

Technical Communication Practices (LCC 3401)
Fall 2006: Sections N, D, and H

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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 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 correct and context-appropriate
- Explore ethical, legal, and linguistic problems in workplace communication
- Develop well-researched projects individually and collaboratively
- Employ informative and persuasive approaches to speech and writing
- Combine verbal and graphical elements effectively
- Deliver organized and engaging oral presentations
- 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

This course is your job. If you miss work or arrive late, there are consequences. If you must miss class, email me ahead of time. You may miss two classes without a grade penalty. For other absences, you must have documentation of a valid excuse (such as a doctor's note, jury summons, etc.) to avoid penalties. I will deduct 25 points from your final grade for each of your third and fourth absences and 50 points for every absence beyond the fourth. Three latenesses constitute an absence.

Punctual Work

Unless I approve a deadline extension ahead of time, 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. Since academic integrity is an ethical issue, and since understanding ethical issues is a major part of this course, I will see a violation of the honor code not only as a sign of a deep character flaw, worthy of firing in itself, but also as a failure to master a basic course concept. 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 oral presentation)

Give an oral introduction of 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)

Complete an audience profile like the one on Markel p. 89 for the classmate assigned to you by the professor. Use this profile as you plan your persuasive email.

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 weakness 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. The recipients of your persuasive and evaluation emails will help you through the drafting process.

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

Design a skills-focused résumé tailored to the job described in your ad. The recipients of your persuasive and evaluation emails will help you through the drafting process.

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

Give a well-researched presentation about the specific tasks and conditions associated with the type of job described in your ad. Design your presentation for a lay audience, and accompany it with PowerPoint slides and a handout that highlight key points.

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

In the group that includes you and the recipients of your persuasive and evaluation emails, investigate the two other groups assigned to you by the professor. Write a memo to the professor that explains the results of your investigation and recommends one of the two investigated groups for a merger with your own. The professor will use these memos to organize groups for the Group Project.

Assignments, continued

Group Project (400 points)

Design a “Survival Guide” that will help your peers to deal with a specific problem that awaits them in their professional lives. As a “how-to” manual, your guide will probably combine process descriptions and instructions. At least one part of your guide must involve 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 not exceed fifteen standard-sized pages. You do not need professional binding, but you should deliver a tidy product.

In addition to the hard copy of the guide, provide the following separate documents:

- 1) Group Contract (defines the group’s ethics, rules, and organization)
- 2) Proposal (presents the problem, solution, program, and schedule)
- 3) Credibility Report (assesses credibility of one research source)
- 4) Executive Summary (summarizes how your guide helps our class to survive)
- 5) Support Web Site (elaborates on key points from the guide)

Plan a twenty-minute oral presentation that explains the purpose, design, and execution of your guide and support site.

The point values and maximum lengths for project components are:

- 1) Group Contract, 20 points, 2 pages
- 2) Proposal, 50 points, 3 pages
- 3) Credibility Report, 10 points, 1 page
- 4) Executive Summary, 20 points, 1 page
- 5) Hard-Copy Guide, 100 points, 15 pages
- 6) Support Web Site, 150 points, unspecified length/size
- 7) Group Presentation, 50 points, 20 minutes

Participation (150 points)

Participation in class discussions and exercises is part of your job. 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.

*NOTE: There are no major grammar assignments, but “correctness” is mandatory for professional writing and for a successful (passing) assignment. See Markel, p. 12.