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- [September 2011](#)

Syllabus

English 384: Technical Editing and Writing

Professor Kevin McKelvey

Office: Esch 044L

Phone: (317) 788-2018

email: mckelveyk@uindy.edu

Office Hours: M 5-6 p.m., T 8:30-9:30 a.m., Th 2-3, and by appointment

Course Website: mckelvey384.wordpress.com

Course Description

From the University Catalog: Study of on-screen writing and editing requirements of technical documents. Students learn about document design in technical communications. Students practice strategies for acquiring technical information from the World Wide Web and collaborating in technical writing and editing. The course includes information about technical writing and editing job markets.

From the instructor: Technical Editing and Writing is a basic course in that it will provide you with the knowledge to tell almost anyone how to use anything in any printed or web delivery. But these abilities are not basic, so we will begin by editing technical documents. But that's only a small part of what technical editing and writing is about. At the end of this course, you will be able to lead almost any writing or editing project, even if it's not in technical writing. This course will make you a better writer, editor, designer, and developer. And you're going to create and make and develop and research and communicate and do using the same creativity that you apply to writing and poetry and design. This is not a passive discussion course; we have work to do.

Required Texts

Blake, Gary, and Robert W. Bly. *The Elements of Technical Writing*. New York: Longman, 1993.

Rude, Carolyn D. *Technical Editing*. Fifth Edition. New York: Pearson, 2009.

University Learning Goals

Critical Thinking – Every word you or someone else writes shows a critical decision, and that critical thinking will only be refined throughout the semester by focusing on technical editing and writing.

Creativity – What is central in technical editing and writing—and why I love it—is being creative in applying principles of technical editing and writing

Performance – A technical writer's presentation skills make the written product more viable for users. Also, you may not be speaking in front of the class, but articulating your thoughts on readings, on others writing, and on your own writing is paramount in this class.

Social Responsibility – You're assuming an active role in the campus' decision on a new Learning Management System.

Our Blog Site

Our wordpress site will allow us to centralize much of the writing that we would do on our own computers or on paper. We will use the site for freewrites of all kinds, journal assignments, initial drafts, project logs, and group work. Keep in mind that other students in the class can read your work, so this is continuous practice in dealing with audience. I will be using the website for my own writing and research, and it may be used for teaching other professors to use the website.

Class Requirements

Editing Practice (10% of final grade) Due throughout first half of semester

Students will have a variety of small assignments and homeworks to practice and develop their editing skills.

Editing Test (15% of final grade) On October 13

After learning technical editing, students will be tested with a longer technical document.

Instructions and Documentation (25% of final grade) Due November 10

Each student will create instructions on a process they know well. The instructions should have at least 25 steps and include at least 8-10

images or diagrams.

Service Learning Project (35%) Due during Finals Week

Students will work with a local company to produce documentation and other technical writing documents. Students will also do a design analysis and article analysis to supplement the project.

A note on the group work: The project work is divided equally, and everyone contributes in the group. I don't want to see one group sitting around one computer while one person works. If one member does not contribute, I flunk that person and that work does not appear in the final project. I can see if problems are developing from project logs, emails, this site's user tracking, and general observations. Slackers will be rewarded with grade deductions of 3 or 4 letter grades.

Class Interaction (10% of final grade)

This will be quantified as much as possible by turning in assignments on time, posting content on the site in blogs or comments, engaging the website, attending all class meetings, committing to the writing process, and being a regular participant in class discussion.

Grading

In grading, I will follow a grading rubric and use a holistic method with line-by-line comments, marginal comments, and an end comment. The quality of the writing is roughly equal in importance to the quality of research, thesis and organization. Utilizing MLA format effectively is a basic expectation, but not doing so can cause significant deductions in your grade.

I will use the grading scale below when assigning grades. On paper assignments, I will respond with a letter grade and a number percentage.

A 95-100
A- 90-94.99
B+ 86.67-89.99
B 83.34-86.66
B- 80-83.33
C+ 76.67-79.99
C 73.34-76.66
C- 70-73.33
D+ 66.67-69.99
D 63.34-66.66
D- 60-63.33
F < 59.99

Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class. To be considered for an excused absence, students must contact the instructor before missing class with a valid reason, such as a family emergency or major illness. More than two unexcused absences will adversely affect your interaction grade. Students with continued excessive absences will be withdrawn from the course.

Late Papers or Assignments

You must be present in class to submit drafts and final papers, and to complete required tests. A penalty of one letter grade per day will be assessed on all late work until it is submitted or completed.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when you pass off someone else's words or ideas as your own, and it is a form of stealing. I don't expect to see plagiarism in this class. If I do, each case will be dealt with on an individual basis and referred to the English department for review. For a first offense, the MINIMUM penalty will be failure for the assignment in question. If you turn in plagiarized work a second time, you will fail the course. All confirmed cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean, the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Director of Campus Life, and the Provost, as required by the University Handbook. If you are doing research and are unsure how to incorporate someone else's work into your own in a valid manner, please ask—I'll be more than happy to help you out so that there is no danger of confusion.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please inform me immediately so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. Students with a disability must register with the Services for Students with Disabilities office (SSD) in Schwitzer Center 206 (317-788-6153 / www.uindy.edu/ssd) for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations. You are responsible for initiating arrangements for accommodations for tests and other assignments in collaboration with the SSD and the faculty.

Laptops

Laptop computers are allowed for taking notes, reviewing drafts and other class-related activities. I reserve the right to ask you to shut your laptops if they are unnecessary for the current class activity.

Cell Phones

Please place your cell phones on vibrate and do not send text messages. If you need to take a call, please leave the classroom quietly.

Other Electronic Gadgets

To decrease distractions in class, please do not use iPods, iTouches, mp3 players, headphones, language translators, or graphing calculators during class. I reserve the right to ask you not to use additional gadgets not listed above.

Tentative Calendar

Week 1 – Aug. 30 and Sept. 1

- Tuesday: Course Introductions
- Thursday: Technical Editing Chapters 1 & 2

Week 2 – Sept. 6 and 8

- Tuesday: Technical Editing Chapters 3 & 7
- Thursday: Technical Editing Chapters 4 & 8

Week 3 - Sept. 13 and 15

- Tuesday: Technical Editing Chapters 9 & 10
- Thursday: Technical Editing Chapters 11

Week 4 - Sept. 20 and 22

- Tuesday: Technical Editing Chapters 12 & 13
- Thursday: Technical Editing Chapters 5 & 6

Week 5 - Sept. 27 and 29

- Tuesday: Technical Editing Chapters 14 & 15
- Thursday: Technical Editing Chapters 16 & 17

Week 6 – Oct. 4 and 6

- Tuesday: Technical Editing Chapters 18 & 22
- Thursday: Technical Editing Chapters 19, 20 & 21

Week 7 - Oct. 11 and 13

- Tuesday: Midterm Review
- Thursday: Midterm

Week 8 - Oct. 18 and 20

- Tuesday: Fall Break
- Thursday: Technical Editing Chapters 23 & 24; Begin Instructions and Documentation Project

Week 9 - Oct. 25 and 27

- Tuesday: Elements of Technical Writing 1 & 2
- Thursday: Elements of Technical Writing 3, 4 & 5

Week 10 – Nov. 1 and 3

- Tuesday: Draft of IDP due for Peer Review; Elements of Technical Writing 6 & 9
- Thursday: Draft of IDP due to professor

Week 11 – Nov. 8 and 10

- Tuesday: Workshop on IDP; Begin Service-learning Project
- Thursday: Final IDP due; Scholarly article

Week 12 - Nov. 15 and 17

- Tuesday: Elements of Technical Writing 7 & 8
- Thursday: Scholarly article; SLP draft due

Week 13 – Nov. 22 and 24

- Tuesday: Continue work on SLP
- Thursday: Thanksgiving

Week 14 – Nov. 29 and Dec. 1

- Tuesday: Scholarly article;
- Thursday: User testing

Week 15 – Dec. 6 and 8

- Tuesday: Final draft of project
- Thursday: Scholarly article

Finals Week

- Final TBA
- December 14: SLP due

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• Calendar

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