San José State University School of Humanities and Arts Department of English and Comparative Literature

English 107: Technical Writing

Instructor: Dr. Mark Thompson

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Office Hours: MW 2:00-3:00; and always by appointment

Class Days/Time: MW 10:30-12:00
Classroom: Incubator Classroom
Prerequisites: Upper Division Standing

Canvas

All course materials such as readings, syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. will be found on Canvas.

The login site for Canvas is: https://sjsu.instructure.com/

Use your standard SJSU login to access the class. We will cover basic login in class, but there are additional resources to learn Canvas here: http://guides.instructure.com/

If there are any issues with your Canvas account, email me immediately.

Technical Writing

Technical writing covers a large number of genres and applications, but is generally unified by the idea that we are creating documents that will "do" things in the real world. Whether we are looking to get a job, teach a reader how something complex works, or help a reader through a complex technical process, there are fundamental aspects of communication which must be followed if we are to be successful. These fundamental aspects can be boiled down to three questions. First, what are we trying to communicate (message)? Second, who are we

communicating to (audience)? Lastly, what are we trying to achieve (purpose)? The answers to these questions start as the launching off point for all the work we will be doing this semester.

A second major focus will be *how do we communicate technical information to non-experts?* Our documents are used by business people trying to decide whether or not to fund a project. Our documents are used by customers to figure out how to use products. How do we translate complex computer or engineering concepts into language that the average person can understand and use? This is further complicated by the fact that we ourselves are probably not experts on every topic that we're asked to write about. What strategies do we as writers have to bring us up to speed on a topic to the level that we can write about it with authority?

Lastly, we will focus on testing how useful the writing we do in this class is. It's one thing to finish a document, but can someone else use it to achieve what they need to achieve?

Department Goals

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- G1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric. (Students are taught and will use rhetorical analysis to make sense of the reading assignments that stretch across many genres covered in this class.)
- G2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature. (This is a technical writing class. Student work may or may not engage with literature, according to their interests.)
- G3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject. (This is a class that creates documents that will "do" things in the real world. Our work is contextually grounded to the real-world situations each major assignment will engage.)
- G4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively. (Assignments #1, #2, #6, and #7 require significant research of outside material.)
- G5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts. (Understanding the cultural and historical origins of current technical writing genres are key to understanding the tasks to be done.)

Course Goals

By the end of this class, you will be able to:

- Apply rhetorical analysis methods to documents as a means of assessing their usefulness.
- Write across a number of technical genres using a rhetorical model that looks at message, audience, and purpose as a means of starting any technical writing project.
- Be able to recognize and communicate using the most common technical writing genres.
- Use a number of strategies to explain technical topics to non-expert audiences.
- Develop and deploy user testing methods for determining document usefulness.
- Use research strategies to understand technical topics to the level that they can be communicated to non-experts with authority.

Classroom Tools: Canvas, Assignments, Readings

Canvas. Because I'm sensitive to the amount of paper a writing/editing class can consume, this course will make extensive use of Canvas, an online classroom management tool. Your readings and assignments will be posted as .pdfs for you to download and print (as you see fit).

You will still need to bring the readings to class, in either print or digital form. I will give random pop quizzes throughout the semester to test whether you have brought your readings to class.

Additionally, I will use Canvas to communicate with you during the week, and will be returning drafts to you via email/Canvas.

I will also use Canvas to make your grades available to you throughout the semester on Canvas, so you know where you stand at all times.

Every semester I seem to have a student or two who can't quite figure the technology out. If you are having any problems logging on to your account, please contact me! Your success in this class is dependent on this!

Readings. There is no reader or textbook for this class. All readings will be posted on Canvas. This allows me to pick and choose from the best writing out there, as well as adjust reading difficulty to the level of our class. You will be absolutely lost if you don't bring the readings to class in paper or digital form. I fully understand that this isn't always the most interesting reading in the world. However, these chapters and articles are crucial to building a classroom vocabulary for the work we are doing. There is no busy work in this class. All readings have been curated to make sure they are of use to class projects. You are expected to read EVERYTHING and come to class prepared to discuss each article.

Classroom Tools: Software

In this class, we will be learning some of the most common applications used in technical writing, such as Adobe InDesign, screen-capture software, and MadCap Flare. If there are ANY other applications that you would like to learn, please don't hesitate to ask me about them. I'm happy to accommodate your individual research interests.

ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENT #1: JOB APPLICATION MATERIALS

For this assignment, you will research and find a job ad to apply to, and then create an appropriate resume and cover letter using the job ad as a guide.

ASSIGNMENT #2: PROPOSAL ANALYSIS

You will go to kickstarter.com and find a technical project that someone is attempting to get funded. Using analytical tools discussed in class, you will write a two-page executive summary that explains the project, analyzes the need for such a project, and recommends whether or not it is a worthwhile project.

ASSIGNMENT #3: PROPOSAL ADAPTATION

For this project, you will be creating a proposal of your own, adapting information that I will be providing you to the proposal genre.

ASSIGNMENT #4: ORAL PRESENTATION OF TECHNICAL MATERIAL TO A NONEXPERT AUDIENCE

I will assign you a technical topic or process. Your job will be to give a short, PowerPoint (or equivalent) presentation that explains the technical topic or process to the class.

ASSIGNMENT #5: WRITTEN PRESENTATION OF TECHNICAL MATERIAL TO A NONEXPERT AUDIENCE

Working from the same research you've done for your presentation, you will author a three- to four-page document that uses adaptation techniques to explain your topic or process.

ASSIGNMENT #6: COMPUTER TUTORIAL

Using screen-capturing software, you will produce a short computer tutorial that explains how to do a moderately difficult task using the software of your choosing. Your tutorial will also include a set of written instructions to reinforce the tutorial.

ASSIGNMENT #7: PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW MEMO

In this assignment, you will find and interview a local professional about their use of technical communication in the workplace. After completing this interview, you will submit your interview questions, as well as a two-page memo that summarizes your findings.

ASSIGNMENT #8: TECHNICAL MANUAL (GROUP ASSIGNMENT)

For the final project in this class, you will work in groups of three or four to produce a user manual that accompanies either a small videogame or a phone app for iPhone or Android. The manual should describe major features, explain basic tasks, and include other sections of user manuals as appropriate to the project. Using MadCap Flare or an equivalent, you will publish this manual across three platforms (mobile, Web, and one of your choosing).

In-Class Exercises. On most days that we discuss readings, there will be short, in-class writing assignment to practice various writing techniques and strategies. These may be group-based, or individually based. I attempt to cater these exercises to issues that I'm seeing in your work. These will generally be graded for completion. Each exercise won't be worth many points, but they will add up.

Student Workload

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in <u>University Policy S12-3</u> at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf.

Important Due Dates (NOTE: There are a lot of them, right? Don't get behind!)

Feb 26	Assignment #1: Job Application Package
March 10	Assignment #2: Proposal Analysis
March 19	Assignment #3: Proposal Adaptation
April 7 & 9	Assignment #4: Oral Presentation of Technical Material
April 14	Assignment #5: Written Presentation of Technical Material

April 28	Assignment #6: Computer Tutorial
May 7	Assignment #7: Professional Interview Memo
May 19	Assignment #8: Technical Manual

Grading Policy

Relative Weights for Determining the Final Course Grade: The letter grades you earn on individual assignments are translated into numbers to be crunched in order to determine the overall course grade. An F is 0, a D- is 1 and so on all the way to A+, which is 12.

Classroom Participation, Homework, In-Class Exercises, etc.	
Assignment #1: Job Application Packet	15%
Assignment #2: Proposal Analysis	5%
Assignment #3: Proposal Adaptation	10%
Assignment #4: Oral Presentation of Technical Material	10%
Assignment #5: Written Presentation of Technical Material	10 %
Assignment #6: Computer Tutorial	15%
Assignment #7: Professional Interview Memo	5%
Assignment #8: Technical Manual	20%

Grading Criteria: The following paragraphs sum up my criteria for grading work. Though I assign number grades for each essay, here is a general guide to my grading.

An "A" is awarded to work that is consistently excellent. It is professional, publishable, generically appropriate, and contains no more than two minor errors.

A "B" is awarded to work that is consistently above average—and occasionally excellent. While documents may not exhibit the same depth of research, analysis, or polish, the author has done a competent job. This document would be publishable with another round of revision.

A "C" is awarded to work that is in the ballpark of what a document is attempting to achieve. The author does many things right, but there are omissions or errors that significantly damage a document's usefulness. The author, while not yet accomplished in the craft of technical writing, is producing competent work that would require significant revision on the part of a more experienced technical writer.

A "D" is awarded to work that shows developing competence. The author has gleaned from research some information on the subject and understands the conversation to be addressed. However, this is the type of work that would be rejected and assigned to another writer.

An "F" is awarded to work that demonstrates incompetence. The author founders in researching the subject. The author commands neither the forms and principles of composition, nor the mechanics of good writing.

"A minimum aggregate GPA of 2.0 SJSU Studies (R, S, & V) shall be required of all students as a graduation requirement." To see full text, review <u>University Policy S11-3</u> at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S11-3.pdf.

My Professional Policies

Attendance. I guarantee that missing more than a few days will significantly affect your understanding of the material. Please notify me if you are unable to attend class. DO NOT DISAPPEAR ON ME. In the past, students who have vanished without explanation for more than two or three classes have failed this class. I am a human being. If you are experiencing an ongoing crisis, please let me know and we will come to some sort of arrangement.

Lateness. Fun fact about your instructor: it drives me insane when people are habitually late to class. You know where the building is. You know what time class starts. What's the problem? I understand that we're all late every now and then, but a routine failure to arrive on time will significantly affect your participation grade in this class. If there is something that will make you late to class, whether reoccurring or not, please let me know.

Grading class participation. I expect everyone to participate in class. This means you are awake and engaged, having done the readings and the homework, are actively participating in discussion and are working constructively when we break into small groups. A participation grade allows me to reward those students who are actively engaged in each class, while being able to account for students who are routinely late, absent, sleepy, or engaged in non-class related activity during our brief time together. An "A" means always engaged, a "B" means mostly engaged. A "C" is sometimes engaged.

Late work. I don't accept it. Part of being a writer is, though the Earth itself may be aflame, you meet your deadlines. All of them. I understand your life is complicated, with many responsibilities pulling you in multiple directions. If you are unable to attend on a day that an assignment is due, it is up to you to make sure that you get me your work before the beginning of that class.

Acting with academic integrity. In both your academic and professional careers, you are expected to act with integrity. You are in this class for more than a grade, you are here to emerge with actual skills—skills which are not developed through cheating. I am well aware of the essay mills, and have designed this class to make the purchase of or plagiarism from other writing sources painfully obvious. Though it most likely will not be an issue, any plagiarism will earn you an automatic "F" in my class, and I will push to see that you are removed from this university and all records of your attendance here are burned and cast into the South Bay in a mock burial of your academic career. Yes. It's that serious. Just do your own work.

Technology use. You should treat the classroom as a professional workspace. I'm allowing use of tablets, laptops, and even phones—whatever you'd prefer to read on. This has worked fine for me in the past, but I realize the temptation to refresh your Twitter feed as we delve into the intricacies of dangling participles may be strong. Emailing, texting, and engaging in unrelated activities are discourteous and distracting to me and your classmates. I begin the semester assuming you are adults with adequate impulse control, and will continue to treat you as such until proven wrong. Please don't turn me into a technology cop. There is a reason I teach college instead of high school.

Food and beverages. You are allowed to bring food and beverages with you to class. If said food happens to be a home-cooked meal from your grandmother, please bring extra for your instructor.

My open door policy. I'm happy to talk with you at any time about the readings, assignments, and any other aspect of the course. Just talk to me after class, send me an email, or arrange to meet with me outside class. COME TO MY OFFICE HOURS! My highest compliments from students have always come from the one-on-one help I give outside of class. In addition to teaching, I've worked as a professional writer and editor for the past 15 years. Please don't make me take all of my experience with me to the grave!

After this class. In addition to my assistance in this class, I extend to all my students an offer to help with any future writing issues which may arise once this class is over. In the past, I have assisted former students with cover letters, updated resumes, grad school applications, and have even helped with the abstract of a scientific paper. Additionally, for all students who receive an A in this class, I will happily write a letter of recommendation for any grants, schools, programs, or internships you may be applying to. Also, if you receive an A in this class, you may include me as a reference in any jobs you might apply to—as long as you haven't committed any felonies in the interim.

University Policies

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's Catalog Policies section at http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the Academic Calendars webpage at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/. The Late Drop Policy is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the <u>Advising Hub</u> at http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/.

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

<u>University Policy S12-7</u>, http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course.

- "Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material."
 - o It is suggested that the greensheet include the instructor's process for granting permission, whether in writing or orally and whether for the whole semester or on a class by class basis.
 - o In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- "Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent."

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The <u>University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2</u> at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The <u>Student Conduct and Ethical Development website</u> is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Integrity Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03. pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the Accessible Education Center (AEC) at http://www.sjsu.edu/aec to establish a record of their disability.

In 2013, the Disability Resource Center changed its name to be known as the Accessible Education Center, to incorporate a philosophy of accessible education for students with

disabilities. The new name change reflects the broad scope of attention and support to SJSU students with disabilities and the University's continued advocacy and commitment to increasing accessibility and inclusivity on campus.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the <u>Academic Success Center</u> at http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/ located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit <u>Peer Connections website</u> at http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu for more information.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the Writing Center website at http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU

Writing Center on Facebook. (Note: You need to have a QR Reader to scan this code.)



SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit <u>Counseling Services website</u> at http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling.

ENGLISH 107 - TECHNICAL WRITING

Spring 2014 · MW · 10:30-12:00 · INCUBATOR CLASSROOM

Daily Schedule

JANUARY 27 Introducing the Course

Class Review course syllabus. Give personal introductions.

Fill out survey.

Homework Reading1.pdf

JANUARY 29 Rhetorical Communication

Class Discuss Reading 1. Discuss ASSIGNMENT #1: JOB APPLICATION

MATERIALS.

Homework Reading2.pdf

Homework #1 - Job Ad Analysis

FEBRUARY 3 The Resume

Due Homework #1

Class Discuss Reading 2

Homework Reading3.pdf

FEBRUARY 5 The Cover Letter

Class Discuss Reading 3.

Homework Reading4.pdf

FEBRUARY 10 Elements of Visual Design for Documents

Class Discuss Reading 4.

Homework Reading5.pdf

FEBRUARY 12 Writing Style and Concision

Class Discuss Reading 5.

Homework Finish Resume Draft

FEBRUARY 17 Workshop Resume Draft

Class Workshop Resumes (Bring 4 paper copies to class and submit

via Canvas)

Homework Finish Cover Letter Draft

FEBRUARY 19 Workshop Cover Letter Draft

Class Workshop Cover Letters (Bring 4 paper copies to class and

submit via Canvas)

Homework Reading6.pdf

FEBRUARY 24 Internal/External Organizational Communication

Class Discuss Reading 6.

Homework Reading7.pdf

Finish ASSIGNMENT #1: JOB APPLICATION MATERIALS

FEBRUARY 26 Memos And Executive Reports

DUE ASSIGNMENT #1: JOB APPLICATION MATERIALS (Printed copy

AND submitted via Canvas)

Class Discuss Reading 7, introduce ASSIGNMENT #2: PROPOSAL

ANALYSIS

Homework Reading8.pdf, Homework #2: Finding a Technical Proposal

MARCH 3 Writing Proposals #1

Due Homework #2: Finding a Technical Proposal

Class Discuss Reading 8 and homework

Homework Reading9.pdf

MARCH 5 Writing Proposals #2

Class Discuss Reading 9

Homework Reading 10. pdf

Finish ASSIGNMENT #2: PROPOSAL ANALYSIS

MARCH 10 Proposal Analysis & Research Of Technical Topics

Due ASSIGNMENT #2: PROPOSAL ANALYSIS (Printed copy AND

submitted via Canvas)

Class Discuss Reading 10, discuss ASSIGNMENT #3: PROPOSAL

ADAPTATION

Homework Reading11.pdf

MARCH 12 Adaptation Strategies For Nonexpert Audiences

Class Discuss Reading 11

Homework Reading12.pdf

MARCH 17 Oral Presentation Of Technical Information To Nonexpert Audiencecs

Class Discuss Reading 12

Homework Finish ASSIGNMENT #3: PROPOSAL ADAPTATION

MARCH 19 In-Class Analysis Of Ted Talks

Due ASSIGNMENT #3: PROPOSAL ADAPTATION (Printed copy AND submitted via Canvas)

Class In-class analysis of TED Talks, Introduction of ASSIGNMENTS #4 and #5, Sign up for presentation slots.

Homework Reading 13. pdf, Begin work on ASSIGNMENTS #4 and #5

MARCH 25 No class—spring break.

MARCH 27 No class—spring break.

MARCH 31 No class—Caesar Chavez Day.

APRIL 2 Written Adaptation Of Technical Material

Class Discuss Reading 13.

Homework Prepare for Presentations

APRIL 7 Assignment #4: Presentation Of Technical Material To A Nonexpert Audience, Pt 1

Class Presentations of ASSIGNMENT #4, discussion of ASSIGNMENT #6: PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW MEMO

Homework Prepare for Presentations

APRIL 9 Assignment #4: Presentation Of Technical Material To A Nonexpert Audience, Pt 2

Class Presentations of ASSIGNMENT #4

Homework Reading14.pdf, Finish ASSIGNMENT #5: WRITTEN

PRESENTATION OF TECHNICAL MATERIAL TO A NONEXPERT

AUDIENCE

APRIL 14 Written Instructions #1

DUE ASSIGNMENT #5: WRITTEN PRESENTATION OF TECHNICAL MATERIAL TO A NONEXPERT AUDIENCE

Class Discuss Reading 14. Discuss ASSIGNMENT #6: COMPUTER **TUTORIAL** Homework Reading15.pdf APRIL 16 Written Instructions #2, Screen Capture Tutorial Class Discuss Reading 15. Homework Reading16.pdf **APRIL 21 Usability Testing** Class Discuss Reading 16, Discuss ASSIGNMENT #7: PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW MEMO Homework Reading17.pdf APRIL 23 Software Documentation, Pt #1 Class Discuss Reading 17 Homework Finish ASSIGNMENT #6: COMPUTER TUTORIAL APRIL 28 Software Documentation, Pt #2 Due ASSIGNMENT #6: COMPUTER TUTORIAL Class Continue discussing Reading 17, discuss ASSIGNMENT #8: TECHNICAL MANUAL Homework Reading 18.pdf APRIL 30 Planning Multipage Documents, Style Guides Class Discuss Reading 18 Homework Reading19.pdf MAY 5 Organizing Manuals Class Discuss Reading 19 Homework Reading20.pdf MAY 7 Editing Manuals & Professional Interview Discussion DUE ASSIGNMENT #7: PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW MEMO Class Discuss Reading 20

MAY 12 Last Class - Informal Presentation Of Technical Manuals

Homework Prepare informal presentations

MAY 19	ASSIGNMENT #8: TECHNICAL MANUAL DUE - SUBMITTED VIA
	CANVAS BY 5:00 PM