

# ENC 2210: Technical Writing

Class Number = 29032; Section = 1GS7

Spring 2023 Semester

Instructor: Laken Brooks

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Office Hours: By appointment

Office Hours location: Virtual; send email to request a link to my Zoom

## Class Details

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays at 9:35 - 10:25 AM (Period 3)

Location: Matherly 118

## Course Description

Technical communication is a broad genre that boils down to two things:

- Communication that a person does in a workplace or when applying to a workplace: memos, emails, resumes, etc.
- Any information that provides instructions on how to *\*do\** or *\*use\** or *\*make\** something: makeup tutorials, DIY TikToks, instruction manuals, recipes, sewing patterns, emergency guidelines about how to exit buildings during a fire alarm, etc.

Many technical writing classes focus exclusively on workplace communication. However, in this course, we will ask ourselves “How has technical communication influenced human history, and how does it continue to influence us today?” The above question will be our guiding framework as we approach this course. Students will consider anthropological and historical questions about how humans communicate. Many of the most ancient artifacts of human communication (like cave paintings) convey technical information about how to complete religious rituals, migration patterns, preparing food, and other important cultural tasks. We will spend the first weeks of this class thinking about dynamic forms of technical writing, like the Egyptian Book of the Dead and wampum beads, and we will discuss what technical writing can teach us about the development of literacy. In this class, students will consider why technical communication has been vital to human development and how students can use technical communication to build better products, workplaces, and communities in the 21st century.

We will also focus on practical lessons on communicating in the workplace. Students will come out of this class having completed a job portfolio (cover letter, LinkedIn portfolio, and resume), an informational interview, and other helpful writing samples that students can use to kickstart their professional development.

## General Education Objectives

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university’s 24,000-word

writing requirement (WR).

- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission. Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

## General Education Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

## Required Texts

There is no need to purchase any textbooks for this class. Texts will be provided on Canvas.

## Assignments

NOTE: Because I have customized some of the assignments to be more hands-on, I have reduced the written word count for some assignments. That's because I consider 'literacy' to be skills that we use even when we are not writing actual words on a page. For example, learning how to code is, in of itself, a literary skill. You will still obtain the 6,000 word requirement if you complete all of the below assignments according to the instructions per assignment.

### Informational Interview and reflection – 100 points

Students will conduct a brief (15-30 minutes) informational interview with a professional in their field. This professional could be a professor, a mentor, or someone else. Students will need to first professionally and politely reach out to the interviewee over e-mail to request the interview, then they'll need to write a 600-word reflection of how the interview went, what questions they asked, and what information the student

learned about their desired field of employment.

**Résumé/CV, LinkedIn portfolio, and Cover Letter – 300 points in total, 100 points each**

Students will identify a potential job application and produce professional-caliber application materials.

**Reflections about 2 UF Career Connections events - 200 points in total, 100 points each**

By the end of the semester, students will attend at least TWO events (either workshops or personal one-on-one sessions) with the UF Career Connections Center. Students have the freedom to choose what and when they will attend. These reflections will be about 500 words each.

**4 Reflections about a Personal Technical Skill - 400 points in total, 100 points each**

Toward the start of the semester, students will choose ONE technical skill that they want to learn in their personal life. This skill does NOT need to be a professional skill like learning a specific function in a coding language, but it *can* be. In the past, students have learned how to play a song on an instrument; how to adapt and cook a family recipe; how to write a stellar blog post; how to crochet; how to plant tomatoes; how to use a specific software tool; etc. Students are NOT expected to become experts or masters in their chosen technical skill by the end of the semester. However, students should expect to produce ONE solid, polished example of their growth in that skill by the end of the semester. For example, if a student chooses to spend the semester learning about crochet as a technical skill, that student does not need to create a sweater or blanket by the end of the semester. Rather, that student might be able to produce a specific type of stitch or create a Granny Square to show their progress. As another example, if a student chooses to spend the semester learning about graphic design, the student does not need to show that they have mastered Photoshop or In-Design. Rather, the student can focus on one or two images that they have created throughout the semester and can reflect on how they learned specific digital or visual design strategies/tools to expand their skillset since the start of the semester.

These reflections will be about 400 words each.

**Presentation of Personal Technical Skill - 50 points**

At the end of the semester, students will have the opportunity to present their technical skill using some of the public speaking skills and writing skills that they have learned throughout the semester. This brief presentation may take the form of an in-class lightning talk (around 4 minutes) or a Three-Minute-Thesis-style talk and demo.

**Participation – 200 points (100 mid-semester, 100 at the end)**

You must be an active and engaged part of the course to not only receive participation credit but to ensure that our course will be an academically fruitful experience. This grade will be gauged by not only your attendance, but your contribution to in-class group activities and larger discussions.

**Grading Scale**

A 4.0 930-1000  
A- 3.67 900-929  
B+ 3.33 870-899  
B 3.0 830-869  
B- 2.67 800-829  
C+ 2.33 770-799  
C 2.0 730-769  
C- 1.67 700-729  
D+ 1.33 670-699  
D 1.0 630-669  
D- 0.67 600-629  
E 0.00 0-599

## Course Policies

1. *Assignments:* You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* Attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed three unexcused absences. If you miss more than three classes during the semester, each additional absence will lower your overall grade by 100 points. If you miss more than five classes, you will fail the course. Exempt from this policy are only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, family emergencies, and health issues for which you must provide appropriate documentation in advance of the absence. In addition, if you are tardy for three class periods, you will receive an unexcused absence. You can read more about UF's official attendance policy here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic/regulations/attendance-policies/>.
3. *Email:* As this is a course focused on rhetoric and communication, students will be expected to be critical and sensitive writers in all their communication, including email. As such, I will only respond to emails that demonstrate a professional tone and style. This means that your emails must display a subject line, greeting, and writing that is edited, clear, and demonstrates that the student has already consulted all necessary documentation (such as the course syllabus) prior to writing. Furthermore, I try to limit my replies to emails during "normal" business hours: M F, 9:00-5:00pm. While I may occasionally reply outside of these business hours, students should not expect a reply outside of these hours or during holidays. I will not discuss the following over email: grade disputes, feedback on papers, or course policies. These can all be discussed during my office hours or by appointment.
4. *Classroom behavior:* Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Many of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own.
5. *Class work:* All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on their assigned deadlines via Canvas. I will not accept hard copies of your work. Late work will be docked ten points for every day it is late until it loses all credit. In-class assignments will consist of group activities and larger classroom discussion. Be prepared for each class by doing the assigned reading and being ready to contribute

- to class in a meaningful way each day.
6. *Assignment Maintenance*: Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
  7. *Plagiarism and Academic Honesty*: Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Any plagiarized assignment will receive a zero, and may result in your automatically failing my class. Plagiarism also violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
  8. *Students with disabilities*: If you are requesting accommodations you should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565 and at <https://disability.ufl.edu/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give to your instructor.
  9. *Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager/resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity/diversity/resources/harassment/>.
  10. *Grade Appeals*: In 1000- and 2000- level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office ([cblount@ufl.edu](mailto:cblount@ufl.edu)). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade. For more information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.
  11. *Course Evaluations*: Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>.
  12. *Mental Health and Wellness*: Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>
  13. *UF's Policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/>
  14. *Environmental Sustainability*: Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends (for example, you could donate them to the Alachua County Friends of the Library annual book sale).

## Course Schedule

### Week 1: No class, no assigned readings

## **Week 2: What is Literacy, and What is Technical Communication?**

Monday January 16th = Holiday; no class

Wednesday January 18th = First day of class: covering the syllabus and discussion of literacy.  
No assigned reading

Friday January 20th = Before class, read articles about multiple intelligences and excerpt from *Toward a Composition Made Whole*

## **Week 3: Communication as Technology**

Monday January 23rd = Introduction to personal technical skill assignment. Guiding question = What Do We Use to Communicate? No assigned readings before class.

Wednesday January 25th = Before class, read and complete Chapter 1 activities from the *Parachute* workbook. Turn in these activities in person, printed out, during class. If you have a DRC or other need to turn in a digital copy, please message me so we can arrange accommodations. We'll do an in-class activity about literacy and about your workbook responses.

Friday January 27th = What is Old is New Again: watch documentary about the Egyptian Book of the Dead before class

**Personal Technical Skill Reflection 1 Due**

## **Week 4: Using Land to Communicate**

Monday January 30th = Read "I, Pencil" and "Land-Based Literacies" essays

Wednesday February 1st = In-class documentary viewing about conflict resources

Friday February 3rd = Read excerpt of *Undersea Network*  
Writing Lab and Introduction to informational interview assignment. We will discuss how to find intellectual and professional role models.

## **Week 5: Visual Literacy in Technical Communication**

Monday February 6th = In-class activity about visual design in workplace documents.

Wednesday February 8th = Read "Cruel Pies" and Canvas materials about visual rhetoric

Friday February 10th = Writing Lab. Before class, read and complete Chapter 2 activities from the *Parachute* workbook. Turn in these activities in person, printed out, during class. If you have a DRC or other need to turn in a digital copy, please message me so we can arrange accommodations. In class, we will be demoing the etiquette and best practices of finding, inquiring about, and applying to job listings.

## **Week 6: LinkedIn and Job Portfolio Prep (no assigned readings)**

Monday February 13th= No assigned reading: focus of the day will be on LinkedIn

Wednesday February 15th = No assigned reading: focus of the day will be on resumes

Friday February 17th = Writing Lab: no assigned reading. Focus of the day will be on cover letters

**Personal Skill Reflection 2 Due.**

## **Week 7: Making a Great First Impression: Emails and Informational Interviews**

Monday February 20th = Before class, review Canvas materials about cold-email etiquette

Wednesday February 22nd = Before class, review Canvas materials about informational interviews and “pitching” etiquette

Friday February 24th = Lab day to demo an informational interview.

## **Week 8: The Ethics of Accurate Technical Communication**

Monday February 27th = Before class, read excerpts of *Algorithms of Oppression* and prepare for an in-class discussion about the ethical implications of technical writing. How can we make sure technical writing is equitable, and what happens when tech writers let their own discriminatory biases leak into their writing?

Wednesday March 1st = Before class, read Canvas articles about safety and miscommunication. In-class evaluation activity

Friday March 3rd = No assigned reading before class. Writing lab day.

**Personal Skill Reflection 3 Due**

## **Week 9: One-on-One Conferences**

## **Week 10: SPRING BREAK; no classes 11th-19th**

## **Week 11: Mentorship and Digital Etiquette**

Monday March 20th = Readings TBA. We will be discussing the importance of mentorship and how to network. We will also be discussing how to cope with rejection and follow-up etiquette in digital communications.

Wednesday March 22nd = Readings TBA. We will be discussing how to make connections and then, over time, how to *maintain* those network connections with proactive communication.

Friday March 24th = No assigned reading. Writing Lab

### **Career Connections Center Reflection 1 Due**

## **Week 12: Privacy and Digital Hygiene**

Monday March 27th = Read assigned articles (and watch corresponding videos) for digital hygiene

Wednesday March 29th = Guest lecture; readings TBA

Friday March 31st = No assigned readings. Writing Lab and In-class Personal Digital Hygiene Audit activity

## **Week 13: Professional Communication in a Museum**

Monday April 3rd = Read excerpts of Quesenbery and Brooks *Storytelling for User Experience*

Wednesday April 5th = Read excerpts of *Storytelling in Museums*

Friday April 7th = Class visit to the Harn Museum for guest tour and lecture (details TBA)

### **Personal Skill Reflection 4 due**

## **Week 14: What is the Future of Technical Communication?**

Monday April 10th = Remembering the Humans Who Compose: read "Bartleby the Scrivener" and article about Harvard's Human Computers



Wednesday April 12th = Review Canvas materials about TikTok and social media as instructional guides

Friday April 14th = Guest speaker TBA

**Job Package Drafts Due for Peer Review**

## **Week 15: In-class Skill Presentations (no assigned readings)**

Monday April 17th = In-class presentations about your semester's chosen skill

Wednesday April 19th = In-class presentations about your semester's chosen skill

Friday April 21st = Last day of required in-person classes for this course: reflecting on what we've learned

**Informational Interview Reflections Due**

## **Week 16: Last week**

Monday April 24th = Optional: drop-in workshop time

Wednesday April 26th = Optional: drop-in workshop time

**Final Career Connections Center Reflection Due on April 28th**

**Final Job Package Drafts Due on May 1st**

### **General Grading Rubric**

A	Insightful: You did what the assignment asked for at a high quality level, with care and precision, and your work shows originality and creativity. Work in this range shows all the qualities listed below for a "B," but it also demonstrates that you took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a style. Work in the "A" range is not only correct and intriguing, but also illuminating. Since careful editing and proofreading are essential in writing, papers in the A range must be free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors.
B	Proficient: You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range is competent, thoughtful, and considered, but it needs revision. To be in the "B" range, an essay must be complete in content, be well organized, and show special attention to style.
C	Satisfactory: You did what the assignment asked of you and demonstrated that you have a generalized comprehension of the ideas/films/essays you're working with. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. Diction may be imprecise or unclear. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.

D	Poor: You did what the assignment asked of you at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and/or the organization is hard to discern. Support is irrelevant, overgeneralized, lacks validity, and/or is absent. Ideas/texts are oversimplified. Work in this range may have no thesis statement, or may stray significantly from the thesis throughout the essay. Attention to style is often nonexistent or uneven.
E	An E is usually reserved for people who don't do the work, or don't come to class, or those who have plagiarized. However, if your work shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment or demonstrates that you put little effort in completing it, you will receive a failing grade.

- Note: I extend my gratitude to Jason Crider, since I was very inspired by his ENC 2210 syllabus and his readings when I began considering how I would organize my own section of the class. I have altered and used many sections of Crider's syllabus, and I appreciate Crider's intellectual generosity.