

ENGLISH 1125: Technical Writing

Spring 2003

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Required Texts

Balestraci et al. *Writing for Academic and Professional Situations*. Pearson 2002.

Recommended Texts

A writing style guide (e.g., Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* or Anson & Schwegler, *The Longman Writer's Companion*)

A citation/ documentation style manual appropriate for your discipline

Course Description

Welcome to English 1125. Over the next ten weeks, you will be working on developing a 5,000–6,000 word recommendation report on a topic related to your major, interests, and/or co-op experiences. Writing a recommendation report means describing a problem that affects a specific audience in your profession and recommending a course of action. In the process of creating your final report, you will complete a number of shorter assignments focused on the basic components of professional writing, including research and professional writing genres.

This class will also cover writing issues that invariably come up when writing a long paper—revising as your ideas change, organizing a long report, and writing in a clear style with a specific audience in mind. My goal is to facilitate your understanding of how to research and write in your field of study.

To succeed in this class, you need time, curiosity, motivation, and a solid grasp of basic writing skills. If you work in good spirit, your accomplishments in this class will be impressive. In the end, you can use your final portfolio as an example of your writing and thinking skills to prospective employers or graduate programs.

Prerequisites

To get credit for this course, you must have 80 QHs of academic (*not* co-op) course credit, and you must have fulfilled your introductory writing requirements. To pass this course, you must have already mastered basic composition skills. If you have not, you may not be ready to take this course.

This course centrally emphasizes the University-wide ACE goal of effective thinking, effective communication, and information literacy.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required at every class meeting. Department policy allows three unexcused absences. For each absence after the third, your grade will drop 1/2 of a letter grade unless you provide a note from a physician or some other proof of a plausible excuse. If you miss more than five classes (including the first class) *for any reason*, you must withdraw from the course—you have missed too much class to feasibly complete the required work.

If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Whether you are in class or not, you are responsible for the material covered in class, as well as any changes to the syllabus and schedule.

Always come to class prepared and ready to contribute. Participation means coming to class on time, having read the day's materials, and having completed any writing assignments. Participation also means taking part in class discussions and activities in a meaningful way. This is a workshop class. Participating in discussion and peer review is especially important, to you and your fellow students. If you come to a peer review without your assignment completed (this includes not bringing required extra copies), you will be considered absent. *If you are unprepared, I will consider you absent.*

Deadlines and Extensions

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. You are required to complete all assignments for your final portfolio.

I do not accept late assignments. You will receive a zero for any assignment not turned in on the due date. If you miss class, you must turn in the assignment early or deliver it to my office by class time.

I will allow one exception, no questions asked, to the late assignment policy, *if you turn in the assignment by the next class period*. You may use this late exception for any assignment *except* the final report (including drafts) and portfolio.

Format of Work

Please follow these guidelines for turning in work:

- ∑ Type or print with a readable printer all work (except in-class writing). I do not accept work that is handwritten, submitted on disk, or sent to me by e-mail.
- ∑ Use 1" margins on all sides, as well as a readable font (for example, 11 or 12 point Times New Roman or Palatino).
- ∑ Staple together assignments with multiple pages.
- ∑ Include the following information on the first page of all assignments: your name, the name of the assignment, the course number, and the date.
- ∑ Keep a copy of all work you hand in. For your own protection, remember to keep a copy of all work turned in (on disk, hard copy, or both).
- ∑ Remember to save your work often and to periodically back up your work to a disk or a second hard drive.

Academic Honesty

Northeastern University is committed to the principles of intellectual honesty and integrity. All members of the Northeastern community are expected to maintain complete honesty in all academic work, presenting only that which is their own work in tests and assignments. In English classes, this definition of plagiarism applies not only to borrowing whole documents (other students' papers, Internet articles, published articles) but also to borrowing parts of another's work without proper acknowledgment and proper paraphrasing or quotation.

Grades

An "A" in this class means you've done superior work, while a "C" means your work is average, on par with standard college work (see Report Grading Standards on page Report Grading Standards). Grades are determined by a point system.

You must receive a C (73 of the 100 points) for the total coursework, and you must receive a C on the final report assignment to earn MYWR credit. (See Assignments on page Assignments for point values for each assignment.)

NOTE I encourage you to look at this class not as one you hope to 'just pass,' but rather as a place where you will have the time and encouragement to be ambitious in your writing. This ambition is worthwhile—trying new and challenging projects is the only way to improve as a writer and as a thinker.

English Department's policy on grades

A student must receive a grade of C or better in order to pass all Department of English writing courses. (C or better in a required writing course is necessary for graduation.) No C- or D grades are allowed in writing courses in the Department of English. If a student's work in a required writing course is not up to the level of C, that student will receive a U grade, and repeat the course.

An F grade indicates that the student has not fulfilled the requirements of the course as specified on this syllabus.

A U grade indicates that the student has made an effort and has met all the requirements as specified, but is not writing at C-level or above. In effect, repeating the course with a U grade simply gives a student more time to work on her or his writing. The U grade is not figured into a student's QPA.

Incompletes are not an option.

Report Grading Standards

- A** A superior report, showing all the qualities of a B report, plus:
- ∑ Treats an unusually original topic in an unusually sophisticated way.
 - ∑ Report is not strictly informative—it shows evidence of the writer's insights drawn from personal experience and thorough, careful research.
 - ∑ Has a narrow and clear sense of an intended audience, and organizes information in a way that will engage and challenge this audience from start to finish.

- Σ Shows the writer not only citing, but engaging and extending research sources—report works to ground its ideas among the ideas of other authorities of the field.
 - Σ Does not feel like anything is missing, underdeveloped or overdeveloped.
 - Σ Is stylistically rich.
- B** A strong report, showing all the qualities of a C report, plus:
- Σ Makes an attempt to treat the topic in a sophisticated and original way, even if that attempt is not successful in every way.
 - Σ Contains information and analysis that will surprise its intended audience.
 - Σ Research sources are appropriate for the discipline and topic, and original claims are built upon evidence from a broad base of sources.
 - Σ Is well-organized into appropriately-sized subtopics and “flows” from one to the next.
 - Σ Displays lively diction and uses grammatically correct sentences almost all the time, avoiding spelling errors and typos.
- C** A report that fulfills all the requirements of the assignment, including:
- Σ Explores an original topic appropriate to the writer’s major.
 - Σ Shows clear evidence that the writer is aware of a specific audience.
 - Σ Cites five scholarly sources from the last two years, and engages these sources by summarizing, paraphrasing and including quotations.
 - Σ Correctly documents all source material.
 - Σ Has a recognizable organizational structure that utilizes headings and subheadings.
 - Σ Exhibits a clean, organized and professional design and is professionally bound.
 - Σ Is at least 5000 words, report text only.
 - Σ Uses grammatically correct sentences most of the time and avoids excessive typos and spelling errors.
- D** An unsatisfactory report, with problems in at least one of the following areas:
- Σ Fails to thoroughly explore the problem or make a convincing recommendation.
 - Σ Fails to use adequate research and to cite sources appropriately.
 - Σ Is seriously disorganized within or between sections.
 - Σ Makes excessive grammatical, spelling or mechanical errors, to the point that meaning is significantly obscured.
- F** A report with problems in two or more of the above areas.

Assignments

To pass the course, you must receive a minimum of 73 points. In addition, the final report must receive a C grade to pass the course (see Grades on page Grades).

Assignment	Point Value
Topic Memo	5
Source Critique	5
Proposal with Audience Analysis and Annotated Bibliography	10
Draft 1 of Final Report	5
Draft 2 of Final Report and Peer Review	8
Draft 3 of Final Report	5
Interview	3
Process Description	5
Oral Progress Report	2
Abstract and Letter of Transmittal	3
Final, professionally bound Recommendation Report	40
In-class activities, peer reviews, and other assignments	9
Total	100

Topic Selection and Memo

Both the in-depth nature of the research and the short time you have to complete the report make it essential that you delve into your topic almost immediately. The topic memo is designed to help you quickly identify your topic for research. Topics must relate to your field of study and/or co-op experience and should focus on issues or problems you already know something about. Along with the advice to choose quickly, I advise you to choose wisely. Generic overdone topics do not work.

Drafts and Revisions

Save all drafts and work leading up to the final report. Save a copy of each assignment to disk or hard drive to reprint a clean copy of each assignment for the bound portfolio.

Final Report

The Final Report is the major assignment for this course; all other assignments help you to complete it. The report analyzes a narrowly defined problem in your field and makes recommendations for approaching that problem. In addition to the criteria outlined in Report Grading Standards on page Report Grading Standards, your final report must include the following elements:

- ∑ Be between 5,000–6,000 words
- ∑ Have a clear thesis and stance that is evident throughout the report

Σ Cite at least five sources (you will look at and likely use many more). At least five of your final sources must be from professional journal articles published *within the last two years* (2001 or later). Your research should rely primarily on professional journals, company reports, interviews (your final report must include at minimum one interview), and surveys. Encyclopedias, books, web sites, and pre-2001 articles should be used minimally, if at all. All sources must be cited in-text and in a reference list at the end of the report according to the documentation standards used in your field.

Bound Portfolio

The bound portfolio compiles clean copies of all your work for the quarter (including the final report). At the end of the quarter, you will need to have your final report and clean printouts of all course assignments bound (Gnomon Copy can do this for you). I will also ask you to provide me with a Priority Mail envelope so that I can mail your portfolio back to you.

You must turn in a complete portfolio to receive a grade for the course.

Other Assignments

Detailed information about each assignment will be distributed separately.

Course Calendar*

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment for the next class meeting
1	R 3/27	Introduction	Assignment ∑ Read text, pages 1–22 (Introduction, Topic Selection, and Audience) and 97–104 (Assignments) ∑ Identify 2 potential topics and write a paragraph about each topic
2	M 3/31	Exploring Topics	Assignment Topic Memo
	T 4/1	Identifying a Topic	Assignment ∑ Read Zimmerman and Roderigues handout ∑ Discourse Community Assignment
	R 4/3	Researching your Topic	Assignment ∑ Read text, pages 23–54 (Research) and 71–82 (Persuasion) ∑ Library questionnaire
3	M 4/7	Library Session	Assignment Find 2 articles to bring to class on Tuesday
	T 4/8	Analyzing Sources	Assignment Source Critique
	R 4/10	Library LAB C Documenting Sources	Assignment ∑ Read text, pages 55–69 (Documenting Sources) ∑ Audience Analysis ∑ Annotated Bibliography
4	M 4/14	Writing Proposals	Assignment Proposal Draft 1
	T 4/15	Working on Your Proposal	Assignment Proposal Draft 2
	R 4/17	Revising the Proposal	Assignment Proposal Final
5	M 4/21	Planning for the Final Report	Assignment Final Report Draft 1 (due M 4/28)
	T 4/22	Getting Organized	Assignment ∑ Read text, pages 83–96 (Grammar and Style) ∑ Continue working on Draft 1

	R 4/24	Outlining a Draft	Assignment Final Report Draft 1 (due M 4/28)
6	M 4/28	Interviewing an Expert Peer Review	Assignment Schedule Interview (due R 5/8) Due Final Report Draft 1
	T 4/29	Progress Reports	Assignment ∑ Process Description ∑ Library research assignment
	R 5/1	Snell Library: Mid Quarter Research	Assignment Final Report Draft 2 (due T 5/6)
7	M 5/5	Style	Assignment Progress Report Memo
	T 5/6	Peer Review	Due Final Report Draft 2 with Progress Report Memo Assignment Final Report Draft 3 (due T 5/13)
	R 5/8	Progress Reports	Due Interview
8	M 5/12	Working on your Final Report	
	T 5/13	Progress Reports	Due Final Report Draft 3
	R 5/15	Library LAB C	
9	M 5/19	Letters of Transmittal and Abstracts	Assignment Letter of Transmittal and Abstract
	T 5/20	Conferences	
	R 5/22	Conferences	
10	M 5/26	Memorial Day	NO CLASS
	T 5/27	Putting together the Final Portfolio	
	R 5/29		Final Portfolio Due

*The Course Calendar of assignments may change.