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For more information on this course, see the [Course Policy Manual](#) and [our Canvas site](#).

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## Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the Tutelo/Monacan people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognize their continuing connection to the land, water, and air that Virginia Tech consumes. I pay respect to the Tutelo/Monacan Nations, and to their elders past, present, and emerging. To learn more, visit [the Monacan Nation website](#). You can also visit the [American Indian & Indigenous Community Center](#) in 122 Squires Student Center.

I also acknowledge the enslaved Black people who lived and worked on the former plantation lands upon which Virginia Tech stands. These families include the Fractions, McNortons, and Saunders, as well as others. Read more about these families in the *Virginia Tech Magazine* article "[Family Tree](#)."

## Your Access to this Course

Everyone needs special accommodation at some point because we all learn differently. 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.



### For anyone who needs extra time on assignments

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No problem. You can arrange whatever you need. If you need more time on a project, take the time you need. This course has a grace period that allows everyone extra time if needed. Check the [details on Due Dates & the Late Policy](#) for more details.

### For anyone who needs a less-distracting environment

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You can arrange to do your work for this course any place that works for you. Since all work is done online and independently, you have complete control over where you work.

### Providing documentation of special needs

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I generally do not require official documentation unless the university requires it for some reason. I do require that you let me know of any accommodation you need **during the first week of classes** so that I can make sure I give you the support you need.

**For anyone with official documentation:**









Contact [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\)](#) in 310 Lavery Hall ([map link](#), above the Turner Place Dining Center) as soon as possible to ensure that you have the resources you need to participate in the class. The procedures and forms you need are also available on the SSD website.

**For anyone without official documentation:**

I know that the official testing can be expensive and time-consuming. Send me [a private message in Canvas](#) **during the first week of classes** that tells me what you need, and I will try to help.

# Technical Writing Overview

English 3764 • CRN #15176, 15186, 15188, & 15190 • Spring 2023 • January 17 to May 10

<p><b>Who</b> </p>  <p><b>Traci Gardner</b>  <a href="mailto:tengrrl@vt.edu">tengrrl@vt.edu</a>  she, her, hers</p> <p>Straight, cisgender, white. Disabled. Lifetime Girl Scout. Hokie alum. Steelers fan. Poodle lover.</p>	<p><b>What</b> </p> <p>This course examines how to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write about technical subjects in ways readers understand.</li> <li>• analyze your situation so you present information clearly and effectively.</li> <li>• choose the best design strategies for composing in digital environments.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Where</b> </p> <p>Online course site on Canvas: <a href="https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/166227">canvas.vt.edu/courses/166227</a></p> <p>Low bandwidth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streaming videos</li> <li>• PDFs</li> <li>• Web pages</li> <li>• Google Drive</li> </ul> <p>Times and dates correspond to the Blacksburg Campus (Eastern US Time Zone).</p>
<p><b>When</b> </p> <p>Anytime!</p> <p>Asynchronous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work at your own pace.</li> <li>• Set your own schedule.</li> </ul> <p>No required real-time sessions. Course begins January 17.</p>	<p><b>Why</b> </p> <p>To succeed in the workplace, you need skills in writing and communications.<sup>1</sup> In this course, we will focus on these skills so that you learn strategies that will help you prosper in your career.</p>	<p><b>How</b> </p> <p>Follow Canvas <b>Modules</b> to write these documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters, memos, &amp; email</li> <li>• Instructions</li> <li>• An oral presentation</li> <li>• A technical description</li> <li>• A recommendation report</li> </ul>
<p><b>What You Need</b></p>		
<p><b>Course Textbook</b></p> <p><i>Technical Communication</i> by Markel &amp; Selber. 13th ed. Macmillan, 2021.<sup>2</sup></p> 	<p><b>Computer</b></p> <p>A reliable computer–Linux, FreeBSD, Windows, or Mac.</p>	<p><b>A/V Gear</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A camera or a phone with a camera. Screenshot support on your computer.</li> <li>• Earbuds and a microphone</li> </ul>
<p><b>Internet</b></p> <p>Working, dependable Internet access and a backup plan. If the connection where you live goes out, know where you can go for free WiFi.</p>	<p><b>Software</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word processor &amp; slide software that saves DOCX, PDF, &amp; PPTX files, OR Google Drive.</li> <li>• Image editing software that saves JPG &amp; PNG files.</li> <li>• Video recording software that saves MP4s or MOVs.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Email</b></p> <p>I will use your VT.EDU email and 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.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center, October 2016, “The State of American Jobs: How the shifting economic landscape is reshaping work and society and affecting the way people think about the skills and training they need to get ahead.”

<sup>2</sup> Print or [ebook](#) of 13th ed. is fine. Other editions may work, but page numbers will differ. I can’t provide page numbers for every edition. If you choose an alternate edition, consult a classmate to find resources that are not in the text you have.

## Short Course Schedule & Full Draft Due Dates







This schedule may change to adapt to your needs and those of others taking the course. Check Canvas Announcements for updates and changes to the dates. Check the Module Instructions each week for specific details on what's due. *Last updated January 17, 2023.*

If you purchased an eBook access code, use this link: <https://achieve.macmillanlearning.com/courses/5tz3bd>

Dates	Activities and Work	Full Draft Due Dates	Markel & Selber Readings
Jan 17-20	Module 1: Course Intro		Ch 1, "Introduction to Technical Communication"
Jan 23-27	Module 2: Getting Started in Tech Writing Jan 23: Last Day to Add		Ch 2, "Understanding Ethical & Legal Considerations" Ch 3, "Writing Technical Documents"
Jan 30-Feb 3	Module 3: Convincing Your Audience	Feb 3: Food Label Analysis	Ch 5, "Analyzing Your Audience & Purpose" Ch 8, "Communicating Persuasively"
Feb 6-10	Module 4: Writing Technical Descriptions		Ch 20, "Writing Definitions, Descriptions, & Instructions," pp. 561-569 Ch 11, "Designing Print & Online Documents"
Feb 13-17	Module 5: Writing Instructions		Ch 20, "Writing Definitions, Descriptions, & Instructions," pp.569-587
Feb 20-24	Module 6: Submitting Your Description & Instructions	Feb 24: Description & Instructions	
Feb 27-Mar 3	Module 7: Pitching Your Topic Feb 27: Last Day to Drop		Ch 21, "Making Oral Presentations"
Mar 4-12	Spring Break Begins, No classes or email (other than emergencies)		
Mar 13-17	Module 8: Using Graphics & Visuals		Ch 12, "Creating Graphics"
Mar 20-24	Module 9: Submitting Your Pitch	Mar 24: Pitch	Ch 9, "Emphasizing Important Information"
Mar 27-31	Module 10: Conducting Research Mar 28: Last day to resign w/o penalty		Ch 6, "Researching Your Subject" App Part A, "Skimming Your Sources & Taking Notes" App Part B, "Documenting Your Sources"
Apr 3-7	Module 11: Structuring Your Recommendation	Apr 7: Report Outline	Ch 7, "Organizing Your Information" Ch 18, "Writing Recommendation Reports"
Apr 10-14	Module 12: Drafting the Body Sections of Your Recommendation		Ch 18, "Writing Recommendation Reports" Ch 11, "Designing Print & Online Documents"
Apr 17-21	Module 13: Drafting the Front & Back Matter of Your Recommendation Apr 19: Last day to reschedule exams		Ch 14, "Corresponding in Print and Online" App Part A, "Skimming Your Sources & Taking Notes" App Part B, "Documenting Your Sources"
Apr 24-28	Module 14: Submitting Your Recommendation	Apr 25: Recommendation Report Apr 28: Grace Period for All Open Work Closes	
May 1-3	Module 15: Evaluating Your Progress May 3: Last day of classes; Last day to withdraw		Ch 8, "Communicating Persuasively" (Review)
May 5-10	May 5: Exam opens at 12:00 AM	May 10: Exam due by 11:59 PM (No Grace Period)	

## Suggested Weekly Schedule & Due Dates

The schedule outlined below suggests how to break up your work during the week and submit your work on the suggested due dates. Take this as a suggestion, not a required schedule. Everyone works differently, and we all have other obligations. Adjust the schedule to make it work for you.

Day of the Week	To Do	Due Dates & Grace Period
<b>Monday</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check the the Module Instructions page in Canvas for the specific activities for the week.</li> <li>Schedule time to complete the activities for the week as well as any work remaining from the previous week.</li> </ul>	
<b>Tuesday</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read the textbook and other readings/viewings, looking for details that will help you complete the activities for the week.</li> <li>Complete the Tuesday Try-It Activity, after reading or watching the related information.</li> </ul>	
<b>Wednesday</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue work on the week's activities.</li> </ul>	Grace Period ends at 11:59 PM for activities from the previous week (including Try-Its and Check-In Surveys).
<b>Thursday</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue work on any other readings and activities for the week.</li> <li>Complete the Thursday Try-It Activity, after reading or watching the related information.</li> </ul>	
<b>Friday</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete any remaining for work the week.</li> </ul>	Due Date for the week's work.
<b>Weekend</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take a break. No one should work all the time!</li> <li>If you do want to work, go for it You can work ahead or catch up.</li> <li>Remember that I take the weekends off, so you'll receive replies to any emails on Monday.</li> </ul>	



## Due Dates & the Late Policy

I accept late work for most of the assignments in this course. You don't need to ask in advance or explain why your work is late. Just take more time when you need it, as many times as you need it. Turn your work in when you can before the grace period ends.

I accept late work  
(no questions asked)

### Grace Period

The grace period covers most situations, whether it's a religious holiday, academic conflict, illness, or a personal issue. If you cannot meet a due date, use the grace period.

The grace period occurs between the due date and the last moment that you can submit work in the course. Canvas indicates the end of the grace period as the "available until" date, shown in the screenshot on the right.

If you turn in your work during the Grace Period, Canvas will mark the activity as *Late*. Don't worry about this late label. There is no grade penalty for work submitted during the grace period.

### Due Dates and Grace Period, by Assignment Type

Most work in this course has a grace period, but there are exceptions. The length of the grace period depends upon the kind of activity:

Assignment Type	Open Grace Period	3-Day Grace Period	No Grace Period
Syllabus Review		✓	
Contact Info Form		✓	
Check-In Surveys		✓	
Try-Its		✓	
Self-Checks & Other Weekly Activities	✓*		
Full Draft Submissions	✓*		
Optional Final Exam			✓†

\* Ends at 11:59 PM on Friday, April 28, 2023.

† Optional Final Exam must be submitted by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, so I can submit course grades on time. Make-ups and extensions must be approved by the Dean of Students.

### Interruptions in Course Progress

In the case of extenuating circumstances, please let me know **immediately**. I understand that things happen. As long as you're honest and timely in letting me know, we can try to work something out.

### Incomplete Policy

My department's policy states, "Incompletes are for students who did their work during the semester but could not complete course requirements because of a problem or emergency at the end of the term." As a result, I cannot offer Incompletes for anyone who failed to keep up during the term. If you find you have an impossible amount of work to complete by the end of the term, withdrawing from the course is likely the best solution.

## Sequence of Technical Writing Projects

In this course, you will compose a series of documents (labeled as Full Drafts) that focus on food-related issues. This sequence of projects will be your focus for the term.

### Analyze Food or Beverage Packaging



You will analyze the packaging and labels for a food or beverage (e.g., a cereal box, can of soup, wine bottle) to see how it works as a technical document.

You will record the details you find in a table that lists the characteristics of a technical document, measures of excellence in technical documents, and principles for ethical communication. Finally, you will predict the likely characteristics of the audience for this technical writing, using the data you have recorded as supporting evidence.

### Write a Technical Description

You will choose an object or process related to food and compose a technical description in the form of a fact or info sheet. Objects can include tools (e.g., wok, mortar and pestle), ingredients (e.g., ginger, hops), and food items (e.g., okonomiyaki, Chicken Kyiv). Processes can include julienning and fertilizing.

You will include specific details and relevant illustrations that describe the item or process is, how it works, and its principal parts or steps.



### Compose Instructions



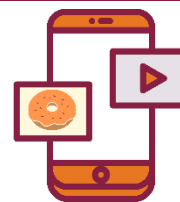
You will create instructions for how to prepare, grow, select, or serve food. Your project can be a recipe, but you are not limited to recipes. You can also focus on topics such as how to pair a beer with a meal, how to harvest strawberries, how to choose the freshest produce, or how to season a cast iron skillet.

You will write numbered steps, using action verbs in the imperative mood. Your project will include photos or illustrations demonstrating the steps.

### Pitch Your Recommendation Report Topic

You will pitch your recommendation topic in a video presentation that describes your topic. Your video should be no more than 3 minutes long and should show either yourself talking to the audience or slides that illustrate your story.

You will explain your topic, why you chose it, and why your readers will be interested. The presentation should also include details on your research plan and be accompanied by a transcript.



### Make Your Recommendation



You will identify a food-related challenge that Virginia Tech students face, investigate solutions, and make a recommendation to your readers. You will have a range of projects to focus on, including recommendations on decreasing grocery bills, eating vegan on campus, optimizing food truck access, and addressing food insecurity.

You will include customary sections (e.g., intro, methods, results, conclusions, and recommendations), along with front and back matter. Your report will probably be 10-15 pages long.

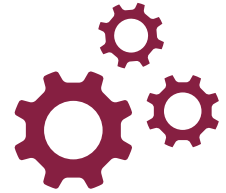
## Why Food & Technical Writing?

All the full drafts in this course focus on the food and beverage industry and food and beverages more generally. I have chosen this focus for the following reasons.

### Focus on a topic everyone can relate to

Every career can involve food or beverage in some way.

- Any major in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences connects to food.
- Engineers design machines that process and package food and beverages as well as the appliances people use to preserve, cook, and store food and beverages.
- Engineers and scientists examine food's chemical composition, green and sustainable production, and food transportation and distribution.
- Any business major can find a job in the food or beverage industry as well as in companies that manufacture or sell products related to food like cookware and appliances.
- Computer scientists develop programs that keep machines processing and inventorying products—and they develop the online presences and stores for these products.
- Computer scientists and engineers manage the software and hardware that keep businesses running (from operating systems to word processors and spreadsheets).
- Architecture, building construction, and real estate majors all participate in designing, building, and selling the spaces where food is stored, prepared, cooked, and eaten.



In short, everyone can have a job in the food industry, regardless of their major. It may not be the path that you ultimately take, but it's a topic everyone can relate to.

### Examine ethical issues that everyone understands

Because this is a Pathways course, we discuss ethical issues relating to technical writing. We can consider the importance of honesty, inclusion, clarity, and the other principles for ethical communication.

The focus on food lets us also talk about issues like food insecurity, sustainability of agricultural and animal resources, protecting the environment, and eliminating food waste. Talking about food and beverages broadens the topics we can explore.



### Bridge from workplace writing to other kinds of technical writing

Technical writing definitely takes place in the workplace, but it can take place outside the workplace as well. You can complete technical writing work in your community, in social organizations, and even with family and friends.

Focusing on food makes it easier to include writing in scenarios that take place outside the workplace. Further, students in the course who do not have any industry experience can feel more comfortable focusing on community and family writing contexts.





# A Module in Canvas is like a Bucket

This course uses Modules in Canvas to organize the work that you will do for each week.

You may notice that some of the sidebar navigation, like Assignments and Quizzes, is not shown in the course Canvas site. That's because everything you need is in Modules.



## What Is a Module?



In this course, a module is like a bucket. It contains everything you will need for a week.

Inside, you will find details on the readings and other activities that you are to complete for the relevant week.

## What's Inside the Bucket?

### The Instructions Page



The Module Instructions page outlines the directions for the week. This page tells you what to do with everything that is in the bucket, and it gives you the suggested due dates for the work.

Be sure to notice these details on the Module Instructions page:

- General details on the current projects in the first paragraphs
- Sections on what you need to read, to write, to check, and to assess
- Links to the resources and activities for the week

### Activities for the Week



The activities you need to complete for the week are listed under these headings on the Module Instructions page:

- To Read: textbook chapters, Canvas pages, webpages, and videos
- To Write: informal and formal document assignments
- To Check-In: weekly surveys to tell or show me how you are doing

## How Assessment Works

This course does not use letter or number grades on the work you submit. Research<sup>3</sup> tells us grades are a terrible way to measure learning, so I don't use them.

Your work in this course is marked Complete or Incomplete, based on the effort you put into the task and on whether the work meets the criteria for the assignment. Since this course focuses on technical writing, the work you do needs to meet specific genre requirements. These requirements drive the criteria for each task you complete.



### Complete

I mark your work Complete in Canvas when it meets **all** of the following requirements:

- Submitted before the end of the Grace Period.
- Matches the assignment.
- Follows the [Undergraduate Honor System](#) and the [Principles of Community](#).
- Fulfills all of the criteria for the assignment (all criteria in the rubric are marked Yes).



### Incomplete

I mark your work Incomplete when it falls into **any** of the following categories:

- Submitted after the end of the Grace Period.
- Is not finished.
- Does not match the assignment.
- Does not fulfill the criteria for the assignment.



If your work earns an Incomplete, **you can revise and resubmit** as long as the Grace Period is still open.

### Complete and Incomplete Notation in Canvas

The Grades tool in Canvas keeps track of your work using a simple binary code:

- Complete work is marked with a one (1) or a checkmark (✓) in Canvas.
- Incomplete work is marked with a zero (0) or an X mark (✗) in Canvas.

This binary code does not bear any grade value. Your goal is to earn a Complete on as much work as you need to reach your goal for the course.

### When Is Work Marked Complete/Incomplete?

Use the table below to determine when I mark your work in Canvas Grades. If a personal issue comes up for me (like I get sick), I may not be work as quickly as usual. Allow an extra day or two just in case.

Kind of Work	When It's Marked in Canvas
Syllabus Review & Contact Info Form	Marked within 24 hours after the Grace Period ends but allow a few days.
Weekly Activities (including Check-Ins, Self-Checks, & Try-Its)	Marked immediately by Canvas after submission, unless noted otherwise.
Full Draft Submissions	Marked after the Suggested Due Date, by comparing the work to the criteria. Allow a week. If submitted during the grace period, marked within a week of submission.
Optional Final Exam	Marked after the end of exams.

<sup>3</sup> If you want to learn more about grades and assessment, check out the work of [Jesse Stommel](#), [Alfie Kohn](#), and [Susan D. Blum](#).

## How Course Grades Are Calculated

There is only one letter grade in this course: the course grade I enter for you at the end of the term. Your course grade is determined by comparing the amount of work you have earned a Complete on to the expectations shown in the table below, which serves as a contract for course grades.

### Effort Expectations Contract for Each Grade Level

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Grade Level	Effort Expectations
A	Earn a Complete on all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All Full Draft Submissions</li><li>• All Check-In Surveys</li><li>• All Weekly Activities (including Try-Its &amp; Self-Checks)</li></ul>
B	Attempt and submit all five of the Full Draft Submissions  Earn a Complete on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Four Full Draft Submissions</li><li>• 85% of the Check-In Surveys</li><li>• 85% of the Weekly Activities (including Try-Its &amp; Self-Checks)</li></ul>
C	Attempt and submit all five of the Full Draft Submissions  Earn a Complete on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Three Full Draft Submissions</li><li>• 75% of the Check-In Surveys</li><li>• 75% of the Weekly Activities (including Try-Its &amp; Self-Checks)</li></ul>
D	Attempt and submit fewer than five of the Full Draft Submissions  Earn a Complete on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At least two Full Draft Submissions</li><li>• 65% of the Check-In Surveys</li><li>• 65% of the Weekly Activities (including Try-Its &amp; Self-Checks)</li></ul>
F	Attempt and submit fewer than five of the Full Draft Submissions  Earn a Complete on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None of the Full Draft Submissions</li><li>• 64% or less of the Check-In Surveys</li><li>• 64% or less of the Weekly Activities (including Try-Its &amp; Self-Checks)</li></ul>

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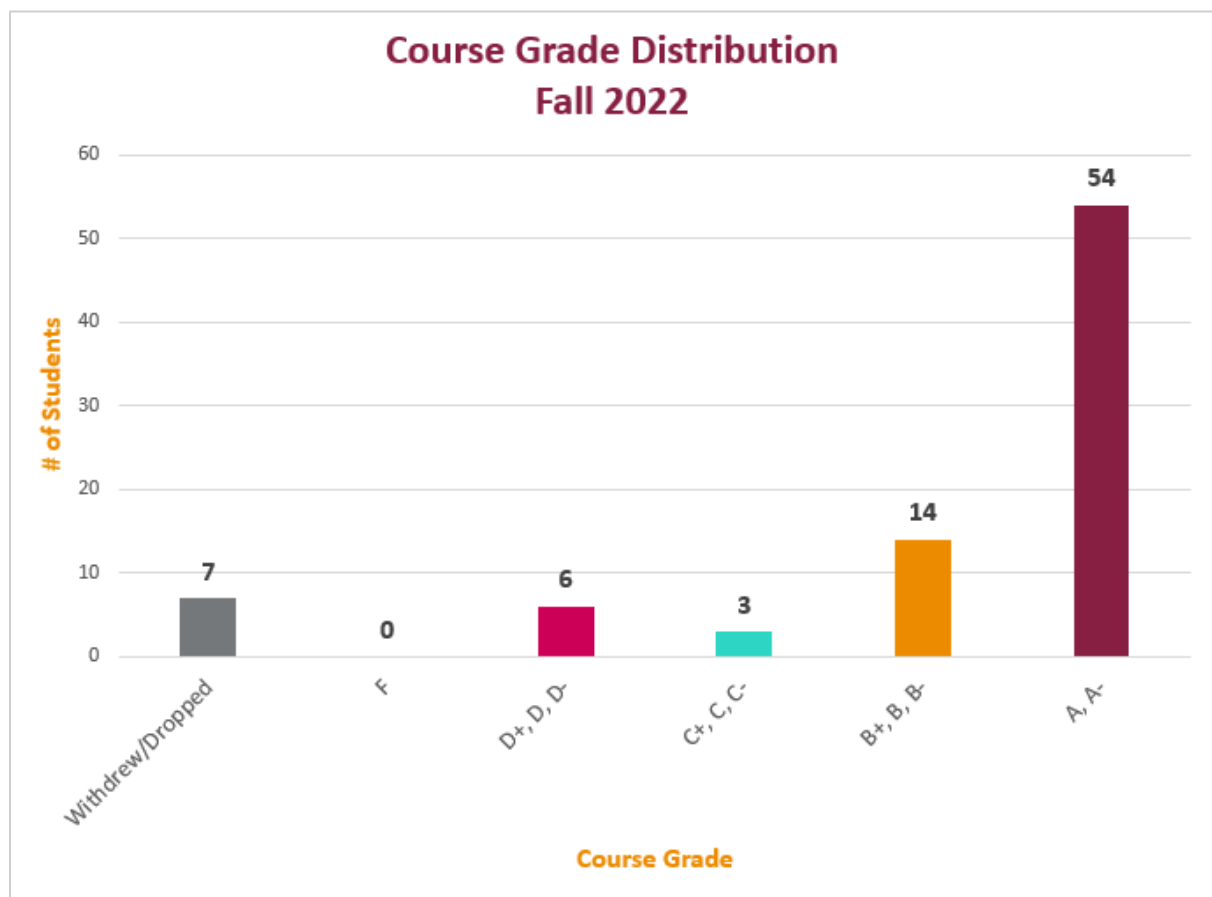
## Additional Grade Calculation Guidelines

- I do not average the percentages or make any other calculation with them to determine your grade.
- The different **categories listed on the Effort Expectations Contract are not equivalent**. The Full Drafts category is the most important category. It becomes your base grade and then I move your estimate up or down based on the other two categories (Weekly Activities and Check-In Surveys).
- You cannot pass the course without earning a Complete on at least TWO Full Drafts. If you have an F for the Full Drafts category, you have an F as your course grade.
- To earn an A or A- in the course, you must earn a Complete on ALL FIVE of the Full Drafts.

## Course Grade Estimate Distribution

The bar graph below shows the course grade distribution for my Fall 2022 Technical Writing courses.

Generally speaking, if you do the work in the course you have a 70% chance of earning a grade in the A range. If you don't do the work, you likely have a course grade in the C or D range. People in the F range usually withdraw from the course.



## Checking Your Progress

Use these instructions to determine where your work in the course falls at any point:

1. Find the percentages for the work you have Completed on the **Grades** page in Canvas. Scroll to the bottom of the page to find a table of categories and details on the work you have completed, like this example:

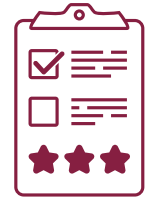
Name	Score	Out of
Full Draft Submissions	80%	4.00/5.00
Check-In Surveys	85%	12.00/14.00
Weekly Activities	75%	27.00/36.00
Course Grade	0%	0.00/0.00

2. Check the chart of Effort Expectations Contract for Each Grade Level (on page 11) to find the expected percentages for each category.
3. Compare the percentages on the Canvas Grades page to the expectations on the Effort Expectations Contract for Each Grade Level. For instance, the student in the example image has 85% for Check-In Surveys; therefore, I marked that the student is in the B range for that category.
4. Determine your progress strictly according to the percentage cut-offs. There is no rounding or bumping up.
5. Look at the overall numbers to decide which course grade you are closest to. Keep this information in mind:
  - o The Full Drafts category holds the strongest weight on your grade.
  - o I start with your course grade for the Full Drafts and then move your grade up or down based on how you did in the other categories.
  - o You cannot earn an A if you do not earn a Complete on all of the Full Drafts.
  - o I do not average the percentages or make any other calculation with them to determine your grade.

## Optional Final Exam: Performance Review

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At the end of the term and after all work has been marked, I'll review the work you've completed and compare it to the effort expectations. I will fill out the Effort Expectations Rubric, so that you can see your potential course grade. You'll find this information in the Effort Expectations-Based Course Grade Assignment.



After this course grade information is posted, you have two options:

- **If you agree** with the course grade, do nothing. The grade in the rubric will become your course grade. You can skip the final exam.
- **If you disagree** with the course grade, you can propose a different grade by completing the final exam. Use the information in the rubric as the baseline for the course grade you propose in your Final Exam. Use details from the work you have done during the term to support your proposal. Your course grade will be indicated as the grade on the final exam.

The Grades page will compare the effort-based grade to the final exam grade and then show the higher letter grade as your course grade.

If you decide to complete the Final Exam, submit your work by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, May 10, 2023.

Make-ups and extensions for the final exam must be approved by the Dean of Students. If you are a graduating senior this term, any make-up or extension may keep you from graduating on time.



## How to Do Well in This Course

You do well in this course by working on everything until you reach your goal. If you don't do well on an activity, you can always try again (as long as its grace period is still open). Place your effort on doing your best work on every task. Keep the following guidelines in mind



### Focus on Ideas (Not Mistakes)



Focus on what you're trying to say. Forget about the pressure to be perfect. Why? Your ideas and the purpose of your message are the most important part of what you write.

Focusing on perfection can distract writers from developing their ideas. Because we will focus on what you accomplish by the end of the course, mistakes won't undermine your course grade.

### Write for Yourself (Not for Me)

In this course, you are learning writing strategies you will use in the workplace. Don't worry about writing to impress me as your teacher. Why? I am not going to be with you when you enter the workplace.

You need to develop your own sense of what makes writing effective. Your course grade is based on how hard you work to find that out.



### Take Risks (Don't Play It Safe)



Try writing strategies that stretch your abilities and help you learn new things. There's no need to play it safe. Why? Taking risks doesn't count against you.

In fact, taking risks can demonstrate that you're putting in more effort. After all, the safe, easy route doesn't push you to learn and improve.

### Have a Do-Over (No Penalty)

If you take a risk and it doesn't turn out, just try again. If my comments ask you to revise, there is no impact on your grade. Just as in a game, you have unlimited do-overs, as long as the Grace Period is open. Why? Making mistakes is part of the learning process.

Whether it takes two tries or more, you are investing yourself in your writing. As long as you are working to improve, you can't fail.



### Put in the Effort (No Pain, No Gain)



Going through the motions won't produce strong workplace writing. You have to put in hard work and try all the projects. You need to write, rewrite, start over, and try again to improve your projects. The more you work, the better you'll do in the course.

Why? All your work counts toward your course grade, as long as you do the work, listen to feedback, incorporate what you hear, and reflect on how to improve your writing and communication.

## Tips for Success

The key to success in this course is to focus on consistent, regular interaction—with the course materials and with me. Here are five specific ways to make that happen.

### 1. Use Courses Resources

Explore everything on our course Canvas site, and always do the readings. These resources are the online classroom for the course. You'll do better if you use them.



### 2. Check Canvas Daily

If anything changes (like a suggested due date or an assignment), you'll find it in Canvas Announcements first. Check in at least once daily so that you always know what is going on. Alternately, you can [set your Canvas Notifications](#) for the course so that you receive an email or text message when a new Announcement is posted.



### 3. Set a Schedule

Schedule regular class sessions for yourself. Dedicate three or four two-hour sessions on different days, rather than a one-day marathon session of 6 to 8 hours. If your work schedule makes this difficult, do what you can to spread your work out.



### 4. Avoid Last-Minute Work

You'll do better in the class if you get started early. If you wait until the last minute, you may not have time to complete your work or improve your draft before its suggested due date. Once the grace period ends, you're out of time!



### 5. Questions? Talk to me

I have no way to know when you need help. Tell me how it's going—what works for you and what you're unsure about. Use your weekly Check-in Survey to update me. If you have a question that can't wait for the Check-In Survey, use the [Inbox tool in Canvas](#).



## Get Help with the Course

Use any of these options to connect with me or others in the class for help.

### General Questions in Canvas Discussions

Post your general questions in the [General Q&A Discussion Board in Canvas](#) so that anyone who knows the answer can help you. Additionally, you can check the [General Q&A Discussion Board](#) for questions that have already been answered.

### Personal Questions in Canvas Inbox

For personal questions, send a private message in Canvas, using [the Inbox tool](#). Canvas messages are secure, so they meet all [FERPA requirements](#) and protect your privacy.

### Messages Using Google Chat

Send me chat messages that I will see whenever I am online. Follow the instructions on the [Get started with Google Chat](#) page. You can also find help on the [Chat cheat sheet](#). If I am online when you message, you can get immediate, live help.

### Help from the Writing Center

Visit the [Writing Center](#) on the second floor of Newman Library. You can go if you have a draft, an outline, or just ideas. Bring your assignment description with you. Make appointments online by setting up an account with [WOnline](#) or call the Writing Center director at 540-231-9270.

### Help with Other Academic Areas

If you require academic support, investigate the University's services. Service areas include

- [Student Success Center](#)
- [Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program](#)
- [Student Athlete Academic Support Services](#)
- [University Academic Advising Center](#)
- [Office of Veterans' Services](#)

### My Availability During the Term

#### Typical online hours

Normally, I am online from late afternoon through early morning hours, so look for responses from me during those hours.

#### Appointments

If you can't catch me on Google Chat, we can set up an appointment. Send me a message using the Canvas Inbox, and tell me what you want to discuss and when you're available.

#### Typical offline hours

Weekdays:

- 5 AM to 3 PM
- 7:30 PM to 10 PM

Weekends:

- After 5PM on Friday
- All Day Saturday & Sunday

I will check in during the weekend, and I may reply. Do not worry if you don't hear from me until Monday however.