

ENGL 3140: Technical Writing

Fall 2020

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Office hours: **Tues 11am-12pm**

Thurs 2pm-3pm via Zoom

Course description, Layout and Course Objectives

This section of ENGL 3140, Technical Writing, focuses on professional communication and writing in the disciplines. This particular course is designed to engage with technical writing and professional communication as instruments of social justice and cultural logics. Essentially, the research and work that you will be doing in this course is first and foremost designed *to engage* with technical writing and professional communication as conduits of social justice and cultural logics. The course is also designed to give you an opportunity to explore and research how technical communication functions in your chosen field of study or future profession. The focus of this classroom will be for you to create and apply thorough awareness and analysis of all the choices you make in doing so to influence, instruct, engage, and/or convince your audience. This course is designed to teach you about contemporary theory and practice with the objective of offering other scholars, students, colleagues, and citizens professional research on significant research questions.

Specific learning outcomes are measured across the following course objectives:

1. Rhetorical Knowledge: The core of this course is to become familiar with and be able to employ a range of professional writing skills. Discerning and engaging with the genres of technical writing requires specific knowledge about each rhetorical situation. By the end of the course, you should be able to identify and utilize a range
2. Analysis: By the end of this course you will be able to analyze technical writing according to discourse and genre expectations. There will be weekly readings that we will discuss and analyze for specific genre conventions and styles.
3. Synthesis: By the end of this course the student will be able to synthesize theoretical readings into essay form using shot posts and multimodal texts (i.e. images, videos, blogs, social media posts, etc.). At this stage, you will understand and employ differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for technical composing processes.
4. Application: The final project of the course will focus on the application of your analysis and synthesis as you build a social media campaign that incorporates distinct features of technical

and professional writing. You will be able to choose any subject matter for your campaign as long as it provides enough depth and content for applying the skills from the course.

5. Evaluation: By the end of this course the student will be able to evaluate and improve their own writing through effective use of drafting and revising processes and will be able to present fully polished work.

The first week of class is devoted to preparatory work such as making sure you understand the required technologies, getting familiar with the projects and the syllabus, and getting to know your peers. The second week of the class you will start reading and responding to the texts in short weekly discussion posts.

Please note: We will use Canvas as our learning management system.

Best Practices for Success in the Course

I believe that the best learning comes through doing. The texts we'll read will give you many good ideas to think about, but your true learning will come unscripted in hundreds of little ways as you immerse yourself in the texts, projects, experiments, and work that you want to create. In order to best benefit from this pedagogy, then, I offer you a few tips:

***Find Passion.** Take advantage of the open-ended nature of every assignment and try to make something you want to make. Draw from your passions and interests. Choose subjects and genres that interest and engage you.

***Be Creative, Innovative, Experimental:** In order to stand out from your peers in the business and technical world, you need to show innovative thinking. Don't just take my word for it, see what Adobe has to say: [<http://tinyurl.com/AdobeCreative15>]. In your assignments try to push the envelope in new ways. Learn new skills, platforms, modes of creation. Take risks: as long as you can justify how these choices are informed by the text and the principles of technical writing, you can make almost anything you want, and you'll gain valuable experience in the whole process.

***Be Visible:** Make your choices and your thinking visible. Every action you take, or don't take, speaks to your *impression* as a student, a writer, a producer. Be aware of this with every piece of work you turn in. Show awareness of the entire plane of your document, from the top left corner to the bottom right. Connect with your classmates: offer ideas, links, resources. Ask questions, make proposals.

Required Reading

Books:

Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code 1st Edition, Ruha Benjamin (available in the bookstore and via Amazon).

Articles:

I will provide scholarly articles to read for each week of the course, and I will upload all of these to the Canvas page, under the Files section. See each week's assignments for the readings that will be due.

Required technologies

Google Docs: <http://docs.google.com>

Multimedia Editing Software: It is **not required** to use Adobe Creative Cloud in this course, but it is important to know that these tools are available to you as a Clemson student. Since we will be making some multi-modal texts in this course, these tools can be a great resource for those assignments. Get set up with Adobe Creative Cloud here:

http://www.clemson.edu/ccit/software_applications/adobe.html

For more information/support on these technologies please see:

- http://www.clemson.edu/ccit/learning_tech/distance_ed/prospective/about_de/ol_skills.html

for a general overview of online learning skills. If you require technical help or assistance at any time during this course please visit:

- http://www.clemson.edu/ccit/help_support/

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

“As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson’s vision of this institution as a ‘high seminary of learning.’ Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form. In instances where academic standards may have been compromised, Clemson University has a responsibility to respond appropriately and expeditiously to charges of violations of academic integrity.”

All students are required to carefully read and familiarize themselves with the following guidelines:

<http://gradspace.editme.com/AcademicGrievancePolicyandProcedures#integritypolicy>

Clemson Title IX Policy

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy,

national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, genetic information or protected activity (e.g., opposition to prohibited discrimination or participation in any complaint process, etc.) in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This policy is located at <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix/>. Mr. Jerry Knighton is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator. and is also the Director of Access and Equity. His office is located at 111 Holtzendorrf Hall, 864.656.3181 (voice) or 864.565.0899 (TDD).

Disability Access Statement

Student Disability Services coordinates the provision of reasonable accommodations for students with physical, emotional, or learning disabilities. Accommodations are individualized, flexible, and confidential based on the nature of the disability and the academic environment in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Students are encouraged to consult with the Disability Services staff early in the semester, preferably prior to the first day of class. Current documentation of a specific disability from a licensed professional is needed.

Additional information or appointments are available from Student Disability Services, G-23 Redfern Health

Center 656-6848. Details on policies and procedures are available at <http://www.clemson.edu/asc>.

Academic and Student Support Services

Clemson University provides a number of services to help you succeed. Please check out the following sites for important information:

- Academic Success Center: <http://www.clemson.edu/asc/staff.html>
- The Writing Center: <http://www.clemson.edu/centers-institutes/writing/>
- Clemson Online Library Guides: <http://libguides.clemson.edu/distanceed>
- Academic Advising: <http://www.clemson.edu/academics/advising/index.html>
- Current Students: <http://www.registrar.clemson.edu/html/indexStudents.htm>

Sharing and Showing your Work

It is to be expected that your weekly work will be viewed and discussed by the rest of the class. I may also select some of your assignments and request permission to re-post them as a model for the rest of the class to consider. I'll choose examples of excellent work and/or unique ideas. Later I may send out a form asking for permission to share your work with wider audiences beyond the scope of this class. The work may be used to demonstrate excellent examples for

future classes or for professional development meetings. When you sign this form, you'll have the option to choose whether or not I should share your name or leave you anonymous.

Attendance Policy

This is an online class, so normal attendance policy does not apply. Students work at their own pace, but you are required to observe weekly deadlines for submission of discussion posts, as well as the final deadline for submission of major assignments.

Grading System

This course will operate on a **grading contract policy**. I will send out a letter to the class with details on this system. Essentially, the course will have a default grade of a B, meaning that if you complete all assignments on time and submit materials for each assignment, you will receive a default of a "B" grade. "B" grades are based primarily on *behaviors*: Have you shown responsible effort and consistency in our class? Have you done what was asked of you in the spirit it was asked? Grades of "A" depend on two additional things: (1) **the acceptable completion of an extra project (listed on the syllabus as **Final Portfolio**)**, and (2) *engaging* in all course projects with thoughtful and critical research that offers the participants in this course material that will help each of us grow. That is, research that engages research questions significant to a community of scholars, students, and citizens. Therefore, you will receive a default grade of "B" in the course as long as you follow the appropriate behaviors for the course: that is, submitting all work on time and responding to your peer's posts. But to earn an "A" you must draft and complete the final portfolio *and* your work must exhibit thoughtful revisions and engaging research.

Assignments

- 1. Weekly Discussion Posts:** Every week you will **read two to three articles or chapters (articles will be posted to Canvas)** and will create a response that is inspired by the contents of these readings. The goal of these responses is to summarize the ideas of what you've read, critically reflect on them, and synthesize the material with prior knowledge, what you are learning, and what you are working on in throughout the course. I will post 2-3 discussion questions to guide responses for each week, and you can choose which questions to respond to in your posts, but your response should be a cohesive piece of technical work, with an introduction, body, and conclusion. The responses can take on many genres, and I will encourage you to write in a different genre each time. This means you will have the opportunity to create **photo essays, blog posts, videos, vlogs, letters, YouTube videos, etc.**
- 2. Origin Stories: Technical Communication and Power Structures**
In this project, you will compose a **photo essay, video essay, or comic** examining the foundations in technical communication and the connections to current symbolic, social, and cultural structures of power. In the context of reading *Race After Technology*, the

purpose of your essay will be to offer a critical analysis of the cultural logics tied to systems of technical communication and power.

3. **Professional Presentation:** For this project, you will take **3 of the readings** from the course (this can be a mix of articles and/or chapters from *Race After Technology*) to apply to a specific social issue or on-going crisis*. This project will require some primary research on your topic in which you will analyze with what you've learned from the readings. This project consists of the following: **a written proposal (250 words) that pitches your topic to an audience, primary and secondary research, and a formal presentation** which you will record for the class. The presentation can take a few forms (i.e. videos, images, photo essays, well-designed web sites, Prezi, or PowerPoint).
**For the sake of ensuring we get a variety of topics, I'm going to limit the presentations on COVID-19. If you would like to use the pandemic as a point of analysis, you will need to compose a proposal that pitches a specific angle/intersection of COVID-19 and social justice.*
4. **Primary Research Report:** For this project, you will collect data on a specific movement, organization, or historical site and create a primary research report that analyzes and presents your findings in a professional format. The main task is to locate a specific topic and compile data from a variety of places and then analyze the data using the research and reading you've done in the course. I will provide examples of research like this, and we will spend time in class discussing the steps of conducting primary research in archives and ethnographies. The main purpose of this assignment is to compose a technical document analyzing data collection on a specific topic.
5. **The Final Portfolio:** Create a portfolio of your work that proudly and professionally displays your final *primary research report* and **revisions from at least two (2)** other course assignments. There should be a **writer's statement** on your report and the rest of your work included at the front of your page (250 words). In addition to this reflection, you will include a **revision statement** that describes the changes you made to your projects based on the feedback you received throughout the course. Then you will include the draft of your original project (with feedback included) followed by the revision of that project. Repeat this for each project you include in the portfolio.
6. **Participation:** Since we will not be meeting synchronously for this class, you'll be asked to be active on Canvas throughout the week. **Most of this requirement will be you responding to each other's discussion posts** with in-depth, constructive, critical, and expansive feedback. You should **contribute to the community in this fashion two to three times per week**; you may consider adopting a Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday schedule. Most of the major assignments will require peer-review, in which you will be assigned a partner to provide feedback for and vice versa. Try to submit responses to drafts early in the week so that they may be helpful as students

revise projects for final grades. The responses can range from 150-250 words (10% of total grade).

Course Calendar

I will make a post on Canvas for each assignment week's assignments, which will include the questions for the discussion threads. Since the posts will be due **each Friday**, I am making the responses to your peers' posts due on the following Monday. This should give you a little more wiggle room to engage in the participation element of the class. If you have any questions, feel free to ask them by posting comments to that post on Canvas.