# ENGL 3140, Spring 2020:
## Technical Writing



Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes* (1993)
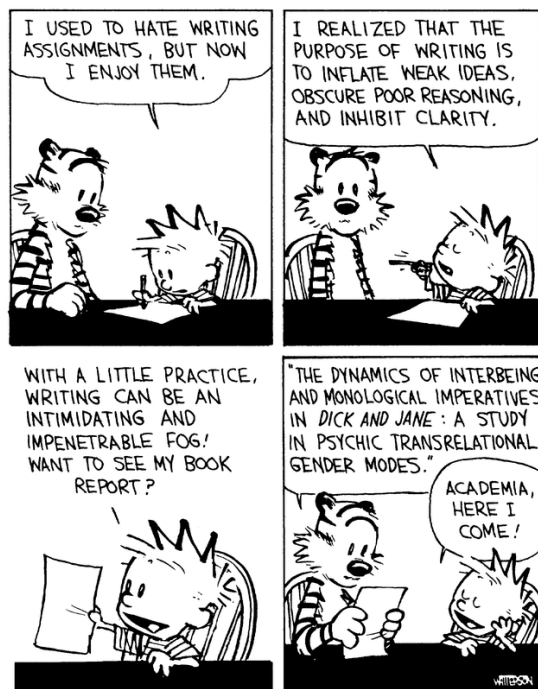
**Instructor:** Dr. Henna Messina
**Email:** hmessin@clemson.edu[1]
**Office:** Daniel 410
**Office Hours:** Mon 8-10 am, Wed 9-10 am, and by appointment
**Sections:** ENGL 3140-5 and 3140-6
**Meeting Times:** MWF, 12:20 pm and 1:25 pm, Daniel Hall 206

## Course Description:

ENGL 3140 requires students to practice writing, designing, and analyzing technical communication in common workplace situations. Emphasis is on problem-solving strategies and teamwork in real-world settings. You will write in a variety of common technical and workplace genres (proposals, memos, instructional guides, progress reports, peer review reports, etc.). We will discuss how writing functions in the workplace and strategies to make writing more effective. Planning and revision will be prominently featured.

## Course Goals:

1. Master critical thinking skills and basic rhetorical concepts as they apply to professional environments and the ethical considerations within them:

- Explore the dynamics in the technical writing environment and its discourse communities

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[1] **A note on email:** I check my email regularly between 9 am and 5 pm Monday through Friday. I do not monitor my email on the weekends, so please allow for a late response if you contact me after business hours on Friday.

- Understand the role of audience, purpose and context through communication models and related rhetorical frameworks
- Recognize ethical challenges that relate to workplace communication and chart the professional and personal principles that help answer them
- Foster cultural sensitivity to identify and negotiate the cultural variables that influence communication within and among organizations
- Acquire research skills to collect, analyze, document and report data ethically and professionally

2. Apply effective communications strategies to targeted readers:

- Practice the iterative writing and production process, which includes careful planning and multiple revisions
- Use rhetorical strategies as you read, and as you design, organize, and deliver professional and persuasive communication
- Examine complex communicational challenges and develop effective solutions by:
- identifying the stakeholders, their conflicting interests, and the contextual constraints
- conducting audience and needs analysis using primary and secondary research techniques
- defining and clearly expressing the scope and purpose of professional documents
- Explore how writing technologies facilitate communication goals
- Plan, manage, and evaluate individual and team writing projects

3. Compose effectively in a variety of forms and media appropriate to the discipline:

- Identify and adopt the industry's and its discourse communities' genre conventions and best writing practices. Genres may include reports, proposals, protocols, manuals, workplace messages, wikis, and more.
- Recognize and develop professional format and design features in presentations, print and digital publications, texts and visuals
- Practice the unique qualities of a professional writing style including conciseness, clarity, accuracy, readability, honesty
- Develop evaluative skills such as editing, proofreading, and usability testing
- Collaborate in person and online

## Texts/Resources/Materials:

- Mike Markel and Stuart A. Selber, *Practical Strategies for Technical Communication*, 3rd edition
- Fully-charged laptop with updated browser (CCIT recommends Chrome for using Canvas)
- Additional readings will be posted on Canvas
- Please bring your laptop or tablet to class. We won't always use devices, but I want you to have them available in case.

## Prerequisites:

- English 3140 is not a general education course. It is an undergraduate requirement for specific majors and must be taken in your junior or senior year.

## Required Technical Skills:

To be successful in this course, you must have a minimum working knowledge of your computer system, a web browser, and a word processing program. If you do not have this knowledge or these skills, consider taking a short computer course prior to enrolling in an online course. For technical assistance with the course site, students should contact ithelp@clemson.edu or visit CCIT's website.

## Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

The following is Clemson's official statement on "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."

A simple definition of plagiarism—one that we will expand upon this semester—is when someone presents another person's words, visuals, or ideas as his/her own. The instructor will deal with plagiarism on a case-by-case basis. The most serious offense within this category occurs when a student copies text from the Internet or from a collective file. *This type of academic dishonesty is a serious offense that will result in a failing grade for the course as well as the filing of a formal report to the university.* See the Clemson site below for information about Academic Integrity and procedures regarding the violation of Clemson policies on scholastic dishonesty:
http://www.clemson.edu/academics/academic-integrity/

## The Writing Center (307 Academic Success Center building):

The Writing Center is a free tutoring service available to the entire student body, regardless of major or academic standing. It provides students opportunities to discuss questions or problems related to academic writing—from generating a topic and thesis to organizing a draft and integrating appropriate citations. The Writing Center's goal is to help Clemson students become confident and effective writers. Please take advantage of this resource (http://www.clemson.edu/centers-institutes/writing/) by calling them at 864-656-3280, or by simply stopping in.

## Student Accessibility Services:

It is university policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities. Students are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services to discuss their individualized needs for accommodation.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to assist you with your accommodations.
For more information visit http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/sds/index.html

## Title IX (Sexual Harassment) Statement:

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/. Alesia Smith is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator. Her office is located at 223 Holtzendorrf Hall. You can contact her by phone at 864.656.3181 or by email at alesias@clemson.edu.

## Copyright:

All materials found in this course are strictly for the use of students enrolled in this course and for purposes associated with this course; they may not be retained or further disseminated. Clemson students, faculty, and staff are expected to comply fully with institutional copyright policy as well as all other copyright laws.

## Attendance:

Students are allowed **THREE** absences unexcused without penalty. If students reach the limit of absences by the drop date, the instructor may drop them from the class for excessive absences. The instructor also reserves the right to drop any student who has missed half or more of the total number of classes before the last day to drop a class or withdraw from the University without final grades. I consider excused absences as unavoidable events such as illness, personal crisis, or school-mandated trips. You must provide me with documentation in order for absences to be excused. If you are unsure whether an absence will be excused, please speak with me in advance.

Arriving late to class or leaving early is unprofessional and will be factored into your attendance. Each recorded instance will count as **ONE** tardy. Three tardies equal one absence. Any student will be marked tardy if you arrive five minutes after the start of class.

I will keep track of your absences and tardies on Canvas; it is your responsibility to keep track of your absence tally and to provide me with documentation for excused absences.

**Note:** After three unexcused absences, your overall grade for the course will be lowered by five points for each additional absence. These penalties cannot be made up in any way. This penalty will not be reflected on Canvas, but I will calculate it when I submit final grades to iRoar.

## Grading Policies:

Your major assignments will receive individual grades and feedback that will be posted to Canvas or handed back to you in hard copy. These assignments help to track your progress as we move through the semester. They indicate your willingness to be a part of the course, and to collaborate with others in the class. As with any course, you will get out of it what you put into it. Your goal is to demonstrate your development toward mastery of the course objectives described above in the "Course Goals" section.

While each writing situation may call for some adjustment in the overall criteria based on the rhetorical situation, the following descriptive rubric is consistent with the values of Clemson's English department and describe very general indicators that I will take into consideration when assessing your work and progress in the course. While the final interpretation and assessment of your grade remains my responsibility, the work that earns the grade falls entirely to you the student.

A: Represents excellent participation in all course activities (including attendance and promptness); all assigned work completed on time, with very high quality in all work produced for the course. Evidence of significant and sustained development across the learning outcomes.

- Responds fully to topic and thoroughly addresses issues.
- Shows unusual or substantial depth and complexity of thought, including strong analysis.
- Demonstrates clarity, focus, organization, and unity throughout.
- Thoroughly investigates the topic; shows full development with supporting detail.
- Documents ideas, information, and questions according to convention.
- Demonstrates superior control of diction, shows appropriate variety of sentences, and incorporates smooth, well-integrated transitions.
- Evidences mastery of mechanical and technical aspects of writing.

B: Represents good participation in all course activities (including participation and promptness); all assigned work completed on time, with consistently high quality in course work. Evidence of marked and above average development across the learning outcomes.

- Clearly and directly responds to topic and to issues.
- Shows depth and complexity of thought; investigates issues and addresses basic counterarguments.
- Demonstrates effective organization and adequate development.
- Incorporates a wide range of sources; uses plenty of detail to support ideas and conclusions.
- Documents sources correctly, with occasional minor errors.
- Contains only minor mechanical errors and exhibits no pattern of errors.

C: Represents average participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with generally good quality overall in course work. Evidence of some development across the learning outcomes.

- Addresses question or topic and explores issues but draws no clear conclusion.
- Shows clarity of thought and organization but fails to show sufficient complexity or depth of thought.
- Uses only a few basic sources.
- Attempts to include adequate detail and development but may leave out obvious counterarguments.
- Attempts to document correctly.
- Demonstrates competence in mechanics; avoids major errors.

D: Represents weak and uneven participation in course activities; some gaps in assigned work

completed, with inconsistent quality in course work. Evidence of development across the learning outcomes is partial or unclear.

- Consistently strays from topic; is oblique or irrelevant.
- Reflects simplistic, reductive, or stereotypical thinking; relies heavily on generalization; shows little evidence of research.
- Shows poor or confusing organization; is too short.
- Contains garbled paraphrases; words or passages are nearly plagiarized.
- Documentation is careless, incorrect, or missing in some cases.
- Exhibits consistent flaws in language, syntax, or mechanics.
- Exhibits inadequate research or reading.

F: Represents minimal participation in course activities; serious gaps in assigned work completed, or very low quality in course work. Evidence of development is not available.

- Distorts topic or assignment; fails to address assignment; fails to establish topic.
- Provides no development.
- Contains obvious or deliberate plagiarism; lacks documentation of some or all sources.
- Displays gross technical or mechanical incompetence and repetitive errors.
- Exhibits inadequate research or reading.

## Assignments:

Assignments must be submitted by the due date. Late work will be accepted at my discretion. If you need an extension, you must request it 24 hours in advance of the due date. If an assignment is turned in after the due date, its lateness will be taken into consideration when assessing the grade. Periodically, I might revise the course schedule on Canvas and will make announcements in class and on Canvas when I do so. Students are responsible for adhering to any and all of these changes.

You can expect to receive feedback and grades on your assignments ten days to two weeks after you have submitted them.

**Grading Scale:**
A: 100-90%
B: 89-80%
C: 79-70%
D: 69-60%
F: 59-0%

## Grade Breakdown:
Participation and In-Class Writing – 15%
Project 1: Cover Letter and Résumé – 10%
Project 2: Writing Instructions – 15%
Individual Presentation – 5%
Midterm – 15%
Project 3: Informational Report – 15%
Project 4: Client-Based Project – 20%
Group Presentation – 5%

Descriptions of all the projects can be found on Canvas.

**Participation:**
Since this is a relatively small, discussion-based course, it is essential that you participate fully. Class participation requires that you are an active and congenial colleague to your classmates and to me. This involves attending class fully prepared to engage with class discussion (i.e., that you have read and thought about that day's material and brought it with you to class); avoiding (or severely limiting) your engagement with electronic devices such as laptops and phones; reading and implementing instructor feedback on your assignments; being on time for class; and treating everyone with respect. I will assign a participation grade at the end of the semester.

**Note:** If your final grade is an 89.5 or higher, I will round up to a 90 when I input your grade in iRoar.

## Course Schedule (please remember that deadlines and assignments are subject to change):

| Date | Class Activities | Homework |
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| Wed, Jan 8 | Class introduction | |
| Fri, Jan 10 | Discuss ch 1<br>In-class writing exercise: writing to different audiences | Acquire textbook; Read chapter 1, "Introduction to Technical Communication" |
| Mon, Jan 13 | **Distribute project 1 prompt**<br>Discuss ch 10 | Read chapter 10, "Applying for a Job" |
| Tue, Jan 14 | **Last day to add a class** | |
| Wed, Jan 15 | Discuss ch 4<br>Begin drafting job documents | Read chapter 4, "Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose" |
| Fri, Jan 17 | Cover letter exercise | Work on job documents |
| Mon, Jan 20 | **No class**<br>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day | |
| Tue, Jan 21 | **Last day to drop a class** | |
| Wed, Jan 22 | Discuss ch 6 | Read chapter 6, "Writing for Your Readers" |
| Fri, Jan 24 | Discuss ch 9 | Read chapter 9, "Corresponding in Print and Online" |
| Mon, Jan 27 | In-class writing exercise | Work on project 1 |

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| Wed, Jan 29 | Peer review of project 1 | Finish full drafts of your cover letter and résumé for peer review |
| Fri, Jan 31 | **Project 1 due by the beginning of class**<br>Begin discussing the client-based project | Finish project 1 |
| Mon, Feb 3 | **Distribute project 2 prompt**<br>Discuss ch 14 | Read chapter 14, "Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions" |
| Wed, Feb 5 | In-class activity for project 2 | Work on project 2 |
| Fri, Feb 7 | Discuss ch 5<br>Begin planning CBP | Read chapter 5, "Researching Your Subject" |
| Mon, Feb 10 | Discuss ch 3<br>Work on CBP | Read chapter 3, "Writing Collaboratively" |
| Wed, Feb 12 | Discuss ch 15 | Read chapter 15, "Making Oral Presentations" |
| Fri, Feb 14 | Work on presentations | Work on project 2 and presentation |
| Mon, Feb 17 | Peer review of project 2 | Finish full draft of project 2 |
| Wed, Feb 19 | **Project 2 due by the beginning of class**<br>Individual presentations | Finish project 2 |
| Fri, Feb 21 | **CBP progress report 1 due**<br>Individual presentations | |
| Mon, Feb 24 | Individual presentations | |
| Wed, Feb 26 | Review for midterm | Begin review for midterm |
| Fri, Feb 28 | **Midterm** | Study for midterm |
| Mon, Mar 2 | Work on CBP and usability testing | |
| Wed, Mar 4 | Work on CBP and usability testing | |

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| Fri, Mar 6 | Work on CBP and usability testing | |
| Mon, Mar 9 | **Distribute Project 3 prompt** Discuss ch 12 | Read chapter 12, "Writing Informational Reports" |
| Wed, Mar 11 | In-class incident report exercise | |
| Fri, Mar 13 | Work on project 3 | Finish incident report exercise |
| Mon, Mar 16-20 | No class! Spring Break! | |
| Mon, Mar 23 | Discuss ch 2 | Read chapter 2, "Understanding Ethical and Legal Obligations" |
| Wed, Mar 25 | **CBP progress report 2 due** Work on project 3 | |
| Fri, Mar 27 | Peer review of project 3 | Finish full draft of project 3 for peer review |
| Mon, Mar 30 | **Project 3 due by the beginning of class** | Finish project 3 |
| Wed, Apr 1 | Discuss ch 8 | Read chapter 8, "Creating Graphics" |
| Fri, Apr 3 | CBP | |
| Mon, Apr 6 | Discuss ch 13 | Read chapter 13, "Writing Recommendation Reports" |
| Wed, Apr 8 | CBP | |
| Fri, Apr 10 | CBP | Read appendix B, "Editing and Proofreading Your Documents" |
| Mon, Apr 13 | Discuss appendix B | |
| Wed, Apr 15 | CBP | |
| Fri, Apr 17 | CBP | |
| Mon, Apr 20 | Final Presentations | |
| Wed, Apr 22 | Final Presentations | |
| Fri, Apr 24 | Final Presentations Last day of class! **CBP due** | |