

Technical Communication Practices (LCC 3401)
Spring 2007: Sections F1, N, D1, and H

Instructor: L. Andrew Cooper
Office Location: Skiles 301
Office Hours: Tu/Th 11am-Noon and by appointment
Online Office Hours: TBA and by appointment
Email: andrew.cooper@lcc.gatech.edu

Course Description

Prerequisites: ENGL 1101 and 1102

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

Your ability to assimilate and 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:

- Study oral, written, and visual communication strategies
- Analyze diverse audiences and methods for addressing them
- Practice informal and formal styles that are concise, concrete, and correct
- Explore ethical and linguistic problems in workplace communication
- Employ informative and persuasive approaches to speech and writing
- Use design principles to combine verbal and graphical elements effectively
- Deliver organized and engaging oral presentations
- Develop well-researched projects individually and collaboratively
- Create documents using the conventions of common workplace genres: emails, memos, résumés, letters, proposals, manuals, and web sites

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*. New York: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2004.

*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 our 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

Students with disabilities should contact Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) within the first two weeks of the semester to develop reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor call (404) 894-2564 (voice) / (404) 894-1664 (voice/TDD) or visit 220 Student Services Building. For more information visit <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>.

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 (10 points, ½ page each, copies for students and professor)

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

Small Group Presentation (40 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 the small group presentation of a small group I assign to you.

Group Memo (100 points, 1 page, hand in one hard copy for the group)

In your small group, investigate two other small groups that I assign to you. Write a memo to me that explains the results of your investigation and recommends one of the two investigated groups for a merger with your own. I will use these memos to organize the large groups for the 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 will combine organized information, process descriptions, instructions, and graphics. At least one part of your guide must involve rigorous step-by-step instructions subject to usability testing. Your guide must also address safety concerns so that users can accomplish your guide’s mission: survival.

This guide is not an academic essay, report, or research paper. It is a product that your peers can and will want to use; it should combine text and graphics in ways that maximize the efficiency and appeal of technical communication. Including front and back matter, the final product should approximate fifteen standard-sized pages. You do not need professional binding, but you should deliver a tidy product.


The following table summarizes the project’s essential components:

Component Description	Length	Due	Points
<i>Group Contract</i> : defines the group's ethics, organization, and procedures	2 pages	Mar. 29	20
<i>Proposal</i> : presents the project's problem, solution, program, and schedule	3 pages	Mar. 29	50
<i>Credibility Report</i> : explains and develops how research will establish authority	1 page, 10-min. pres.	Mar. 29	20
<i>Hard-Copy Guide</i> : offers information and instructions for professionals' problems	15 pages	Apr. 19	100
<i>Support Website</i> : elaborates on the guide, e.g. with FAQ, further instructions, etc.	variable	Apr. 19	100
<i>Group Presentation</i> : convinces classmates they will want to use the guide	20 minutes	Apr. 19, 24	50

On the last day of class, students will vote on which guide other than their own best exemplifies effective technical communication. Each class’s winner will receive ten bonus points. A high-ranking member of LCC will then choose the best of the winners from all of my classes.

Participation (150 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.

	There are no major grammar assignments, but “correctness” is mandatory for professional writing and for a successful assignment. See Markel, p. 12.
---	---

Schedule of Meetings, Readings, and Deadlines

	Topics and Readings	Deadlines and Presentations
Week 1 1/9 & 1/11	Tu: Course Intro: Practically Speaking Th: Tech Comm and Audiences*, Markel Ch. 1&5 *Small groups tentatively assigned	
Week 2 1/16 & 1/18	Tu: Speaking Basics, O'Hair pp. 13-17, 25-32, 104-117 Th: Speaking Basics, continued	Tu: Self-Introductions Th: Self-Introductions
Week 3 1/23 & 1/25	Tu: Paragraphs and Sentences, Markel Ch. 10&11 Th: Persuasion and Emails, Markel Ch. 8&14	Tu: Small Group Pres #1 Th: Small Group Pres #2
Week 4 1/30 & 2/1	Tu: Tact, Markel Ch. 4 (54-55) Th: Job Applications, Markel Ch. 15 (363-93)	Tu: Audience Profile, Persuasive Email, and Rationale Due Th: Evaluation Email Due
Week 5 2/6 & 2/8	Tu: Application Materials Workshop, Markel p. 56 Th: Interviews, Markel Ch. 15 (393-403)	Tu: App Letter and Résumé Drafts Due Th: App Letter and Résumé Due
Week 6 2/13 & 2/15	Tu: Research Basics, Markel Ch. 6 Th: Organizing and Styling Speech, O'Hair pp. 69-102	Tu: Small Group Pres #3 Th: Small Group Pres #4
Week 7 2/20 & 2/22	Tu: Visual Aids, O'Hair pp. 119-138 Th: Job Presentations	Th: Job Presentations
Week 8 2/27 & 3/1	Tu: Job Presentations Th: Job Presentations	Tu: Job Presentations Th: Job Presentations
Week 9 3/6 & 3/8	Tu: Group Memo Planning, review Markel pp. 352-3 Th: Ethics, Definitions, and Processes, Markel Ch. 2&9	Th: Group Memo Due
Week 10 3/13 & 3/15	Tu: Proposals*, Markel Ch. 16 Th: Design Principles, Markel Ch. 12 *Large Groups Assigned	Tu: Small Group Pres #5
Week 11 3/20 & 3/22	SPRING BREAK	
Week 12 3/27 & 3/29	Tu: Writing Instructions and Manuals, Markel Ch. 19 Th: Authority and Credibility, review Markel Ch. 6	Tu: Small Group Pres #6 Th: Contract, Proposal, and Credibility Reports Due
Week 13 4/3 & 4/5	Tu: Graphics, Markel Ch. 13 Th: Websites, Markel Ch. 20	Tu: Small Group Pres #7 Th: Small Group Pres #8
Week 14 4/10 & 4/12	Tu: Manuals and Support., Markel Ch. 18 (467-474) Th: Project Workshop I	
Week 15 4/17 & 4/19	Tu: Project Workshop II Th: Group Presentations	Tu: Guide and Site Drafts Due Th: Large Group Presentations ALL GUIDES AND SITES DUE
Week 16 4/24 & 4/26	Tu: Group Presentations Th: Project Voting and Course Evaluations	Tu: Large Group Presentations