

ENGL 3920 Syllabus ~ Spring 2013

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Office Hours and Location: 10:30-12:00 and 1:15-2:00 MW, 12:00-12:30 and 3:15-4:30 TR, and otherwise by appointment, Academic Building 103I

Textbook:

- Markel, Mike. *Technical Communication*. 10th ed. Boston: Bedford, 2012. [ISBN-13: 978-1-4576-0029-6]

Prerequisite: Grade of C or better in ENGL 1102 and completion of a 2000-level English course.

Course Description: A study of technical communication practices in professional writing contexts including document analysis, the rhetoric of the scientific and technical professions, and the composition of technical reports, manuals, and articles.

Credit for Graduation or Transfer: This is a required course for B.A. English majors concentrating in Professional Communication and is an elective for general education B.A. English majors. A junior-level course in Technical Writing is a standard feature of B.A. English programs. The course requires a grade of C or better to count as credit toward graduation. Students planning to transfer to another school must also receive a C or better in this course in order to receive credit toward graduation at that institution as well.

Course Objectives: By the end of the semester, students will (1) advance their knowledge of rhetorical practice within the scientific and technical fields, (2) develop advanced data collection and analysis skills, and (3) demonstrate their aptitude by writing and editing technical documents.

Course Requirements: All students are expected to

- read assigned materials for the course,
- attend class and participate in class discussions and activities,
- complete written assignments as scheduled, and
- complete all other assignments as scheduled.

Academic Dishonesty: Gordon State College's current Academic Catalog includes detailed descriptions of what actions are academically dishonest and a statement on the purpose of having an academic dishonesty policy in the first place. For the purposes of this class particularly, an act of "Academic Dishonesty" involves passing off someone else's work or ideas as your own. This rule applies to anything turned in for a grade, regardless of how minor or major that assignment is and regardless of the reason for the infraction. Ignorance of the rules for attributing ideas to others correctly is not a valid excuse; students are held accountable for documenting others' ideas correctly, so they should make certain to be present on the days the class discusses documentation or to get the notes from a classmate who was there on that date.

Collusion is one form of academic dishonesty that is worth mentioning specifically and is defined as receiving excessive help from another to the point that a work can no longer be the product of a single author. In this class, if a submitted assignment is suspected to be the result of collusion, the teacher reserves the right to refuse credit for that work if the claimed author is unable to demonstrate sole authorship.

We will discuss ethics on Tuesday, January 15 when we cover those parts of the semester that have most to do with academic honesty in general. The particulars and principles of Gordon State College's Academic Dishonesty policy are available in the Catalog on pp. 286-87 and online at <http://www2.gordonstate.edu/catalog/current/view/C191/#academic-dishonesty>.

The Academic Catalog also outlines, among other things, the possible penalties for academic dishonesty and the process by which these penalties can be repealed. This information can also be found in the Catalog on pp. 62-63 and online at <http://www2.gordonstate.edu/catalog/current/view/C84/#academic-dishonesty-policy>. In most cases of Academic Dishonesty for this course, a student can expect to receive no better than an F on the assignment in question. In more severe cases the student may receive a 0 for the assignment grade or expulsion from the class.

Attendance: There is no attendance requirement, but poor attendance can have an indirect negative effect on your grade. Material covered in class may or may not be covered in the textbook, so a good attendance record is important to have. Likewise, there is a good deal of reading material that will be photocopied and handed out during the class meeting before discussion of it. We have many topics to cover over the course of the semester, so we will not be able to go over material again extensively once it has already been covered. If you miss a class meeting, you are encouraged to go over any handouts you might have been given the day you missed and to ask one or more of your classmates for their notes, but your teacher may politely decline to review material that has previously been covered in class that you missed. If there was a handout given on the day that you missed class, then your teacher will give that to you when you ask for it.

There is also no further penalty for tardiness, except that if a student misses a technical editing or writing assignment or part of an exam because he or she was tardy, then that missed time cannot be made up. Students who find that tardiness will be a problem for them will be encouraged to take a seat along the wall nearest the door so that their late entry will not be a distraction to the rest of the class.

Make-up Work: All major assignments will be accepted late, but with a five-point penalty for each day they are past due. (This includes holidays and weekends.) To be considered on time, these documents need to be printed out and submitted any time before the conclusion of the class meeting during which they are due. Submission after the conclusion of that class meeting makes that assignment one day late, two days late twenty-four hours later, and so on.

For differing reasons, there are certain elements of the course grade that cannot be made up. Oral Presentation and Group Project activities are always group-based, so there is no way for these activities to be made up.

Homework will not be accepted late, unless the student was absent from class the day the assignment was due. In that case, the missed homework assignment will not be accepted for a grade if submitted at any other class meeting except the next one that student attends. Waiting too long to request missed information about homework assignments is not a valid excuse for not having those assignments completed.

Tests can be made up, but only after students establish valid excuses for having missed them and then make arrangements for making them up.

No assignment should be submitted via email or by any other method of electronic submission. If a student must miss class on the day an assignment is due, and if email is the only means by which the assignment can be submitted on time, then an exception can be made if the student requests and receives permission to do so beforehand. If the student emails the assignment on time, but without receiving permission beforehand, the assignment will be accepted, but with a five-point deduction from the assignment grade.

Electronic Devices and Other Distractions: There is no penalty for using electronic devices, talking, or sleeping in class other than the information students miss because they were distracted. In this class students are expected not to distract their teacher or their fellow classmates with these electronic devices and disruptive behaviors, so in cases where a student's use of an electronic device or inattention to class discussion becomes a distraction, the teacher reserves the right to ask that student to stop that behavior privately, after class, or publicly, in the middle of class.

Course Assignments: The following is a list of the specific assignments for this course section. Each assignment name is accompanied by a short description of its requirements. Where noted, see the corresponding supplementary materials for more detailed information. Dates on which the details of these assignments will be discussed appear below in the Daily Calendar.

Final Exam: On Tuesday, April 30, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., there will be a final exam. It will be over the material and concepts covered in class since the Midterm Exam (non-cumulative, in other words) and will account for ten percent of the final semester's grade. The format will vary, but given that it will be drawn from concepts covered in the textbook, it will be short-answer, True/False, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and/or matching.

Group Project: Technical writing often involves being judged as an individual by the work a person does in a group, so there will be a group project in the second half of the semester, accounting for twenty percent of the final grade, that will require students to work in groups for a common purpose. The details of this assignment will be determined at that time, but a quarter of that project's grade will be determined by each student individually in the form of a reflective response to the experience of working in a group.

Midterm Exam: On Thursday, February 21, during the regularly scheduled class time, there will be a midterm exam. It will be over the material and concepts covered in class until that point in the semester and will account for fifteen percent of the final semester's grade. The format will vary, but

given that it will be drawn from concepts covered in the textbook, it will be short-answer, True/False, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and/or matching.

Oral Presentation: Students are also required to give an Oral Presentation as a requirement for the course, accounting for ten percent of the final semester's grade. This will be done in the form of a job interview. Near the end of the semester the teacher will split students up into job interview "teams," and they will take turns interviewing one another before the rest of the class. Half of this grade will go toward the quality of work students do answering questions, and the other half will go toward the quality of work they do asking them as members of the "job search committee."

Technical Editing and Writing Assignments: Students will be required to perform technical editing writing assignments as a part of many, if not most, class meetings. These are exercises done for the purpose of practice applying the principles of technical communication discussed on those days. In cases where editing is required, students will be given samples of technical writing and asked to revise them a certain way, and in cases where writing is required, students will be given a writing prompt and write something original. These assignments may be given as homework in cases where more time is required to do the work, and in others the work will be done in class. In each case, the assignment will be identified in the heading as an "editing" or a "writing" assignment, and the maximum number of points possible for the assignment will be given there as well. Students will generate at least 20 pages of "writing" and at least 40 pages of "editing" over the course of the semester. Altogether, these technical editing and writing assignments will comprise thirty-five percent of the semester's grade.

Web-writing Project: As five percent of the final grade, students will be required to complete work on a web page. This will involve either designing a web document "from the ground up" or making needed changes to a web document already in existence. Students will do this in two parts: (1) a detailed proposal describing what will be done, and (2) the work done on the page itself. Students will be graded by how well they achieved the goals they set for themselves in the proposal.

See the Daily Calendar (below) for information on the days essays are due, grammar tests will be taken, and homework will be assigned and due.

Grade Distribution: Generally speaking, grammar and composition each account for fifty percent of the course grade. Each of the following assignments will factor into the final course grade by the following percentages:

Technical Editing and Writing Assignments	35%
Group Project	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	10%
Oral Presentation	10%
Web-writing Project	10%

Academic Accommodations: Students at Gordon State College with mental or physical impairments that may negatively affect their academic performance are encouraged to contact Laura Bowen, Director of the

Counseling Center, by telephone at 678-359-5585, or via email at laurab@gdn.edu for further information about the scope and requirements of this service, look in the Academic Catalog on pp. 75-76, or go to this center's web page at <http://www.gordonstate.edu/studentlife/ADA.asp>.

Dates to Remember:

Late Registration Ends	Wednesday, January 9
Drop/Add Ends	Wednesday, January 9
Midterm	Thursday, February 28
Residence Halls Close	March 8 (4:00 p.m.) – March 17 (4:00 p.m.)
Summer and Fall 2013 Early Registration	Monday, April 1 – Friday, April 19
Final Exams	Tuesday, April 30 – Friday, May 3
Buy-Back at Bookstore	Tuesday, April 30 – Friday, May 3

Daily Calendar

Week 1 (January 7 – January 11)			
Tues.	Introductions to Course, Syllabus, Class	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For January 10, read Ch. 1
Thurs.	Discuss “Introduction to Technical Communication”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For January 15, read Ch. 2
Notes: Late Registration and Add/Drop end on Wednesday, January 9.			

Week 2 (January 14 – January 18)			
Tues.	Discuss “Understanding Ethics and Legal Considerations”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For January 17, read Ch. 3
Thurs.	Discuss “Writing Technical Documents”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For January 22, read Ch. 5
Notes:			

Week 3 (January 21 – January 25)			
Tues.	Discuss “Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For January 24, read Ch. 6
Thurs.	Discuss “Researching Your Subject”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For January 29, read Ch. 7
Notes:			

Week 4 (January 28 – February 1)			
Tues.	Discuss “Organizing Your Information”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For January 31, read Ch. 8
Thurs.	Discuss “Communicating Persuasively”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For February 5, read Ch. 9
Notes:			

Week 5 (February 4 – February 8)			
Tues.	Discuss “Writing Coherent Documents”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For February 7, read Ch. 10
Thurs.	Discuss “Writing Effective Sentences”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For February 12, read Ch. 4
Notes:			

Week 6 (February 11 – February 15)			
Tues.	Discuss “Writing Collaboratively” and Group Project	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For February 14, read Chs. 11 and 16
Thurs.	Discuss “Designing Documents and Web Sites,” “Writing Proposals,” and Web-writing Project	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	
Notes: Group Projects are due at the beginning of class Tuesday, April 9. Web-writing Project Proposals are due at the beginning of class Thursday, March 7.			

Week 7 (February 18 – February 22)			
Tues.	Review for Midterm Exam		Homework: For February 21, prepare for Midterm Exam
Thurs.	Midterm Exam		Homework: For February 26, read Ch. 12
Notes: The last day to drop a course with a W is Thursday, February 28.			

Week 8 (February 25 – March 1)			
Tues.	Discuss “Creating Graphics”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For February 28, read Ch. 17
Thurs.	Discuss “Writing Informational Reports”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For March 5, read Ch. 19
Notes:			

Week 9 (March 4 – March 8)			
Tues.	Discuss “Writing Recommendation Reports”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For March 7, complete work on Web-writing Proposal
Thurs.	Web-writing Proposal Due ~ Discuss Proposals	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For March 19, read Ch. 20
Notes: Residence Halls close at 4:00 p.m. Friday, March 8 for Spring Break.			

SPRING BREAK, MARCH 11 – MARCH 15 ~ CLASS DOES NOT MEET

Week 10 (March 18 – March 22)			
Tues.	Discuss “Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For March 21, read Ch. 14
Thurs.	Discuss “Writing Correspondence”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: TBD
Notes:			

Week 11 (March 25 – March 29)			
Tues.	TBD	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For March 28, read Ch. 15
Thurs.	Discuss “Writing job-Application Materials” and Oral Presentations	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For April 2, read Ch. 21
Notes:			

Week 12 (April 1 – April 5)			
Tues.	Discuss “Making Oral Presentations”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: For April 4, read Ch. 22
Thurs.	Discuss “Connecting with the Public”	Technical Editing/Writing Assignment	Homework: TBD
Notes:			

Week 13 (April 8 – April 12)			
Tues.	Group Projects Due ~ Group work for Job Interviews		
Thurs.	Job Interviews		
Notes:			

Week 14 (April 15 – April 19)			
Tues.	Job Interviews (cont.)		
Thurs.			
Notes: The Final Examination Period is from Tuesday, April 30 to Friday, May 3.			

Week 15 (April 22 – April 26)			
Tues.	Job Interviews (concl.)		
Thurs.	Review for Final Exam		
Notes: Buy-Back at the Bookstore is from Tuesday, April 30 to Friday, May 3.			

Final Exam: Tuesday, April 30, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.