

# English 314: Technical Writing

Spring 2011

Instructor: Curtis Newbold

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**Office Hours** T/TH 12:30 – 2:30

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**Goals:** *ENGL 314: Technical Writing* is designed to introduce students to the theory and practice of professional communication and how it is used in workplace settings. Students will learn the conventions of several technical writing genres: letters, research reports, fact sheets, instructions, memos, and recommendation reports. Students will learn appropriate document design strategies and students will learn to investigate audiences and how to tailor their writing to meet the needs of those audiences. In regards to technical communication, by the end of this course, students will have learned how to:

- Research and present technical information in specific fields of study
- Execute appropriate rhetorical strategies for meeting audience needs
- Approach common ethical dilemmas
- Collaborate in teams to produce effective communications
- Write and format several document types
- Apply effective document design skills
- Give professional presentations using effective visuals
- Simplify and re-write technical information to make documents readable
- Use technical writing skills to apply for a job

**Required Materials:** For this course, students will only need to purchase the **Pearson Online Solutions Student Access Code**. The access code can be purchased online at [http://www.pearsoncustom.com/sc/cu\\_techwriting/](http://www.pearsoncustom.com/sc/cu_techwriting/) and costs \$30.00 USD. With the access code, students will have full access to the textbook we are using (*Technical Communication*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. By John M. Lannon) plus a wide variety of other resources. No hardcopy textbook is required for the course, though if students wish to purchase it, it can be found on Amazon.com for about \$70.00 used or \$85.00 new.

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## Assignments, Assessments, and Course Proceedings

At first glance, this course will appear very demanding. As students look at the “List of Assessments” sheet accompanying this syllabus, students will see that there are 14 assignments, one comprehensive exam, one final portfolio, and 20 quizzes. Also accompanying this syllabus, students will see the reading and quiz schedule, which outlines the 20 chapters we will be covering over the course of the semester. With many things to cover, this course will move at a fast pace. However, many of the assignments are “small” and many of the chapters are short. In general, students can expect that any assignment that is worth 25 points will take students about an hour to complete; assignments worth 50 points will likely take 1 – 3 hours to complete; assignments worth 75 points will likely take 2 – 4 hours to complete; and assignments worth 100 points will likely take 3 – 10 hours to complete. Students should plan 30 – 45 minutes for reading chapters and taking quizzes. In general, this means that students can expect 2 – 4 hours of homework for the course per week, or 30 – 45 minutes per day if students plan accordingly.

**Quizzes:** As noted on the “List of Assessments” sheet, there are 20 quizzes for the course, each based on the reading for the following class. Each quiz is worth 5 points, which means there are 100 points possible for the quizzes. **However**, only 50 points will be

required. This means that there is a potential to earn 50 points extra credit if students take all 20 quizzes and get 100% on them. Or, if students only take 10 quizzes, and get 100% on each of them, students will get full credit for the quizzes. Quizzes will be taken online through the MyTechCommLab website ([http://www.pearsoncustom.com/sc/cu\\_techwriting](http://www.pearsoncustom.com/sc/cu_techwriting)).

**Assignments:** All assignments will follow the schedule on the “List of Assessments” sheet and “Course Schedule” unless otherwise noted. Assignments vary widely in difficulty and time to complete, so students will want to plan accordingly. The majority of assignments will be turned in on BlackBoard by midnight of the due date, while some will be submitted as a hard copy in class. Please take note of which method I need each assignment turned in. Please refer to and closely follow assignment descriptions posted on BlackBoard under the **Assignment Descriptions** folder in the “Content” area.

**Saving Work:** When students upload an assignment to BlackBoard, please save the file as: **yourlastname\_AssignmentName.doc** (for example: Newbold\_InstructionSet.doc).

**Comprehensive Exam:** There will be one test for the course—in late April—that will cover the highlights from the course. The test questions will be drawn from in-class lectures and discussions as well as chapter readings. The test is worth 75 points; however, there are 100 points possible. This means any score students receive above 75 will be extra credit. Test will be taken on BlackBoard and is closed note, closed book, and closed resources. We will have a test review day in class the class before the exam. On the day of the test, students will need to go to “**Assignments**,” and there will be a test that students can click. The test will appear only on the test day, as it is set by a timer. Once students open the test, students will be able to read and answer the questions. BlackBoard will grade your test upon completion and report your score immediately.

**Late Work:** All assignments are due on the due date; however, late assignments are accepted—for up to 5 days—but will be docked **10 percent per late day**. Weekends count too. *For example, if an assignment is due on Thursday and students turn it in on Monday, it is four days late. This equals 40%, so the highest students could possibly make on an assignment worth 100 points would be a 60, assuming that the assignment was otherwise perfect.* Extensions (in rare circumstances) must be approved by me **PRIOR** to the due date. **No quizzes may be taken late. The comprehensive exam cannot be taken late. No presentations may be given late.**

**Attendance & Participation:** Attendance will be taken in class. Because we only meet officially in class 24 times during the semester, it is important that students can be in class as often as possible. However, I allow students to miss up to three (3) days without penalty. After 3 days, students will lose 10 points per day up to 50 points worth (or 8 days total). If a student misses more than 8 days, he or she will fail the course. School-sponsored absences are the only exception to this. Any other absence (for illness, vacation, or other issue) is considered the same. Students **may not** miss class on days when assigned to give a presentation. If a student misses a presentation day, he or she will lose all points for that assignment. For participation, students only need to be present and alert. Playing on your laptop, reading a book, or sleeping will count as an absence.

**BlackBoard:** The Course Syllabus, Course Schedule, “List of Assessments,” and Reading and Quiz Schedule can be found in the “**Course Info**” folder under the ‘Information’ link. Assignments can be found in the “**Assignments**” folder under the ‘Content’ link. All other documents and samples will be in the “**Course Documents**” folder under the ‘Content’

link and will be announced in class when new items are available. The Comprehensive Exam can be found in the “**Assignments**” folder.

**Gradebook:** All grades will be updated in BlackBoard. Please review your grades often to ensure everything is correct and so that students know what students need to do to earn the grade that students want.

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## Other Information

**Rounding grades:** At the end of the semester, I round grades to the nearest percentage. If it is a .5 or higher, I round up. If students have, for example, an 89.5, it will round up to a 90%, or an ‘A’. But, if it is 89.4, it will remain a B.

**Email Responses:** Outside of class, email is the best way to reach me. I will do my best respond within 24 hours (usually sooner) to emails. For example, if students send me an email at 6:00pm on a Tuesday, a response should not be expected that same evening. If I happen to be online, I will try to respond, but more than likely, students will not hear back until the next day. Like many workers in the field, I don’t typically work in the evenings or much on the weekends.

**Classroom Behavior:** Respect for all persons, regardless of sex, age, religion, status, sexual orientation, background, etc. is expected at all times. Also, be considerate of the learning environment. Please do not listen to iPods, play games, text, read books or newspapers, or use laptops for anything other than taking notes or doing in-class activities. Please do not answer cell phones in class and try to remember to turn them off or to vibrate. I do not mind if you eat snacks or have beverages in class, but please do not bring anything noisy or that emits odors.

**Academic Integrity:** According to the *2007/2008 Undergraduate Announcements*, “As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson’s vision of this institution as a ‘high seminary of learning.’ Fundamental to that vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating or stealing in any form.” I agree and comply entirely with this statement.

**Students with Disabilities** It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities. Students are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services to discuss their individualized needs for accommodation. *Please let me know as soon as possible so we can work out accommodations.*

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## Important Spring 2011 Dates

January 12 – Classes begin  
January 17 – Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday  
January 19 – Last day to register or add a class  
January 26 – Last day to drop a class or withdraw from the University without a W grade  
March 18 – Last day to drop a class or withdraw from the University without a final grade  
March 21 – 25 – Fall Break  
May 2 – 6 – Examinations  
May 11 – Last day for instructor to post grades