

English 402: Technical and Professional Writing

SPRING 2015 / Syllabus & Schedule

Wednesday 6:00-8:40pm/ VMMC 115

Dr. Thabiti Lewis

Office: MMC 102M, x9256, email: Thabiti@wsu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 3-5pm (or by appointment)

Required Texts & Resources

1. Anderson, Paul. *Technical Communication*. 8th Ed. Wadsworth Cengage, 2014. ISBN 9781133309819 **OR** ebook (available directly from cengagebrain.com).
2. Computer with high-speed Internet for use of Angel and other online resources, and access to a printer. Links to additional reading materials will be posted on our Angel site. You'll be asked to print out some of these so that you can examine them critically, annotate as necessary, and bring to class for discussion. Be prepared to do this.

Catalog Description

402 [WRTG] [W] [M] Technical and Professional Writing 3 Course Prerequisite: ENGLISH 101 or 298; junior standing. Research writing: defining, proposing, reporting progress; presenting a final product; other professional writing needs. Credit not granted for both ENGLISH 402 and 403.

Course Description

Welcome to English 402! English 402 is a course in technical and professional communication. It is designed to prepare students for producing texts for multiple audiences outside of the university, in a variety of professional situations. Approaching textual design from rhetorical principles (studying how texts create specific effects upon intended audiences), we will work to understand the role that writing plays in a variety of professional contexts. As such, the focus of this course is to study and practice the design and content choices that lead to effective communication in professional writing settings.

The goal of technical and professional communication is to make complex material accessible to those who need it. "Professional writing" can be taken to refer to *either* the writing done by a professional writer (one who is paid primarily to write) *or* the writing done by someone working in a particular profession – whether that be science, engineering, business, medicine, or another field – someone who writes as a part of their job but most often does not write full time. According to the Society for Technical Communication,

"Technical communication is a broad field and includes any form of communication that exhibits one or more of the following characteristics:

- Communicating *about technical or specialized topics*, such as computer applications,

medical procedures, or environmental regulations.

- Communicating *by using technology*, such as web pages, help files, or social media sites.
- Providing *instructions about how to do something*, regardless of how technical the task is or even if technology is used to create or distribute that communication.”

In this course, we will focus on creating reader-centered documents designed for maximum usability. We will do this by closely examining the roles of both verbal and visual rhetoric in a variety of document types — both instructional and persuasive — including definitions, proposals, reports, user manuals, and presentation.

In addition, because in today's world a good deal of communication occurs online and using various digital formats, and much work is done collaboratively, course assignments will require you to utilize appropriate technologies and in some instances to work in teams. You should also be aware that proofreading and revision are extremely important in professional writing. All writing assignments submitted should be final drafts and of the quality you would feel comfortable submitting to a peer or higher-up in your chosen field.

I hope that this proves to be an interesting and challenging semester for you. Either email me or call me to discuss any questions you may have.

Course Objectives

As part of the general education curriculum, English 402 engages writing as both a means of communicating and a way of making meaning in technical and professional texts. In doing so, it focuses on the following objectives:

- Developing strategies for planning, drafting, and revising professional and technical documents.
- Engaging with the role that visual communication plays in the reception of texts.
- Learning to define the rhetorical situation, and to identify and apply rhetorical strategies to texts.
- Engaging ethically the obligations of writing in a diverse world.
- Responding to and evaluating the writing of others in a constructive manner.
- Learning to present ideas and information in a proficient and persuasive manner.

Course Requirements

Reading and Writing Assignments as Designated (submitted on time and in appropriate format): See Schedule below and details in Angel. There will be some supplementary readings along with those from the course text. Good time management skills will be necessary.

- 1. Formal Writing Projects:** All of the writing activities and discussions we generate are designed to help you complete four formal assignments: 1. Rhetorical Analysis, 2. Job Application Materials, 3. an exercise in document Redesign, 4. a Professional Report with presentation based on report. Project 4 will include an in-class presentation to be given on an assigned date during the last two weeks of the semester. For each major assignment, you will participate in peer review before revising for final submission.
- 2. Informal Online Writing Activities:** This course is being enhanced by weekly online writing activities to give you the opportunity to polish your writing skills using today's communications media. These will be assigned from time to time. Often, they will be a part of the pre-writing or research that will help you to complete your Formal Writing Projects. View these as "homework." Your participation in these is vital to your success in this class.
- 3. Workshops:** This class is built upon the idea that providing and receiving peer feedback are essential elements of writing and revision. Furthermore, learning to provide sound feedback is an essential part of professional writing, and building that skill is an integral part of English 402.
- 4. In-Class Writing Activities:** In response to readings and/or class discussions, you will be asked to participate in a variety of in-class writing activities that may include group work, case studies, etc. These will allow you to try out and reflect on course content and to prepare for Formal Writing Projects.

Attendance and Participation: Be prepared to be an active, informed, and intellectually engaged participant at all times. Regular class attendance is required except in cases of serious illness or emergency. **Missing more than three weeks of class and/or not completing all assignments may constitute grounds for failure.** It is important to attend all class sessions, especially because we will be meeting only once a week. Lectures and class activities are designed to extend your understanding and application of your new skills and knowledge. You may miss no more than one class before it begins to impact your grade. At two absences, your grade will drop by 5% (for example, from 90% to 85%); at 3 absences, it will drop by 10%. *More than three absences may result in failure of the course.* If you must miss a class meeting, you are

responsible for any material that you miss. **You're expected to arrive on time each session.** Also, if you arrive more than 15 minutes late on a regular basis I will tabulate these as partial absences.

Evaluation: Your final grade will be calculated according to the following percentages (adjusted for absences and/or late (**see late policy**) and missing work):

Formal Writing Assignments	70%
Drafts	10%
Workshopping/Peer Review	10%
In-Class Writing Activities	10%

Program Grading Standards: The grading standards for English 402 follow the standards established by the university:

A = Outstanding achievement; awarded only for the highest accomplishment

B = Praiseworthy performance; above the average in most respects

C = Satisfactory performance; work meets the standards for competency but is not outstanding nor above average in most respects

D = Minimally passing; effort and achievement less than satisfactory

Grading Scale (% of total score): A=94-100; A- =93-90; B=84-86; B- =80-83; C=74-76; C- =70-73; D+ =67-69; D=64-66; F=0-65

Class Policies and Other Matters

Accommodations: Accommodations may be available if you need them in order to fully participate in this class because of a disability. Accommodations may take some time to implement so it is critical that you contact Disability Services as soon as possible. All accommodations must be approved through Disability Services, located in the Student Resource Center on the Lower Level of Student Services Center, (360) 546-9138. Additional information: <http://studentaffairs.vancouver.wsu.edu/student-resource-center/disability-services>.

The Writing Center: You are encouraged to visit the university Writing Center as you write your assignments for English 402. The Writing Center, located in VLIB 203, has open tutoring hours throughout the week. You may also use the Online Writing Lab (OWL). More information: <http://cas.vancouver.wsu.edu/writing-center>.

Due Dates: Assignments are due on dates designated. Points may be subtracted for late work. However, in cases of *bona fide* emergency allowances will be made if the professor is contacted *in advance* of the due date. *If any assignment is not completed, you may not receive a passing grade for the course.*

Phones, Computers, and other Electronic Devices: You may not use phones, computers, or other electronic devices for activities not related to this course while in the classroom. Please remember to silence your devices before class begins.

Plagiarism: Academic integrity is the cornerstone of the university and will be strongly enforced in this course. Any student found in violation of the academic integrity policy will suffer grave consequences, which may include failure of the course, and will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. For additional information about WSU’s Academic Integrity policy/procedures, please contact 360-546-9573. All work that you submit must be your own, and written exclusively for this course. Proper documentation of all sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) is required. To learn more about how to avoid plagiarism, please see the WSU Plagiarism Information Site at <http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/plagiarism/main.html>.

Emergency Notification System: WSU has made an emergency notification system available for faculty, students, and staff. Please register at zzusis with emergency contact information (cell, email, text, etc.). You may have been prompted to complete emergency contact information when registering for classes at ROnet. In the event of a building evacuation, a map at each classroom entrance shows the evacuation point for each building. Please refer to it. Finally, in case of class cancellation campus- wide, please check local media, the WSU Vancouver web page and/or <http://www.flashalert.net/>. Individual class cancellations may be made at the discretion of the instructor. Each individual is expected to make the best decision for their personal circumstances, taking safety into account. [Safety plan website](#).

Important Dates and Deadlines: Students are encouraged to refer to the academic calendar often to be aware of critical deadlines: <http://www.registrar.wsu.edu/Registrar/Apps/AcadCal.ASPX>. Questions regarding the academic calendar can be directed to the Office of Student Affairs in VSSC 100 or call 360-546-9559.

English 402 Schedule

General Outline of Readings and Assignments—subject to Revision

(full assignment details will be posted in Angel—check there by week three for complete details)

	Readings	Major Assignments
Week 1	Course Introduction	
Week 2 1/21	Ch 1: Communication, Your Career, and Writing; Ch. 23: Letters, Memos, E-mails, and Digital Exchanges	
Week 3 1/28	Ch 3: Defining Your Communication’s Goals; Ch. 8: Drafting Reader-Centered Paragraphs, Sections, and Chapters	Rhetorical Analysis draft due Peer response (in-class)

Week 4 2/4	Ch. 4: Planning for Usefulness; Ch 13: Creating Reader-Centered Graphics;	Rhetorical Analysis final due
Week 5 2/11	Ch. 15: Creating Eleven Types of Reader- Centered Graphics; Ch 16: Designing Reader-Centered Pages and Graphics;	
Week 6 2/18	Ch. 7: Using Five Reader-Centered Research Methods;	Document Redesign draft due Peer response (in-class)
Week 7 2/25	Ch. 17: Revising Your Drafts	
Week 8 3/4	Ch. 10 Developing an Effective, Professional Style;	Document Redesign final due
Week 9 3/11	Ch. 2: Obtaining a Job; Ch. 5: Planning Your Persuasive Strategies	
Week 10	SPRING BREAK 3/16—3/20	SPRING BREAK
Week 11 3/25	Ch. 6: Conducting Reader-Centered Research	Job App Materials draft due Peer response (in-class)
Week 12 4/1	Ch. 26: Writing Reader-Centered Feasibility Reports; Ch. 25: Writing Reader-Centered Empirical Reports	
Week 13 4/8	Ch. 24: Writing Reader-Centered Proposals; Ch. 9: Patterns for Organizing Paragraphs, Sections, and Chapters	Job App Materials final due
Week 14 4/15	Ch. 11: Beginning a Communication; Ch. 12: Ending a Communication	Report Proposal due Peer response (in-class)
Week 15 4/22	Ch. 13: Writing Reader-Centered Front and Back Matter;	Report draft due Peer response (in-class)
Week 16 4/29	Ch. 20: Creating and Delivering Listener- Centered Oral Projects; Toast Masters information (hand-out given to students on 4/22)	Presentations (Revision of paper of your choice IS DUE today)
Week 17	Finals Week	Report final due (5/4 @6pm)

This course is linked to WSU's Seven Learning Goals of the Baccalaureate (**SEE GOALS ON LAST TWO PAGES OF THIS DOCUMENT**). In particular, the course fulfills the learning goals of Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Diversity, and Communication. These goals will be developed throughout the course, but the learning outcomes will be assessed through the graded assignments.