. Students should consider how they can make their experiences applicable to the job posting.

Recommendation report:

For this assignment, students will be tasked with exploring ChatGPT technology (use your NJIT information to log in if you don't have an account) and constructing an academic policy about ChatGPT. The first part of this assignment asked students to compose an essay on a topic within technical writing using ChatGPT. Students then took the essay produced by ChatGPT and wrote a 500-word response where they analyzed ChatGPT's response and elaborated on any missing context and information that would strengthen the essay response using the information and content learned in this course. Students also considered the limitations of asking ChatGPT to write an assignment for them. Finally, students brainstormed 2-3 possible policy recommendations around AI in the classroom.

For this assignment, students should compose a recommendation report of the 2-3 policy recommendations that they brainstormed during the AI essay assignment. The report should be written for the Office of Academic Integrity and it should argue for an AI policy that can be used

at NJIT. Students will be responsible for crafting an argument around an AI policy that they believe would be ethical and beneficial for NJIT students. Students should consult the academic integrity policy already included in NJIT syllabi and consider how they would revise the policy to also consider AI. *Students should use what they learned in the comparison exercise as they consider which policy is best.* In the recommendation report, students should include the following sections with headings:

- Executive summary- identify the need in a sentence,
- Introduction-Introduce the problem and urgency of the topic- expand on the executive summary
- Present possible policy recommendations
- Provide an analysis of the pros and cons of each policy
- Conclusions- Present the conclusions from your findings-- what do the pros and cons of each policy suggest?
- Recommendation - Provide a recommendation and rationale for that recommendation to the Office of Academic Integrity

Extensions:

For major assignments, students can hand in the assignment **within 48 hours after the deadline** without penalty. As long as the assignment is submitted within 48 hours after the deadline, students will not be penalized. I will not accept late major assignments **after more than two weeks from the due date**.

Minor assignments and discussion boards can be submitted late without penalty, but students should aim to submit their late minor and discussion board assignments within no more than two weeks from the due date. **Consistent late submissions may result in an extended conversation with the instructor.**

Assignments for the week are due on Sunday at midnight. However, I understand that sometimes other things get in the way. I am willing to grant extensions when they are needed. The extension is not an issue; lack of communication is. There will be no extensions on the final revised proposal.

All assignments should be typed and proofread for grammar and spelling errors.

This course moves fast. It is expected that you complete assignments weekly. If you experience an illness or emergency, please contact me as soon as you become aware that there will be an issue. We will then work out a plan to ensure your completion of the course that works for you.

Missing/Late Work:

I will email students bi-weekly to remind them of any assignments that they are missing.

Submitting assignments late can result in a lower final grade based on the grading contract.

Accessibility:

I am committed to ensuring this course is inclusive and accessible to all students. At the beginning of the semester, you will be asked to fill out an access survey where you can articulate any accommodations or access needs you may require or desire. I will do my best to meet your access needs throughout the semester based on your responses. If you encounter any barriers (physical, mental, or emotional) as the semester progresses, please let me know so we can determine the best course of action together. I am happy to discuss solutions to any design limitations to the course. Bear in mind that while the university asks for documentation for disabilities and accommodations, I do not, and I am willing to do my best to meet individual needs. You are welcome to contact the disability resource office to begin this conversation or to establish accommodations for this or other courses. You can also reach out to me privately if going through disability services isn't currently an option. I welcome feedback that will assist me in improving the usability and experience for all students. As a classroom community, I hope that we can work together to create an accessible space.

If you get sick at any point during the semester, please reach out as soon as possible. If you need to quarantine or isolate, please let me know if you need any extensions. If you are having issues with the design of the course or the technology itself, please reach out to me. All of this to say, I can't read your mind; I'm willing to work together to make this course beneficial to you; Please keep open lines of communication to ensure we can have the best semester.

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability, documented or undocumented, 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 indented 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. For more information, please visit [**"The Writing Center"**](#)

Email Policy

If you need to get a hold of me email is my preferred method. **I will respond to your emails within 24 hours (I don't check email from 6 p.m.- 9 a.m.).** Please plan accordingly. If I do not respond in 24 hours, please feel free to email me again. Remember to maintain an appropriate tone in all school-related correspondence. This means to include an appropriate SUBJECT line,

your NAME, and class in all emails.

Intellectual Property

Original class materials (handouts, assignments, tests, etc.) and recordings of class sessions are the intellectual property of the course instructor. You may download these materials for your use in this class. However, you may not provide these materials to other parties (e.g., web sites, social media, other students) without permission. Doing so is a violation of intellectual property law and of the student code of conduct.

A note on AI:

Any work you submit at any stage of the writing process must be your own. In addition, any words, ideas, or data you borrow from other people and include in your work must be properly documented, including work produced by generative AI. Failure to do either of these things is plagiarism.

I seek to protect the rights and intellectual property of all students, writers, and scholars by insisting that individual students act with integrity. Moreover, as we discuss in this course, citations are a political and cultural practice that requires intentional reflection and consideration. To develop as a writer, reader, and researcher requires personal investment and practice.

Emerging technology continues to change the literacy practices and contexts in which we engage, and it is critical that composition classrooms adapt accordingly. Chat GPT and AI platforms are tools that writers may use in some situations within particular contexts. Part of your development as a writer and researcher entails critically considering different occasions and developing a rationale for the appropriate use of AI writing tools. The use of AI is not a binary issue; I expect and trust that students will use the technology responsibly and ethically; failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity might include asking AI to generate project content for you (ChatGPT), drastically altering the language and syntax of your writing through AI software (Grammarly), and failing to disclose AI usage (Canva AI).

In this class, I ask that you keep an open line of communication with me regarding the use of AI writing tools. We will talk more about AI and the pros and cons later in the semester, but as a course policy: If you use Chat GPT or other AI tools, cite them as a footnote and in your Works Cited page and include a few sentence rationale for the appropriateness of their use. These are matters of concern because overreliance on technology can impede the growth of your writing skills and offset the learning outcomes for the course. It is also critical that writers and researchers interrogate the use of AI, given the ethical dilemmas associated with these technologies and their increasing presence.

NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity:

The New Jersey Institute of Technology is an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge through teaching and research. We expect our graduates to assume positions of leadership within their professions and communities. Honesty in your academic work will develop into professional integrity.

The NJIT Code of Academic Integrity embodies a spirit of mutual trust and intellectual honesty that is central to the very nature of the university and represents the highest possible expression of shared values among the members of the university community. 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 assignments are to be completed individually unless otherwise specified.

The full text of the NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity can be found at [NJIT University Code on 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 University Code on Academic Integrity](#).”

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.”

COM 313 Course Calendar

Online Full Term

COM 313: Technical Writing

Week 1

Topic: Introducing technical writing and communication

Due: Memo assignment and informal discussion board

Week 2

Topic: Genre and technical writing documents

Due: Informal discussion boards

Week 3

Topic: User-centered design and personas

Due: User persona minor assignment and technical writing analysis

Week 4

Topic: Audience and analysis

Due: Informal discussion boards

Week 5

Topic: Proposals and rhetorical concepts

Due: Proposal major assignment

Week 6

Topic: Tutorial and instruction manuals

Due: Tutorial video major assignment

Week 7

Topic: Technology and Social Justice

Due: Informal discussion boards

Week 8

Topic: Progress reports

Due: Progress report minor assignment

Week 10

Topic: Wicked problems and ethics in technical writing

Due: Pre-reflection and informal discussion board

Week 11

Topic: Accessibility and presentations

Due: Presentation major assignment

Week 12

Topic: Employment materials

Due: The job application package major assignment

Week 13

Topic: Data justice

Due: Informal discussion board and peer review

Week 14

Topic: Information literacy

Due: Informal discussion board and AI minor assignment

Week 15

Topic: Recommendation reports and AI ethics

Due: Recommendation report major assignment