



## COM 313 – Writing in the Workplace (Section H03, Honors) Fall 2025

Monday/Wednesday, 11:30am – 12:50pm

**Classroom:** Central King Building, CKB 313

**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.

## Instructor Information

<b>Name</b>	<b>Michael Laudenbach, PhD</b> <i>Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities &amp; Social Sciences</i>
<b>Contact Info</b>	<a href="mailto:michael.laudenbach@njit.edu"><u>michael.laudenbach@njit.edu</u></a>
<b>Office location</b>	Cullimore Hall 310 (in the Music Technology hallway)
<b>Office hours</b>	MW, 9:30am – 10:30am, 2:30pm – 3:30pm or another time by request; I'm also happy to meet over Zoom.

## Course Description

This is an advanced writing course combining theory with practice to prepare students as technical writers. Technical writing describes the process of turning complex knowledge into usable forms to be shared with colleagues and peers, community stakeholders, or less-expert audiences. To be effective technical writers, we must learn to do so across genres and media, and with a keen sense of audience expectations, as well as the purpose, contexts, and constraints of the rhetorical situation. In this course, you will sharpen your abilities to communicate information effectively, ethically, and authentically to people with different expectations and readers with specific needs. Students will analyze complex communication situations and design appropriate responses through tasks that involve problem-solving, rhetorical theory, document design, oral presentations, and ethical considerations.

## Learning Objectives

- Identify, research, negotiate, and compose various forms of technical and professional communication to produce a set of documents demonstrating your ability to adapt your writing according to changes in audience, purpose, and context.
- Develop an awareness of your own writing processes, becoming a more reflective writer with the meta-language to explain your communication choices.
- Learn and apply methods of textual and rhetorical analysis to identify patterns in communication genres within technical disciplines and professional settings.
- Draw on and apply research on how people read and use documents.
- Visualize data and appropriately caption visuals; discriminate between methodologies for creating accessible visuals and other multimodal artifacts to support a communication endeavor; develop data storytelling skills to support visualizations.
- Develop and apply an understanding of how visual design contributes to effectiveness in a given rhetorical situation or genre.
- Plan, devise, formulate, design, and report information via professional presentations or short talks for a variety of diverse technical and user needs.
- Perform, collect, analyze, evaluate, and integrate research that includes database searches, primary sources, and original (primary) research.

- Develop and apply strategies for making complex information accessible to non-expert audiences in both oral and written communication contexts.
- 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.
- Evaluate the impact of systemic barriers in businesses and organizations, identifying areas of inequity and proposing ethical improvements through strategic technical writing and inclusive documentation practices.

## Required Materials (nothing!) and Learning Resources

There are no required books to purchase. All readings will be uploaded and distributed via Canvas.

We will supplement our learning with digital tools designed at Carnegie Mellon University and tested in prior writing classrooms to confirm impact on learning:

- *DocuScope Corpus Analysis & Concordancer* is a tool for visualizing and analyzing rhetorical choices in text. We will use this tool to analyze sample texts and drafts of our own work.
- *myProse* is a tool that visualizes topical cohesion in your writing and uses a constrained large language model to help you turn your notes into complete sentences and paragraphs.

## Grade Assessment

Final course grades will follow NJIT's scale, which does not include A+ or any minuses.

A = 90 or above    B+ = 87-89    B = 80-86    C+ = 77-79    C = 70-76    D = 60-69

F = less than 60

Assignments are assigned point values and grouped into categories. On Canvas, you can view the assignments and their point values. The final course grade will be calculated using the following categories:

<u>Deliverable</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Short Assignments (homework, in-class activities, low-stakes tasks, etc.)	30%
Comparative Genre Analysis I & II	20%
Project 1: Policy or Funding Proposal	20%
Project 2: Proposal Presentation	20%
Final Self-Reflection	10%

*\*Please note that the total point value for each individual project includes all drafts, peer reviews, self-reflections, and tasks corresponding to the final project.*

Rubrics will be provided for each individual assignment. Rubric items will correspond to concepts covered in class.

# Description of Major Projects

## Comparative Genre Analysis

### **Analyzing writing types to build your meta-linguistic skills**

In these low-stakes assignments, you'll be asked to compare and analyze different writing genres—e.g., a journalistic article and an academic research article—and reflect on how the genre features work towards the exigence, purpose, and audience expectations for a given text. As part of the honors curriculum, you will examine writing from various disciplines and discuss how different discursive practices reflect disciplinary values and ways of knowing.

## Project 1: Policy or Funding Proposal

### **Persuading Decision-Makers to Fund or Support an Initiative**

Identify an existing problem in your disciplinary field of interest and write a funding proposal for a new research study. Alternatively, you may choose to instead identify a real-world problem or project that needs decision-makers' support in your communities, and propose a new policy, or a modification to an existing policy that addresses the problem. Write a proposal that details why your idea is worth investing time and/or funds.

## Project 2: “Tech Talk” Presentation

### **Giving Informative Technical Talks to Public Audiences**

In no more than 4-5 minutes, and with well-designed slides, engage and inform a non-expert audience on a technical matter that you are familiar with or a research project that you've contributed to.

***Note: For the projects in this course, you will be selecting topics that you authentically care about, so start brainstorming early!***

# Attendance Policy & In-Class Expectations

I do not deduct points from your grade for missing class. However, other aspects of your grade are affected by in-class participation and completion of daily tasks, so you will lose points on classwork activities. We meet 28 times total this semester. Everyone gets a free day or two without penalty to account for inevitabilities, but if you start to willingly miss class for no good reason, your grade will likely suffer.

Excused absences are reserved for documented professional commitments, illness, or religious observances; as with any other professional context, make requests for excused absences in courteous advance. When you miss class for something unforeseen, send me an email whenever you are able. Use your best professional judgment here: what's most important is your acknowledgement that you have looked on Canvas and know what you need to do for the upcoming class. If you are uncertain about something, let me know.

Here are some expectations that we can all be held accountable for, myself included:

- We should arrive on time for class.
- We will frequently need to access Canvas, Google Docs, and other online spaces for our activities and analyses for this course. You should bring a laptop or tablet to each class. While using your devices, please be courteous of your peers and instructor and **refrain from engaging in activities on your devices that may distract others (and you!).** Professional use of technology is instrumental for professional communication, and fostering those good habits starts in the classroom.
- We should be present for each other's ideas and should listen to understand, rather than to evaluate first.

- We should listen to each other with assumptions of good will and respect
- We should use inclusive, invitational language to build a class community that does not alienate but rather promotes the diversity of thought, culture, and identity. If anyone feels that we are not building an inclusive and safe culture within our class, please talk to me so that we can do better. And if you do not think you can talk to me about concerns, you can always reach out to your advisor and other administrators on campus.
- **Students and the instructor should deliver written work on time.** If the work is not on time, we should communicate with each other about the lateness in advance
- Students and the instructor should communicate about problems or concerns that arise. If students feel uncomfortable about an aspect of the course, they should share that concern with the teacher. Concerns can be about anything specific to our course material, pace, rigor, or classroom interactions.
- Occasionally, and if it benefits the whole class, I will offer extensions to everyone and announce them in advance. **Late work that has not been granted an extension will receive feedback but lower points**

## Academic Integrity

We will have thorough and considered conversations about academic integrity, plagiarism, and what it means to synthesize knowledge and cite sources in different contexts. Ultimately, if you are presenting someone else's work as your own in a writing course, you are only doing yourself a disservice. Here is the university's official language:

"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](mailto:dos@njit.edu)."

## LLM Policy

Personally, I do not believe in policing the use of large language models (LLMs) or restricting your access from tools like NotebookLM or Grammarly. In fact, we will be discussing some of these tools during the semester. We will have discussions about the affordances and drawbacks of generative AI tools, as well as critical discussions surrounding AI ethics. These tools have many pitfalls, but they are powerful enough to produce (mostly) convincing output. Still, that output is dogged by erroneous claims and a somewhat stale style of writing. These points of critique will be explored during weeks 5 & 6, and we will consult recent research literature to do so. Remember this: writing is an iterative, problem-solving process, not solely the generation of grammatically coherent sentences.

This course is meant for you to practice identifying rhetorical and linguistic strategies that you can put into your writing toolbox. Your use of tools like ChatGPT for text generation—not content generation—will only be strengthened by practicing the writing *yourself* in this course, applying principles to the other classes you may be taking this semester. If you rely on generative AI rather than engage with the course material and activities, you would only be doing yourself a

disservice.

To put it more formally: if you **do** use LLMs in your writing process, you should be doing so critically and ethically, and you must cite the model and explain how you used it in your writing process. If you present machine-generated text as your own, you are engaging in plagiarism, and I will need to follow the procedures described in the above section on academic integrity. (I can tell you that, if I were to assess it as your own work, a purely LLM-generated paper would **not** receive a high grade, no matter how good your prompt engineering may be. We will talk about this more over the course of the semester.)

## Accessibility Accommodations

“As your teacher, I want to empower you to become your own advocate for your learning. If there are improvements that I can make in class to help you access material more easily, please tell me. I’m happy to do anything to improve your learning experience.

If you have needs that require more formal accommodations, you can contact the **Office of Accessibility Resources and Services at [OARS@NJIT.EDU](mailto:OARS@NJIT.EDU), or visit the office in Kupfrian Hall 201 to discuss your specific needs.** According to their website, “a Letter of Accommodation Eligibility from the office authorizing student accommodations is required.”

## Guidelines for Self-Care (C-CAPS)

This semester should be challenging, engaging, and fruitful. However, don’t be embarrassed if you’re having trouble staying afloat. Ask for help. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone.

The busier we get, the easier it is to forget about maintaining a healthy mental state. If you are struggling and need course-related assistance or accommodations, please do not hesitate to reach out to me for a request—no personal details needed.

There are many helpful resources available on campus, including the Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (C-CAPS). Here is a quote from their web page (<https://www.njit.edu/counseling/>):

“Personal issues, family, emotional, and other concerns can be challenging and may impact your academic, personal, and overall functioning. C-CAPS provides safe, non-judgmental, and confidential services including individual and group counseling and workshops.

Staffed by psychologists and professional counselors, C-CAPS can help with the transitions and stresses of college life and other psychological concerns or difficulties. Services provided are in a hybrid manner – remotely via phone, video conferencing, and in-person. Initial consultation meetings are typically held remotely. To schedule a meeting with C-CAPS, contact (973) 596-3414 or email [counseling@njit.edu](mailto:counseling@njit.edu).”

While it’s easier said than done, you can make proactive choices so that you can act with resilience as you face the unfolding demands and expectations of college life. Being resilient means that you can bounce back from setbacks and disappointments and that you can take on somewhat intimidating tasks. Resilient people make sure that they get sleep, eat a variety of

foods, stay connected with friends, and get some physical exercise.

**There are a variety of campus resources meant to support your well-being if you experience hardships like housing or food insecurity. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the CAPS team or myself for help.**