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COM 115.07: Technical Writing

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TECHNICAL WRITING COURSE SYLLABUS

Com 115

UM - Missoula - College of Technology
COM 115 -- sections 02 and 07
Autumn 2004
Office Hours: TBA and by appointment

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Required Materials:

Professional and Technical Writing Strategies
by Judith VanAlstyne, Sixth Edition
Little, Brown Compact Handbook
by Jane E. Aaron, Sixth Edition
Supplemental Packet
by C. Corr, First Edition

Course Objectives:

- Construct texts that accurately communicate technical information using appropriate technical-writing constructs, document design, graphic placement, and specific technical formats
- Construct texts that are logical and effectively organized
- Demonstrate mastery of a writing process that includes revising and editing.
- Construct texts that are free of appropriate technical errors
- Demonstrate writing proficiency at the sentence and paragraph level according to standard writing conventions.
- Demonstrated working knowledge of *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook* for use as a tool in other writing classes.

Grading: There are two longer papers in this class. Both must have a rough draft and be submitted to other students during revision day. Revision day requires mandatory attendance and participation in the revision process and carries 10% of your grade.

The other assignments are shorter and carry various points with them as the lists below show. There is a comprehensive final worth 200 points. Because each class creates its own writing and working situations, the Instructor may adjust assignments.

There will be no opportunity to “make-up” tests, quizzes or in-class assignments. This policy is employed at the discretion of the Instructor.

Grading

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Sentence Type Quiz – 10 | Summaries – 10-50 |
| Comma Quiz -- 18 | Incident Report-- 75 |
| Word Usage Exam - 49 | Progress Report--50 |
| Instructions with Analysis--125 | Instructor's Choice Report -- 75 |
| Mechanism Description – 100 | Bad News Letter – 50 |
| In-class Projects -- varies | Comprehensive Final -- 200 |

An 'A-level' paper applies to outstanding student work in concert with the criteria established for each technical writing situation and assignment.

A 'B-level' paper marks work of high quality that reflects a command of material and a strong presentation according to the criteria established by the specific technical-writing situation.

A 'C-level' paper represents average work. Paper is of good overall quality but exhibits deficiencies in the student's command of the material or problems established by the writing assignment.

A 'D' or 'F' paper is assigned to unsuccessful work. In general, there are significant problems with the student's work in terms of assignment-specific and general writing-proficiency issues. There is little or no critical attention given to the material.

Grading Assignments

Beginning with the 2004-2005 academic year, I will employ a plus/minus grading system. Valid grades and their point values per credit under the traditional grading system will be:

| | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| A 4.00 | C+ 2.33 | D+ 1.33 | F 0.00 |
| A- 3.67 | C 2.00 | D 1.00 | |
| B+ 3.33 | C- 1.67 | D- 0.67 | |
| B 3.00 | | | |
| B- 2.67 | | | |

Please verify grade values for your own records.

Although there is a grading scale, your final grade must and will reflect your level of proficiency as a technical writer.

Re-writes: Rewrites of the description and the instructions are accepted. Students receive half the points gained in the rewrite. Rewrites must be substantial and not just 'a fixing of editing issues.' Revised papers must exhibit significant efforts attempted during the revision process.

Attendance: Attendance is required. Students who do not attend class do not perform as well as students who do attend class.

Format of Writing Assignments: Text formats are assignment-specific. All final drafts must be word processed. Save everything to disc for your own protection.

Plagiarism: Please read the policy statement on plagiarism in the University Catalogue.
<http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/CODE.htm>

In brief, plagiarism is any attempt to misrepresent another writer's work as your own. This includes scooping something off the Internet. It is expected that you will adhere to this policy. Plagiarism of any sort will result in a course grade of F and I will follow the disciplinary procedures as stated in the Student Conduct Code <http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/CODE.htm>

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.

Course Outline:

Pre-skill review:

Sentence Structure

Introduction to *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*

1. Introduction to Professional and Technical Communication
 - definition
 - ethical considerations
2. Executing the Writing Process
 - basic communication theories
 - writing process
 - specifics of technical writing
3. Graphics
 - general conventions
4. Document Design
7. Preparing Manuals
 - definitions
 - technical description
 - instructions
 - analysis
8. Definitions
 - formal sentence definition
9. Mechanism Description
10. Instructions
11. Process Analysis
12. Correspondence
14. Brief Reports
15. Longer Reports discussion

September:

[August]30-3

intro of class—

Chap 1; page 20, #1—

group discussion: What is good technical writing

6-10

Labor Day Holiday 6

Chapter 2 1st half

Chapter 2 nd half; Supplemental packet, page 45 and 31

Review rough drafts

13-17

Chapter 3

Chapter 4 and Chapter 11

Examination of technical writing

20-24

Supplemental Packet, page 1—discussion of points 1-4

Supplemental Packet pages 2-14

LBCH pages 159-60; 167-168

27-1

Quiz on sentence types

Chapter 7 Defining Terms

October:

4-8

Chapter 8 Describing Mechanisms

first paper

Supplemental Packet, page 29 review of concreteness; pages 46-52

11-15

Rough draft due during Revision Day

Supplemental Packet, pages 15-19

LBCH, pages 227-234

18-22

Paper due

Chapter 9 Giving Instructions and Chapter 10 Analyzing a Process

Supplemental Packet, pages 53-4 and page 30 and 32-3

LBCH, pages 277-9 and pages 135-137.

25-29

Supplemental Packet, pages 20-27

LBCH, pages 243-254

November:

1-5

Election Day Holiday 2

Comma Quiz

Instruction rough draft due

8-12

Instructions due

Supplemental Packet, pages 34-38

Veteran's Day Holiday 11

Summary and journal article

15-19

Chapter 12

Supplemental Packet, pages 38-43 and 55-58

22-26

Travel Day for Students 24

Thanksgiving Vacation 25-26

Work days

29-3

Chapter 14

Supplemental Packet, page 59

December:

6-10

Chapter 15

Re-writes due

13-17

Practice for final: Supplemental Packet, pages 60-65