

Technical Communication Practices (LCC 3401)
Fall 2007: Section M, M/W 4:05-4:55

Instructor: L. Andrew Cooper
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Course Description

Prerequisites: ENGL 1101 and 1102

LCC 3401 carries two semester hours of credit and no humanities credit

Your ability to communicate information and ideas will help determine your success in your profession. LCC 3401 introduces the techniques and conventions of workplace communication. Workplace communication must be practical, and communication is practical only if it meets the needs of a specific audience in a specific situation. To master the contextual practices of technical communication, you will learn how to

- Convey effective written, oral, visual, electronic, and non-verbal messages
- Address diverse audiences
- Use informal and formal styles that are concise, concrete, and correct
- Solve ethical and linguistic problems in the workplace
- Inform and persuade individuals and groups using multiple media
- Combine verbal and graphical elements using design principles
- Deliver organized and engaging presentations
- Develop well-researched projects individually and collaboratively
- Create documents using the conventions of common workplace genres: emails, memos, résumés, letters, proposals, manuals, and websites

Required Texts

Markel, Mike. *Technical Communication*. 8th ed. New York: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2007.

O'Hair, Dan, et al. *A Pocket Guide to Public Speaking*. 2nd ed. New York: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2007.

*You may also need to consult an English dictionary and a grammar/usage guide such as *The St. Martin's Handbook*

Course Policies

Grading

Each assignment has a point value. Assignments add up to a total of 1000 points. Convert point totals into percentages, and the letter grade equivalents are

A = 90-100; **B** = 80-89; **C** = 70-79; **D** = 60-69; **F** = 0-59
Failure to complete an assignment will result in 0 points.

Attendance

If you must miss class, email me ahead of time. You have two “freebie” days, classes you may miss without any grade penalties. You have two additional “professional” days that you may use for penalty-free absences if you have documentation to prove that you have a job interview, conference presentation, or other professional obligation that conflicts with a class time. For other absences, you must have official documentation of an illness, injury, or legal obligation that keeps you from class. I will deduct 25 points from your grade for each non-freebie, undocumented absence. Three latenesses constitute an absence. After six absences, you may fail the course. *Even “excused,” documented absences could affect your participation grade if they occur too often.*

Punctual Work

Unless I approve a deadline extension, which is unlikely, I will not accept major assignments after the deadline. You may not “make up” a missed oral presentation. You are responsible for all information covered during every class meeting.

Class Ethics

You are responsible for knowing and abiding by GT’s policy for academic integrity. Consult the Honor Code online at <http://www.honor.gatech.edu> or in the General Catalog. In professional terms, the Honor Code is similar to a code of ethics. Unethical work will receive zero credit and may result in failure of the entire course. I will also report any serious breach of ethics to the dean of students.

Disability Notice

If you need accommodation for any disabilities, contact Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS). Call 404-894-2563 (voice) / 404-894-1664 (TDD), email adapts@vpss.gatech.edu, or visit 210 Smithgall Student Services Building. Also see <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>. After contacting ADAPTS, please make sure I receive a Faculty Accommodation Letter verifying your disability and specifying the accommodation you need, and please arrange a meeting with me so we can develop a workable plan for your success in the course.

The Fine Print

I reserve the right to alter the policies and assignments on this syllabus. I will exercise this right rarely, but I will often provide more detailed information about assignments during class. This syllabus is your guide. Keep it. Know it. Love it.

Assignments

Self-Introduction (10 points, individual 1-2 minute presentation)

Give an informal presentation about yourself to the class. Aim to exhibit good speech practices and to meet the needs of the audience profile.

Audience Profile (5 points, 1 page, hand in hard copy with Rationale)

Customize the profile on Markel p. 89 and fill it with information about the classmate I assign to you. You, the person you profile, and the person who profiles you will be in your small group.

Persuasive Email (20 points, 1 page, email to student and professor)

Write an email with appropriate formality in which you persuade the classmate you have profiled that s/he will benefit from working with you on an upcoming project.

Rationale for the Persuasive Email (5 points, ½ to 1 page, hand in hard copy)

Write an explanation of how your persuasive email reflects strategic calculations based on information gathered for the audience profile.

Evaluation Email (10 points, 1 page, email to student and professor)

Using appropriate formality and tact, reply to the persuasive email that a classmate has sent you, explaining what you see as the strengths AND weaknesses of her/his argument.

Application Letter (100 points, 1 page, hand in hard copy with a copy of the ad)

Write a cover letter as part of an application in response to a real job ad.

Résumé (100 points, 1 page, hand in copy with application letter)

Design a skills-focused résumé tailored to the job described in your ad.

Job Presentation (100 points, individual 5-minute oral presentation with slides)

Give a well-researched presentation about the specific tasks and conditions associated with the type of job described in your ad. Use slides and target a lay audience.

Job Presentation Critiques (20 points, ½ page each, copies for students and professor)

Critique the job presentations of two members of a small group I assign to you.

Small Group Presentation (50 points, 10 minute group presentation with handout)

Explain the highlights of the day's reading in a presentation with a handout.

Small Group Presentation Critiques (10 points, ½ page each, copies for students and professor)

Critique a small group presentation. Groups 1 and 5, 2 and 6, 3 and 7, and 4 and 8 will critique each other. The critique is due one week after the presentation.

Merger Memo (100 points, 1 page, hand in hard copy)

In your small group, investigate two small groups and choose one of them to recommend for a merger with your group. Group 1 investigates groups 2 and 3, 2 investigates 3 and 4, etc., with 7 investigating 8 and 1 and 8 investigating 1 and 2. Write a memo to me that conveys and supports your group's recommendation. All members of your group should recommend the same group for the merger. Your memo should explain *your* reasons for accepting and recommending your group's choice; emphasize what you as an individual find most appealing about the group and why. I will use these memos to organize the large groups for the Large Group Project.

Assignments, continued

Large Group Project

Design a “Survival Guide” that will help your peers to deal with a specific challenge that awaits them in their professional lives after college. As a “how-to” manual, your guide must

- Provide concrete, well-researched advice for meeting the challenge
- Include rigorous step-by-step instructions for meeting one aspect of the challenge
- Emphasize precautions and/or methods for ensuring your users’ safety
- Balance text with graphics in ways that maximize accessibility and efficiency
- Document sources of information with a clear and consistent style
- Approximate 15-16 standard-sized pages of print

Also design a website that will supplement your guide. Your site must include

- ADDITIONAL resources, which you write and design, for meeting the challenge
- An FAQ with specific questions and usable answers
- A list of well-explained links to more resources on the web
- An explanation of your group members’ qualifications to address your topic

The following table summarizes the project’s essential components:

Component Description	Length	Due	Points
<i>Group Agreement</i> : defines the group's ethics, organization, and procedures	3 pages	Nov. 7	50
<i>Proposal</i> : presents the project's problem, solution, program, and schedule	3 pages	Nov. 7	50
<i>Credibility Report</i> : explains and develops how research will establish authority	1 page, 10-min. chat	Nov. 7	20
<i>Hard-Copy Guide</i> : offers information and instructions for professionals' problems	15-16 pages	Nov. 28	100
<i>Support Website</i> : elaborates on the guide, e.g. with FAQ, further instructions, etc.	variable	Nov. 28	100
<i>Group Presentation</i> : convinces classmates they will want to use the guide	15 minutes	Nov. 28	50

On the last day of class, you will vote on which guide other than your own best exemplifies effective technical communication. The winning guide’s authors will receive ten bonus points.

Participation (100 points)

Participation in class discussions and exercises is mandatory. Demonstrate your knowledge of the readings, share your insights, and help your peers during workshops. Maintaining class decorum is part of participation: noisy cell phones, disrespectful behavior, and other intrusions lower productivity and, therefore, your grade. The participation grade also includes scores on any quizzes or assignments not detailed here.

Schedule of Meetings, Readings, and Deadlines

	Topics and Readings	Deadlines and Presentations
Week 1 8/20 & 8/22	M: Course Intro: Practically Speaking W: Tech Comm and Audiences*, Markel Ch. 1&5 *Small groups tentatively assigned	
Week 2 8/27 & 8/29	M: Speaking Basics, O’Hair pp. 1-19, 27-34, 126-139 W: Speaking Basics, continued	M: Self-Introductions W: Self-Introductions
Week 3 9/3 & 9/5	M: LABOR DAY (no class) W: Paragraphs and Sentences, Markel Ch. 10&11	W: Small Group Pres #1
Week 4 9/10 & 9/12	M: Persuasion and Emails, Markel Ch. 8&14 W: Tact, Markel Ch. 4 (54-55)	M: Small Group Pres #2 W: Audience Profile, Persuasive Email, and Rationale Due
Week 5 9/17 & 9/19	M: Job Applications, Markel Ch. 15 (363-93) W: Application Materials Workshop, Markel p. 56	M: Evaluation Email Due Small Group Pres#3 W: App Letter and Résumé Drafts Due
Week 6 9/24 & 9/26	M: Interviews, Markel Ch. 15 (393-403) W: Research Basics, Markel Ch. 6	M: App Letter and Résumé Due W: Small Group Pres #4
Week 7 10/1 & 10/3	M: Organizing and Styling Speech, O’Hair pp. 69-102 W: Visual Aids, O’Hair pp. 119-138	
Week 8 10/8 & 10/10	M: FALL RECESS (no class) W: Job Presentations	W: Job Presentations
Week 9 10/15 & 10/17	M: Job Presentations W: Job Presentations	M: Job Presentations W: Job Presentations
Week 10 10/22 & 10/24	M: Memo Planning, review Markel pp. 352-3 W: Ethics, Definitions, and Processes, Markel Ch. 2&9	W: Memo Due
Week 11 10/29 & 10/31	M: Proposals*, Markel Ch. 16 M: Design Principles, Markel Ch. 12 *Large Groups Assigned	M: Small Group Pres #5
Week 12 11/5 & 11/7	M: Writing Instructions and Manuals, Markel Ch. 19 W: Authority and Credibility, review Markel Ch. 6	M: Small Group Pres #6 W: Contract, Proposal, and Credibility Reports Due
Week 13 11/12 & 11/14	M: Graphics, Markel Ch. 13 W: Websites, Markel Ch. 20	M: Small Group Pres #7 W: Small Group Pres #8
Week 14 11/19 & 11/21	M: Manuals and Support,, Markel Ch. 18 (467-474) W: Project Workshop I	
Week 15 11/26 & 11/28	M: Project Workshop II W: Large Group Presentations	M: Guide and Site Drafts Due W: Large Group Presentations ALL GUIDES AND SITES DUE
Week 16 12/3 & 12/5	M: Large Group Presentations W: Project Voting and Course Evaluations	M: Large Group Presentations