

ENG 3771, Advanced Career Writing



ENG3771 | D564 | MW 4:00PM-5:15PM | N601B

Professor: Dr. Jason W. Ellis | Office: Namm 520 | Office Hours: MW 3:00-4:00PM or by appointment | Contact: jellis@citytech.cuny.edu

Class Description

ENG 3771, Advanced Career Writing gives you opportunities to learn important technical communication skills, heuristics, and approaches that you will use in the workplace. Borrowing ideas from Donald A. Norman's *Living with Complexity* (2010), we can think of technical communication as a way of managing complexity. Using rhetoric, research, and process, we can make complex information, tasks, and technology far easier to understand, accomplish, and use. In order to accomplish these things, we need to focus our use of WOVEN (written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal) modes of communication on the needs of our readers. However, we must base our strategies and approaches on clearly articulated goals and firmly established research; we must test our deliverables for usability; and we must revise our deliverables to meet our clients' requirements. Above all else, as technical communicators, we must follow professional and ethical codes of behavior. In this class, you will learn about these important aspects of technical communication through daily exercises, hands-on activities, and collaborative service-based projects.

Course Objectives and Prerequisites (See additional handout)

Required Texts

Anderson, Paul V. *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach*. 8th edition. Boston: Wadsworth, 2014.

Other readings made available by email or on our OpenLab site.

Required Resources

Access to your campus email account. Use it to create an account on openlab.citytech.cuny.edu during the first week. Join our class on OpenLab (I will show you where to find it during class).

Software: Office suite of applications capable of producing files in DOCX, PPTX, and PDF formats.

Create accounts (or use your existing accounts) for Google and LinkedIn.com.

Ability to create DOCX, PPTX, and PDF documents, and print color and b/w documents.

Recommended Resources

Journals in the field available through the library: *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *Technical Communication*, and *Technical Communication Quarterly*.

Usability.gov is an important website from the Department of Health and Human Services that provides information and methodologies for improving user experiences (UX).

City Tech's Ursula C. Schwerin Library, Atrium 4th Floor: <http://library.citytech.cuny.edu>

City Tech Learning Center, Atrium G-18: <http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/students/learningcenter/>

Purdue Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Grading Policy

Due dates are provided for assignments on the tentative schedule. Instructions for these assignments will be given to you with plenty of time to discuss them with me or your peers before they are due. Should you have any questions, concerns, or issues about an assignment, you **MUST** speak with me **BEFORE** an assignment is due, because **ALL GRADES FOR THIS COURSE ARE FINAL**. This means that I will not entertain student arguments for grade changes after an assignment is completed. Also, failure to complete any major assignment in the course may result in the failure of the course as a whole. Should you find yourself having trouble, you **MUST** speak with me **BEFORE** an assignment is due. I will not listen to any arguments after an assignment is completed. If assignments are submitted late, one letter grade will be deducted from the assignment's score for each day that the assignment is late.

Attendance Policy

I make no distinction between excused and excused absences. Students are permitted to have three absences without penalty. However, absence does not give you an extension on assignment or presentation due dates. It is the responsibility of each student to make sure her or his work is turned in on time and presentations are made according to schedule. Presentations cannot be made up except in the most exceptional cases. Students are expected to arrive on time and remain in class for its duration. Each late arrival or early exit will equal half of an absence. Excessive absence can result in failure of the course or a final WU grade.

Major Assignment Grade Distribution

Unit 1: Getting a Job and Communicating in the Workplace	Deliverables: Job application portfolio, elevator pitch presentation, and mock interview report.	30%
Unit 2: Service-Learning Research Project	Deliverables: Each team proposes, researches, creates, tests, revises, and presents a deliverable that addresses a campus or community need. The deliverable might be a poster, brochure, report, video, website, etc.	30%
In-Class Writing	Deliverables: Daily writing that briefly identifies and analyzes an example of technical communication.	20%
Reading Presentations	Deliverables: Notes, PowerPoint, and in-class presentation on readings from <i>Technical Communication</i> .	10%
Participation	Attendance, timeliness, and engagement are expected of students for success in this class. In addition to my observations of your in-class contributions to discussion and teamwork, I will base this grade on daily assignments, quizzes, and other indicators of extended class-focused involvement and activity.	10%
Total		100%

Teaching Philosophy and Standards for Professor Performance

As a first generation college graduate, I deeply understand the importance of a college education. Furthermore, my experiences as a student—positive and negative—inform the way that I design and teach classes. I know firsthand and by studying the research of others that learning and cognitive development takes place best through extensive practice and challenging work. Put another way, you have to work out your brain as you work out your cardiovascular system (work over time) and your muscular system (repetitions and exceeding prior limits). If you are not

metaphorically sweating and in pain, you are likely not achieving the cognitive development that you desire. Think of me as your trainer. I will teach you techniques, I will encourage you to push past what you think you are capable of, and I will spot you to make sure that you are safe. As a class, we should all be working together and supporting one another.

<p>You can expect me to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be professional inside and outside the classroom. • Treat you like an adult in a professional and respectful manner. • Be prepared for class. • Attend class regularly. • Respond promptly to email communication. • Adhere to my policies and standards. • Be available for student meetings with an appointment. • Maintain a positive attitude. • Be a problem solver. • Offer thoughtful, constructive criticism on your work. • Be a coach, instead of a “sage on the stage,” in the classroom. • Be a mentor. 	<p>You should not expect me to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept notes or other documents from third parties excusing you from class or other activities. • Respond favorably to excuses of any kind. • Answer emails or phone calls from parents, guardians, or other third parties. • Be available outside my office hours without an appointment. • Respond favorably to any argument for missing my class or leaving my class early because of activities in another class. • Make exceptions to my policies and standards. • Grant make-ups. • Accept late work without a <i>pre-arranged</i> extension. • Answer emails on the weekends.
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Standards for Student Performance

Another important aspect of the Technical Communication class is developing your professionalism. Expect to be held to these professional standards in our class:

- **Respect deadlines.** In the workplace, you will be held to a high standard of making and meeting project deadlines. I do not accept late work unless the student speaks with me about arranging an extension. I do not guarantee extension, but I often grant them if there is a documented, compelling need that is identified before an assignment is due.
- **Do not expect make-ups.** In the workplace, there are consequences for poor performance or incomplete projects. Likewise in our class, you should not expect any make-up opportunities for late or incomplete work. Students who participate in school sanctioned absences (e.g., in-season athletics) are a possible exception, but it is the responsibility of those students to meet with me before assignments are due to discuss and establish a plan for the individual student.
- **Arrive on time for class and stay for the duration of class.** Being late or leaving early can be disruptive and are disrespectful in any situation, especially in the workplace. I

assign partial absences to students who arrive late or leave early, because those students miss a portion of the class lecture, exercises, or team participation. Students who are perpetually late run the risk of receiving a failing grade in the class.

- **Respect others.** Following a workplace example, we will treat our class as meetings. This means that you should not disrupt class with texting, phone calls, or unnecessary computer sounds. Furthermore, you should respect the people who you work with in class on daily assignments or major projects. Give one another your full attention, your attention to detail, and your vast wealth of expertise. In addition, be receptive to constructive criticism and provide it in full measure to your classroom colleagues.
- **Maintain a positive attitude.** Many of your projects will be collaborative. Having a negative attitude can influence your and your teammates' performance and success. Put your best foot forward regardless of any situation's challenges.
- **Be a problem solver.** This is the best strategy for maintaining a positive attitude. The workplace is replete with problems, miscommunications, and difficulties. In any job or situation, we should work toward solutions, compromises, and successful communication. This involves identifying where the problem lies, figuring out a solution, applying the solution, evaluating its success, and revising if possible until the problem is fully resolved (or as resolved as possible). This class gives you many opportunities to be a problem solver in preparation for the higher stakes of the workplace.

Nondiscrimination Policy

This class does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, disability, or status as a veteran. Alternative viewpoints are welcome; however, statements that are deemed racist, sexist, homophobic, classist, or otherwise discriminatory toward others in the class or outside the class will not be tolerated.

Accommodations Policy

Qualified students with disabilities will be provided reasonable academic accommodations if determined eligible by the Student Support Services Program (SSSP). Prior to granting disability accommodations in this course, the instructor must receive written verification of a student's eligibility from SSSP, which is located in A-237. It is the student's responsibility to initiate contact with the SSSP staff and to follow the established procedures for having the accommodation notice sent to the instructor.

Communication

The best and most efficient way to contact me is by email. Please feel free to email me with your questions about the readings, assignments, or anything else pertaining to the class. While I am not an official advisor, I can offer first-hand advice and I can point students toward resources for student success. If I do not know the answer to a question, I will find out for you. I will not discuss grades by email, but I will be happy to discuss student grades in person during my office

hours or by appointment. Please feel free to stop by during my office hours, but please send me an email beforehand so that I can prepare appropriately for what you would like to discuss. I will send official announcements to the class by email. Each student is expected to check her or his email before class.

Office Hours

I encourage students to meet with me outside of class to discuss their work. If you cannot meet with me during my office hours, you may setup an appointment to meet with me at another time. Students should send me an email at least 24 hours in advance requesting a meeting and including information about the student's available meeting times for the next few days.

New York City College of Technology Policy on Academic Integrity

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog (http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/academics/catalog_listing.shtml).

While we will discuss academic integrity and plagiarism in class, please do not hesitate to seek my advice on this subject should you have any question at any time before an assignment is due. In our class, any writing or work by others that you incorporate into your writing and work should be properly attributed using MLA professional style. There is a section on MLA in Hacker and Sommer's *A Writer's Reference* and in the Purdue OWL website (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>). City Tech provides a list of tips on avoiding plagiarism (http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/students/academic_integrity/plagiarism_tips.pdf).

Tentative Schedule

I believe that classes should be organic and adaptive for each group of students. Therefore, I reserve the right to alter the following tentative schedule depending on the needs of the class as a whole. However, major assignment due dates will remain unchanged. If you have suggestions for supplemental readings or viewings, please share them with me. If you have questions about the course content, please speak with me.

Week	Day	Date	Reading/Announcements	Work	Due
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UNIT 1: Introduction and Workplace Communication					
1	W	9/3	FIRST DAY OF CLASS.	Class introductions and discuss syllabus. Discussion: What is career writing? What is technical communication? Career writing and technical communication are rhetorical, reader-centered, multimodal (WOVEN), dynamic, ethical, and solving problems.	Print out and sign the syllabus policy and use forms on the last page of syllabus. Signup for an account on openlab.citytech.cuny.edu and join our class site.
2	M	9/8	<i>Technical Communication (TC)</i> Chapter 1: Communication, Your Career, and This Book Introduce Unit 1 Project: Workplace Communication and Getting a Job Signup for reading presentations.	Discussion: What is complexity and (perceived) simplicity? Discussion: Why should we follow a user-centric/reader-centric focus?	Beginning of class writing: write 125-250 word summary of today's reading in a comment to today's blog post. Discuss important points and what you found most interesting. Format each comment as a memo (see page 480 in TC for general structure).
	W	9/10	<i>TC</i> Chapter 20: Creating and Delivering Listener-Centered Oral Presentations	Discussion.	Beginning of class writing.
3	M	9/15	<i>TC</i> Chapter 2: Overview of the Reader-Centered Communication Process: Obtaining a Job	Discussion.	Beginning of class writing. Signup for LinkedIn account and add professor as a contact.
	W	9/17	<i>TC</i> Chapter 23: Writing Reader-Centered Letters, Memos, E-mails, and Digital Exchanges	Discussion.	Beginning of class writing.
4	M	9/22	<i>TC</i> Chapter 3: Defining Your Communication's Goals	Discussion.	Beginning of class writing.

	W	9/24	No class.		
5	M	9/29	<i>TC</i> Chapter 4: Planning for Usefulness	Discuss job application portfolio and job advertisements.	Beginning of class writing.
	W	10/1	<i>TC</i> Chapter 5: Planning Your Persuasive Strategies	Discussion.	Beginning of class writing.
6	M	10/6	<i>TC</i> Chapter 8: Drafting Reader-Centered Paragraphs, Sections, and Chapters	Discussion.	Beginning of class writing.
	W	10/8	<i>TC</i> Chapter 17: Revising Your Drafts	Mock interviews.	Beginning of class writing. Unit 1 Deliverables due as a Blog Post on our OpenLab site.
7	M	10/13	No class.		
	W	10/15	<i>TC</i> Chapter 11: Beginning a Communication	Mock interviews.	Beginning of class writing.
Unit 2: Service-Learning Research Project					
8	M	10/20	<i>TC</i> Chapter 21: Managing Client and Service-Learning Projects Introduce Unit 2 Service-Learning Research Project.		Beginning of class writing.
	W	10/22	<i>TC</i> Chapter 12: Ending a Communication NB: Midterm grades available.	Divide into teams.	Beginning of class writing.
9	M	10/27	<i>TC</i> Chapter 19: Creating Communications with a Team	Discussion.	Beginning of class writing.
	W	10/29	<i>TC</i> Chapter 6: Conducting Reader-Centered Research: Gathering, Analyzing, and Thinking Critically About Information	Class pitches.	Beginning of class writing.
10	M	11/3	<i>TC</i> Chapter 7: Using Five	Discussion.	Beginning of

			Reader-Centered Research Methods.	Team studio time.	class writing.
	W	11/5	<i>TC</i> Chapter 24: Writing Reader-Centered Proposals	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
11	M	11/10	<i>TC</i> Chapter 27: Writing Reader-Centered Progress Reports	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
	W	11/12	<i>TC</i> Chapter 25: Writing Reader-Centered Empirical Research Reports	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
12	M	11/17	<i>TC</i> Chapter 9: Using Nine Reader-Centered Patterns for Organizing Paragraphs, Sections, and Chapters	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
	W	11/19	<i>TC</i> Chapter 10: Developing an Effective, Professional Style	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
13	M	11/24	<i>TC</i> Chapter 13: Writing Reader-Centered Front and Back Matter	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
	W	11/26	<i>TC</i> Chapter 16: Designing Reader-Centered Pages and Documents	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
14	M	12/1	<i>TC</i> Chapter 14: Creating Reader-Centered Graphics	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
	W	12/3	<i>TC</i> Chapter 15: Creating Eleven Types of Reader-Centered Graphics	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
15	M	12/8	<i>TC</i> Chapter 22: Creating Reader-Centered Websites	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
	W	12/10	<i>TC</i> Chapter 26: Writing Reader-Centered Feasibility Reports	Discussion. Team studio time.	Beginning of class writing.
16	M	12/15		Unit 2 wrap up and	Beginning of class writing.
	W	12/17		Team presentations.	Submit Unit 2 deliverables as a blog post on OpenLab (Only one post needed per team, but all team members should be listed in post).
17	M	12/22		Team presentations.	