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COM 115T.02: Technical Writing

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The University Of Montana

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TECHNICAL WRITING COURSE SYLLABUS

Com 115

Instructor: Betsy Holmquist 243-4021 holmquistb@mso.umt.edu

Office Hours: Before or after class Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

Required Materials:

Professional and Technical Writing Strategie

by Judith VanAlstyne, Sixth Edition

Little, Brown Compact Handbook

by Jane E. Aaron, Sixth Edition

Supplemental Packet

by C. Corr, First Edition

Course Objectives:

1. Constructed text that accurately communicates technical information using appropriate technical writing constructs, document design, and graphic placement within technical formats.
2. An understanding of technical writing situation and appropriate formats.
3. Demonstrated mastery of a writing process that includes revising and editing.
4. Demonstrated working knowledge of *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook* for use as a tool in other writing classes.

Workload and Expectations:

This course focuses on the kind of writing that fills manuals—description, instruction, and analysis. We will read, write and discuss technical documents as well as materials about technical writing. There is a special focus on audience as evidenced in this quote from the Society for Technical Communicator’s Code of Ethics: Technical writers “satisfy the audience’s need for information, not the writer’s own need for self-expression.” This kind of writing is all about the reader.

The writing, reading and discussing in this course fall into several areas: technical papers with revision days, business reports/letters, in class group work, student designed documents, sentence level assignments and quizzes, and ends with a comprehensive final/portfolio.

All writing classes address **writing conventions** at some point. Punctuation and grammar are addressed mainly through clauses and basic sentence structure, which leads to a working knowledge of *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*, a tool you take with you to use in other classes. It is appropriate to line edit technical documents, so this can be a good opportunity to hone your editing skills.

The **technical papers** are the core of this course and include a mandatory revision day. We work the writing process as we write these papers to better understand how we compose. There is nothing neat and tidy about writing and revising. In technical writing with the audience so important, we have to get feedback and adjust continually. These technical papers are designed to apply solid elements of good technical writing, graphic placement, and document design. These pieces are assigned after we complete the first four chapters of the text.

The **in-class projects** and revisions are designed to help build a writing community. We never write alone and technical writing especially needs input from others. We group up and help each other often. We think through writing problems and get ideas from each other. It is helpful to be in a group and analyze together. Groups can be good learning experiences.

The **final paper portfolio** is an opportunity to synthesize your writing knowledge, both the already acquired and the new, and to articulate a new understanding of writing. It is your

opportunity to bridge between learned composition skills and technical skills. This is the piece you can take with you to show a prospective employer your writing skills.

COM writing curriculum is in transition. The COT is part of the UM system and the student populations attending all the campuses are diverse and dynamic. As UM at large and COT specifically continue to grow, the faculty must address the needs of these varied populations. COT's Department of Applied Arts and Sciences and the writing curriculum in particular are facing exciting and varied curricula and pedagogical challenges. The changes reflect current research and conversation going on in the discipline of rhetoric and composition as well as an evolving 'answer' to the needs of the COT students. Students are invited to participate in the ongoing course development and to assess changes in the writing curriculum and instruction.

Grading Scale:

94-100 A

92-90 A-

87-89 B+

86-83 B

82-80 B-

77-79 C+

76-73 C

72-70 C-

Course Policies

Rewrites are frequently allowed, but must be substantial - not just a fixing of editing issues. Students must give their paper more depth and detail to earn rewrite points.

There will be no opportunity to "make-up" tests, quizzes or in-class assignments that are not turned-in during the designated class period. This make-up policy is applied at the discretion of the Instructor.

Attendance is an expectation. Students who do not attend class do not perform as well as students who do attend class.

Format of all works produced will depend upon the specific assignment. All final drafts must be word processed and double spaced. Save everything to disc for your own protection.

Plagiarism of any sort will result in a course grade of F. The U of M's student Conduct Code defines plagiarism as "representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own."

Students may be asked for their research or sources at any time.

Disability Services: I am willing to provide accommodations for students with disabilities with the proper verification. Come see me.