COM 310-940

Technical Communication

Fall Term 2020

**Instructor:**       Dacia Pajé
**Office Hours:**     E-mail for a virtual appointment
**Office Location:**  Blackboard
**Email:**            dp932@drexel.edu

## COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course develops skills in communicating with a technical focus. The course emphasizes such technical genres as proposals, reports, and instructions, as well as associated shorter documents and presentations. Moreover, this course offers extensive application of the writing process, including creating drafts, receiving feedback, and applying feedback in revising. This is a writing intensive course.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES:

*If you complete this course successfully, you will learn to:*
- LO1: Rhetoric: Identify major genres and apply key rhetorical techniques for effective technical communication
- LO2: Audience Analysis: Analyze the nature of multiple audiences and craft documents appropriate to audience needs
- LO3: Usability/Critical Evaluation: Apply principles of usability, style, and design to develop and critically evaluate the quality of technical documents*
- LO4: Research: Identify, summarize and incorporate appropriate research to increase the authority and credibility of the written document
- LO5: Ethics: Identify, analyze and apply ethical principles for technical writing
*This includes technical communication grammar, style and standards

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

*Practical Strategies for Technical Communication*, Markel, 3rd Edition. Macmillan Press. You need to purchase the LL version, so you have access to Launchpad.

https://www.macmillanlearning.com/college/us/product/Practical-Strategies-for-Technical-Communication-with-2020-APA-Update/p/131936229X

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

Your course grade, out of 100%, is calculated as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Discussion Boards/Class Activities | 15% |
| Project I: Instructions | 15% |
| Project II: Proposal | 15% |
| Project III: Correspondence | 20% |
| Project IV: Recommendation Report | 35% |

**Grading Scale:**

| | |
|---|---|
| A+ 98-100 | C+ 77-79 |
| A 93-97 | C 73-76 |
| A- 90-92 | C- 70-72 |
| B+ 87-89 | D+ 67-69 |
| B 83-86 | D 60-66 |
| B- 80-82 | F 60 |

**ASSIGNMENT**

This course is writing-intensive and project-based. You will have four major writing assignments, other smaller assignments, and discussion boards throughout the term.

1. **Discussion Boards/Class Activities:** throughout the term, you will have discussion boards or some group activities. Each time you can earn **1 point**, and you will have 10 discussion boards to participate in. Unless noted otherwise, your original post is due every **Thursday** at 11:59PM. When required, you will also have to respond to two peers, by every **Sunday** at 11:59PM.
   **Failure** to respond: loss of 1 point; **failure** to respond on time: loss of 0.5 points; **failure** to respond to classmates: loss of 0.5 points; **failure** to respond to classmates on time: loss of 0.5 points.

2. **Launchpad Pretest and Posttest (this is part of your Discussion Boards/Class Activities):** throughout the course, you will be required to participate to 2 pretests and 2

posttests aimed at evaluating the writing level of the class before and after specific classes. Each test is worth **0.5 points** and are usually due by **Sunday by 11:59pm**.

3. **Peer Reviews (this is part of your Discussion Boards/Class Activities):** for the first **three** projects, you will have peer reviews activities. You will be divided into couples and expected to review and comment your partner's draft by **Sunday by 11:59pm**. Each is worth **1 point**.

4. **Project I: Instructions:** Write detailed instructions for a given process, following the guidelines in the text.

5. **Project II: Proposal:** Write a short proposal for a given situation, following the guidelines in the text.

6. **Project III: Correspondence:** Write the appropriate type of correspondence for a given situation, following the guidelines in the text.

7. **Project IV: Recommendation Report:** Write the appropriate type of report for a given situation, following the guidelines in the text.

   **Note: All projects and drafts are due by Sunday 11:59 PM.**

## GRADINGS

All **written assignments** will be graded for grammar, spelling, punctuation, content and composition. For each grammatical, spelling or punctuation error, **three points** will be deducted. Content and composition errors will result in a **five-point deduction**. Certain assignments will have mandatory sections. Missing mandatory sections will result in **five-point deductions** (you will be notified of that each time).

## COURSE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

### Late Work

Assignments that are more than three days late will not be accepted. Late projects will be docked 10% of the assignment value per day late.

### Deadlines for Discussion Boards:

The Discussion Board opens at 7.30 a.m. Monday and closes at 11:59 p.m. Sunday. Students must post their initial comments by 11:59 p.m. each Thursday. Students must respond to as many students as requested each week by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

In case you have not taken an online course before, please understand that even if you are working on something you MUST finish by 11:59 p.m. Sunday or the unit will close. So, make sure you allow yourself enough time to finish work if you start it on Sunday night.

**Note:** I will not chase you for missing work. You will always be notified of your deadlines on BBL. It is your responsibility to meet them. So, **if you do not submit on time, I will not accept excuses**. This is valid also for the Discussion Board posts.

### Conduct and Complaints

If you have any comments, complaints, or questions about the class you are taking, please talk to your instructor first. If this does not resolve the issue, the faculty lead in is Prof. Karen Cristiano, the Assistant Head of Department (kc42@drexel.edu). If the issue remains unresolved, you can reach out to the Department Head, Prof. Hilde Van den Bulck (hdv26@drexel.edu).

### Plagiarism/Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone's previously documented words, ideas, or data in one's own new and original work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the words, ideas, or data of others, including one's own previously submitted work, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific references, and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks as well. By placing his/her name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments. A student must obtain permission from the current instructor, prior to submission, to use his or her previously submitted work in a new and original work.

Plagiarism covers unpublished as well as published sources. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Quoting another person's actual words, complete sentences or paragraphs, or an entire piece of written work without acknowledgment of the source.
- Using another person's ideas, opinions, or theory, even if it is completely paraphrased in one's own words without acknowledgment of the source.
- Borrowing facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials that are not clearly common knowledge without acknowledgment of the source.
- Copying, or allowing another student to copy, a computer file that contains another student's assignment, and submitting it, in part or in its entirety, as one's own.
- Working together on an assignment, sharing the computer files and programs involved, and then submitting individual copies of the assignment as one's own individual work.

Students are urged to consult with individual faculty members, academic departments, or recognized handbooks in their field if in doubt regarding issues of plagiarism.

For further information on Drexel University's academic integrity policies and resources, please consult the following university web pages:

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Student Code of Conduct](#)

**Behavior:**

**Email:** I will be using Blackboard and e-mail to contact the class. Please make sure your e-mail is functioning and that you check your email each day. You are responsible for reading all messages I send you via e-mail. If you need to reply to my e-mails, please be sure that you are responding to dp943@drexel.edu. Every e-mail sent out to the whole class will also be posted under "Announcements" on Blackboard.

Although this is an online course, just as in any other course all participants are expected to adhere to the highest standards of responsible and respectful communication. This means being up-to-date with Blackboard Announcements, course readings and class assignments, responding to e-mails in a reasonable time (for non-urgent issues let's make it 48 hours), and showing general respect for your classmates and the instructor. In particular, please review and follow the following netiquette rules:

- Make your messages easier to read by making your paragraphs short and to the point
- TYPING IN ALL CAPS IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING ON THE INTERNET
- Messages in all lowercase letters can be difficult to read – instead, use normal capitalization.
- *Asterisks* surrounding a word can be used to make a stronger point.
- Be careful when using sarcasm and humor. Without a face-to-face context, your joke may be interpreted as criticism. When being humorous, you can use emoticons to express humor, just please use them *with moderation*

**Online Netiquette Guidelines:**

When communicating with classmates and your professor on the Discussion Board follow the guidelines below to leave your mark as a knowledgeable, respectful and polite student who is also positioned to succeed professionally.

**Be Scholarly**
Do: Use proper language, grammar and spelling. Be explanatory and justify your opinions. Credit the ideas of others through citing and linking to scholarly resources. Avoid: Misinforming others when you may not know the answer. If you are guessing about something, clearly state that you do not know the answer.

**Be Respectful**
Do: Respect privacy, diversity and opinions of others. Communicate tactfully and base disagreements on scholarly ideas or research evidence.
Avoid: Sharing another person's professional or personal information.

**Be Professional**
Do: Represent yourself well at all times. Be truthful, accurate and run a final spell check. Limit the use of slang and emoticons.
Avoid: Using profanity or participating in hostile interactions.

**Be Polite**
Do: Address others by name or appropriate title and be mindful of your tone. Treat people as if you were in a face-to-face situation.
Avoid: Using sarcasm, being rude or writing in all capital letters. Written words can be easily misinterpreted as they lack nonverbals.

Online Netiquette Guidelines Used with permission from ASU Online

## Add, Drop and Withdrawal Policies:

- You can **add** this course until the end of week 1, and you can also **drop** this course until the end of week 1, meaning the course will then be removed from your transcript. More information can be found here on the Add/Drop web page.

- If you add this course after the start of the term, you are responsible for completing ALL work that you may have missed.

- The course **withdrawal** deadline is Friday, August 7th, 2020. You will have received some graded work prior to this deadline. If you have any questions about your progress at any time of the term, please contact me. If you choose to Withdraw, a "W" will be recorded in your transcript. Please read the Course Withdrawal web page for more information.

## Disability Accommodations:

It is the University's policy to provide a learning environment that provides all students with the opportunity to realize their full potential. Students requesting accommodations due to a disability at Drexel University need to request a current Accommodations Verification Letter (AVL) in the ClockWork database before accommodations can be made. These requests are received by Disability Resources (DR), who then issues the AVL to the appropriate contacts. For additional information, visit the Disability Resources web page, or contact DR for more information by phone at 215.895.1401, or by email at disability@drexel.edu.

## Writing Resources:

The Drexel Writing Center (DWC) is staffed by Peer Readers and ESL Specialist Faculty Readers who will help you develop as a writer through one-on-one consultations on

current writing projects.

[The DWC website has more details](). The DWC is located in 0032 MacAlister Hall and can be reached at 215-895-6633.

**If you are an international/multilingual student,** the Center offers, in collaboration with the English Language Center (ELC) and the Drexel Library, a focused way to support you through their "Language, Writing, and Research" (LWR) Initiative. If you are working on these types of issues, please send your writing projects to [lwr@drexel.edu](). A Writing Center ESL specialist will review them with an ELC language tutor and a librarian, and their team will then contact you to set up a focused appointment. [Here is the ELC's website page]() with more information.

If you need additional tutoring or academic coaching services, please visit the website for Drexel's [Center for Learning and Academic Success Services (CLASS)]().

# STATEMENT ON RECORDING OF CLASS INTERACTIONS

## AS OF 8.5.20

*These statements have been crafted, reviewed and approved by Nicole Sugarman (Office of the General Counsel), Kim Upshaw (Office of Compliance), Vanessa Cohen (Office of Disability Resources), Paul Apicella (Office of Equity and Diversity) and Shivanthi Anandan (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education).*

## STATEMENT ON RECORDING OF LECTURES FOR USE IN SYLLABI:

**Appropriate Use of Course Materials**

It is important to recognize that some or all of the course materials provided to you are the intellectual property of Drexel University, the course instructor, or others.  Use of this intellectual property is governed by Drexel University policies, including the IT-1 policy found at: https://drexel.edu/it/about/policies/policies/01-Acceptable-Use/

Briefly, this policy states that **all course materials including recordings** provided by the course instructor may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or re-posted, unless otherwise given prior written approval by the University. Doing so may be considered a breach of this policy and will be investigated and addressed as possible academic dishonesty, among other potential violations.  Improper use of such materials may also constitute a violation of the University's Code of Conduct found at: https://drexel.edu/cpo/policies/cpo-1/ and will be investigated as such.

**Recording of Class Activities:**

In general, students and others should not record course interactions and course activities in lecture, lab, studio or recitation.

Students who have an approved accommodation from the Office of Disability Resources to record online lectures and discussions for note taking purposes should inform their course instructor(s) of their approved accommodation in advance. The recording of lectures and discussions may only be carried out by the students enrolled in the class who have an approved accommodation from Disability Resources with their instructors' prior knowledge and consent. Students with approved accommodations may be asked to turn off their recorder if confidential or personal information is presented.

If a student has any comments, concerns, or questions about provided class materials and/ or recording, talk to your course instructor first. If this does not resolve the issue, you can also reach out to the Department Head, and use the process described for a grade appeal to move your concern forward. The process described for grade appeals can be found at:

https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/grade-appeals/

<p style="text-align:center;">**COURSE SCHEDULE:**</p>

<p style="text-align:center;">**This schedule is subject to change.**</p>

<p style="text-align:center;">Every **Monday morning**, you will be notified about the weekly activity via **email** and on the **Announcement** section on BBL.</p>

<p style="text-align:center;">I may **change anything** about the course at my discretion once it has begun, but **ONLY** if I think it will make the course better. If I do so, I will announce the change in the **'Announcements'** section, provide a new syllabus with the changes clearly marked, and send an email to all students.</p>

| Week | Topics | Readings | Major Assignment |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Week 1** **Sep. 21** | Introductions<br><br>What is technical communication?<br><br>Writing for Your Readers | CH 1<br><br>CH 6 | 1. Discussion Board<br>2. Launchpad Punctuation, Style, and Mechanics **Pretest**<br><br>*Sunday of Week 1 is the last day to add/drop a course * |
| **Week 2** **Sep. 28** | Ethical and Legal Obligations | CH 2 | 1. Discussion Board<br>2. Launchpad – Grammar Girl podcast |
| **Week 3** **October 5** | Writing Collaboratively<br><br>Purpose and Audience | CH 3<br><br>CH 4 | 1. Discussion Board<br>2. Launchpad – Grammar Girl podcast<br><br>*Instructions to **Project I available** |
| **Week 4** **October 12** | Designing Documents<br><br>Graphics | CH 7<br><br>CH 8 | 1. Launchpad Punctuation, Style, and Mechanics **Posttest**<br>2. Discussion Board/Group Activity |
| **Week 5** **October 19** | Instructions, Definitions and Descriptions | Ch 14 | **Project I**: **Instructions Peer Review**<br><br>1. Discussion Board<br>2. Peer Review Project I<br><br>*Instructions to **Project II available** |
| **Week 6** **October 26** | Proposals<br><br>Researching Your Subject | CH 11<br><br>CH 5 | **Project I: Instructions Due**<br><br>1. Launchpad Sentence Grammar **Pretest**<br>2. Discussion Board |
| **Week 7** **Nov. 2** | Correspondence | CH 9 | **Project II: Proposal Peer Review**<br><br>1. Discussion Board/Class Activity<br>2. Peer Review Project II<br><br>*Instructions to **Project III available** |
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|---|---|---|---|
| **Week 8**<br>**Nov 9** | Reports | CH 12 | **Project II: Proposal Due**<br><br>1. Discussion Board / Group Activity<br>2. Launchpad – Grammar Girl podcast |
| **Week 9**<br>**Nov 16** | Reports (continues) | CH 13 | **Project III: Correspondence Peer Review**<br><br>1. Peer Review Project III<br>2. Discussion Board<br><br>*Instructions to **Project IV available** |
| **Week 10**<br>**Thanksgiving**<br>**Week** | | | |
| **Week 11**<br>**Nov. 30** | Making Oral Presentations | CH 15 | **Project III: Correspondence Due**<br><br>1.Video Discussion Board<br>2. Launchpad – Grammar Girl podcast |
| **FINALS**<br>**WEEK**<br>**Dec. 7** | *Work on your final project* | | **Project IV: Recommendation Report Due**<br><br>1. Discussion Board<br>2. Launchpad Sentence Grammar **Posttest** |