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### WTS 115.01: Technical Writing

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# TECHNICAL WRITING COURSE SYLLABUS

## WTS 115

Instructor: Cathy Corr

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### Required Materials:

*Professional and Technical Writing Strategies*  
Custom edition for COT UM  
*The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*  
Jane E. Aaron, Sixth Edition

### Course Objectives:

1. Introduction to constructed text that accurately communicates technical information using appropriate technical writing constructs, document design, and graphic placement within technical formats.
2. Introduction to technical writing situations and appropriate formats.
3. Introduction to a writing process that includes discussions of revision and editing.
4. Introduction to *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook* for use as a tool.

### Workload and Expectations:

This course focuses on the kind of writing that fills manuals—description, instruction, and analysis. We will read 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 discussion in this course fall into several areas: technical papers with revision days, reports, in-class group work, student-designed documents, sentence level assignments and quizzes, and ends with a comprehensive exercise.

All writing classes address **writing conventions** at some point. I address punctuation problems 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.

After completing the technical papers, students will be expected to apply their knowledge of strong technical text, graphic placement, and design features to specific workplace **reports**.

The one page **accumulative documents** are scenarios that are designed to apply solid elements of good technical writing, graphic placement, and document design.

There are **journal articles** placed in Blackboard that are aimed at college level writing. These will require a summary and in-class discussion.

The **in-class projects** are designed to help build a writing community. We never write alone and technical writing especially needs input from others. We often use small groups to help each other think through writing problems and get ideas from each other.

The **comprehensive exercise** 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.

WTS 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 that dynamically act as an evolving 'answer' to the needs of the COT students as well as responding to administrative directives. 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	87-89 B+	77-79 C+
93-90 A-	86-83 B	76-73 C
	82-80 B-	72-70 C-

**Course Policies**

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. Do not put writing assignments in folders or binders; staple them in the upper, left hand corner. 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.