

## ENGLISH 379, TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION, COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Prefix, Number, Title, Credit Hours: ENGL 379, Technical Communication, 3

*Dakota State University*

Spring 2009

**Course Meeting Time and Location:** Internet course

**Instructor's Contact Information:**

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**Approved Course Description:** Study of and practice in writing of a technical nature. (ENGL 379 is a designated writing-intensive course.)

**Additional Course Description:** No matter what career you choose, you are likely to do some technical writing in the form of reports, manuals, memos, letters, e-mail correspondence, web documents, or professional presentations. This course provides instruction and practice in the kinds of writing common to most technical professions, including collaborative writing; it also provides an opportunity to define, produce, and collect a portfolio of specific forms of communication used in your chosen career.

**Prerequisites:** A grade of "C" or better in ENGL 101 and 201.

**Course Requirements:**

**Required textbook and other materials:**

*Technical Communication 8e* by Mike Markel, 8th edition, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.

*Prentice Hall Reference Guide* by Muriel Harris, customized for DSU, Prentice 2007.

**Technology & Supplementary Materials:** Since all coursework will take place via the Internet, students need a computer with reliable Internet connectivity. It is important that students have a willingness to learn new software and have a patient attitude for dealing with technical issues as they arise. At the minimum, assignments will be completed using the D2L interface; MS *Word*; and various online sites. Students should maintain back-up copies of important information, correspondence, assignments, and feedback until final grades have been posted to WebAdvisor. Please note that some of the assignments you complete in this course may fulfill requirements for an exit portfolio in your major.

**Description of Instructional Methods:** A variety of online learning approaches will be used, including online instructional materials posted in D2L; class discussions on the D2L Discuss page; collaborative writing; and electronic submission and return of assignments. Students will be responsible for accessing all online materials and participating in class discussions as well as research and writing activities.

**Accommodations Policy:** If you have a documented disability and/or anticipate needing accommodations (e.g., non-standard note taking, test modifications) in this course, please arrange to meet with the instructor. Also, please contact Dakota State University's ADA coordinator, Keith Bundy in the Student Development Office located in the Trojan Center Underground or at 256-5121, as soon as possible. The DSU website containing additional information, along with the form to request accommodations is [http://www.departments.dsu.edu/disability\\_services/](http://www.departments.dsu.edu/disability_services/). You will need to provide documentation of your disability. The ADA coordinator must confirm the need for accommodations before officially authorizing them.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are contrary to the purpose of higher education and will not be tolerated in this course. Academic dishonesty will result in a zero on the assignment and may result in failure of the course and referral to DSU's Academic Integrity Board. DSU's policy on academic integrity (DSU Policy 04-05-00) is available online at <http://www.departments.dsu.edu/hr/newsite/policies/040500.htm>. Academic dishonesty includes copying answers or work done by another student, turning in work done for another course without obtaining permission from both instructors, using notes or other restricted aids during an exam, using someone else's work without proper citation, and allowing another student to copy from your work.

#### **Other Policies:**

**Workload:** The workload for a 3 credit course is based on an expectation of 12 hours of work per week beyond the regular class time for 16 weeks. Although an Internet course does not meet for 3 hours per week in the traditional sense, students do need to budget similar time for reading course materials, exchanging ideas via the discussion board, and communicating questions. *Plan your time accordingly.*

**Late Papers:** Assignments are due at the time noted in the assignment. *If you expect to have trouble meeting a deadline, consult with the instructor at least 24 hours before the deadline.* Without prior agreement, late submissions will result in deduction of one letter grade per class period. A student must submit all major writing assignments in order to pass the course.

**Freedom of Learning:** Students are responsible for learning the content of any course of study in which they are enrolled. Under Board of Regents and University policy, student academic performance shall be evaluated solely on an academic basis and students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study. It has always been the policy of Dakota State University to allow students to appeal the decisions of faculty, administrative, and staff members and the decisions of institutional committees. Students who believe that an academic evaluation is unrelated to academic standards but is related instead to judgment of their personal opinion or conduct should contact the dean of the college which offers the class to initiate a review of the evaluation.

**Grammar & Mechanics:** The work submitted during this course should be free of mechanical errors and conform to the conventions of standard written English. I *expect* that you will use

- your grammar handbook
- spell-check and a dictionary
- someone to help you proofread your work.

If you know you have trouble with some aspect of writing mechanics, make use of Smarthinking, an online service available to DSU students. More details are available at <http://www.dsu.edu/academics/tutoring/index.aspx>.

**Course Goals:**

1. **Institutional Goal #2, Writing Intensive Goal, and Learning Outcomes:** Students will refine their understanding and practice of reading and writing as integral parts of researching, learning, discussing, and presenting academic material.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course, students will be able to

Outcome	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read extensively and respond critically in written discourse, e.g. do significant outside reading with corresponding writing assignments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will complete weekly reading assignments and respond to the readings through class discussion board posts and the completion of study guides.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use writing to learn course content by practicing writing as an integral, ongoing part of the course and applying appropriate style manuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will complete 7 major writing projects, as well as contribute toward collaborative writing projects and discussion board threads.</li> </ul>

2. Develop skills and practices appropriate to professional and technical writing

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course, students will be able to

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyze the informational needs of audiences; organize technical information according to audience needs and expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will complete audience analysis assignments and demonstrate an understanding of audience needs in the technical documents created.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work productively as a member of a collaborative writing team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will complete 2-3 assigned major collaborative projects, as well as work together on other small group activities.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify and employ rhetorical strategies appropriate to a variety of technical communication situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will complete multiple writing assignments and conduct communication throughout the course that will require them to use a variety of rhetorical strategies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employ appropriate methods of researching, writing, and documenting technical articles and reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will locate, evaluate, and integrate information using a variety of research techniques including observation, interview, and electronic databases. Students will select and apply appropriate documentation in their written assignments.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop a technical writing “style” appropriate to a chosen field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will research current writing demands/expectations in their chosen field and apply appropriate style in writing assignments.</li> </ul>

**Assessment:** Your ability to meet these objectives will be assessed through major writing assignments and supporting materials, study guides, exams, and class participation.

**Major writing assignments:** When completing major assignments, you will have opportunities to draft, receive feedback, and rewrite assignments. To improve your chances for a better grade on a major assignment, you may share your assignment with classmates in peer review workshops, you may use Smarthinking to ask specific questions regarding a draft, or you may ask the instructor for focused feedback on a draft.

**Study Guides & Exams:** Understanding and applying textbook material is essential to the work of the course; reading worksheets will identify and focus on essential concepts in your reading assignments. Application of these concepts will be assessed through weekly study guides.

**Participation:** The ability to share ideas and collaborate on projects is an important component of technical communication; therefore, participation in class discussions and collaborative writing groups is highly valued in this course. To gain maximum points, you should carefully consider your use of all forms of communication (e-mail, chat, discussion board, etc.) and your actions when working collaboratively. Your correspondence should contribute to the class positively and should demonstrate your understanding of technical writing principles and concepts. When working collaboratively, you should treat peers with civility and consideration, including dividing work fairly, meeting deadlines, and staying in contact. A portion of this grade will be based on how your teammates evaluate your group contributions.

**Performance standards/grading policy:** Grades will be based on points accumulated from:

- Writing Assignments: 60%
- Participation: 20%

- Study Guides, Exams & Quizzes: 20%

Final grades in the course will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
Fail	50-59%

**Instructor Response:**

Students may expect feedback on submitted assignments within a week after being submitted. If a student has not received a score after one week, he or she should contact the instructor. During the workweek, students can expect a reply to email messages within a 24-hour period.

**Tentative Course Outline/Schedule:** (This schedule is offered to provide students with a general overview of the course topics and an idea of the projected pace of the course. As each group of students is unique, the schedule is subject to change to better meet the students’ needs. Students should always consult D2L for the most up-to-date schedule. )

Week 1	Jan 14-16	Introductions, Course Overview	Chapter 1. Tech Communication
Week 2	Jan 19-23	Collaborative Writing	Chapter 2. Ethics & Legalities Chapter 4. Collaborative Writing
Week 3	Jan 26-30	Professional & Technical Correspondence	Chapter 5. Audience & Purpose Chapter 14. Letters, Memos, and Emails
Week 4	Feb 2-6	Job Applications	Chapter3. Writing Process Chapter 15. Job Application Materials
Week 5	Feb 9-13	Defining & Describing	Chapter 9. Definitions & Descriptions Chapter 11. Effective sentences
Week 6	Feb 16-20	Workplace Research	Chapter 6. Research Chapter 10. Writing Coherent Documents
Week 7	Feb 23-27	Writing Effective Proposals	Chapter 16. Proposals Chapter 12. Document Design
Week 8	Mar 2-6	Graphics for Technical Documents	Chapter 13. Graphics
Week 9	Mar 16-20	Informal Reports	Chapter 8. Persuasive Communication Chapter 17. Informal reports

Week 10	Mar 23-27	Formal Reports	Chapter 18. Formal reports Chapter 7. Organizing
Week 11	Mar 30-Apr 3	Formal Reports	Chapter 18. Formal reports
Week 12	Apr 6 - 10	Writing Instructions	Chapter 19. Instructions & manuals
Week 13	Apr 13 -17	Writing Instructions	Chapter 19. Instructions & manuals
Week 14	Apr 20 - 24	Electronic Portfolio	Chapter 20. Websites
Week 15	Apr 27–May 1	Portfolio Presentation	Chapter 21. Presentations
Week 16	May 4-8	Final Exam Week	