

English 235: Technical Writing

Instructor: Jason Loan

Space: SNR 112

Time: Daily from 10:00 - 10:50

Visit the course site [here](#).

Office: Cascade 357

Office Hours are Monday through Thursday from 1 - 2 and by appointment.

Email (preferred): jloan@pierce.ctc.edu

Office Phone: 253-964-6312

Welcome to English 235 -- Technical Writing.

English 235 (Technical Writing) offers students the opportunity for hands-on experience in the diverse range of communications that circulate throughout our professional, academic and personal lives. Technical writing and communication differs from courses like English 102 in that it explores writing beyond the standard academic research essay. Projects in this course can include everything from proposal and grant writing to social media campaigns to board game design. Students in this class will be encouraged to experiment with and develop a wide variety of projects that seek to expand their definition and understanding of writing and communication.

Technical writing also offers students a safe, low-stakes opportunity to become savvier in their use of technology for life-long learning and communication. No prior expertise or experience with technology is required and students will be provided the chance to become more comfortable with and critically aware of how computers, smart phones and software impact how we make meaning and connect with others.

Throughout the quarter we will consider the array of choices available to us as composers and the constraints we are faced with when we compose for particular purposes, for particular audiences, and with particular materials.

COURSE OUTCOMES

The activity and work of this class will oscillate between holistic, big picture stuff and more seemingly nuts and bolts considerations of composition across academic, professional and personal situations.

We will compose things that do the work of more conventional written texts. We will also produce compositions in mediums and genres that go beyond some of our notions of writing or composing as strictly words on a printed page.

All of this activity and work will support the process of meeting the course outcomes. Our expectation is that English 235 will help students to:

1. Identify the purpose of, gather appropriate and accurate information for, and write technical reports for specific audiences (Ex: resume, claim letter, instructions assignment, investigative report, proposal, feasibility report).
2. Acquire the skills of Information Competency: be able to access, evaluate, and apply information appropriately.
3. Transform instructions into informational units set down in a numbered sequence that is in logical order, in both writing and illustrations.
4. Analyze the accuracy of and use appropriately graphics in technical documents.
5. Write at least three different analytical reports implementing the appropriate content and format for each.
6. Complete a collaborative team report.
7. Identify and articulate ethical and multicultural issues in technical writing.

Research Logs

Each week you will document what you are learning in English 235 via a Research Log Entry. The goal of these entries is for you to capture the in-process moments of insight and learning, including the posing of questions. For each entry, I will offer some brief instructions via the course site as a starting point, and you are encouraged to extend your entries beyond these instructions as unanticipated things emerge in your work. These log entries will also serve as a resource for the self-evaluations that will be central to our assessment of your work in the course. Research Logs should be composed in a Google Doc shared with me and other members of the class.

Mini Projects

At the beginning of the quarter we will engage in several mini projects/experiments that explore Technical Writing as a process of translation. Our jumping off point for these mini-projects/experiments will be Karen Dale Welsh's "[Poetry, Visual Design and the How-To Manual: Creativity in the Teaching of Technical Writing](#)" (2010).

Project: PierceHacker

In this project students will contribute materials to the [PierceHacker](#) project website.

Project: Composing an Open Educational Resource

Working in collaborative small groups, in this project students will compose a chapter in for [OER Textbook](#) to be used in future ENGLISH 235 courses at Pierce.

Project: Composing a Community Resource

Working in collaborative small groups, in this project students will identify a problem or issue on campus or in their community that requires detailed technical instructions, policies and/or procedures to solve.

As technical writers, students will attempt to intervene in this problem by producing a technical communications resource in response to this particular problem/issue that is of use to their community.

Note

More detailed instructions for these projects will be provided. The above descriptions are thumbnail sketches of the projects.

In all our work this quarter we will engage in processes of drafting, feedback and revision. We want to become better aware of how our work interacts with audiences and how it can be worked on to do useful work for these audiences in the world.

Course Reading

We have no required text in this class. We will, however, occasionally have both assigned and self-selected readings. These will be posted to the course schedule as needed.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

Here's where we talk grades...

Our class will conduct assessment using a two-fold process of *assessment declarations* and *self-evaluation*. This system is meant to value your labor and the work you do in order to fully engage the course. My intention in using this system is to offer each of us a chance to experience composing and learning not as a strictly finite task that is either already mastered or simply needs to be mastered, but instead as an ongoing act of dialogue, invention, risk taking, concern for others, and, yes, even failure. My intention is to facilitate as close as we can a classroom-as-studio approach in which we each play a generative role in one another's learning.

Conventional grading requires us to over-simplify the otherwise complex processes of learning, processes that require from us a commitment to experimentation, to ambiguity, to taking risks, to listening and responding, and ultimately, to having a space for the productive failures that lay the groundwork for growth.

Our assessment process will not focus on assigning letter or number grades to individual projects or assignments. This means that while activities, compositions and projects will receive feedback both from me and from your peers, they will not be assigned grades in the traditional sense.

[Here's how it works:](#)

Assessment Declarations

Each week's work has a point value, and you receive the points when the work is complete. So, as you finish each week, you will record the points in Canvas by means of a "Declaration" — which is just a true/false survey where you confirm that the work for the week is done. The points you declare are automatically recorded in your total points, which you can see in the Canvas Gradebook.

A typical weekly Declaration looks like this:

- I completed all components of this week's work. - True/False
- I completed all components of this week's work on time. - True/False

- I attended all workshops this week. - True/False
- I offered at least one peer some in-progress feedback or conversation on their work this week. - True/False

There will be a total of 300 points available for the quarter -- approximately 30 points a week for 10 weeks.

Self-Assessments

Each week, students will write a self-evaluation of their work for the week. This self-evaluation will focus on how your learning relates to our course outcomes as well as one's own personal learning outcomes. These self-evaluations will be submitted via Canvas.

Determining Final Grades

Final grades will be determined by the student and the instructor based on the declarations and self-assessments.

Students finishing the course with at least 270 points will be eligible to receive a grade of B or better for the course. Finalizing this grade will be based on taking the self-evaluations of one's learning and the course outcomes into consideration.

Students finishing the course with at least 210 points will be eligible to receive at least a grade of C. Again, finalizing this grade will be based on taking the self-evaluations of one's learning and the course outcomes into consideration.

Students finishing the course with fewer than 210 points risks not passing the course and earning below a C (or 2.0). Again, finalizing this grade will be based on taking the self-evaluations of one's learning and the course outcomes into consideration.

Needs/Support

BASIC NEEDS SECURITY

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact [Student Support Services](#). Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.

In short, if you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

My goal is to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this: If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official Pierce records, please let me know!

Creating this environment also includes my commitment to value the diversity of our language practices. School for many is often a place where judgements about language have been harnessed both intentionally and unintentionally to marginalize people and set-up barriers to success. The composition classroom is a place where we can come to more critically understand how language plays a role in issues of inclusion/exclusion in the world.

I (like all us) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, as a participant in course discussions and work, I expect you to also strive to honor the diversity of your classmates.

SUPPORT and RESOURCES

From Access and Disability Services (ADS) to Multicultural Services to Tutoring, a variety of support services exist at Pierce College.

Students in need of additional support for any reason should seek out the appropriate services so you can make necessary arrangements. If you are not sure where to go or who to seek out please speak with me so I can help you get where you want to go. If I do not know the answer to a question I will always be more than happy to help you find out who does have an answer.

A good starting point is the [Support Services page](#) on the Pierce College website.

Again, do not hesitate to have a conversation with me about support and services. Your success is important to me and I'm willing to help you find what you need.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Pierce College is committed to creating quality educational opportunities for a diverse community of learners. Pierce does not discriminate against its students or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, or sexual orientation in this class we will strive to maintain an open atmosphere with shared respect for all differences.

CONTACT ME

Email (jlolan@pierce.ctc.edu) is the best way to contact me. Typically, you can expect a reply to an email within 24 hours; however, response times for emails received over the weekend will vary and may not receive a reply until Monday.

I do have an office phone. The # is 253-964-6312. I recommend emailing me first. I will not check my voice mail as often as my email, so the reply time will be faster.

Stopping in to see me during my office hours or making an appointment to meet with me are both an expectation and a great way to have questions answered, receive feedback and to talk about the work of our course. I will do my best throughout the semester to work with you so, again, don't hesitate to initiate a conversation.