

**ENGLISH 323: Intro to Professional Writing**Course Syllabus

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**Description** This course will introduce you to the field of technical and professional communication and will help you transition from writing for academic audiences to writing for workplace audiences. Professional writers help readers get things done and help organizations communicate their values and goals. Working across a wide range of industries, technical and professional writers plan, research, and write collaboratively using a variety of media. The assignments in this course model common situations professional writers address. As a result of taking this course, you will be better prepared to be effective and ethical workplace writers.

**Objectives** By the end of the semester you will

- Develop the ability to identify strong and weak professional writing practices and to evaluate the usefulness and persuasiveness of professional and technical documents
- Create useful, persuasive, and ethical documents in preparation for a career as a professional writer
- Plan, research, and produce deliverables for specific audiences, purposes, and contexts
- Collaborate as part of a professional team throughout the writing
- Increase your confidence in your ability to write in professional settings

**Texts** Required *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.) by Paul V.Anderson

Additional required readings available on Learning Suite

**Assignments** Writing your way into a job (memo, resume, cover letter)  
Professional writing includes genres used to apply for jobs, internships, academic programs, and graduate school. This assignment asks you to create a cover letter and resume for a job, scholarship, internship, or academic program that interests you. To successfully complete this assignment, you will research the organization you are applying to and present your research in a memo to me.

Reader-centered instructions (memo and instructions)

You will choose something you know a lot about and will introduce that activity, concept, process, or object to others. You will research a group of people that needs the information you can provide and will write a set of instructions for those readers.

Analyses (3)

Using the principles of reader-centered communication we learn this semester, you will write four short (300-500 words) analyses of a variety of professional and technical communication documents and will use your analysis to make revision suggestions.

Class Presentation

You will introduce the class to one of the many resources available for technical and professional writers (see last page of syllabus). These 10-minute presentations will be scheduled on Wednesdays throughout the semester. Sign-ups will be available the second week of class.

Client Project

This is the major assignment for the semester. Working in groups, you will research an organization and assess its technical and professional writing needs. Based on that research, you will work collaboratively to produce deliverables for the organization. This project includes several intermediate assignments designed to keep you on track throughout the semester (see Learning Suite).

Reflections (3)

Throughout the semester, you will write three short documents reflecting on your learning.

<b>Grading</b>	Writing your way into a job	10%
	Reader-centered instructions	10%
	Analysis and Revision (4)	20%
	Application Project	40%
	Class Presentation	5%
	Reflections (3)	5%
	Attendance and participation	10%

**Grading Scale** For final grades: A (94-100%), A- (90-93%), B+ (87-89%), b (83-86%), B- (80-82%), C+ (77-79%), C (73-76%), C- (70-72%), D+ (67-69%), D (63-66%), D- (60-62%), E (below 60%)

**Attendance** Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading, to share drafts of your work with others, and to provide thoughtful responses to your peers' writing. I take roll every day. If you arrive after I take roll, you will be marked absent. Each absence after two will lower your participation grade by 1/3 (e.g., A to A-). Assignments are due whether you are in class or not.

**Technology** We will be writing extensively in this class, and it will be helpful for you to have a laptop. I have a "lids down" policy during class discussions, however, so that you and your classmates can participate fully in the conversation. You may want to print copies of

class readings to refer to during discussions. Please do not use your cellphones at any time during class.

**Late Work** Please submit assignments on time. I will deduct 5% for each day an assignment is late. Exceptions to this policy must be negotiated before an assignment due date.

**Honor Code** You are expected to live the principles of the BYU Honor Code, especially the policies on academic honesty and dress and grooming standards. Don't plagiarize, which is to present someone else's work as your own without attribution. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes plagiarism, please talk to me. For questions about the Honor Code, please contact the Honor Code Office at 801-422-2847 or <https://honorcode.byu.edu/>.

**Preventing Sexual Misconduct** As required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the university prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in its education programs or activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment—including sexual violence—committed by or against students, university employees, and visitors to campus. As outlined in university policy, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are considered forms of sexual misconduct prohibited by the university. University policy requires any university employee in a teaching, managerial, or supervisory role to report incidents of sexual misconduct that come to their attention through various forms including face-to-face conversation, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. If you encounter Sexual Misconduct, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at [t9coordinator@byu.edu](mailto:t9coordinator@byu.edu) or 801-422-2130 or Ethics Point at <https://titleix.byu.edu/report-concern> or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours). Additional information about Title IX and resources available to you can be found at [titleix.byu.edu](http://titleix.byu.edu).

**Students with Disabilities** Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD Office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-285 ASB.

**Calendar** (LS) indicates text is available under the "readings" tab on Learning Suite

**Week 1** Introductions  
W Sep 6

**Week 2** Writing Your Way into a Job  
M Sep 11  
Read Anderson Chapter 1.

W Sep 13 Read Anderson Chapter 21. Read all the resources on OWL Purdue Workplace Writers under “Memos.”

**Week 3 Employment Documents**

M Sep 18 Read Anderson Chapter 2 and all links on OWL Purdue Workplace Writers under “Employment Documents: The Cover Letter, Job Acceptance, Letter, and Personal Statement” and “Employment Documents: The Resume and Curriculum Vitae.”

W Sep 20 Read Anderson Chapter 9 and review Anderson Chapter 10. Bring cover letter to class.

**Week 4 Writing and Rhetoric**

M Sep 25 Read Anderson Chapter 3.

W Sep 27 Read Blakeslee and Savage “What Do Technical Communicators Need to Know about Writing?” (Library Resources tab). Bring Analysis 1 to class.

**Week 5 Research**

M Oct 2 Read Johnson-Sheehan “Instructions and Documentation” (Library Resources tab) and Anderson Chapter 27. Bring instructions you have used during the past two weeks to class.

W Oct 4 Read Anderson Chapter 8. Bring Instructions Memo to class.

**Week 6 Instructions**

M Oct 9 Read Anderson Chapter 16. Bring Instructions to class.

W Oct 11 Read Anderson Chapter 17. Create project groups in class.

**Week 7 Research**

M Oct 16 Read Anderson Chapters 4 and 5.

W Oct 18 Read Anderson Chapter 24.

**Week 8 Planning and Collaborating**

M Oct 23 Read Anderson Chapter 7.

W Oct 25 Read Anderson Chapter 19. Bring Project Research Report to class.

**Week 9 Proposals**

M Oct 30 Read Anderson Chapters 6 and 23.

W Nov 1 Read (or review) Anderson Chapter 18. Oral briefings (in class).

**Week 10 Design**

M Nov 6 Read Anderson Chapter 26.

W Nov 9 Read Anderson Chapter 12.

**Week 11 Design**

M Nov 13 Read Anderson Chapter 13.

W Nov 15 Read Anderson Chapter 14.

**Week 12 Evaluating and Revising**

M Nov 20 Analysis 3 in class.

**Week 13 Ethics**

M Nov 27 Read Anderson Chapter 15. Bring deliverables to class.  
W Nov 29 Read Markel "Toward an Approach to Ethical Decision-Making" (Library Resources tab)

**Week 14 Ethics cont.**

M Dec 4 Read STC Ethical Principles <https://www.stc.org/about-stc/ethical-principles/>  
W Dec 6 Oral Presentations

**Week 15 Conclusion**

M Dec 11 Oral Presentations  
W Dec 14 Conclusion

**Resources for Class Presentations:**

Introduce the resource to the class. Choose 10 articles or ideas from your site that could serve as a resource for you in a future technical writing position.

<http://thevisualcommunicationguy.com>

<https://techwhirl.com>

<https://www.stc.org>

<http://www.technicalwritingworld.com>

<http://thecontentwrangler.com>

<http://attw.org>

<https://technicalwritingtoolbox.com>

<http://www.encoretechresources.com/insights/>

<http://farbey.co.uk>

<http://www.stc.org/techcomm/>

<http://iconlogic.blogs.com/weblog>

<http://www.cherryleaf.com/blog>

<http://justwriteclick.com>

<http://kaiweber.wordpress.com>

<http://ffeathers.wordpress.com>

<http://idratherbewriting.com>

<http://www.writersua.com>

<http://rhetoric.byu.edu>

<http://journals.sagepub.com/home/jbt>

<http://journals.sagepub.com/loi/jtw>

<http://tandfonline.com/loi/htcq20>

## TEACHING

### Course Development Project

I have attached the syllabus that I developed during the CTL workshops last summer. I taught this class during Fall Semester 2017. I had a SCOT Consultant observe my teaching and met with my CTL Consultant during that semester.

I made mid-semester adjustments based on feedback from the SCOT Consultant, but the end-of-semester student ratings gave me more information to help me improve this course. The feedback suggested that students did not find the class was not intellectually rigorous. Students resented spending so much time reading the text when they didn't understand how the curriculum made them accountable for that information (i.e., there were no tests or quizzes). They didn't find the textbook engaging or intellectually challenging.

I realized that I was using the Anderson text (a very expensive book) mostly for the writing assignment guidelines it offers (the "Writer's Guide" pages at the end of each chapter that outline a specific genre). I was using writing assignments to hold students accountable for reading, but they didn't understand that connection.

### **Steps for Improving Teaching and Student Learning—Fall Semester 2018**

After reading an article in *Pedagogy* (Vetter and Nunes), I have decided to bag the expensive text and have students read articles on rhetorical theory as the groundwork for the course. I plan to assign mostly the same writing assignments, but the articles will provide a theoretical groundwork for those assignments. I will work with the library to make just the "Writer's Guide" pages available to students without making them buy the text.

The open-case format I used for final projects worked very well for the one group that chose something on campus. They presented their final project (a digital map of the WILK) to the WILK management team, and it is now being tested on a beta site. The groups who chose off-campus projects were less successful. I plan to require students to do on-campus projects from now on. That way I can provide better guidance on research. Additionally, the University's focus on experiential learning means that student projects have a high possibility of being used by campus organizations.

I will evaluate the effectiveness of these course changes through student ratings, a mid-course evaluation, and assessment of final projects.

Vetter, Matthew A. and Matthew J. Nunes. "Writing Theory for the Multimajor Professional Writing Course: Writing Theory for the A Case Study and Course Design." *Pedagogy*, vol. 18 no. 1, 2018, pp. 157-173.

### \$300 Teaching Grant Proposal

I will use the \$300 grant money to hire a teaching assistant to support students' open-case projects.

My use of the open-case format was not entirely successful the first time I taught this course. I allowed students to situate their projects in the community or on campus. The campus-based project was by far the most successful. I became more convinced of the value of campus-based projects during a WAC lunch in fall of 2017. The speaker Richard Johnson-Sheehan outlined the advantages of having students actively participate in the rhetorical situation of the university, a context with which they are already familiar. When I teach the course this fall, I will require students to choose an on-campus project.

Because open-case projects require more teacher supervision than closed-case projects. I will recruit one of the students from last fall's class to assist me in teaching this course. This TA will help students find a project, conduct research, and interact with on-campus organizations. During the first weeks of the semester, the TA will research on-campus opportunities and will provide current students with examples of projects that they might choose. During the final weeks of the semester, the TA will support students in researching, designing, and producing their project. I anticipate the TA will work two hours a week during the 15-week semester. I will pay the TA \$10/hour.

This grant will support student learning both for the TA and for students in the class. The TA will develop knowledge and skill in research and teaching as he or she supports students in finding an appropriate project. The TA will also improve technical and professional writing skills as he or she assists other students in completing their projects. The grant money will also improve the learning of students in the class by providing them with mentoring beyond what I as an instructor can provide.

Johnson-Sheehan, Richard, and Andrew Flood. "Genre, rhetorical interpretation, and the open case: Teaching the analytical report." *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1999, pp. 20-31.

## **SCHOLARSHIP**

### Project

I plan to build on the work I have done about students' writing experiences by conducting a year-long study of students' affect in a high school language arts classroom. This study will enroll high school seniors who are part of regular language arts classes (i.e., not AP, honors, or college prep classes). I have already obtained IRB and Salt Lake City School District approval for this study and am working closely with the classroom teacher to prepare prompts for writing assignments that will be part of the study.

To ensure the success of this project, I will apply for a MEG Grant (deadline mid-October). This grant will allow me to pay for transcription of interviews and hire research assistants to help with analyzing student texts, interview transcripts, and fieldnotes. I will teach the research assistants qualitative coding methods. I also plan to involve assistants in writing articles that result from the data.

While I am gathering data for this new project, I will continue to write daily for 15-30 minutes on other projects.

### **Fall Semester 2018 Goals**

#### Research

- Apply for MEG Grant
- Hire Research Assistants

#### Writing

- Write 15-30 minutes daily

#### Feedback

- Continue to participate in two writing groups

**CITIZENSHIP**Project

As part of my departmental citizenship responsibilities, I assist Jon Ostensen in overseeing Writing 150 courses and instructors. Jon, Jonathon Garcia (coordinator of adjunct 150 instructors) and I have decided to study 150 students over the course of their university career to better assess the impact of Writing 150 courses. We are interested in how students use what they learn in 150 about genre, writing processes, and rhetoric as they write within their discipline and in public spaces. We plan to survey all Writing 150 students as they leave the course each semester. Additionally, we will enroll a purposive sample of 75 students at the end of Winter Semester 2019. We will interview these students annually during their time at BYU.

During the summer of 2018, I will apply for IRB approval for this study. During Fall Semester 2018, Jon, Jonathon and I will collaboratively write a survey that we will give to all 150 students in December of 2018.

**Fall Semester Goals**

- Final IRB approval
- Write survey
- Administer survey to 150 students

## SCHOLARSHIP

This year I submitted three major articles to journals. One of the articles was accepted and will be published in a top journal in my field, *English Journal*. The other two are still under review. I presented a paper at the Rhetoric Society of America conference. I also secured IRB and Salt Lake City School District approval to conduct a research study during the 2018-2019 school year. Additionally, I am collaborating with Jon Ostensen and Jonathon Garcia on another research study, a longitudinal study of students' experiences in Writing 150. These new studies will provide data for additional articles and a book project.

As a new scholar with little publishing experience, I sought the advice of more seasoned faculty, who generously read and responded to my writing. Their help has been invaluable. I have worked closely with my faculty mentor and was an active participant in two writing groups: one composed of rhetoric faculty and a second organized by the Faculty Center.

During the coming year, I will complete and submit three additional articles and present at one conference. I will also obtain funding for my research through BYU grants.

### 2017-2018 Scholarship Accomplishments

#### Accepted and Forthcoming

- "I Don't Know What to Write": Seeing Para-Expertise in Students' Writing, *English Journal*, 2018

#### Under Review

- "I Can't Do Cartwheels, so I Write": Student's Writing Affect, *Composition Studies*
- Learning to Argue: Affect and Pedagogical Discourse, *Pedagogy*

#### Conferences

- Presented at Rhetoric Society of America

### 2018-2019 Scholarship Goals

#### Submissions/Publications

- "Hope is The Thing With Feathers: Toward an Affective Understanding of Writing Identity," submit to *Composition Forum* by end of summer 2018
- "Affective Rupture: Students' Orientations to Writing In and Out of School," submit to *Journal of Basic Writing* by end of summer 2018
- "Beyond Measurable and Replicable: How Writing Studies Can Research Affect," submit to *Research in the Teaching of English* by end of winter semester 2019
- "Exceptional Tweeting: The Rhetoric and Politics of @realdonaldtrump," submit to *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* by end of winter semester 2019

#### Grants

- Apply for funding for research in Salt Lake City School District (MEG grant)

## **TEACHING**

### **Self-Assessment**

During my first year, I taught two new courses (English 323 and 324) and one (Writing 150) that I have experience teaching. I think my strengths as a teacher include my ability to use a number of active learning strategies to make class engaging and fun. I give prompt feedback to writing and use best practices for responding to student writing. Despite my confidence in my teaching, I am humbled by the response of my students this year. Their intellectual depth, dedication, and kindness to me and to their peers made this year a wonderful experience for me. I am grateful for their generous response to my teaching. I am also grateful for colleagues in the English department who have guided me in developing courses.

I took advantage of resources BYU offers to help teachers improve—WAC workshops, CTL consultants, SCOT consultants, mid-semester feedback, and end-of-semester evaluations. I read at least one article on writing pedagogy each month.

This year I started the practice of reflecting, in writing, at the end of every semester, on what went well and what I can improve. Similar to the reflections I require for my students, these reflections have helped me be conscious about my teaching so that I can reproduce success and improve on weaknesses. As a teacher at BYU, I have the opportunity to continue to refine my teaching. I was inspired by what I learned in the spring Faculty Development Seminar about incorporating the Gospel into my classes. What I learned in that session influenced my goals below.

### **2016-2017 Teaching Accomplishments**

Courses prepped and taught with overall student evaluations

- ENGL 323—4.6
- ENGL 324—4.9, 4.9
- WRTG 150—4.9

Other

- Committee member for one master's thesis

### **2018-2019 Teaching Goals**

- Improve 323 course based on feedback from Fall 2017
- Include more writing in all courses
- Successfully develop and teach first graduate seminar
- Improve class discussions by asking follow-up questions
- Pray each day for opportunities to share my faith and my spiritual experiences with my students

## **CITIZENSHIP**

### **Self-Assessment**

I consider it a blessing to be part of the BYU community. I look forward to contributing to my section, my department, and the University as a whole. I can do this by participating in all section meetings and activities, by fulfilling my committee assignments in the department, and by actively developing associations with faculty from other departments.

During the 2017-2018 school year, I focused on citizenship in the University, but I am also building relationships that will allow me to serve at the regional level in the future. In my department, I fulfilled my assignment as a member of the department advisement committee. I met with students each semester, helping them understand the major, English + requirements, and other opportunities. I also mentored students for their senior capstone project each semester. I was asked to serve as the associate coordinator for University Writing beginning fall 2018. However, I began assisting in that capacity during winter semester, including attending weekly instructor meetings and interviewing graduate student instructors. Beyond the department, I have worked to build a collaborative relationship with the University of Utah and arranged for BYU to host the Western States Rhetoric and Literacy Conference in 2021.

### **2017-2018 Citizenship Accomplishments**

- Advised students as part of the department advisement committee
- Mentored two English 400 students
- Began serving on one master's committee
- Organized biweekly Rhetoric Reading Group meetings for faculty and students (winter semester)
- Presented as part of a panel at the department's "Women in Academia" series
- Hosted lunch meeting with writing and rhetoric faculty from University of Utah and BYU's English department rhetoric and writing section
- Associate Coordinator of University Writing
- Presented at WAC Spring Modules
- Supported other faculty by attending book lunches, humanities colloquium, and other presentations, as possible

### **2018-2019 Citizenship Goals**

- Coordinate University Writing 150 courses
- Present at the Rocky Mountain Rhetoric Symposium (University of Utah)
- Accept and fulfill all citizenship responsibilities from department chair
- Support other faculty by attending book lunches, humanities colloquium, and other presentations, as possible