

**3223G 001: Technical Writing  
Winter 2021****Professor Tim Freeborn**

Contact: Please use OWL Message

**Course Description and Objectives**

In this course, you will become acquainted with the forms, functions, and rhetorical lives of technical documents. You will examine and produce a variety of technical documents:

- job-package materials
- usability reports
- technical instructions
- technical descriptions
- technical reports
- technical manuals

In the course of preparing these documents, you will consider your audience and purpose, document-design principles, and the role of visuals or graphics in both written and oral texts. Students will combine analysis, organization, and visual elements to pursue high standards in document design, culminating in a major technical-writing project. This course will help you to refine your “ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences” (source: Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents’ statement on “Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations” 24 October 2005).

**Required Text**

Mike Markel and Stuart A. Selber. *Technical Communication*. Twelfth Edition. Bedford, 2017.

**Course Requirements**

Technical Instructions	10%
Job Package	20%
Proposal	30%
Technical Manual + Cover Letter	30% + 10%

### **Assignments/Assignment Format**

In addition to submitting final drafts on the due date for each assignment, you are required to submit a draft of each assignment and to participate in each of the scheduled peer-review sessions. Failure either to submit a draft sufficiently complete (in your instructor's opinion) to permit meaningful review or to participate actively in the peer-review session will result in a 10% penalty being applied to the earned grade for that assignment. In other words, an assignment that would have earned 78, for example, will receive instead a recorded grade of 70. This penalty will be applied in addition to any other penalties incurred (e.g., for late submission).

When using sources in a paper, you will be expected to follow appropriate standards for documentation, detailed in *Technical Communication*, Appendix B.

### **Submitting Assignments/Due Dates/Late Submission Penalties**

Late assignments will receive a grade no higher than 65% and will not receive comments unless you negotiate a new deadline with me prior to the original due date: you must request a new deadline in a memorandum that clearly states your reason(s) for needing the extension (see also Medical Accommodation Policy below).

### **Email Policy**

When you contact me using OWL Message, you can expect a response within twenty-four hours. If you e-mail me using Outlook/Western email, you can expect a response within one week. If you email me using a non-UWO account, you will not receive a response. If I foresee that I cannot respond to emails within times listed above, I will post an announcement on OWL.

### **Attendance/Participation (Please note posting requirements)**

Obviously, we do not meet formally in a Distance Studies course. Therefore, attendance and participation on the forum are intertwined. While Distance Studies classes are generally asynchronous, they are not correspondence or self-paced. You must attend class (defined as logging into our OWL section) and participate by introducing yourself and posting questions and thoughts during the first week and by posting (by participating in a given week's set discussion topic) in subsequent weeks when the forum is active. This means at least three separate posts during each of those weeks (a week is defined for this purpose as running from Monday to Sunday), **at least one of which must be a reply/response to another student and at least one of which must start a new thread.** Extended absences, defined as a failure to post into the OWL classroom for more than five consecutive days, must be coordinated with the instructor.

Your contributions to the forum must

- contribute something meaningful to the discussion;
- support your opinion with sufficient reasons or evidence; and
- display good grammar and organization.

Your posts should neither

- contain disrespectful, insulting, or offensive language;
- be excessively long or excessively short (in most cases, a few detailed sentences will suffice);
- be unrelated to the week's topic; nor
- merely praise another comment (e.g., "I agree with you" or "Nice comment!"). While you should feel free to offer such praise, it must appear in addition to a substantial comment.

Note that attendance as defined in this section is mandatory in this course. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements as defined above for any week when the forum is active will result in your earned final grade in this course being reduced by 3%. That penalty is cumulative to a maximum of five weeks. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements for five or more weeks when the forum is active will result in your earned final grade being reduced by 15%.

### **Accommodation Policy**

**Note: the official Western Accommodation Policy appears below. This policy is in effect, but it may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change.**

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

### **Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors by email within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide either a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical or appropriate documentation if compassionate grounds exist for the absence in question. Students

are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

**Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.**

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information appears in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

### **Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, Aegrotat Standing**

Please refer to the "Information for All Students in a Writing Course" for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that I do not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean's office of your home faculty.

### **Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism**

The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on 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/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

"Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text 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 as above). Plagiarized work will receive an 'F'(ranging from 0 to 49) and may result in failure in the course as a whole.

“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>).”

### Prerequisites

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted 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.”

### Class Meeting Schedule

Date	Lesson Focus	Readings
Week 1 January 11-17	Introduction to Technical Writing	Chapter 1
Week 2 January 18-24	Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions  Assignment 1: Technical Instructions (10%, due January 24)	Chapter 20
Week 3 January 25-31	Analyzing Audience and Purpose  Peer Review of Assignment 1	Chapter 5
Week 4 February 1-7	Writing Job-Application Materials  Assignment 2: Job Package (20%, due February 28)	Chapter 15  <b>Assignment 1 Due</b>
Week 5 February 8-12	Designing Documents  Writing Effective Sentences	Chapter 11  Chapter 10

Week 6 February 22-28	Writing Proposals  Peer review of Assignment 2: February 22-25  Assignment 3 Assigned: Manual Proposal (30%, due March 28)	Chapter 16  <b>Assignment 2 Due</b>
Week 7 March 1-7	Organizing Your Information  Emphasizing Important Information	Chapter 7  Chapter 9
Week 8 March 8-14	Researching Technical Subjects  Citing and Integrating Sources	Chapter 6  Appendices A and B
Week 9 March 15-21	Reviewing, Evaluating, and Testing Documents  Peer review of Assignment 3	Chapter 13
Week 10 March 22-28	Creating Graphics  Assignment 4 Assigned: Instruction Manual (40%, due April 12)	Chapter 12  <b>Assignment 3 Due</b>
Week 11 March 29-April 4	Peer review of Assignment 4	Chapter 3
Week 12 April 5-12	Concluding Thoughts	<b>Assignment 4 Due:</b> Manual (30%), cover letter (10%)