

Course Syllabus and Information
English 381 (WID): Technical Communication—WesternOnline
Spring 2015
Professor Bill Knox

Course and Conference Information

Class meets: January 20-May 15, 2015

Faculty Contact: Simpkins 13, 298-2505 (office), 298.2974 (FAX), wl-knox@wiu.edu

Office hours: MW 10-noon, TTh 9-9:30 a.m., and by arrangement in 013 Simpkins

Prerequisites

ENG 180 and 280, and/or permission of Director of Writing Programs

Text and Materials

Anderson, Paul V. *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach*. 8th ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2014. Print.

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 2012.

Knox, Bill. *Writing Fast-Writing Well*. Dubuque: Kendal-Hunt, 2013.

Initial Comments

Actions central to your success in this course include

- **recalling and applying past learning from ENG 280 and ENG 180**
- **attending class and visiting Western Online site three times a week**
- **reading assignments thoroughly**
- **studying assigned material in Anderson before beginning assignments**
- **asking me questions if the reading or assignments are unclear**
- **completing assignments when due—late work will not be recorded.**

This syllabus serves as the basis for our work this semester; however, some details may change.

Assignments and communication (including changes) will be given via Western Online.

Download—please print class information for backup.

Online activities will include topic selection, drafting in stages, sharing selections with your writing circle and me and editing of your report drafts.

Online discussions of the development of your assignments (as well as any other class matter) are encouraged with me via Western Online email and telephone during my office hours.

Although I am available via email and will usually respond within a day, I prefer you to phone or email during my office hours to address your writing and to share your questions and comments.

As a rule, use email for routine questions and the telephone and office visit (if possible) when real-time communication is necessary.

Course Content

The 2014-2015 *Undergraduate Catalog* describes ENG 381, a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) course, as the “[s]tudy of characteristics, concepts, and procedures involved in technical communication; practice in producing various types of technical communication including written and online formats.” This course will introduce you to technical communication by means of individual yet related course projects. Study and practice, peer editing, and student-instructor conferences will help you to write clear, concise technical prose while improving skills, sharpening critical ability, creating awareness of writing habits, and fostering a writer’s confidence.

Your writing, the principal text in this class, should accomplish four goals:

- **meet assignment requirements,**
- **convey significant content,**
- **interest the reader, and**
- **define you as a technical writer.**

By the end of the semester, you should master content and form requirements for technical texts.

Class Activities

Class materials will structure assignments, invite responses, and guide evaluation of your original “practical use” reports in progress. I will be “present” online, via email, and by telephone to discuss ways to improve your reports before formal assessment, but much time in each unit will be yours to write, ask questions, discuss, and work with your classmates and me by means of stepped activities. Please use our quick “conferences” online to ask questions, review writing assignments, and discuss your progress.

Our class is divided into units, requiring reading, Refresher-Reminder exercises (R-Rs), five reports, peer reviews, a set of PowerPoint slides and a final project (built from the proposal, feasibility, and progress reports) demonstrating growing writing skill. We will also give attention to instruction and examples from *Pocket Style Manual* and participate in workshops with each other to gain competence and confidence.

Maintain daily habits on our Western Online site, to keep up with the reading, make reading notes, and, to perform well on the assigned papers, write several drafts to complete assignments

Attendance, Due Date, Return, and Revision Policy

According to the *WIU Undergraduate Catalog*, “[s]tudents are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled” (<http://www.wiu.edu/catalog/2012 - 2013/programs/english.php>). In an online course this means to sign on at least three times each week to locate and complete assignments. All reports are due to the Western Online Dropbox according to the course calendar.

Academic Honesty

In this course, as in all others, “it is the student's responsibility to be informed and to abide by all University regulations and policies on Academic Integrity” ([wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php](http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php)). In other words, take responsibility for work on activities and reports and, as necessary, give credit where it is due to outside sources of information—whether a friend in person or an expert in print or online. Reports found not to meet this standard will not be accepted. Please also see <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php> for the complete “Student Rights and Responsibilities.”

Use of Learning Technologies, Web Note, and Writing Assistance

Please use Western Online to receive assignments and submit reports. Use Zimbra email to send drafts to your classmates and me and to stay in touch.

If you are near either the Macomb or Quad Cities campus, the **University Writing Center** bricks-and-mortar sites are available to assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The one-to-one assistance available at the Writing Center is valuable for generating ideas, talking about global-level issues such as organization, and working through writing issues. See www.wiu.edu/uwc. Call for an appointment (298-2815) and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment. Regardless of where you are, you will also find online writing help at OWL, the Online Writing Lab-- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu--24/7>.

Assignments (1000 points total)

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|---|-----|
| • <i>Refresher-Reminder Exercises (20 total)</i> | 100 |
| • <i>Five (5) Reports and Letters each on suggested topics: (100 points each)</i> | 500 |
| • <i>Peer Review Forms--1 as writer + several as reviewer</i> | 100 |
| • <i>PowerPoint Slides</i> | 100 |
| • <i>Final Project</i> | 200 |

Percentage Grading Scale

- **A=1000-930; A-=929-900;**
- **B+=899-870; B=869-830; B-=829-800; C+=799-770;**
- **C=769-730; C-=729-700;**
- **D+=699-670; D=669-630; D-=629-600;**
- **F=<600**

(I reserve the right to add assignments and points for effort and improvement.)

Standards for Assignment Assessment

The table below provides a performance guide but the ultimate measure is how the document would be perceived by the professional audience, including a “robo-reader.” Therefore, bring the greatest care to your work.

Area	Standard
Content	Focused specific details and examples and precise language show great care for the information needs of a targeted, educated audience.
Structure	Order of document sections and transitions between them exhibit logic, emphasizing content clarity.
Correctness	Sentence structure, writing mechanics, and citations are copy ready.
Creativity	Meaningful thinking reflects imagination, not just conventional ideas.
Critical Thinking	Serious reflection in writing shows rejection of easy answers and pursuit of all key information.
Page Layout + Visual Impact	Each document exhibits recognized standards, includes appropriate visuals, and contains no distracting elements.

Course Calendar

Reading, essential to every report, should be done before the week indicated. ***Writing assignments will be due to the Drop Box, by 11:00 p.m. on the dates indicated in the “Due” column.***

Week and Unit		Week of	Reading	Due
1	Introductions and Summaries	01/20/15	Course Intro on Course WesternOnline Ch. 1, “Communication” + Ch. 3, “Goals”	R-R 1+2 (01/22)
2		01/26	Ch. 2, “Reader-Centered” + Ch. 23, “Letters, Memos. . .” Ch. 1, <i>WFWW</i> Letter + Resume Peer Review	R-R 3+4 (01/29)
3	Instructions	02/02	Ch. 11, “Beginning” + Ch. 12, “Ending”; Ch. 28, “Instructions” + Ch. 15, “Revising”	<i>1-Intro Letter + Resume</i> (02/05)
4		02/09	Ch. 5, “Persuasive Strategies”; Ch. 18, “Testing Drafts” + Ch. 4, “Usefulness” Ch. 2, <i>WFWW</i> Instructions Peer Review (PR)	R-R 5+6 (02/11)
	Lincoln’s Birthday	<i>Th, 02/12</i>	<i>No Class</i>	
5	Proposals	02/16	Ch. 24, “Proposals”; Ch. 9, “Style” + Ch. 6, “Research”	<i>2-Instructions</i> (02/19)
6		02/23	Telephone Conferences Ch. 9, “Patterns” + Ch. 8, “Drafting” Ch. 3, <i>WFWW</i>	R-R 7+8 (02/26)
7		03/02	Proposal Peer Review	R-R 9+10 (03/05)
8	Feasibility	03/09	Ch. 26, “Feasibility” + Ch. 18, “Team”	<i>3-Proposal</i> (03/12)
	Spring Break	<i>03/16-20</i>	<i>No Class</i>	
9	Progress	03/23	Ch. 27, “Progress Reports” Feasibility Peer Review Ch. 4, <i>WFWW</i>	R-R 11+12 (03/26)
10		03/30	Ch. 14, “Graphics,” + Ch. 15, “Eleven Types”	<i>4-Feasibility Report</i> (04/02)

11	Research and Public Presentation	04/06	Ch. 25, "Research Reports" Progress Report Peer Review Ch. 5, <i>WFWW</i>	<i>R-R 13+14 (04/09)</i>
12		04/13	Ch. 16, "Designing" Appendix "Documentation"	<i>5-Progress Report (04/16)</i>
13		04/20	Ch. 13, "Front and Back" Ch. 20, "Oral Presentations" Ch. 6, <i>WFWW</i>	<i>R-R 15+16 (04/23)</i>
14		04/27	Final Report Drafting and Q + A Telephone Conferences	<i>R-R 17+18 (04/30)</i>
15		05/04	Final Report Drafting and Q + A PowerPoint Drafting and Q + A	<i>Final Project (05/7)</i>
16	Finals Week	05/11-15		<i>R-R 19+20 PowerPoint (05/14)</i>

Some Important Dates

January 26: Open registration ends (technically at 11:59 PM, but if students need permission to enroll or drop, they should seek permission before 4:30 that day)

February 2: Last day of restricted schedule changes (technically at 11:59 PM, but students need permission to enroll [and sometimes to drop], so they should seek permission before 4:30 that day)

February 12: Lincoln's Birthday—no class

February 13: Writing Program Assessment Day (please cancel class so that you can participate)

March 16-20: Spring Break—no class

April 6: Last day to drop a course (students needing permission to drop should seek permission prior to April 6 at 4:30) AND last day for a total university withdrawal

ADA Statement

In accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. For the instructor to provide the proper accommodation(s) you must obtain documentation of the need for an accommodation through Disability Resource Center (DRC) and provide it to the instructor. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor's attention, as he/she is not legally permitted to inquire about such particular needs of students. Students who may require special assistance in emergency evacuations (i.e. fire, tornado, etc.) should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow in such an emergency. Contact Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 298-2512 for additional services.

Comments

Scheduling changes may be necessary, but I will usually announce these in advance. If you are in the Macomb area, you are welcome to visit my face-to-face ENG 381 class T Th, 11-12:15 in Simpkins 214 and my office in Simpkins 013. At any time, feel free to tell me how the class can serve you better during the term.

