# RWS 3359: Technical Communication

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| CRN: 25982 | Instructor: Jennifer Falcon |
| Time/Day: ONLINE | E-mail: jfalcon3@utep.edu |
| Place: Blackboard | Phone: 323-243-4739 |
|  | Office Hours: Tuesday/Wednesday 10:00 – 11:30 MST |
|  | Office Location: Library 520Email at jfalcon3@utep.edu or contact for a skype appointments SKYPE: jfalcon3@utep.edu |

# Course Description

A professionally-oriented communication course centered on assembling, organizing, drafting, and revising technical information for generating written documents and oral reports. Technical communication is a field concerned with making complex, technical information understandable, accessible, and usable for non-experts.

Technical communication includes:

* Providing usable instructions for non-experts, so they can use products safely;
* Communicating clearly about technical topics, so non‐experts can make informed decisions;
* Communicating with (and about) technology to make information accessible.

This course teaches you strategies for clearly communicating complex, technical information to non‐experts. We will read chapters from our technical communication textbook, analyze case studies, engage in writing activities, and work collaboratively to write different kinds of technical documents. You will spend class time applying concepts from the readings by working alongside an organization to create an artifact. A key theoretical focus will also be looking at technical communication from a rhetorical and design perspective to understand how organizations assess the needs of their audiences and strategically construct user-knowledge.

# Learning Outcomes

* Develop an efficient and effective writing process that includes strategies for invention, researching, drafting, revising, and editing
* Create effective documents in genres commonly used in technical communication
* Conduct research within the context of your field of study that will inform your writing
* Work collaboratively with a team to create written documents and multimedia presentations
* Advance in your careers and create professional identities;

# Required Texts & Materials



* Markel, M (2011). Technical Communication. 10th edition
* Various PDF articles, web links, and videos on Blackboard

# Course Assignments

The Undergraduate Rhetoric and Writing Studies Program at UTEP uses Blackboard. Projects will be submitted and graded through Blackboard.

You will complete six major assignments and several smaller, weekly assignments over the course of the semester. All major and some minor assignments will be submitted using the “Assignments” feature in Blackboard. Assignments should be submitted as attachments unless otherwise specified. **Late work will not be accepted.** The following is a list of major assignments, brief descriptions, and point values. More detailed assignment sheets are available on Blackboard. Minor assignments will be announced weekly and will include reading, discussion posts, peer reviews, short essay responses, short multimedia presentations, etc.

1. 120 points **Reading Responses:** Write eight (8) Reading Response (RR) blog posts

of 250 – 300 words. Specific assignment guidelines will be provided on Blackboard. Each response is worth 15 points.

1. 40 points **Replying to Reading Responses:** Each week you must reply to two RR blog

posts. Responses must be a minimum of 100 - 150 words. You will write a total

of 8 responses. Specific assignment guidelines will be provided on Blackboard.

1. 90 points **Purpose Statements and Drafts of Major Assignments:** Purpose statements,

drafts, and other short assignments. Drafts of the Memo, YouTube Assignment, Instruction Manual, and presentations must be submitted for feedback. Specific assignment guidelines will be provided on Blackboard.

1. 100 points **Memo Communication:** Students will inform the class about the types of

technical communication within their field of study. Specific assignment guidelines will be provided on Blackboard

1. 250 points **Video Assignment:** Groups of two (2) will download a “How To” video from

YouTube, and improve it by adding transitions, title slides, text information, etc. and write a memo analysis of the audience, and a memo detailing revisions made to the video. Specific assignment guidelines will be provided on Blackboard.

1. 300 points **Instruction Manual:** Groups will write an instruction manual. The manual will

include a usability test, revision memo, and an evaluation of group members. Specific assignment guidelines will be provided on Blackboard.

1. 100 points **Instruction Manual Presentation:** Groups will present their proposal to the

 class. The presentation will assume the audience is a group within the studied

 organization who can take some action regarding the proposed

 recommendations. Specific assignment guidelines will be provided on

 Blackboard.

**Grade Distribution (Students can earn a total of 1000 points for the course):**

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| 1000-900 = A | 899-800 = B | 799 -700 = C | 699- 600 = D | 599 and below = F |

# Course/Instructor Policies

**Project Format:** All projects must be word-processed and saved as a .doc file. They should be in 12 pt. font, have one-inch margins, and be double-spaced. Use a font style that is easily readable like Times New Roman, Arial, or Georgia.

Microsoft Word is available to students at all campus computers and can be purchased at the UTEP Bookstore using a current UTEP ID card at discount.  Students may also go to openoffice.org and download a free and compatible version of Word/Office.

**Rough Drafts:** Part of the participation grade will include the submission of rough drafts. In order to get the most useful feedback, rough drafts should be completed projects. They must also be submitted before or on the due date.

**Rough Draft Feedback:** On the rough drafts, students will receive marginal comments as well as comments at the end of the project. The purpose of this feedback is:

1. To be sure that the project is on the right track: that it meets the requirements of the assignment.
2. To comment on the “big issues.” Students will receive comments based on the most important elements of the assignment. Addressing these concerns should help students write a more effective project. The comments will NOT focus on grammar and such—so it is a good idea to get additional help from instructors and the Writing Center for this.

**University Writing Center:** UTEP’s University Writing Center (UWC) offers free writing tutoring assistance for all UTEP students. The tutors are undergraduate and graduate students who can help with all parts of a writing assignment including prewriting, organizing, revising, and editing. They can also help to understand any writing assignment and help work on comprehending difficult textbook material. Note: To facilitate revision, UWC tutors will not hold a tutoring session fewer than 12 hours before the assignment is due.

**Students can access Blackboard by the steps outlined below:**

* Go to [http://my.utep.edu](http://my.utep.edu/)
* Login is e-mail ID. Password is e-mail password.
* Click on the link to Blackboard
* Once logged into Blackboard, all the courses a student is registered for are listed under the appropriate semester.
* Click on the course title to access the course.

**Classroom Etiquette:**

* No checking email, typing assignments, or surfing the web during class.
* Absolutely no food or drinks in this classroom.
* Turn off cell phone ringers, and please do not text message or listen to iPods/MP3 players during class.
* If possible, please bring a laptop, tablet, or smart phone to use in class. Please note that these should be used in class to participate and/or complete assignments.

**Online “Netiquette”:**

* Always consider audience. Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading any postings.
* Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
* When reacting to someone else’s message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a f2f situation.
* Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).

**Attendance:**

Students are required to attend all classes. This is an online class, but attendance is still required. Attendance counts as checking Blackboard daily and participating in blog post discussions, and completing assigned readings, and major assignments by the due dates.

* Missing a scheduled conference with the instructor constitutes an absence.

**Late Work:**

* **No late work will be accepted. All work must be submitted via Blackboard. I will not accept email submissions.**

**Email Policy:**

* **If you email me I will do my best to replay within 24 hours. I will not answer questions about major assignments the day they are due. It is your responsibility to understand the guidelines, and due dates for each major assignment.**

**Academic Integrity**

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In all matters of intellectual pursuit, UTEP faculty and students must strive to achieve excellence based on the quality of work produced by the individual. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. It is imperative, therefore, that the members of this academic community understand the regulations pertaining to academic integrity and that all faculty insist on adherence to these standards.

Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP), and available in the Office of the Dean of Students and on the homepage of the Dean of Students at www.utep.edu/dos, may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to a failing grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others. (<http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=54418>)

**Copyright and Fair Use:** The University requires all members of its community to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies.

**ADA:** The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you suspect that you have a disability and need an accommodation, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148 or cass@utep.edu. The CASS is located in Room 106, Union East Bldg. Students are responsible for presenting the instructor any CASS accommodation letters and instructions.

**The calendar is subject to change. As of now this is our plan for the course, but if changes are made you will be notified and given an updated calendar.**

**RWS 3359 Calendar**

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| **Calendar** | **Monday**  | **Wednesday** | **Friday** |
| **Week One****1/16** | **First official day of class Tuesday 1/16****Introduction to class, and review of syllabus.****Read Syllabus, and review Course Policies****Read: Technical Communication p. 2 – 14, p. 17 -39 (Technical Communication)****Technical Communication Introduction (PDF)****Read: Intro to Narrative Essay Assignment Guidelines** | **The Writing Process****Audience and Purpose****Purpose Statement****Read: p. 40 – 55, p. 83 - 93****Weekly Response #1 Due 5 p.m.**  | **Reply to Reading Response of two (2) peers by 5 p.m.** |
| **Week Two****1/22** | **Intro to Memo Assignment****Read p. 40 – 52****p. 371 – 376, 385 – 387 (Technical Communication)****Johnson PDF - Ch. 16 Letters and Memos (Blackboard)****Read Memo Assignment guidelines** | **Submit title of article, and/or writing sample to be analyzed for Memo Assignment via Blackboard by** **Read p. 227 - 254** **Weekly Response #2 Due 5 p.m. MST****Informative Memo Purpose Statement Due 5 p.m. MST** | **Reply to Reading Response of two (2) peers by 5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Three****1/29** | **Researching Your Subject****Audience Analysis Profile (BB)****Read: p. 125 – 135 (Technical Communication)****Review Audience Analysis Worksheet** | **Audience Analysis Profile Sheet due 5 p.m. MST****Reading Response #3 due 5 p.m. MST** | **Memo Draft due 5 p.m. MST****Reply to Reading Response of two (2) peers by 5 p.m.** |
| **Week Four****2/5** | **Writing Workshop** | **Writing Workshop** | **Final Draft of Memo due 5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Five****2/12** | **Introduction Video Assignment (major assignment #3)****Read assignment guidelines on Blackboard** **Read: Links and PDFs on Blackboard****Lower Thirds** | **Submit link to “How To” video 5 p.m. MST****Reading Response #4 Due 5 p.m.** | **Reply to Reading Response of two (2) peers by 5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Six****2/19** | **Analyzing Intended Audience****Read: Links and PDFs on Blackboard** | **Audience Analysis Memo Workshop****Submit purpose statement of video** **5 p.m. MST** | **Submit draft of Audience Analysis Memo** **5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Seven****2/26** | **Video Assignment Recommendation Report****Read: Guide on Reports (PDF)****Recommendation Report** **Read: p. 513 – 558 (Technical Communication)** | **Video Assignment Workshop** | **Video Assignment Recommendation Report due 5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Eight****3/5** | **Video Workshop** | **Video Workshop** | **Video Assignment Draft (two memos, and link to revised video) due 5 p.m. MST** |
| **3/12** | **Spring Break** | **Spring Break** | **Spring Break** |
| **Week Nine****3/19** | **Video Workshop**  | **Video Workshop** | **Video Assignment Final Draft (two memos, and link to revised video) due 11:59 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Ten****3/26** | **Introduce Instruction Manual (Major Assignment #4)****Read: p. 564 – 598 (Technical Communication)** | **Instruction Manual Purpose Statement due 5 p.m. MST****Reading Response #5 Due 5 p.m. MST** | **Reply to Reading Response of two (2) peers by 5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Eleven****4/2** | **Recommendation Report****Read: p. 513 – 558 (Technical Communication)** | **Reading Response #6 Due 5 p.m. MST** | **Reply to Reading Response of two (2) peers by 5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Twelve****4/9** | **Progress Report****Read: p. 470 – 483 (Technical Communication)** | **Writing Workshop****Reading Response #7 Due 5 p.m. MST** | **Reply to Reading Response of two (2) peers by 5 p.m. MST****Instructional Manual Draft Due 5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Thirteen****4/16** | **Usability Test and Report****Read: Guide on Reports (PDF)****Read: p. 350 – 362 (Technical Communication)** | **Reading Response #8 Due 5 p.m.** | **Reply to Reading Response of two (2) peers by 5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week Fourteen****4/23** | **Presentation Workshop****Read: Presentations Assignment Guidelines****p. 606 – 630 (Technical Communication)** | **Presentation Workshop** | **Presentation Draft Due 5 p.m. MST** |
| **Week 15****4/30** | **Presentations** **Presentation Final Draft Due 5 p.m. MST** | **Presentations****Presentation Final Draft Due 5 p.m. MST** | **Presentation Review Report due 5 p.m. MST** |