**WRI 350: DOCUMENTATION DEVELOPMENT**

**Winter 2017 Syllabus**

**Section 02, CRN 28907:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10:00-10:50, Owens 220

**Section 01, CRN 25255:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1:00-1:50, Owens 202

**Professor Franny Howes**

**Office:** 132 Semon Hall

**Office Hours:** Monday and Wednesday, 3-4:30, and Tuesday, 9-10:30, or by appointment.

**Email:** franny.howes@oit.edu (This is my preferred means of communication.)

**Office Phone:** (541) 885-0339 (Voicemails left here are emailed to me as an mp3 file, so specify if you want to be emailed back or called and at what number.)

**Course Description, Objectives, and Outcomes:**

The official course description of WRI 350, “Documentation Development,” is: “Provides students with basic tools for preparing documentation. Focuses on usability of documentation and includes planning and scheduling, audience evaluation, use of appropriate examples and illustrations, style, editing technique, organization and research.”

This is not a course on grammar or sentence-level editing: I define technical writing broadly to include a variety of genres and modes that are commonly needed in science, engineering, and other careers.

In general, documentation means instructions, manuals, tutorials, walkthroughs, and other writing and media that guide people’s actions. In software-specific contexts, it refers additionally to text that describes how a program works or should work. Finally, documentation is also the *process* of writing down or recording what you have done or are doing on a project for the benefit of others or your future self.

No wonder no one has any idea what they’re going to be doing in this class.

The rationale behind my assignment design in this course is that creating meaningful, usable documentation for existing processes and products will transfer to writing excellent documentation for your own projects, whether at OIT or in the workplace.

I use the word “create” to emphasize that good documentation is often multimodal and not just written text. In this class, we will use a range of media and genres to create audience-aware documentation projects.

Through this class, you will:

1. Acquire advanced practice with the rhetorical and technological skill set of a technical writer;
2. Gain familiarity with common genres and modes used in developing documentation;
3. Learn best practices in collaborative writing and professional teamwork;
4. Investigate the ethical and cultural issues related to writing in a diverse workplace and world;
5. Understand the interrelatedness of documentation writing and design;
6. Practice problem-solving through documentation writing;
7. See yourself as a reflective practitioner of technical writing.

**Required Texts:**

*Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century, Second Edition* by Sidney I. Dobrin, Christopher J. Keller, and Christian R. Weisser.

This is a general-purpose technical writing textbook that I use in all my classes. You may use a print or digital copy, but it must be the second edition.

*See What I Mean: How To Use Comics To Communicate Ideas* by Kevin Cheng.

This is a book by a software developer about why and how comics can be used in technical fields, and also how to create them (even as a complete beginner).

Other miscellaneous digital readings will be assigned through Blackboard.

**Course Assignments:**

Detailed assignment descriptions with grading criteria will be made available on Blackboard.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Point total** |
| Self-evaluation memo | 200 |
| Personal documentation log | 800 |
| Task-based documentation (individual) | 400 |
| Instructional comic (individual) | 400 |
| Interview with a professional about workplace writing (individual) | 400 |
| Design specification/proposal with use cases (group) | 400 |
| Resume and cover document (individual) | 400 |
| Usability test plan and report of results (group) | 400 |
| Presentation or video (group) | 400 |
| Final reflection memo (individual) | 200 |
| Total: | 4000 |

**Course Policies:**

**Attendance and participation**: Attendance is required to succeed in this course: you cannot participate if you do not attend. Excessive absences will disrupt your ability to learn. (That being said, please do not come to class if you have a contagious illness like the flu, or if weather would make it unsafe for you to get to campus. Your safety is more important than your butt in a seat.) Serious participation in all class exercises is required.

**Reading Assignments:** This class will require weekly reading assignments, including chapters from our textbooks and additional texts available through Blackboard. It is essential that you complete the readings on time. If it becomes evident that students are not doing the readings, I reserve the right to implement reading quizzes that will contribute to the final grade.

**Late Assignment Policy**: All major assignments must be uploaded to Blackboard by the date indicated on Blackboard. Assignments are due at midnight at the end of the day they are due unless otherwise noted. Late assignments will only be accepted for full credit by prior arrangement with me or documentation of an excused absence; I will accept late assignments without prior arrangement but I will deduct 40% of the assignment’s points. Please see me if you anticipate having a problem meeting any deadlines in this class. If technical problems with Blackboard cause an assignment to be late, please contact me for an extension.

**Assignment submission:** All assignments must be turned in electronically via Blackboard. Please submit written documents as either a .doc, .docx, or PDF. I use Blackboard’s built-in commenting tools to grade your writing and they only work on those formats. Multimedia projects may be submitted in any format that I can open; make sure to export video and audio correctly.

**Assignment formatting:** All written assignments must be single-spaced in a normal document font (between 10 and 12 pt). *Please number your pages.*

**Laptops**: I invite you to bring your laptop or tablet to class. Computers and other devices, including cell phones, may always be used for in-class activities.

**Accessibility and accommodations**: If you have a disability that will affect your ability to complete the requirements of this class, please make an appointment to meet with me during my office hours so that we can determine how to accommodate you. I understand that students experience a variety of physical and mental health issues, and as long as you discuss these issues with me in a timely fashion, I am more than willing to work with you so that you can be successful in my class.

I rely on the Disability Services Office for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously worked with that office, I strongly encourage you to do so. Contact Erin Ferrara, Disability Services Coordinator, at 541-851-5227 or erin.ferrara@oit.edu for further assistance. Disability Services is located in LRC 229.

As a general policy, students are allowed to bring drinks and snacks to class and to leave class at any time to go to the bathroom or deal with a personal emergency without asking permission.

**Fragrance policy**: Please refrain from wearing perfume, cologne, or other strongly scented products to class or to my office hours.

**Incomplete grades**: An incomplete grade is only appropriate for students who have completed the majority of the course’s requirements but have a crisis late in the term that affects their ability to finish. I may also give an incomplete to work I can’t meaningfully evaluate before the end of the term due to reasons beyond my control (such as late discovery of a plagiarism case). Please only pursue this option if you will realistically be able to finish your work by the end of the following term.

**Extra credit:** Extra credit assignments are offered at my discretion. There will be at least one small EC assignment and more may be offered as opportunities arise.

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:** The OIT Student Academic Integrity policy provides the following definitions:

*Academic dishonesty* is defined as cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses. *Plagiarism* is defined as submitting the language, ideas, thoughts or work of another as one’s own or assisting in the act of plagiarism by allowing one’s work to be used in this fashion. *Cheating* is defined as, but not limited to: obtaining or providing unauthorized information during an examination through verbal, visual or unauthorized use of books, notes, text and other materials; obtaining or providing unauthorized information concerning all or part of an examination prior to that examination; taking an examination for another student or arranging for another person to take an exam in one’s place; altering test answers after submittal for grading; changing grades after grades have been awarded; or altering other official academic records.

None of these behaviors are acceptable in my class. If I find that you have submitted a plagiarized assignment for a grade, I will follow the disciplinary policies outlined in the OIT Student Handbook.

**Safe Learning Environment:** The Communication Department at Oregon Tech is committed to creating and maintaining a safe learning environment so that all students can focus on their education. If, at any time during this or any of your other classes at Oregon Tech, you feel that you are being discriminated against or treated inappropriately by faculty or classmates because of a disability, ethnic or national origin, gender identity, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation, the Communication Department encourages you to let us know. Feel free to talk to me or to my department chair, Dr. Dan Peterson, so that we can help you identify the best resources to address your concerns.

**Grading Scale:**

The course as a whole is graded out of 4000 points. Grades will be assigned as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Final Grade Points** | **Percentage Range** | **Letter Grade** |
| **3600-4000** | **90%-100%** | **A** |
| **3200-3599** | **80%-89.9%** | **B** |
| **2800-3199** | **70%-79.9%** | **C** |
| **2400-2799** | **60%-69.9%** | **D** |
| **0-2399** | **Below 60%** | **F** |

**WRI 350 Calendar (Draft, some readings TBD)**

All readings are due before class on the day they are listed in the calendar.

This calendar may be subject to change with appropriate notice from me. Please check Blackboard for the most up-to-date version of our course calendar.

**Week One:**

January 9: Syllabus day.

January 11: Getting to know you/skills inventorying activity day.

January 13: What is technical writing? Read **Chapter 1 and 2 of TC21C.**

**Week Two:**

January 16: No class, MLK Day.

January 18: **Read Chapter 18, Instructions, in TC21C, and “Installing Linux on a Dead Badger: User’s Notes”:** [**http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040405/badger.shtml**](http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040405/badger.shtml)

January 20: **Read Chapter 4, Ethics, in TC21C.** Self-evaluation and goal-setting memo due.

**Week Three:**

January 23: Pokemon activity today.

January 25: Pokemon activity wrap-up; discussing technical description and technical definitions.

January 27: Written instructions assignment due.

**Week Four:**

January 30: Intro to comics/visuals; **Read Chapters 1, 2, and 8 of See What I Mean.**

February 1: **Read Chapter 4 of See What I Mean and Chapters 15 and 16 of TC21C**; in-class comic day.

February 3:

**Week Five:**

February 6: Instructional comic due. **Read Chapter 12 of TC21C (Memos).**

February 8: **Read pages 146-153 of TC21C (Research).**

February 10:

**Week Six:**

February 13: Interview due. **Read Chapter 20 of TC21C (Proposals) plus proposal folder on Blackboard.**

February 15: TBD

February 17: Read chapter 14 of TC21C, Finding Employment.

**Week Seven:**

February 20: Proposal/design spec due with use cases. Read Chapter 11, Usability, in TC21C and the Usability folder on Blackboard.

February 22: Usability activities continued.

February 24:Job application packet due if you want pre-career fair feedback.

**Week Eight:**

February 27: Job application packet due if feedback is not time-sensitive. Read “culture readings” folder on blackboard and Chapter 5 of TC21C.

March 1: **Winter career fair. Class attendance waived today if you attend the event.**

March 3: Career wrap-up.

**Week Nine:**

March 6: Documentation tools. Time available this week to conduct usability tests in-class.

March 8: Guest speaker TBD.

March 10: Usability continued.

**Week Ten (Dead Week):**

March 13: Usability test report due. Course evaluations in-class. Revisions of previous assignments due.

March 15: No class.

March 17: No class.

**Finals Week:**

March 22: Final presentations during each class’s final exam time (10 and 2), and final reflections due. Final potluck feast.