

# TECHNICAL WRITING COURSE OVERVIEW

## Course Details

English 3764: Technical Writing  
CRNs #85298, #85300, #85304,  
& #85305  
Fall 2025



**Traci  
Gardner**  
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she, her, hers

## Course Texts

All readings are free, from

- open online textbooks.
- pages & files in Canvas.
- external PDFs & websites.

Straight, cisgender, white.  
Disabled. Lifetime Girl Scout.  
Hokie alum. Steelers fan. Poodle  
lover.

## Accessibility

Everyone needs special accommodation at some point.  
I am happy to work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) staff or directly with you to make sure that you have the support you need.



### Need extra time on assignments?

No problem. If you need more time, use the course's grace period. Check the details on Due Dates & the Late Policy for more details.

### Need a less-distracting environment?

Do your work any place that works for you. Since all work is done online and independently, you have complete control over where you work.

### Ready to tell me what you need to do well in the course?

Official testing can be expensive and time-consuming, so I don't require it. Just tell me what you need, and I'll try to help.

Send me a private Canvas or email message that tells me what you need as soon as you can. Attach info from the SSD office if you have it. I'll do what I can to help, but can only apply changes to the future. I cannot apply accommodations retroactively.

# CONTACTING TRACI

## Email Messages

Send your message to me using your VT.EDU email or the Inbox tool in Canvas.



I will respond as quickly as possible, **usually within 24 to 48 hours on class days.**

I take holidays and weekends off and reply on the next class day.

## Public Chat in Real-Time

Use the Zoom Team Chat in Canvas to ask fast questions about the course.



Team Chat is something like an awkward Discord server.

I keep the Chat tool open whenever I am at the computer and available. I'll post a note there when I'm offline or busy.

## Private Online Meetings

Setup online meetings in Zoom if you need a private conversation. Think of this as meeting me in my office on campus.



NEED MORE HERE » Schedule your meeting at least 24 hours in advance.

This page contains invisible dragons  
If you can see a dragon, you are magical



# COURSE WORK

## ASSIGNMENT BASICS

This course includes three weighted categories of work, described below.

All work is your individual responsibility. There are some group discussions, but you are graded individually, based on your participation in these activities.



## KINDS OF WORK IN THE COURSE

### Major Projects

**60%**

These are written documents ranging from 1-15 pages. They ask you to compose memos, letters, instructions, proposals, and reports. All major projects have visual design elements.

Grading criteria are in the rubric for each project. There are six Major Projects in the course.

### Weekly Activities

**25%**

These are short exercises and assignments, similar to in class work or homework in a campus-based class. They may ask you to write something, fill out a form, or complete a quiz.

All Weekly Activities are open book. Usually you have two assignments each week.

### Check-In Surveys

**15%**

These are brief, anonymous polls that ask you how you are doing in the course. Surveys are primarily multiple-choice or true-false. There are no right or wrong answers.

I use your responses to customize the course and write a class newsletter. There is a Check-In Survey for each week of classes.

# COURSE STRUCTURE

## COURSE MODULES



This course has five modules:

- Module 1: Introduction to TW
- Module 2: Project Proposal
- Module 3: Documentation & Instructions
- Module 4: Informational Article
- Module 5: Fact Sheet

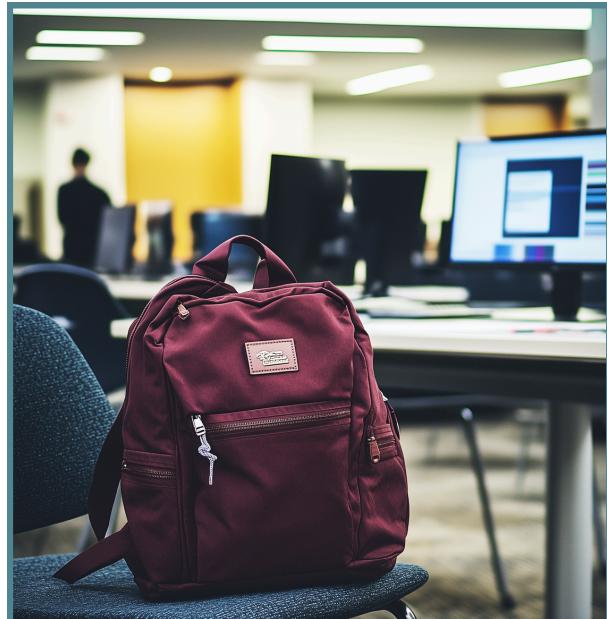
## WHAT'S IN A MODULE?

Each Module includes everything you need for a unit. Think of it like a backpack that has just the right materials you need for a task.

You'll find the following materials:

- A Module introduction page
- Links to readings
- Links to all assignments

To access each module, click on **Modules** in the left menu in Canvas.



## MODULE STARTING POINT



Begin with the module introduction page, which provides:

- A brief intro to the subject(s) covered in that module
- A set of module objectives
- Links to readings and assignments

# MODULE & PROJECT OVERVIEW

## Module 1 (Weeks 1-3): Intro to Technical Communication

- Identify a subject from your major and justify its relevance.
- Analyze potential audiences for technical communication on this topic.
- Learn about audience awareness, ethics, and correspondence



## Module 2 (Weeks 4-6): Proposing Your Project

- Propose an approach to your subject (could be a solution to a problem, implementation plan, etc.).
- Include a brief literature review of scholarly sources, demonstrating research techniques, citation styles, and evaluation of sources.
- Incorporate document design principles, plain language techniques, and audience adaptation.
- Include visual elements (charts, graphs, etc.).
- Learn to distinguish technical from academic writing.



## Module 3 (Weeks 7-9): Writing Instructions

- Create a guide that explains how to learn about your subject.
- Report on your progress in the course.



## Module 4 (Weeks 10-12): Informing Your Readers

- Write an in-depth information article for non-experts, providing a comprehensive explanation of your subject.



## Module 5 (Weeks 13-15): Explaining to the Public

- Distill your informational article into a concise, visually-appealing fact sheet



# COURSE GRADING PROCESS

## THINK ABOUT A JOB



In the workplace, no one gives you a 92% on a report or a B+ on a proposal. You're expected to do your job completely and correctly. Instead, your manager either approves your work or asks you to revise it by the final deadline. That's what we do in this class too.

## HOW IT WORKS



Complete (✓ or 1)

Done right & ready to send out



Incomplete (X or 0)

Needs work & can be revised

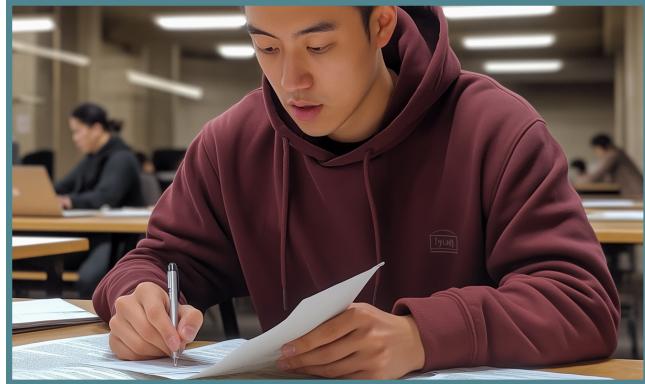
## WHAT "COMPLETE" MEANS

Criteria	Complete	Incomplete
Matches the assignment	✓	X
Follows VT's Honor Code & Principles of Community	✓	X
Meets every rubric item	✓	X
Includes everything required	✓	X

# INCOMPLETE ISN'T A FAILURE — IT'S A DRAFT

If your work is marked Incomplete, don't panic. It just means something needs to be revised.

You can revise and resubmit as often as needed, up until you earn a Complete or the final deadline at 11:59 PM, whichever comes first.



## TRACKING YOUR WORK IN CANVAS



You'll see these marks in Canvas Grades:

- ✓ or 1 = Complete
- ✗ or 0 = Incomplete

These aren't grades. They're status updates that tell you when your work is finished.

## WHERE YOUR COURSE GRADE COMES FROM

Canvas calculates your course grade by tallying all the work that is Complete in each category of work and assigning a score based on the weight of the category. The math is straightforward:

$$\frac{\text{\# of Complete Tasks}}{\text{Total \# of Tasks Available}} \times \text{Weight for Category}$$

Add up the calculations for all the categories, and compare the number to the VT Grade Scale with +/- :

	B+ 87-89.99	C+ 77-79.99	D+ 67-69.99	
A 93-100	B 83-86.99	C 73-76.99	D 63-66.99	F 59.99 & below
A- 90-92.99	B- 80-82.99	C- 70-72.99	D- 60-62.99	

# LATE POLICY & GRACE PERIOD

## THE BASICS



I accept late work for most work in this course. You don't need to ask in advance or explain why your work is late. Take more time when you need it, as often as you need it, and then turn your work in before the grace period ends.

## TARGET DUE DATES

Every assignment in the course has a Target Due Date. That's the date the assignment is due. It's the date you should aim for so you do not fall behind in the course.

- Applies to all work in the course.
- Ends at 11:59 PM on Fridays.

## THE GRACE PERIODS

There are two different grace period systems: one for weekly activities and check-in surveys, and another for major projects. For both systems, once the grace period passes, you can no longer submit the assignment.

### 3-Day Grace Period

- Applies to all Weekly Activities and Check-In Surveys.
- Lasts 3 week days.
- Ends at 11:59 PM on Wednesdays.

### 6-Day Grace Period

- Applies to all Major Projects and Self-Checks.
- Lasts 6 week days.
- Ends at 11:59 PM on Mondays.

# MAJOR PROJECT REVISION DUE DATES

When you submit your Major Projects by the end of the 6-Day Grace Period, you unlock the Major Project Revision Due Date.

Or something. I'm not sure how this works. I really don't want a complicated mess of dates to deal with. That's just confusing for everyone. I want unlimited revision, but I don't want them to wait until the last minute to do that revising. Somehow it has to deal with running out of time for revision on the last project, but having an expansive amount of time for early assignments. And everything is predicated on when I return their work. I can't just say another 6 days to revise because I may not give them feedback fast enough for that to be meaningful. There has to be a workable way to do this.

revisions will only be accepted if there has been a good-faith effort to complete the original assignment, and this judgment will be at the discretion of the instructor

Most syllabi I've seen for writing courses--whether they're "conventional" or not (e.g., contract-based)--require a complete and good-faith effort on the part of students when turning in rough drafts in order to receive full credit on assignments. This way, students aren't phoning in rough drafts to buy extra time for the "real" final draft.

As a pass/fail course, all course requirements will be evaluated as either Complete--work adheres to the general expectations and requirements including purpose, length/depth, formatting, and timeliness--or Incomplete--work does not adhere to the general expectations and requirements. I may ask you to revisit or revise Incomplete work for it to be considered Complete and for you to receive a passing grade for the class. Incomplete work will be considered Missing if not revised by the last class meeting, Tuesday, April 30.

You must revise and resubmit the essay within 2 weeks of receiving your initial grade.

## Do-Overs

IMPORTANT: The end product of your projects – newsletters, posters, and books themselves – that are turned in on time may be redone once for a better grade. Project Do-Over deadlines will be noted on our weekly course agendas but are typically a weeks after the grades are posted, except for the final project.

Late projects may not be redone for a better grade. This option does not apply to the PechaKucha or in-class or homework assignments.

Please be aware that grading the do-overs or resubmissions will be subject to my availability, as my priority is to grade current assignments to ensure timely feedback for all students. I will endeavor to review and grade your resubmitted work as my schedule permits, but I appreciate your patience and understanding that this process may not be immediate.

# KEY TERMS AT A GLANCE

## Late Indication in Canvas

If you turn in your work any time after the Target Due Date, Canvas will mark your work as Late. Don't worry about this label. There is no grade penalty for work submitted after the Target Due Date.

Incompletes are given only in provable emergency situations--and only if you have completed at least 75% of the coursework. Incompletes will not be given in situations where you might have disappeared early in the class and then reappeared later. Be aware of drop and withdrawal dates.

## Late Work

Since this class serves as an introduction to professional writing and the working environment, you will need to consider this class to be your "job." We will follow the same policies as you could expect to find in a professional work environment. Therefore, **late work will not be accepted**. All assignments are due during the time frame noted on the assignment; if no time is listed, the due time will be 7am on the due date. Timeliness and professionalism are expected in this course just the same as they will be in your future profession.

## Availability

I will check my email throughout the day. I will not check email on Saturday or Sunday. For your convenience, no assignments are ever due on those days, so no pressing issue should require my attention on a weekend.

Email is usually the most convenient way to contact me with questions and concerns that come up when we're not in class. Please use your Virginia Tech email account only, accessible via <https://onecampus.vt.edu/>. I will answer any email that includes a question within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. Often, I will answer much more quickly, but please email again if you have not received an answer after these stated periods.

The university provides you with Microsoft 365 OneDrive. Access this through the OneCampus portal.

The writings may include the following: 1) responses to the reading (e.g., "I related to Clark's experiences with X . . ." because...), 2) questions about the reading (e.g., "Why is the author so opposed to X?...Is it perhaps because of..."), 3) perceived criticisms of the reading (e.g., "The author seems to contradict herself on page . . ."), or 4) connections among readings in this class or information you've learned elsewhere (e.g., "The chart on page X reminds me of when I learned to create flow charts in . . . I wonder how the flow chart metaphor helps us conceptualize the complex nature of the writing process?"). Each discussion should be thoughtful and substantive. For example, "Did anyone else understand the reading?" is not a thoughtful question, "I did not get the main point" is not a criticism, and "I like these readings a lot" is not a substantive response.

You will receive a complete/incomplete grade for each project. You will receive specific feedback only for major assignments or if I recognize an issue

To Add:

- Schedule
- Late Policy
- Major Project Overview?
- Where to Get Help