

WR227, Technical Writing

("Clear and Effective Writing")
Fall 2016

About the Class:

This class teaches you to communicate in ways that will get you a job, earn good grades on four-year college papers, gain you admission to an important program, win approval of a project you conceived, or land other real-world rewards. This class also will make you feel overworked, frustrated, and possibly angry, because it will turn your long-held beliefs about writing upside down. Fortunately, despite the discomfort, I suspect you'll enjoy yourselves.

Instructor:

Brian B. Egan, WR227@ClarityCorvallis.com (or EganB@LinnBenton.edu), cell phone (541) 740-0540

Office hours: Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. in the Commons Cafeteria (NE corner)
Other days, times, and locations by arrangement – email, text, or call me!

Class Hours and Locations:

CRN 20464 Tuesday and Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 9:50 a.m. IA-201A

Textbook:

The text book is required. You may use the 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, or 14th edition of *Technical Communication* by John M. Lannon (and Laura J. Gurak, 12th-14th eds.). Get it NOW! You can buy the older editions very cheaply (as low as \$0.01!) at the LBCC Bookstore, from Craigslist, or on Amazon.com. (If you get the books by mail, please pay for priority shipping.) You also can rent the latest edition from the LBCC Bookstore or several editions from Chegg.com. A limited number of copies of several editions are on Reserve at the LBCC Library.

Requirements and Recommendations:

1. You must create formatted documents in Microsoft Word (free to LBCC students), LibreOffice Writer (also free from LibreOffice.org), or another full-featured word processor that can save files in .doc/.docx or .odt formats. If you don't know how to use such an application, you will need to learn quickly.
2. You must have a reliable email account, and must know how (or learn how) to attach files to an email message.
3. It is essential that you visit my Instructor Web Page at least every other day. You will find updates, new resources, corrections, etc. This is my only way to reach you outside of class! To view it, either: a.) browse directly at <http://tinyurl.com/wr227>, or b.) browse via the Instructor Websites link on the Current Students Home page.

4. I very strongly suggest you safely exchange contact information with at least two classmates.
5. I strongly recommend that you also buy or borrow a book on grammar or find a good website that covers the basics.
6. To get full credit for the class, you are required to make a 3-5 minute presentation during Week 10. If this is a problem, talk to me during Week 1; chickening out at the last minute will cost serious points.
7. Attendance is essential for an effective learning experience (and a good grade).
8. Back up your WR227 work!

Approximate Course Schedule (undoubtedly will change slightly):

| | |
|---------|---|
| Week 1 | Introduction, logistics, concepts; The Audience |
| Week 2 | The Audience (cont.); email/memos, persuasion |
| Week 3 | Persuasion (cont.); cover letters and business letters |
| Week 4 | Cover letters (cont.); résumés |
| Week 5 | Résumés (cont.); research tools, citation, avoiding plagiarism |
| Week 6 | Organizing material, descriptions, reports |
| Week 7 | Reports (cont.) |
| Week 8 | Reports (cont.), proofreading, typography, illustrations, citations |
| Week 9 | Presentation techniques, review |
| Week 10 | Student presentations |
| Week 11 | Final exam: Tuesday, December 6: 7:30 a.m. - 9:20 a.m. in IA-201A. |

Attendance, Reading Assignments, and Quizzes:

The majority of the material taught in this class is conveyed during the “lectures,” in-class discussions, and in-class consultation with your classmates. Your success in this class will depend on your regular attendance.

Points are awarded for attendance; they are not awarded for unexcused absences.

If you cannot get to a class, please let me know by email or text (just as you would notify your employer); make arrangements to get notes from a classmate (hence the suggestion to swap contact information with several classmates before you need it).

Visit the instructor website every couple of days. Clarifications, corrections, and important news (e.g., class location changes) are posted frequently.

The textbook provides essential supplementary information. Reading assignments are not optional. Three no-notice closed-book, closed-notes quizzes will be given during the term to ensure you keep up with your reading!

Writing Assignments:

Instruction sheets will be passed out in class and posted on the web as each assignment is made. (Sample assignments from the previous term are posted on the web site as a preview.) Due dates will be indicated on the instruction sheets.

There are a lot of tasks, and often several run concurrently. You are responsible for managing your time and deadlines! (Welcome to “real life”!)

Late Work:

Tardy assignments will be penalized 1/3 letter grade (e.g., B to B-, A- to B+) per day or part of a day that they are late. Assignments will not be accepted if they are one week or more late. Do not fall behind – you will not be able to catch up!

Assignment Weighting:

| Task | Max. Pts. | ~ Pct. |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Demographic survey completion | 5 | 1% |
| “Toast” (full credit if turned in, zero credit if missing) | 10 | 2% |
| “My Position...” (final only, no draft) | 10 | 2% |
| Persuasive Email draft and final | 30 | 5% |
| Cover Letter worksheet (final only, no draft) | 25 | 4% |
| Cover Letter draft and final | 60 | 10% |
| Résumé draft and final | 75 | 13% |
| Job Application Package Email (final only, no draft) | 25 | 4% |
| Research Technical Report Topic Email (final only, no draft) | 15 | 3% |
| Research Technical Report Outline (final only, no draft) | 30 | 5% |
| Research Technical Report Introduction/Summary draft | 20 | 3% |
| Research Technical Report Body draft | 40 | 7% |
| Research Technical Report Front/Back Matter draft | 10 | 2% |
| Research Technical Report final version | 90 | 15% |
| Oral Presentation delivery | 30 | 5% |
| Oral Presentation visuals | 10 | 2% |
| Attendance at student presentations (5 pts each day) | 10 | 2% |
| Three quizzes on reading and concepts (5 pts each) | 15 | 3% |
| Attendance (2 points per class day) | 40 | 7% |
| Final Exam | 50 | 8% |
| <hr/> | | |
| Total possible points | 600 | ~100% |

Most assignments require both a rough draft and a final version. The rough draft is usually worth one third of the assignment’s point value, and the final version is worth the

remainder. This provides you a “safety net” as you create your first version. (Hint: Testing and revision are keys to good technical communication.)

All emailed or on-line assignments must be timestamped by 11:59 p.m. on the date indicated. All hardcopy assignments must be turned in at the beginning of the class period on the due date.

Assignment Grading:

The emphasis of this course is to prepare you for the writing tasks that you will encounter in the workplace and/or a four-year college. Each assignment will be given a letter grade that reflects how I [subjectively and objectively] would rate the work if given to me by an employee or job applicant:

- A** Can be used for its intended purpose with very little or no further work. Well planned and thought out, well structured, no or very few grammatical or spelling errors, written for appropriate audience, clear, correct, and usable. Gives a positive impression of the author. Meets expectations/standards for a major corporation or 4-year university. Bottom line: If this was your job application, I would immediately bring you in for an interview.
- B** Suitable for internal workplace use, but would need some editing of structure, wording, grammar/spelling, and/or presentation to meet corporate or university standards. No errors in technical content. Bottom line: You are in the running for the job, but I’ll wait a bit to see if someone better comes along.
- C** Adequate, but could not be used without significant editing. May have minor technical inconsistencies, clarity problems, and/or spelling or grammatical errors. Gives a questionable impression of the author. Bottom line: You are just another person in line; I’ll get back to you if nobody else applies.
- D** Could not be used without major editing. Has structural problems, serious audience mismatch, and/or frequent spelling or grammatical errors; and/or does not meet one critical specification. Gives a distinctly negative impression of the author. Bottom line: I will not hire you, because it’s clear you don’t care enough even to do a good job for yourself, much less to work hard for me.
- F** Too many problems to be worth repairing in a professional environment. Does not meet two or more critical specifications, and/or writing insufficient for instructor to understand intent, purpose, or content. Would be rejected out of hand by an employer or university. Bottom line: I will mutter under my breath for the rest of the day about how bad the candidates (and their schools) have gotten.
- X** No credit, because assignment was plagiarized (see below), was not turned in at all, or was more than one week late.

Assignment letter grade increments may include plusses or minuses. The letter grade will be converted to a multiplier that determines how many of the assignment's points are awarded:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|
| A+ | 1.03 | B+ | 0.87 | C+ | 0.77 | D+ | 0.67 | F | 0.50 |
| A | 1.00 | B | 0.84 | C | 0.74 | D | 0.64 | X* | 0.00 |
| A- | 0.90 | B- | 0.80 | C- | 0.70 | D- | 0.60 | | |

* X signifies assignment is missing

Final Grade Scale:

| | | | |
|------------------|------------------|---|---|
| ≥90% | 540 - 600 points | = | A |
| ≥80% | 480 - 539 points | = | B |
| ≥70% | 420 - 479 points | = | C |
| ≥60% | 360 - 419 points | = | D |
| Below 360 points | | = | F |

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is using someone else's words, pictures, ideas, concepts, etc. and representing them as your own work. It's illegal and immoral; it can get you fired, sued, thrown out of school, and/or discredited professionally. In this class, it will earn your assignment an instant "no credit".

The most obvious example is when you copy material directly out of a book or a web site and paste it into your own document, and then fail to *cite* your source (i.e., mention that you did this and where you got the material from). If you copy material, you must enclose it in quotation marks and cite the source.

You may not re-use work you have written previously. This is an LBCC academic policy. (And in the outside world, if you use material you have written previously as a reference or source, you must cite it like any other referenced work.)

You must cite every use of outside material even if you reword it substantially (*paraphrase* it), because you are taking the knowledge as well as the words themselves. But simply citing a source does not get you off the hook. In this class, I expect you to write original material, based on thorough research from reputable, cited sources. If more than 5% of any assignment comes directly from outside sources – quoted and cited, paraphrased and cited, rearranged or disguised even if cited, or just plain stolen – you will receive zero credit for that assignment. The school requires me to report all plagiarism!

For more information on plagiarism and fair use, visit the Using Research section of this excellent resource: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>.

Keys to Surviving any Technical Communication Project

- Read and understand the instructions completely and follow them explicitly.
- Know the purpose and intended use of what you are creating.
- Know your audience and write to their needs (and wants).

- Know your topic thoroughly, but research extensively anyway.
- Proofread and test your product mercilessly.

Keys to Surviving this WR227 Class

- Do everything in “Keys to Surviving any Technical Communication Project”.
- Come to every class.
- Pay attention to detail, and strive for perfection.
- Complete all the reading assignments in the textbook and elsewhere.
- Do not get behind in your assignments; it is impossible to catch up.
- Find a study partner; read and proofread each other’s work.
- Turn in all assignments even if incomplete; an F grade is better than an X grade.
- Do the best possible job on your first draft; you’ll get a good grade on it and the final draft will be close to a “free ride”.
- If you have questions, try to find the answers yourself, then ask a classmate or the Library or Writing Center, then ask me. Do not let questions go unanswered!

LBCC Comprehensive Statement of Nondiscrimination

LBCC maintains a policy of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity in employment and admissions, without regard to race, color, sex, marital and/or parental status, religion, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, Vietnam era, or veteran status. (See Administrative Rule No. E029 and Board Policy Series No. 6090, found at <http://po.linnbenton.edu/BPsandARs/>).

Accessibility

You should meet with your instructor during the first week of class if:

- you have a documented disability and need accommodations,
- your instructor needs to know medical information about you, or
- you need special arrangements in the event of an emergency.

If you believe you may need accommodation services please contact the Center for Accessibility Resources in RCH-105, (541) 917-4789. If you have documented your disability, remember that you must make your request for accommodations through the Center for Accessibility Resources Online Services web page every term in order to receive accommodations.