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FOR 220.01: Technical Writing

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Technical Writing
Forestry 220

SYLLABUS: FALL SEMESTER 2005

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1) Required materials

The Elements of Technical Writing, by Gary Blake and Robert W. Bly
Handbook of Technical Writing, by Gerald J. Alred, Charles T. Brusaw, and Walter E. Oliu (seventh edition)
The Write Stuff: Fall 2005 faculty packet for Forestry 220, available at UC Bookstore
Three-ring notebook for papers and exercises
STAPLER

2) Course description

Students focus on writing simply, clearly, correctly, precisely, and concisely. They hone those skills through in-class and homework exercises, then put them to use writing and revising short papers. Assignments include a how-to paper, a comparison paper, an application letter, and a **persuasive essay made up of three exercises**. The midterm and final exams, which cover lectures, exercises, and readings, include essay questions and correcting, simplifying, and condensing copy.

3) Requirements

- a) **Attendance**: You must attend each class, signing *your name only* on the attendance sheet when you arrive. The only excused absences are ones resulting from illness or an emergency. If you must miss class for one of those reasons, **promptly get in touch with me** to tell me so – not after the fact. Unexcused absences, like assignments not turned in on time, will cost you points.
- b) **Readings**: You must read materials *before* the class for which they're assigned and be ready to discuss them. I'll call on you regularly.

★ c) **BRING FAC PAC AND SYLLABUS TO EVERY CLASS.** You will need the *Fac Pac* for many in-class exercises and may need to update the syllabus.

d) **Strict deadlines for writing assignments:** You must finish writing assignments *by the beginning of class on the due date*. I will *not* accept papers after the start of class on the due date **unless you had a legitimate emergency AND told me about it promptly**.

e) *Document preparation*

i) Type *ALL papers, strictly following content and length requirements*. (You may *neatly write your answers to all Fac Pac exercises except the three making up a persuasive essay*.)

ii) Turn in *TWO COPIES* of every draft of a *paper*.

iii) Double-space all papers except the application letter; follow specific instructions for that assignment.

iv) Indent each paragraph.

v) Use *one-inch* margins.

vi) Use easy-to-read, *12-point* type.

vii) On the first page, center your title, and put your name and section number in the upper right-hand corner.

viii) Number each page.

ix) Always **SAVE YOUR PAPERS ON COMPUTER**.

x) Spell-check and proofread your papers, using the *Handbook of Technical Writing* or *UM Style Guide (Fac Pac)* to help you fix errors in punctuation, grammar, and usage.


xi) **STAPLE PAGES**.

f) *Revisions*

i) Only your final draft of the “Ethics of Human Cloning” and how-to papers and the application letter will receive scores.

ii) You must submit *all* drafts of a multiple-draft assignment, stapled together.

iii) You must revise critiqued drafts, incorporating corrections and suggestions, before turning in a new draft of a paper.

g)  Automatic deductions applied to assignments

i) Up to one letter grade deducted for not meeting *all* document-preparation requirements.

ii) Two letter grades deducted for not doing (*by the due date*) all parts of a multiple-draft assignment (e.g., turning in only the first draft of the how-to paper or application letter).

iii) Any assignment including a *sentence fragment* or *run-on* will receive a score no higher than 79 percent.

iv) Any form of cheating (e.g., collaborating on an exercise or turning in the work of another person as your own) will cost you, *at a minimum*, a 0 on the assignment and a *25-point deduction* from your semester score. If you commit one more breach of ethics, you'll receive an F for the semester.

4) Conduct

a) Please refrain from disrupting class with private conversations or other inappropriate behavior (e.g., checking cell phones).

b) All work you turn in must be *your own*. Any violation of UM's Student Conduct Code will have *serious consequences* [see item g) iv above]. The code forbids:

i) "representing someone else's words, ideas, data, or materials as your own (plagiarism)";

★ ii) "*copying from another student's paper* or, without authorization, giving information to another student or *collaborating with one or more students on assignments*";

iii) "knowingly submitting false, altered, or invented information, data, quotations, citations, or documentation";

iv) "knowingly helping or trying to help another student commit academic dishonesty"; and

★ v) *submitting work you – or another student – turned in for another class.*

5) For information on UM's Upper Division Writing Proficiency Assessment:

www.umt.edu/provost/writingassessment/

6) For extra help with your writing: www.umt.edu/writingcenter

7) **Grading:** Your grade for the semester will be based *largely* on this point system:

Attendance <i>and</i> classroom participation	90
Exercises (8 at 15 points each)	120
How-to paper	145
Comparison paper	145
Application letter	145
Quizzes (2 at 5 points each)	10
Midterm exam	165
Final exam	180
Total	1,000 points

Preliminary Class Schedule*

1) **Tuesday, Aug. 30**

Overview of course

Technical writing: importance, characteristics, and common pitfalls

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *The Elements of Technical Writing (Elements)*, Chapter 1.
- b) ***Warm-up/Size-up:** Write a *one-page* paper on *one* of these topics: What's the hardest obstacle you've ever overcome? Who's been the most influential person in your life? If you were a gifted scientist, which problem would you most like to solve? Paper **due Thursday, Sept. 1**. Follow document-preparation instructions in syllabus.

2) **Thursday, Sept. 1**

Turn in *two copies* of one-page paper.

Good and bad technical writing, including *Fac Pac*, pp. 88-89

What Hemingway could teach technical writers

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Elements*, Chapter 3.
- b) Read *Handbook of Technical Writing (Handbook)*, pp. 66-69 ("capitalization"); 84-91 ("comma splice" through "Avoiding Unnecessary Commas"); 434 (**Become familiar with these proofreaders' marks, and use them in exercises, exams, and peer-editing**); 501 ("run-on sentences"); and 514-515 ("sentence fragments").

3) **Tuesday, Sept. 6**

Discuss one-page papers.

Grammatical surgical strike, Part I → Sentence fragments; run-ons; comma splices and other comma problems (*Fac Pac*, p. 90); and capitalization (*Fac Pac*, p. 91)

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 92-93

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 5 (“agreement of subject and verb: some tricky cases”); 87 (**★ Become familiar with these symbols and abbreviations, which I’ll use on your papers**); and 95-98.
- b) Read *Handbook*, pp. 28-34 (“agreement”); 123 (“dangling modifiers”); and 392-393 (“parallel structure”).
- c) **Punctuation exercise** (*Fac Pac*, pp. 150-151) **due Thursday, Sept. 8.**

4) **Thursday, Sept. 8**

Turn in punctuation exercise.

Grammatical surgical strike, Part II → Agreement (*Fac Pac*, p. 99); parallel structure (*Fac Pac*, p. 94); and dangling and misplaced modifiers (*Fac Pac*, p. 99).

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 100-103

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Handbook*, pp. 77 (“clarity”); 79 (“ clichés”); 428 (“pronoun reference”); and 551 (“trite language”).
- b) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 33; 35-38; 65-66 (“Effective Sentences” through “Always Have Something Definite to Say”); 68-69 (“Avoid Pretentiousness”); 73-76 (“Selecting the Best Words”); and 85-86 (“Helpful Hints”).
- c) **Grammar exercise** (*Fac Pac*, pp. 152-153) **due Tuesday, Sept. 13.** (★For help, refer to *Fac Pac*, p. 5, “agreement of subject and verb: some tricky cases.”)

5) **Tuesday, Sept. 13**

Turn in grammar exercise.

Writing simply and clearly

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 105-106

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Handbook*, pp. 63-64 (“buzzwords”) and 243-244 (“gobbledygook”). (**NOTE:** On p. 64, you’ll find the address of an excellent Web site for help with all sorts of writing: **www.bedfordstmartins.com/alred**. Choose “Links for Technical Writing.”)
- b) Read *Elements*, Chapter 5, and review pp. 53-56 (Rules 32-34).
- c) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 43-48.

6) **Thursday, Sept. 15**

Writing simply and clearly in general, avoiding gobbledygook and alphabet soup in specific

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 107-110

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 50-53 and 239-246 (★“**Genetic Encores: The Ethics of Human Cloning,**” an article that will be the basis of a persuasive essay made up of three exercises worth 45 points TOTAL).
- b) **Clear-writing exercise** (*Fac Pac*, pp. 154-155) **due Tuesday, Sept. 20.**

7) **Tuesday, Sept. 20**

Turn in clear-writing exercise.

Thesis statements

Discuss thesis-statement exercise (*Fac Pac*, p. 160).

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 111-112 and 158

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 55-58 and 160-167.
- b) Read *Handbook*, pp. 388-391 (“paragraphs”) and 515-517 (“Sentence Length” and “Word Order”).
- c) **“Ethics” thesis statement** (*Fac Pac*, p. 160) **due Thursday, Sept. 22.**

8) **Thursday, Sept. 22**

Turn in *two copies* of thesis statement.

Topic sentences, sentence variety, focus, and flow

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 113 and 121

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Handbook*, p. 559 (“vague words”).
- b) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 66 (“Make Your Sentences Specific”); 71 (“Use Specific, Precise Modifiers”); 72 (“Vary Your Sentence Style”); 78-80 (“Strategy One: Development by Example”); and 123-127.

9) **Tuesday, Sept. 27**

Group discussion of “Ethics” thesis statements

Supporting evidence, showing vs. telling

In-class practice: Discuss *Fac Pac*, pp. 123-127; *National Geographic* legends; *National-Geographic-moments* exercise 🗺️

10) **Thursday, Sept. 29**

Showing vs. telling, *continued*

In-class practice, *continued* (*See listings for Tuesday, Sept. 27.*)

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Handbook*, pp. 393-394 (“paraphrasing”) and 466-470 (“quotation marks” through “Incorporating Quotations into Text”).
- b) Read *Fac Pac*, p. 7 (“attribution dos and don’ts”).

11) **Tuesday, Oct. 4**

Quoting and paraphrasing

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Handbook*, pp. 101-103 (“conclusions”); 477-478 (“repetition”); and 548-550 (“transition”).
- b) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 59-61 (“Transitions Between Paragraphs” through “Using a Variety of Transition Devices”); 62-63 (section on conclusions); and 131-133 (“Strategies for Writing a Conclusion”).
- c) **“Ethics” body paragraphs** (*Fac Pac*, p. 161), **added to REVISED thesis, due Thursday, Oct. 6.**

12) **Thursday, Oct. 6**

Turn in *two copies* of “Ethics” body paragraphs, **added to REVISED thesis.**

Transitions and conclusions

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 129-130; 132 (“Echoing the Introduction”); and 156-157

Assignments for next class:

- a) **“Ethics” conclusion** (*Fac Pac*, p. 161), **added to REVISED thesis and body paragraphs, due Tuesday, Oct. 11.** (*NOTE: Final draft due Thursday, Oct. 27.*)
- b) Read *Elements*, Chapter 9.
- c) Read *Handbook*, pp. 266-270 (“Writing Instructions”).
- d) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 180-200.
- e) **Deadline for how-to paper topic** (*Fac Pac*, pp. 180-181) **is Tuesday, Oct. 11. Type a brief description.** Fall-back option: minimum-impact camping.

13) **Tuesday, Oct. 11**

Turn in *two copies* of “Ethics” conclusion, **added to REVISED thesis and body paragraphs (= complete draft).**

Submit how-to paper *topic*.

Brief discussion of “Ethics” body paragraphs

How to write instructions ✂

Discuss how-to paper (*Fac Pac*, pp. 180-181); **first draft due Thursday, Nov. 3.** (*Note: Final, REVISED draft due Tuesday, Nov. 15. In both drafts, you must include a bibliography written in Chicago style; see “CMS Documentation,” Handbook, pp. 150-157. Also indicate which kinds of CMS examples you followed.*)

In-class practice: Discuss *Fac Pac*, pp. 182-200.

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Handbook*, pp. 99-101 (“conciseness/wordiness”).
- b) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 39-41; 66-68 (“Make Your Sentences Simple” through “Avoid Redundancy”); and 114-115.

14) **Thursday, Oct. 13**

Cutting deadwood (needless words) ✂

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 168-169

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Elements*, Chapter 4.
- b) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 70-71 (“Developing a Lively Style”).
- c) **Deadwood exercise** (*Fac Pac*, pp. 170-171) **due Tuesday, Oct. 18.**

15) **Tuesday, Oct. 18**

Turn in deadwood exercise.

Brief discussion of “Ethics” conclusions

Active vs. passive voice

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 117-120

Review for midterm

Assignment for next class:

- a) Review readings, exercises, and lecture notes for midterm exam.

16) **Thursday, Oct. 20**

☠ MIDTERM EXAM

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Handbook*, pp. 405-407 (“point of view”); 471-472 (“readers”); 524-527 (“style”); and 543 (“tone”).
- b) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 49 and 83.
- c) Review *Elements*, pp. 13-16 (“Targeted”).
- d) **Passives exercise** (*Fac Pac*, pp. 172-173) **due Tuesday, Oct. 25.**

17) **Tuesday, Oct. 25**

Turn in passives exercise.

Audience, tone, style, and point of view

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 135-140

Assignments for next class :

- a) Read *Handbook*, pp. 73-75 (cause-and-effect and chronological methods); 93-94 (comparison method); 127-130 (definition method); 138-140 (division-and-classification method); 238-239 (general and specific method); 349-350 (“methods of development”); 517-518 (sequential method); and 521-522 (spatial method).
- b) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 81-82 and 202-207.
- c) **Deadline for comparison-paper topic** (*Fac Pac*, pp. 202-203) **is Thursday, Oct. 27. Type a brief description. Fall-back option:** llamas vs. mule deer.
- d) **Reminder: “Ethics” rewrite (REVISED thesis, body paragraphs, and conclusion) due Thursday, Oct. 27. Be sure to staple all earlier, critiqued drafts to one final draft.**

18) **Thursday, Oct. 27**

Submit comparison-paper *topic*.

Turn in *two copies* of final, **REVISED** draft of “Ethics” essay. Staple *all earlier, critiqued drafts* to one final draft.

Discuss ways to approach a topic, focusing on comparison.

Discuss comparison paper (*Fac Pac*, pp. 202-203). ***One draft only, due Tuesday, Nov. 22.*** (**NOTE: You must include a bibliography written in Chicago style. See *Handbook*, pp. 150-157. Also indicate which kinds of CMS examples you followed.**)



In-class practice: Discuss *Fac Pac*, pp. 204-207.

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Elements*, Chapter 8.
- b) Read *Handbook*, pp. 40-46 (“application letters”).
- c) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 208-217.
- d) **Deadline for application-letter idea** (*Fac Pac*, pp. 208-209) is **Tuesday, Nov. 1.** *Type a brief description, including the kind of opening and the name, title, and address of the person to whom you’ll write.*

19) **Tuesday, Nov. 1**

Turn in application-letter *idea*.

Writing application letters  

Assignment for next class:

- a) **Reminder: First draft of how-to paper (with CMS bibliography) due Thursday, Nov. 3.**

20) **Thursday, Nov. 3**

Turn in *two copies* of first draft of how-to paper.

Application letters, continued

Discuss application-letter assignment (*Fac Pac*, pp. 208-209); **first draft due Tuesday, Nov. 29.** (**NOTE: Final, REVISED draft due Thursday, Dec. 1.**)

In-class practice: Discuss *Fac Pac*, pp. 210-217.

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Handbook*, pp. 484-498.
- b) Read *Fac Pac*, p. 148

21) **Tuesday, Nov. 8**

Writing a résumé

In-class practice, including discussing *Fac Pac*, p. 148

22) **Thursday, Nov. 10**

Writing workshop: Group discussion of first draft of how-to papers

Assignments for next class:

- a) *Handbook*: **Look through** pp. 140-165 (“documentation”); **read** p. 405 (“plagiarism”).
- b) **Reminder: Final draft of how-to paper due Tuesday, Nov. 15.**

23) **Tuesday, Nov. 15**

Turn in *two copies* of final, **REVISED** draft of how-to paper. **Staple first, critiqued draft to one copy of final draft.**

Documenting and plagiarism

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 141 and 143

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 34 and 84.
- b) Read *Handbook*, pp. 54-55 (“biased language”).

24) **Thursday, Nov. 17**

Avoiding discriminatory writing

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, p. 145

Assignment for next class:

- a) Read *Handbook*, pp. 433-436 (“proofreaders’ marks” and “proofreading”) and 499-500 (“revision”).
- b) **Reminder: Comparison paper due Tuesday, Nov. 22.**

25) **Tuesday, Nov. 22**

Turn in *two copies* of comparison paper.

Proofreading

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 174-175.

Assignment for next class:

- a) **Reminder: First draft of application letter due Tuesday, Nov. 29.**
NOTE: YOU MUST BRING TWO COPIES TO CLASS.

Thursday, Nov. 24

☺ **NO CLASS: Thanksgiving holiday**

26) **Tuesday, Nov. 29**

Brief discussion of comparison papers

Peer editing of application letter

★ **Bring to class TWO COPIES of the first draft of your application letter.** Give me one copy, and have as many peer editors as possible, but *at least* two, review the other copy. Peer editors should refer to *Fac Pac*, pp. 218-219, and initial their suggestions.

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read *Fac Pac*, pp. 77 and (*if you still need to pass the Writing Proficiency Assessment*) 221-238.
- b) Read *Handbook*, pp. 384-387 (“outlining”).
- c) **Reminder: Final draft of application letter due Thursday, Dec. 1.**

27) **Thursday, Dec. 1**

Turn in *two copies* of final, **REVISED** draft of application letter. *Staple your first, peer-edited draft to one final copy.*

Preparing for the Writing Proficiency Assessment (**NOTE: You're excused today if you've PASSED the assessment or don't have to take it. To earn attendance points for the day, let me know beforehand whether you fall into either category.**)

28) **Tuesday, Dec. 6**

Using style guides

In-class practice: *Fac Pac*, pp. 176-177

Assignments for next class:

- a) Read either or both: *Fac Pac*, pp. 247-254 (“Global Warming”) or 255-262 (“Internet Addiction”). (**NOTE: On the final exam, you'll write a sizable essay on whichever of these articles you prefer.**)
- b) If you read “Internet Addiction,” also read notes on *Fac Pac*, p. 263.

29) **Thursday, Dec. 8**

Review for final, including *Fac Pac*, p. 147, and sum up “Global Warming” and “Internet Addiction.”

If time allows, briefly discuss final application letters and wrap up style-guide exercise.

Fill out course evaluations.

Assignment for next class:

- a) Review readings, exercises, notes, and midterm for final.

* *Class schedule subject to change.*

👤 **FINAL-EXAM SCHEDULE**

SECTION 1 (9:10 a.m. class) → 10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 15

SECTION 2 (10:10 a.m. class) → 10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m. Friday, Dec. 16

SECTION 3 (11:10 a.m. class) → 10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m. Monday, Dec. 12

SECTION 4 (12:10 p.m. class) → 10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 13

SECTION 5 (1:10 p.m. class) → 3:20-5:20 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 13

★ **NOTE:** Your final exam will be **in the room where you regularly meet.** *You may not switch exam times without permission and confirming the exam location.*

Notes

