

# English 539: Spring 2009

## Teaching Professional Writing

### Instructor Information

**Instructor:** Valerie Thomas                      **E-Mail:** vthomas@unm.edu  
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**Office Hours:** Tuesday/Thursday 9am to 10:45am or by appointment.

### Course Materials

*Teaching Technical Communication: Critical Issues for the Classroom* edited by James M. Dubinsky.  
Bedford/St. Martin's. 2004 (ISBN: 0-312-41204-5)

*Additional readings available on WebCT.*

### Course Description

This course provides graduate students with a foundation in the theory, pedagogy, and practice of teaching technical and professional communication. We will focus on how to teach English 219: *Technical and Professional Communication* but we will also discuss how to teach other professional writing courses both in the academy and the workplace. Throughout the semester, you will read a variety of articles and discuss how the ideas presented influence your approach to teaching. The first half of the semester, we will focus on understanding rhetorical theory and historical background of professional and technical writing, genre theory, ethics, multi-cultural issues, and user-centered document design. During the second half of the semester, we will explore teaching methods such as case studies, service learning, collaborative work, and computer mediated instruction that you can employ in your classroom.

The goal of the class is to provide you with a firm foundation from which to teach technical and professional writing courses with the emphasis on creating practical classroom solutions that will successfully engage your future students. You will work as a team with other students in the class, sharing ideas, projects, and teaching methods in order to establish a "professional and technical writing wiki" as a resource for current and future instructors.

### Course Objectives

At the completion of this course, you should achieve the following objectives:

- Develop a personal teaching philosophy that incorporates your understanding of the theoretical and historical foundations of professional and technical writing.
- Understand the different genres associated with technical and professional writing so you can effectively teach them to your students.
- Understand a variety of teaching strategies and technologies that you can use when teaching professional and technical writing courses.
- Develop an academic or pedagogical project that allows you to contribute to the field by doing research, critical thinking, and problem solving.
- Create teaching materials that you will be able to use when you teach a course in technical and professional writing.
- Contribute to a wiki that provides technical and professional writing instructors with helpful resources.

## Assignments

Class assignments will allow you to understand theoretical and pedagogical theories and create practical solutions that you can use as an instructor. You will also have the opportunity to use the technologies we discuss in class to produce assignments and share them with each other.

### **Class Discussion Leader (5%)**

You will lead a class discussion over that reviews that week's assigned readings. You will be responsible for creating a hand-out, PowerPoint, or other teaching aid to help focus the discussion.

### **Textbook Analysis (10%)**

You will work in small groups to review and compare several technical writing textbooks. You will analyze and compare each textbook writer's pedagogical approach and determine what type of textbook you would be most comfortable using. Although students will work together and share research and ideas, each student will be responsible for submitting their own assignment.

### **Class Observation Report (10%)**

You will observe a professional writing course and interview the instructor. You will prepare a report on what you observed and learned.

### **Annotated Syllabus (10%)**

You will develop a syllabus for English 219 that you can use when you teach the course. You will provide annotated notes to indicate why you made the choices you did in setting up your syllabus, using either the comment feature in MS Word or in Adobe Acrobat.

### **Assignment Sequence (15%)**

You will work in small groups to develop a three to four week sequence of readings, exercises, and major writing assignment that will help students understand and practice a specific genre of technical and professional writing.

### **Research Project Proposal (5%)**

You will write a research project on either an academic or pedagogical topic. To obtain approval, you will create a one-page proposal that describes your research project.

### **Research Project (20%)**

You will write a research project on either an academic or pedagogical topic. If you choose the academic topic, you will write a conference paper for a future writing conference or an article for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. If you choose the pedagogical topic, you will produce a writing workshop (for academic or workplace use) on a specific aspect of professional and technical writing or develop additional materials to use when teaching a professional or technical writing course.

### **Oral Presentation of Research Project (5%)**

During the final two weeks of class, you will describe your research project in a ten-minute presentation. You may present your work either in class or through WebCT's web-conferencing tool.

### **Wiki Development (5%)**

You will work with the other students in the course to create a Wiki on Professional and Technical Writing that will provide resources you create during this class (syllabi, schedules, exercises, assignment instructions, sample documents, tutorials, reading quizzes, PowerPoint presentations, research, etc.) to other instructors.

## **Online Discussions (15%)**

You are required to participate in weekly online discussions on readings and other topics of discussion. Each week's discussion is worth up to 10-points. Ideally, you will write about 300 words each week, posting your initial thoughts on the discussion prompt and then responding to what other students post. When I assign a grade for your discussion postings, I will see if you have given serious thought to the topic and what others post. If you do this, you get full credit. But if your responses are hurried, short, don't effectively relate to the topic, or are late, you will lose points. However, it's better to post something, than nothing at all.

## **Attendance Expectation**

Attendance is required in this class. In this hybrid course, attendance consists of attending class sessions on Thursdays as well as participating in online discussions and other online activities available through WebCT. Online discussions are due by Tuesday each week. Since you have a number of days to participate, I do not expect you to miss online discussions. If you must miss class, please send me an email prior to class letting me know. If you miss more than two class sessions, I will reduce your final course grade by 5% per additional class missed.

## **Late Work**

All assignments are to be turned in on the day they are due. If you are late with an assignment, you must write me an e-mail that tells me that you will be handing the assignment in late and when I should expect the assignment. I don't need excuses. However, submitting work late will result in a five percent per day deduction from your grade for the assignment.

## **Course Policies**

### **Positive Learning Environment**

The English Department affirms its commitment to the joint responsibility of instructors and students to foster and maintain a positive learning environment.

### **Access to Education**

Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact the instructor as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. For information on assistive technology available for student use and information on services available through Student Accessibility Services, see <http://www.unm.edu/~as/>.

### **Copyright**

All materials in this course fall under copyright laws and should not be downloaded, distributed, or used by students for any purposes outside of this course.

### **Privacy and WebCT Tracking Notice**

WebCT or the course web site automatically records all students' activities, including, the pages you accessed, the number of discussion messages you have read and sent, and chat room discussion text. The instructor will access this data to evaluate class participation.

### **UNM Policies**

This course falls under all UNM policies for last day to drop courses, etc. Please see <http://www.unm.edu/studentinfo.html> or the UNM Course Catalog for information on UNM services and policies. Please see the UNM academic calendar for course dates, the last day to drop courses without penalty, and for financial disenrollment dates.

## English 539: Teaching Professional Writing Schedule of Readings and Assignments

The following schedule lists each week's topic, readings to discuss that week, and assignment due dates. You will use the WebCT online discussion tool to begin discussing that week's reading. Your online postings are due by Tuesday; we will continue the online discussion in class on Thursday. The due date for your work as class discussion leader and your oral presentation will vary according to when you sign up. Participation in creating the wiki is due throughout the semester, schedule to be announced.

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1 1/20-1/22	What are we teaching?	Lipson & Day: Introduction (WebCT) Coney: "Technical Communication Theory: An Overview" (WebCT)	
2 1/27-1/29	Theoretical Approaches	Miller: "A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing" pg 15 Subbiah: "Social Construction Theory and Technical Communication" (WebCT)	
3 2/3-2/5	History of Tech/Prof Writing	Connors: "The Rise of Technical Writing Instruction in America" pg 77 Thralls & Blyer: "The Social Perspective and Pedagogy in Technical Communication" pg 110	
4 2/10-2/12	Genre Theory	Berkenkotter & Huckin: "Rethinking Genre from a Sociocognitive Perspective" pg 283 Review of Technical Communication Textbooks	
5 2/17-2/19	Ethics	Miller: "What's Practical about Technical Writing?" pg 154 Sanders: "Technical Communication and Ethics" (WebCT)	Textbook Analysis Due 2/19
6 2/24-2/26	Ethics & Plagiarism	Gurak: "Ethics and Technical Communication in a Digital Age" (WebCT) Reyman: Rethinking Plagiarism for Technical Communication (WebCT)	
7 3/3-3/5	Multicultural Issues / Internet	Thrush: "Multicultural Issues in Technical Communication" pg 414 St. Amant: "Online Ethos and Intercultural Technical Communication" (WebCT)	Class Observation Report Due 3/5
8 3/10-3/12	Visual Rhetoric / User-Centered Design	Mirel: "Advancing a Vision of Usability" pg 218 Kramer & Bernhardt: "Teaching Text Design" pg 240 Kostelnick: "Visual Rhetoric: A Reader-Oriented Approach" (WebCT)	
9 3/17-3/19	Spring Break		
10 3/24-3/26	Collaboration/ Group Work	Burnett, White & Duin: "Locating Collaboration" (WebCT) Blakeslee: "Bridging the Workplace and the Academy" pg 348	Research Project Proposal Due 3/26
11 3/31-4/2	Case Studies/ Sequences	Lang: "Integrating the Web into a Tech Comm Course" (WebCT) Johnson Sheehan & Flood: "Genre, Rhetorical Interpretation, and the Open Case" (WebCT)	Annotated Syllabus Due 4/2
12 4/7-4/9	Service Learning	Johnson & Simpson: "Bridging the Problem-Solver Communication Gap" (WebCT) Matthews & Zimmerman: "Integrating Service Learning & Tech Comm" (WebCT)	
13 4/14-4/16	Teaching with Technology	Brech: "Thinking Critically about Technology Literacy" pg 481 Selfe & Hawisher: "A Historical Look at Electronic Literacy" pg 505	
14 4/21-4/23	Trends	Johnson-Eilola: "Relocating the Value of Work" pg 573 Bernhardt: "Teaching for Change, Vision, and Responsibility" pg 602	Assignment Sequence Due 4/23
15 4/28-4/30	Oral Presentations	No Reading	
16 5/5-5/7	Oral Presentations	No Reading	
Finals Week			Research Project Due 5/14 9am