

ENGLISH 421: TECHNICAL WRITING

Fall 2020 | 009 | CRN 19143 | 3.0 credits

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Virtual Office Hours: T 2-3pm via Zoom or by appointment.

Link to Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/7190610153?pwd=OEY1QTRSvVRyQkdvOHBLdkREZG9CQT09>

Meeting ID: 719 061 0153

Passcode: Ydx9pr

COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 421 helps students become better technical writers across global audiences, for multiple purposes, and in a variety of media. The work of the course is centered on presenting technical material in written and visual formats that demonstrate an awareness of audience needs and contexts, achieve implicit and explicit rhetorical purposes, and work to effectively address workplace, social, or global problems.

Communication across multiple audiences and for multiple purposes continues to be a desired skill set in technical and professional fields. Beyond field-specific knowledge and experience, successful and ethical communication drives the professional world. This class, in content and form, models these successful communication practices. Working individually and in teams, students learn effective strategies for communicating about and with technology, particularly in networked workplaces and through usability testing. To achieve success in this course, students must display the ability to succeed in their future workplaces by developing a variety of informative and visually effective print and electronic documents.

COURSE OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Use technical writing theories and approaches to analyze and solve problems individually and in teams
- Communicate complex technical information, processes, and procedures via a variety of media, genres, and technologies to a range of audiences and stakeholders
- Adapt written genre conventions and expectations to both technical and non-technical audiences with changing organizational needs
- Apply primary and secondary research methods and strategies to produce technical documents
- Demonstrate awareness of both the technical and human needs of users, paying special attention to cultural diversity and global sensitivity
- Interpret, contextualize, explain, and visualize data sets in the context of specific rhetorical contexts or problems

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Johnson-Sheehan, R. (2017). *Technical communication strategies for today* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Pearson. **Please purchase the e-book rental version of this text.**

All other required readings can be found on Brightspace under the relevant weekly modules.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM COURSEWORK

Each student will be responsible for completing, whether individually or as part of a team, 3 major projects. Each project will have multiple components that contribute to the final project. You must complete all of the projects in a timely manner in order to pass the course. Just like in the working world, you are required to submit your work on time. I do not accept late work unless you have reached out to me with sufficient notice beforehand requesting reasonable accommodation.

Project 1 - Redesign Portfolio (200 points): Students will take previously designed documents and rewrite and redesign them with respect to visual appeal, accessibility, audience, and clarity. The portfolio will be introduced by a memo detailing and explaining revision choices.

Project 2 - Technical Documents Project (200 points): Students will work in small teams to develop a short series of related technical documents, which may include technical descriptions, specifications, instruction manuals, troubleshooting guides, procedures, protocols, and fact sheets.

Project 3 - Formal Report (300 points): Students will work in teams to execute a collaborative project: a factual, data-centered response to a research question. The formal written report will be accompanied by a slideshow presentation.

Peer Workshops (100 points): Students will participate in regular peer workshops in which they review, critique, and offer constructive criticism of peer work in both oral and written forms.

Additional Assignments (200 points): Students will complete other minor assignments throughout the semester, including participation in the discussion board (5 pts each), reading quizzes (5 pts each), and exercises (10 pts each).

GRADING

The course grade will be determined as follows:

Assignment	Points*
◇Project 1	200
Peer Workshop	25
◇Project 2	200
Peer Workshop	25
◇Project 3	300
Peer Workshop	50
◇Exercises (10)	100
◇Discussion Posts (10)	50
◇Quizzes (10)	50
TOTAL	1000

Letter Grades/Point Range
A+ = 1000–970
A = 969–940
A- = 939–900
B+ = 899–870
B = 869–840
B- = 839–800
C+ = 799–770
C = 769–740
C- = 739–700
D+ = 699–670
D = 669–640
D- = 639–600
F = Below 600

***You must complete all three projects to pass the class.**

****No rounding up. All grades are final.**

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

Participation: Your success in this class is largely dependent on your regular engagement and daily efforts. Every week, you will be set a list of tasks in the form of assignments, discussions, quizzes, and peer workshop to be completed either in-class or online to help you accomplish the shared objectives of this course. Developing relationships with your instructor and your peers also helps you in successfully achieving your goals. In instances when you are unable to participate actively in the class, you are responsible for reaching out to a classmate or to me as early as you can so we can identify appropriate adjustments or alternatives to completing satisfactory work and meeting the course objectives.



Please note: due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the actual method of delivering this course may change over the course of the semester. Please pay close attention to e-mails from me and the Announcements section of Brightspace where I will let you know if there are any shifts.

Teamwork: Being a “team player” is often listed as priority in hiring in technical work environments. One of the goals of this course is to develop our teamwork skills by working with our peers in collaborative, team-based writing projects. You will have the opportunity to participate on a team in a variety of roles; offer and receive feedback from peers; develop proposals, conflict resolution plans, and team calendars; and establish effective modes of communication within a team setting. Your own contributions and involvement will be assessed by both you, your team, and your instructor.



Late work: As with the real-world work environment, you are expected to organize your time and work hard to meet deadlines. I generally do not accept late work. That said, if circumstances arise that will make it impossible for you to complete one of the major projects or exercises on time, please reach out to me as soon as possible so we can work something out. Discussion posts and quizzes will not be accepted after the deadline, and the grade in the gradebook will be given as a zero (0).



Contacting the Instructor: Please contact me via email at sweech@purdue.edu. I will respond within 24 hours on the weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. Please do not expect a reply after 7:00 pm EST.

Due to social distancing measures, my office isn't ideal for meeting with students, therefore I will be keeping regular virtual office hours on Tuesdays from 2-3pm via Zoom. Additionally, I will make myself flexible to meet with students during the day as needed. Please send me an email to arrange a time to meet via Zoom, and I will send you an invitation with a link for the scheduled time. Please be prepared to use the “screen share” feature so we can look at your work together in real time. These meetings prove to be extremely beneficial for students, so please don't hesitate to reach out.



Academic Integrity: Academic Integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information that is submitted provides the greatest opportunity for the university to investigate the concern. Incidents of academic misconduct in this course will be addressed by the course instructor and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for

review at the university level. Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that particular assignment, and at the instructor's discretion may result in a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university, may be considered.

Purdue Honor Pledge: As a Boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - we are Purdue.

Nondiscrimination Policy: All class participants are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and sensitive manner towards others and the course material. Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. Purdue's nondiscrimination policy can be found at http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea_eou_statement.html.

Accessibility and Accommodation: Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247.

If you're struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (765)494-6995 and <http://www.purdue.edu/caps/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office of the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed: Try WellTrack, <https://purdue.welltrack.com/>. Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time.

If you need support and information about options and resources: Please see the Office of the Dean of Students, <http://www.purdue.edu/odos>, for drop-in hours (M-F, 8 am- 5 pm).

Major Campus Emergency: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines, and grading are subject to change that may be necessitated by a revised calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted on Bright Space and I will send an email.

The university has several ways of communicating campus emergencies, such as natural disasters and human-caused incidents. Here are some things you can do to ensure you are alerted in the case an emergency:

- For any emergency, text or call 911.

- Program emergency numbers into your phone in the case of an emergency:
 - Purdue Police: (765) 494-8221
 - Purdue Fire: (765) 494-6919
- Keep your cell phone on to receive a Purdue ALERT text message. Sign up at www.purdue.edu/securepurdue

In the Event a Student is Quarantined or Isolated: If you become quarantined or isolated at any point in time during the semester, in addition to support from the Protect Purdue Health Center, you will also have access to an Academic Case Manager who can provide you academic support during this time. Your Academic Case Manager can be reached at acmq@purdue.edu and will provide you with general guidelines/resources around communicating with your instructors, be available for academic support, and offer suggestions for how to be successful when learning remotely. Importantly, if you find yourself too sick to progress in the course, notify your academic case manager and notify me via email or Brightspace. We will make arrangements based on your particular situation. The Office of the Dean of Students (odos@purdue.edu) is also available to support you should this situation occur.

Attendance: Students should stay home and contact the Protect Purdue Health Center (496-INFO) if they feel ill, have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, or suspect they have been exposed to the virus. In the current context of COVID-19, in-person attendance will not be a factor in the final grades, but the student still needs to inform the instructor of any conflict that can be anticipated and will affect the submission of an assignment or the ability to take an exam. Only the instructor can excuse a student from a course requirement or responsibility. When conflicts can be anticipated, such as for many University-sponsored activities and religious observations, the student should inform the instructor of the situation as far in advance as possible. For unanticipated or emergency conflict, when advance notification to an instructor is not possible, the student should contact the instructor as soon as possible by email, through Brightspace, or by phone. When the student is unable to make direct contact with the instructor and is unable to leave word with the instructor's department because of circumstances beyond the student's control, and in cases of bereavement, quarantine, or isolation, the student or the student's representative should contact the Office of the Dean of Students via odos@purdue.edu or phone at 765-494-1747. Our course Brightspace includes a link on Attendance and Grief Absence policies under the University Policies menu.

Protect Purdue Compliance: The [Protect Purdue Plan](#), which includes the [Protect Purdue Pledge](#), is campus policy and as such all members of the Purdue community must comply with the required health and safety guidelines. Required behaviors in this class include: staying home and contacting the Protect Purdue Health Center (496-INFO) if you feel ill or know you have been exposed to the virus, wearing a mask [in classrooms and campus building](#), at all times (e.g., no eating/drinking in the classroom), disinfecting desk/workspace prior to and after use, maintaining proper social distancing with peers and instructors (including when entering/exiting classrooms), refraining from moving furniture, avoiding shared use of personal items, maintaining robust hygiene (e.g., handwashing, disposal of tissues) prior to, during and after class, and following all safety directions from the instructor.

Students who are not engaging in these behaviors (e.g., wearing a mask) will be offered the opportunity to comply. If non-compliance continues, possible results include instructors asking the student to leave class and instructors dismissing the whole class. Students who do not comply with the required health behaviors are violating the University Code of Conduct and will be reported to the Dean of Students Office with sanctions ranging from educational requirements to dismissal from the university.

Any student who has substantial reason to believe that another person in a campus room (e.g., classroom) is threatening the safety of others by not complying (e.g., not wearing a mask) may leave the room without consequence. The student is encouraged to report the behavior to and discuss next steps with their instructor. Students also have the option of reporting the behavior to the [Office of the Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). See also [Purdue University Bill of Student Rights](#).

Writing Lab: Many students believe the Writing Lab exists only for writers who need “extra” (or “remedial”) help; however, having another set of eyes can help all writers strengthen their ideas and focus. Even the most accomplished writers need feedback. The tutors in the Writing Lab can work with students at any stage of the writing process, from planning and drafting to editing and polishing strategies. Writing Lab consultants work with undergraduate and graduate students from every department on any piece of writing from class assignments to job search documents. For more information, please visit https://owl.purdue.edu/writinglab/the_writing_lab_at_purdue.html or call 494-3723.

If you want to be successful in this class...

- Be self-motivated and self-disciplined.
- Be willing to ask questions and speak up, especially if problems arise, or ask me questions privately.
- Do the reading and come to class prepared.
- If available, use class time to complete the work for the course.
- Respect your peers and your instructor. This means being open, generous, and actively attentive.
- Be willing to step out of your comfort zone and try something new.
- Accept critical thinking and decision making as part of the learning process.
- Commit to 5 to 10 hours per week per course.

In contrast, here are some common behaviors that lead to failing the course.

- Reading or doing the work the night before a due date.
- Wait until the last day to begin assignments.
- Forget about deadlines.
- Ignore emails from the instructor and/or your peers regarding course activities.
- Don't get familiar with the grade book and syllabus.

English 421 Course Calendar

This calendar will be periodically adjusted to meet the needs of the class, and short readings may be added to supplement the textbook. See Announcements on Brightspace for updates.

	Weekly Readings	Due Sunday by 11:59 pm
UNIT 1: Redesign Portfolio		
Week 1 Aug. 24 – Aug. 30 <i>Document design principles</i>	Read: Week 1 Assignments Read Chapter 1 Read: Chapter 13 Project 1 Introduced	Discussion Post 1 Exercise 1 Quiz 1
Week 2 Aug. 31 – Sept. 6 <i>Genre and audience</i>	Read: Week 2 Assignments Read: Chapter 2	Discussion Post 2 Exercise 2 Quiz 2
Week 3 Sept. 7 – Sept. 13 <i>Revising with Intent</i>	Read: Week 3 Assignments Peer Workshop Revisions	Project 1: Redesign Portfolio
UNIT 2: Original Technical Documents		
Week 4 Sept. 14 – Sept. 20 <i>Teamwork and primary research</i>	Read: Week 4 Assignments Read: Chapter 3, Chapter 12 Project 2 Introduced Form teams	Exercise 3
Week 5 Sept. 21 – Sept. 27 <i>How to give instructions</i>	Read: Week 5 Assignments Read: Chapter 8	Discussion Post 3 Quiz 3 (Instruction or Troubleshooting Guide)
Week 6 Sept. 28 – Oct. 4 <i>How to write descriptions</i>	Read: Week 6 Assignments Read: Chapter 7	Discussion Post 4 Exercise 4 Quiz 4 (Technical Description or Specification)
Week 7 Oct. 5 – Oct. 11 <i>Writing for professionals and data visualization</i>	Read: Week 7 Assignments Read: Chapter 14	Discussion Post 5 Exercise 5 Quiz 5 (Fact Sheet, Procedure, or Protocol)
Week 8 Oct. 12 – Oct. 18 <i>Revising with intent</i>	Read: Week 8 Assignments Peer Workshop	
Week 9 Oct. 19 – Oct. 25 <i>Polish and complete</i>	Read Week 9 Assignments Revisions practices	Project 2: Technical Documents Final Portfolio Team Evaluation Form

UNIT 3: Formal Report		
Week 10 Oct. 26 – Nov. 1 <i>Pitching an idea</i>	Read Week 10 Assignments Read: Chapter 4 Project 3 Introduced Form teams	Discussion Post 6 (Pitches) Exercise 6 Quiz 6
Week 11 Nov. 2 – Nov. 8 <i>Research methodology</i>	Read Week 11 Assignments Read: Chapter 11	Discussion Post 7 Exercise 7 Quiz 7
Week 12 Nov. 9 – Nov. 15 <i>Primary research and documenting sources</i>	Read Week 12 Assignments Read: Chapter 12	Discussion Post 8 Exercise 8 Quiz 8
Week 13 Nov. 16 – Nov. 22 <i>Presenting research visually</i>	Read Week 13 Assignments Chapter 15	Discussion Post 9 Exercise 9 Quiz 9
Week 14 Nov. 23 – Nov. 29 <i>Report Design</i>	Read Week 14 Assignments	
Week 15 Nov. 30 – Dec. 6 <i>Revising with intent</i>	Read Week 15 Assignments Peer Workshop	Discussion Post 10 Exercise 10 Quiz 10
Finals Week (Dec. 7 – Dec. 12)		
Project 3 and Team Evaluation Form Due Dec. 9 by 11:59 p.m.		