

# WRITING 2205F-650

## TECHNICAL WRITING

**INSTRUCTOR: Nikki Kelvin**

**E-MAIL: Please use WebCT Owl email**

**Office Hours: Stevenson Lawson 270 by appointment or as announced on WebCT when I am in London**

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** *A Strategic Guide to Technical Communication*. Heather Graves and Roger Graves. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2007.

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Any good desk or college-level dictionary that you may already own. *The Oxford English Dictionary Canadian Edition* is strongly recommended. The *Gage Canadian Dictionary* and *Webster's Tenth New Collegiate Dictionary* are also acceptable. **Please set your computer software to Canadian English spelling.**

A good writing manual that you may already own such as *The Brief Penguin Handbook*, *The Bedford Handbook*, or *The Little, Brown Handbook* that contains rules for grammar and style as well as a section outlining the style preferences of your home faculty (i.e., MLA, APA, Chicago).

### COURSE DESCRIPTION and LEARNING OUTCOMES:

In this course, students will assess audiences encountered in education, industry, business, and government to determine how the technical writer appropriately communicates specialized information. Students will examine and produce a variety of technical documents including:

- informal reports and memos
- usability reports
- technical instructions
- technical descriptions
- technical reports
- technical manuals

Students will then combine analysis, organization, and visual elements to pursue high standards in document design, culminating in a major technical writing project.

### SCHOLASTIC OFFENSES:

The Senate of the University of Western Ontario requires that the following statements regarding scholastic offenses be included on all course outlines:

“Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>.

**Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).**

***Plagiarism Checking:*** All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of

the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

**Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive 0 on the assignment with no option to rewrite, and I will petition the department for the severest penalty possible.**

**N.B.: I am required to report even just one line of copied text to the Director of the Writing Program.**

#### **PREREQUISITES:**

Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded and that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If you do not have the requisites for a course, the university reserves the right to remove you from the course and to delete it from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. The prerequisite for registration in this course is a) a final grade of 65 or more in one of Writing 2101, 2121, 2111, or 2131, or b) Special Permission of the Program. **Instructors in the Writing Program may not sign student Add/Drop forms and may not grant requests for special permission. Instructors also do not have the discretion to consent to course/section overloads unilaterally. All changes are arranged and approved through Add/Drop in the Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication Program Office.**

#### **ATTENDANCE:**

Although there is no specific time that I will require you to be online, “attendance” in the form of participation in the discussion postings is expected. You are required to attend class (i.e., log in to our WebCT section and interact) and post to the discussion on at least three separate days a week, unless you are the discussion facilitator for that week, in which case you must respond to comments and queries from the other members of the course no less than six times in that week. A week is defined as running from Monday to Sunday. Postings on the discussion board must have the following characteristics:

- Must contribute something meaningful to the board
- Must support your opinion with sufficient reasons or evidence
- Must display good grammar and organization

Posting should not:

- Contain disrespectful, insulting, or offensive language
- Be excessively long (more than one screen length) or excessively short
- Be unrelated to the forum topic
- Say things that do not contribute such as “I agree with you” without reasons or evidence to support your opinion

Spontaneous discussion in the chat room is also encouraged. Click on the Who’s Online icon in the menu bar to see who is online and send a chat invitation to someone to start a discussion.

I will assign a weekly number grade based on a two-mark system (0, 2, 4, 6, 8) for all the weeks based on whether you have fulfilled the posting requirements stated above—number of days, number of comments, content. Failure to participate will earn a zero. Fewer comments than the minimum will earn 2 or 4. Doing the minimum required posts will earn a 6. More than the minimum will earn an 8. Additionally, marks for posts that fulfill the requirements for numbers but not content may be adjusted down while fewer posts that contribute significantly may lead to a weekly grade that is adjusted up. At the end of the term, I will add the marks to get a number ranging out of 100, which will be weighted as 10% of your final grade.

## **MEDICAL ACCOMMODATION POLICY:**

**Effective 1 September 2008, Senate has adopted a new “Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness – Undergraduate Students.” This policy replaces the existing “Policy on Medical Excuse Slips,” and can be found at <http://uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>.**

“Students seeking academic accommodation on medical or other grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds cannot be granted by the instructor or the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication, and the Program requires students in these circumstances to follow the same procedure when seeking academic accommodation on non-medical (i.e. non-medical compassionate or other) grounds.

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth less than 10% of their final grade must also apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Where in these circumstances the accommodation is being sought on non-medical grounds, students should consult in the first instance with their instructor, who may elect to make a decision on the request directly, or refer the student to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an ‘Attendance’ policy in the course). All medical documentation must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student’s home Faculty.”

## **ASSIGNMENTS, IN-CLASS WRITING, PEER EDITING, and TESTS:**

**In addition to submitting final drafts on the due date for each assignment, you are required to a draft of some assignments for peer-review sessions.** These drafts will be assessed by your instructor for completeness and given a grade based on the instructor’s assessment of it as a complete draft (2 marks), partial draft (1 mark), or no draft (0). Those students who do not submit a draft are still expected to provide feedback to the other students in their peer-review groups.

Due dates and course weight for each assignment appear at the end of the syllabus. **Please adhere exactly to the following instructions to submit your work:**

1. Do an updated to-the-week virus check on your computer.
2. Regardless of what computer or program you use for your word processing, **save your assignment in a format compatible with Microsoft Word 97 or later version. Save your work as an rtf file.**
3. Name your file with your first name and last initial, followed by one of the following assignment short forms with no spaces:
  - Pro-Proposal
  - Stat-Status Report
  - Usability-Usability Report
  - Final-Final Major Project

For example, I would submit assignments for this course as

NikkiK-Pro  
NikkiK-Stat  
NikkiK-Usability  
NikkiK-Final

***NB: PLEASE save your assignment using your own name, not mine!***

4. When submitting your draft assignments for peer editing by a student colleague, attach your file to an email message on the Web site using a WebCT email address.
5. Final drafts should be submitted to me via the Assignments link. **DO NOT send them as email attachments.**

**There will be one in-class writing assignment. Several classes are also scheduled for writing workshops and peer editing. You must attend these classes with the required work in hand to receive credit for these classes because they cannot be made up.**

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS/MISSED TESTS:**

I do not like to penalize late assignments; however, since the purpose of this course is to prepare you for a career in writing for publication, you should be aware that the publishing industry thrives on deadlines. If your copy is not ready on time, your story may not be published. For these reasons, all assignments will be due on the date specified unless you negotiate an extension at least 48 hours in advance. Late assignments will be penalized at 2% per day, including weekends. Following any other policy would be an injustice to you as a future writer. **NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER 24 JULY 2009. OUTSTANDING WORK AS OF THIS DATE WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF 0.**

**Missed in-class work cannot be made up unless a doctor's certificate or evidence of extenuating circumstances can be provided to your academic counsellor.**

**COMMUNICATION:**

**I can be reached through WebCT Owl email. Please use the WebCT email for our course rather than the UWO mail.** I check my WebCT e-mail regularly, and you can expect a reply within forty-eight hours. I can also be reached in person during my office hours.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

<b>Assignment 1: Proposal</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Due: 31 May 2009</b>
<b>Assignment 2: Status Report</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Due: 21 June 2009</b>
<b>Assignment 3: Usability Report</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>Due: 12 July 2009</b>
<b>Assignment 4: Final Major Project</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>Due: 26 July 2009</b>
<b>Online Discussion</b>	<b>10%</b>	
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>25%</b>	

## SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, REQUIRED READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EXERCISES

<b>DATE</b>	<b>READINGS AND ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENTS DUE</b>
<b>WEEK 1:</b> May 4-10	Ch.1: Thinking about audience, purpose and genre	
<b>WEEK 2:</b> May 11-17	Ch.6: Writing Winning Proposals	
<b>WEEK 3:</b> May 19-24	Ch. 2: Leading and misleading the reader	
<b>WEEK 4:</b> May25-31	Ch.3: Researching Technical Subjects	Proposal 1-2 pages Due 31 May
<b>WEEK 5:</b> June 1-7	Ch.7: Reporting Technical Information	
<b>WEEK 6:</b> June 8-14	Ch.8: Writing How-To Documents	
<b>WEEK 7:</b> June15-21	Ch.4: Writing Technical Prose	Status Report 2 pages Due 21 June
<b>WEEK 8:</b> June22-28	Ch.9: Testing and Reporting Document Usability	
<b>WEEK 9:</b> June 29-July 5	Ch.5: Document Design and Page Layout	
<b>WEEK 10:</b> July 6-12	Ch.10 & 11: Taking Technical Communication Online	Usability Report 2 pages Due 12 July
<b>WEEK 11:</b> July 13-19	Peer Editing Workshop Read the Workshop Notes posted on WebCT	Final Project Rough Draft Due 13 July
<b>WEEK 12:</b> July 20-26	Exam Review	Final Project 10 pages Due 26 July
<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	Final exam date, time and place TBA	