



**TCOM 2010-853 Technical Writing**  
*Hybrid*  
**Course Syllabus 1.0**  
**Fall Semester 2009**

**INSTRUCTOR**

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**COMMUNICATIONS**

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**COURSE LOCATION AND TIME**

J-213  
WebCT Vista, course listserv

This is a partially online, hybrid course with approximately half of class sessions to be conducted face-to-face in the traditional classroom and half conducted online and asynchronously (different time/different place).

## INTRODUCTION

This course syllabus provides a general outline or plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary and will be provided in writing. This course will prepare you to complete the kinds of practical writing projects often required in professions such as those you will enter. Emphasis will be placed on:

- The process of completing an on-the-job writing assignment
- The specific formats most often used
- Related communication tasks such as graphics, websites and email

This is the instructor's twelfth course on technical writing<sup>1</sup> but the course uses a recently updated text; adjustments and changes are to be expected. Student feedback is encouraged and valued. A discussion board for course feedback will be provided on the course WebCT Vista site.

## CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Prerequisite ENGL 1102

Introduction to organization, style, and mechanics of technical and professional writing. Includes practice in writing such typical documents as technical descriptions, instructions, proposals, and recommendation reports. Emphasis placed on planning, organizing, and writing reports; designing visual aids; and editing. Among other assignments, at least one complete technical report is required.

## INSTRUCTOR'S DESCRIPTION

The course's primary purpose is to provide students with fundamental knowledge, expert guidance, and peer interaction designed to help them learn to produce well organized, stylistically appropriate, grammatically correct documents of the sort that technical and business professionals depend on to communicate. The principal topics covered include:

- Nature and importance of technical communication
- Information gathering and report planning
- Drafting, revising, and editing
- Audience-centered information design
- Elements of organization, style, persuasion, and document design
- Information-centric visual aids
- Characteristics of effective instructions, technical explanations, memo reports, email messages, formal reports, oral reports, and websites

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<sup>1</sup> No students were harmed in the redesign of this course.

This course is delivered partially online. To do well in this class, students must take responsibility for their learning by actively engaging in discussions, reflecting critically on assignments, and dedicating sufficient time to revising and editing their work. I am a learning facilitator, writing coach, and technical communication consultant, not a lecturer/tester.

### **COURSE OUTCOMES**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Analyze audiences and purposes for various technical documents
2. Write and edit effective technical documents, such as descriptions, instructions, progress reports, and formal reports
3. Demonstrate how audience needs affect the organization, design, and style of documents
4. Insert eye-catching graphics, charts, and tables that illustrate key points

### **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

Successful students in this course will:

1. Complete assignments on time and participate actively in online discussions.
2. Meet deadlines for peer review work so that your peer-review partner(s) can hand in their final revised work on time.
3. Plan, draft, revise, and edit the formal reports assigned as major deliverables.
4. Ask for assistance or clarification on assignments well before the work is due.

☞ Note: Students who withdraw from the course should notify me by email, as the Registrar does not advise me when a student withdraws.

## DELIVERABLES

The main assignments include four primary papers (reports, memos, and letters) and additional short writing assignments. Additionally, there are homework assignments, participatory exercises, collaborative editing tasks, and quizzes.

1. **Short papers and final report.** Three short papers and a single final report, graded on both preparation (sometimes including peer review) and final draft. (60 points)

Item	Preparation	Final Draft	Total
Technical Instructions	5	10	15
Proposal	5	10	15
Informal Report	5	10	15
Formal Report	5	20	25

Papers will be generally judged on the following criteria:

Format	Content	Style
Headings clear and consistent; headings indicate appropriate levels	Introductory summary / executive summary complete	Paragraphs coherent and unified
Spacing and margins consistent	Introduction complete (if needed)	Sentences effective, correct, and concise
Visuals correctly produced	Discussion complete	Grammar conventional and conservative
Pages visually appealing and accessible	Conclusion focused on inferences / opinions	Spelling correct
Typeface style appropriate (serif typeface for body text; sans serif typeface for headings)	Recommendations (if appropriate) focused on action	Punctuation and other mechanics correct
Typeface size appropriate: for body text: minimum of 11 pt.	Peripheral elements clear and necessary	
	Visuals fully utilized and referred to in the text	
	Terminology consistent	
	Jargon minimized / defined	

2. **Participation and contributions to online (discussion board) discussions.** This is an important element in the conduct of the course, and will be graded objectively and subjectively by instructor impression of overall student performance in this area. Both extent and quality of participation in class dialogue will determine the score, to be awarded at midterm and at the end of the course. **It is not possible to participate in a class you do not attend**, and attendance affects the participation score. (10 points)

☞ Caution: Score in this area is primarily determined by the **quality** of contributions. The best advice is that no student should either dominate or abstain. It is expected that keeping abreast of reading assignments will be evident in participation of online and classroom discussion.

3. **Exercises and quizzes.** Weekly chapter reading and writing exercises, plus periodic online (open book) quizzes. (20 points)

**FABULOUS PRIZES**

For some exercises, effort. Winners will



students will vote online for the best writing receive fabulous prizes.

**EXAMINATIONS**

This course is performance based. There will be no examinations beyond periodic online (open book) chapter quizzes.

**GRADING**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Point Value</i>
Draft and Final Papers	70
Class Participation	10
Exercises and Quizzes	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

The grading system is based upon regular and active participation in course activities and the completion, on time, of all assignments. Any assignment turned in late will be subject to a 10% grade reduction for each late day, or portion. No late assignments will be accepted for credit more than one week after the due date, or after the last week of the semester.

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>
A	93 - 100
B	83 - 92
C	73 - 82
D	63 - 72
F	< 63

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	of	Topic	Due	Reading
1	8/24	<b>Module 1</b> Course Overview	week 1 exercises	1
2	8/31	Ethics Rhetoric in TCOM	week 2 exercises	2, 4
3	9/7	Visuals Layout & design	week 3 exercises	8, 9
4	9/14	Revising & editing Technical instructions	week 4 exercises <b>Technical Instructions</b>	10, 18
5	9/21	<b>Module 2</b> Email & memos	week 5 exercises	12
6	9/28	Proposals	week 6 exercises	20
7	10/5	Letters	week 7 exercises	13
8	10/12	Employment	week 8 exercises <b>Proposal</b>	14
9	10/19	<b>Module 3</b> Websites	week 9 exercises	17
10	10/26	Informal reports	week 10 exercises	21
11	11/2	Formal reports	week 11 exercises	22
12	11/9	Formal reports (2)	week 12 exercises <b>Informal Report</b>	
13	11/16	<b>Module 4</b> TCOM transnational	week 13 exercises	5
14	11/23	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>		
15	11/30		week 15 exercises <b>Formal Report</b>	
16	12/7	Course evaluation		

☞ Note: Online assignments are posted in the WebCT Vista drop box, and are due **midnight Saturday of the class week** (unless otherwise directed).

☞ Note: Online session only week (grey shading).

## TEXT

## Required

Dobrin, S. I., Keller, C. J., & Weisser, C. R. (2010). *Technical communication in the twenty-first century* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Address technical support issues in the following order:

1. SPSU distance learning technical information at:  
<http://www.spsu.edu/vista/student.html>
2. Review the technical pearls discussion thread on the course WebCT site.
3. Post a request for help on the course listserv.
4. Email instructor directly.
5. Phone the SPSU IT help desk at 678.915.4357.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

This is an Internet-delivered course. All course elements will be delivered entirely online. At a minimum, the student must have:

- Regular access to the World Wide Web, via either home computer connection or institutional equipment.
- Email is provided to all Southern Polytechnic State University students and this is the only email address the instructor will use to communicate with you. You may set your SPSU email account to forward to another email address if you wish.
- Regular access to a computer with processing speed, local storage, graphics capability, word processing software (**Microsoft Word**), and other hardware, software, and performance elements appropriate for graduate students using current Internet browsers.

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

Successful participation in this course assumes that the student arrives with a basic set of computer-related technical skills, including but not limited to the following:

- Keyboarding and mousing
- Connecting to the World Wide Web (WWW)
- File management (opening, saving, sharing files such as word processing files and PDF files)
- Email application (receiving, reading, printing, composing, sending, managing email messages and attachments)
- Working familiarity with the WWW and an Internet browser (such as Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer), including navigating, searching, bookmarking, downloading files, and uploading files.

These skills will not be addressed in this course, except incidentally, and the student must assume responsibility for mastering them. Southern Polytechnic University, various tutorials and technical resources on the WWW, and major bookstores are suggested as resources for self-directed learning. Fellow students are often an excellent resource for help with technical matters.

## INTERNET BROWSER

Some elements of this course work best using Microsoft Internet Explorer. If you currently use another browser, consider downloading Internet Explorer to view course elements that are troublesome.

## ADOBE ACROBAT READER

Some course elements are provided in Adobe PDF (Portable Document Format) files, which require Adobe Acrobat Reader. This is a FREE plug-in available for download on the Internet. It allows you to open, read, search, and print documents saved in this file format. PDF is a file type that allows information to be presented over the web while maintaining its exact look and feel, regardless of the fonts the user has installed on his/her local PC. PDF files can be viewed on any computer that has the Adobe Acrobat Reader software. To download the Adobe Acrobat Reader, visit:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

## COURSE LISTSERV

This course provides a listserv for housekeeping purposes. Course content messages may also be distributed via the listserv. A listserv is email machinery that automatically distributes a single posted message to all subscribers to the list. There are two purposes for our course listserv:

1. To provide a professional listserv experience for all TCOM 2010-853 students. Listservs are widely used in professional circles related to technical writing.
2. To serve as a course housekeeping communications medium. Listservs are simple, reliable technology requiring only an email capability.

It is the student's responsibility to:

1. Subscribe to the course listserv
2. Check course email messages frequently (not less than several times per week)

To **subscribe** to the TCOM-010-F09-L listserv:

Send an email message to: **listserv@listserv.uga.edu**

omit the subject (if possible)

the message text should be: **subscribe TCOM-2010-F09-L *first last***

example: subscribe TCOM-2010-F09-L Richard Nixon<sup>2</sup>

The listserv will return a confirmation within a few minutes. Follow listserv instructions in this message to finalize your subscription.

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<sup>2</sup> You are not Richard Nixon.

To **post** a message to the TCOM 2010-F09-L listserv:

Send the email message to: **TCOM-2010-F09-L@listserv.uga.edu**

When you post a listserv message or reply to a listserv email message, the message is **sent to every subscriber on the list** plus the instructor.

Further information about USG listservs may be found at:

<http://listserv.uga.edu/>

The course listserv will be deactivated when the course ends. It is not necessary to unsubscribe.

### **IMPATICA**

Some course sessions may be delivered using Impatica, a technology that compresses and streams narrated PowerPoint presentations over the Internet. For an overview of this technology, visit: <http://www.impatica.com/higher-ed/higher-ed.html>

Impatica requires a Java run-time environment, which may be downloaded and installed free from Sun-Java: <http://java.sun.com/j2se/1.4.2/download.html>

☞ Note: Microsoft JVM is not supported by Impatica.

In most cases, Impatica modules will only require the student to click on a link from the WebCT course website. No plug-ins or special software required. Students will experience a narrated lecture, with VCR-like playback controls. Although one-way, Impatica technology permits a near lecture experience with acceptable (although not spectacular) sound quality.

☞ Note: Impatica is designed for acceptable performance via slow dial-up Internet connections; however, DSL is preferred.

☞ Note: It is likely that laptop speakers will not provide adequate sound volume. External speakers are recommended.

### **ATRICULATE**

Some course sessions will be delivered using Articulate, a technology that renders high fidelity, narrated PowerPoint presentations as Flash files to be delivered over the Internet. These should be accessible using either Windows or Macintosh platforms, with most contemporary browsers.

## WebCT VISTA

Point your browser to:

<http://www.spsu.edu/vista/>

Click on the “Log in” link

In most cases, students will be automatically enrolled in WebCT Vista via the Banner system.

The WebCT website is the focal point of this course. An essential first task for each student is to visit the course website, browse, and become familiar with the tools and resources. It is important to visit the course website frequently, not less than several times each week. Housekeeping messages as well as content are placed here and the student is responsible for keeping abreast. Not all WebCT options will be used in this course. Particularly important are the following online elements:

- Syllabus – the latest iteration of the course syllabus is available as a website page and as a downloadable, printable PDF file. The syllabus is likely to change as this course develops and incorporates student feedback. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that he/she has the current syllabus.
- Student grades – password-protected, current, and private.
- Course resources – a glossary, selected WWW links, table of abbreviations, and other items the student may find useful in this course.
- Discussion boards – for asynchronous, threaded discussions on class management and content topics. This is an important part of the course and meaningful participation contributes to the final grade.
- Chatrooms – for real time, live discussions. Some chat sessions are scheduled; others are at student discretion.
- Course map – provides a quick overview of the course.
- Student presentations – post assigned work and view the work of others in the class.
- Take notes – prepare custom notes on course content, discussions, and activities.
- Email addresses – students and instructor. (This course will **not** use WebCT’s email feature).
- Home pages – students and instructors. Students are encouraged to link homepages to this course website. This is a great way to melt the ice, build a sense of community in the class, and add a bit of levity.

## ELECTRONIC RESERVES

Some documents required in this course may be placed on electronic reserve, courtesy SPSU's Lawrence V. Johnson Library. To access an electronic reserve document:

1. Point your browser to <http://gil.spsu.edu>
2. Choose search course reserves
3. Under instructor field choose Hopper and under course field choose the course number
4. Choose the title location in "Electronic Reserves"
5. Click the blue highlighted e-item title
6. Enter the password: acquirement
7. These are PDF files, which you can download and print.

## **POLICES**

This is intended to be a highly interactive course that depends upon your active participation during every class meeting, traditional or online.<sup>3</sup> This is also a course that is structured to maximize learning from your peers as well as from your instructor. If you miss an online or classroom session, you are unavailable to learn from nor contribute to others in this class. As a result, much of what is missed cannot be "made up".

If you find it necessary to be absent or late to a classroom or live online class session, please inform the instructor, via e-mail, (as soon as possible but not later than the following day) the reason for your absence or lateness. This policy also includes anyone who is absent from our first week class session.

**Students with Disabilities** who believe that they may need accommodations in this class should contact the counselor working with disabilities at 770.528.7244 right away to better ensure that they get the help they need quickly.

## **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is the act of representing someone else's work as your own, either intentionally or unintentionally. In this course, plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and, possibly, a failing grade in the course. Be aware that current Internet search engines can quickly identify almost any previously published document.

## **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

A student who misses the presentation of a guest speaker will be publicly flogged. However, if SPSU's legal department objects to this consequence, an equivalent nonviolent substitute will be devised.

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<sup>3</sup> Contents may settle during shipping.