

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

English 316

Course Objectives and Procedures

Technical Communication is a specialized composition course designed primarily to teach the future scientist, engineer and technician the principles of writing the kind of reports they will be expected to write in their future professional work. Secondly, it is designed to assist the students in acquiring the skills needed to write effective reports, examinations, term papers and theses in school.

□ Course Objectives

The course goals for English 495 Senior Writing & Critical Thinking Seminar include:

- ❖ Apply BYU-Idaho Learning Model to prepare, teach one another, and ponder/prove.
- ❖ Become more effective communicators and leaders.
- ❖ Recognize the function of writing within discipline-specific contexts.
- ❖ Demonstrate an ability to use writing principles learned in Foundations, but specifically geared towards carefully developed technical communication.
- ❖ Demonstrate an ability toward discipline-specific research employing a variety of research methodologies, including discipline-specific documentation

□ Text

Riodan, D. & Pauley S. (2004). *Technical report writing today* (9th ed.). NY: Wadsworth.

□ Organization of English 316

English 316 has the following major assignments:

- ❖ Two formal letters
- ❖ Four short reports
- ❖ Major research report
- ❖ Professional portfolio
- ❖ Critique of other students' major research reports
- ❖ Spori Technical Conference presentation
- ❖ Technical communication presentation

Letters. The two formal letters include a letter of application and resume to a specific audience requesting an interview and a letter/proposal

requesting permission and submitting justification for a research project. (100 pts. each)

Short Reports. The short reports (3-5 pages) are designed to teach “the special techniques of technical communication”--essentially the rhetorical patterns of scientific writing. Although rarely will a scientific report be written following only one of these patterns, it is sound pedagogical practice to treat them separately in academic exercises. Thus each of the following is the subject of separate papers (100 pts. each):

- ❖ Description of Mechanism Report
- ❖ Description of Process Report
- ❖ Definition/Classification Report
- ❖ Recommendation/Feasibility Report

Research Report. The short papers are intended as preliminaries to the major paper, which may be based on library, field, or laboratory research or any combination of the three. The paper is ordinarily on a problem-solving topic from the students' own majors, and in it they are expected to demonstrate all of the skills that they have been learning on the shorter papers. In fact, if they are able to fit them into the term paper, they are encouraged to use the short papers as rehearsals of actual sections of the term paper. The term paper (12-15 pages), of course, should demonstrate a quite comprehensive grasp of not only writing skills, but also of research technique, format, appropriate coordination of tables, formulae, graphs, etc. (300 pts.)

Professional Portfolio. Students will gather, revise, and present their best writing and major-specific projects they have completed at BYU-Idaho. This electronic portfolio becomes a permanent document

capturing students as majors and writers during their academic careers. This portfolio also becomes a marketing tool in entering careers and graduate school. (200 pts.)

Critique of Another Student's Research Report.

For the students to have an experience with editing, they are given a copy of another student's term paper (often from a similar discipline). They are to evaluate both the research and the writing. The final, of course, is done by the teacher who grades both the paper and the evaluation. (100 pts.)

Spori Technical Conference Presentation.

Students will participate in a class Spori Technical Conference. Here the students present a ten to twelve minute report based on their term report. They are expected to utilize all appropriate visual aids and demonstrations that will enhance the quality of their presentations. Each speaker not only receives a critique from the teacher but also receives an anonymous critique from fellow students. (100 pts.)

Technical Communication Presentation. Student teams will prepare and present two 5-minute presentations based on specific chapters from Riordan *Technical Report Writing Today*. (25 points each—50 points)

Mechanics Review and Quizzes

Students will review principles of mechanics and punctuation to prepare them for writing and editing articles. Students will then take a quiz on each of the eight units (10 points each—80 points).

Mechanics Review Exam.

Students will take a comprehensive exam on mechanics and punctuation (100 points).

❑ Conduct of the Class

The basic pattern of the course is one of (1) *theory*, (2) *practice*, (3) *critique*. The course of theory is the text supplemented by materials furnished by the instructor. The theory of each assignment is thoroughly discussed in informal classroom sessions. Included in these discussions are numerous examples of the application of each principle to students' own fields and to their specific writing problem. Following such discussions, the students then write their papers and hand them in. The teacher then reads the papers and makes written or oral comments about the paper

LATE ASSIGNMENTS
NOT ACCEPTED

❑ Grading and Evaluation

The teacher will evaluate all formal assignments and comment on what works well and offer suggestions for improvement. The teacher will assign a letter grade and record a number grade in the roll book. Most often the number grade follows the breakdown below

A	=	95%	C	=	75%
A-	=	92%	C-	=	72%
B+	=	88%	D+	=	68%
B	=	85%	D	=	65%
B-	=	82%	D-	=	62%
C+	=	78%	F	=	59%

The teacher reserves the write to slightly alter the number points depending on the student's performance. For example, instead of recording a 92% for an A-, the teacher may record a 90%.

❑ Teacher Conferencing

Most student questions and concerns are handled in the classroom through class or individual discussion. Students may schedule an appointment with the teacher for more extended conferencing. Rarely will the teacher read an entire document during a conference but rather will assist the student in identifying the writing frustration and in developing options to solve the communication problems.

Students who wish to conference with the teacher about a graded paper must meet the following two conditions (there are no rewrite options to improve a graded assignment):

1. Wait 24 hours before making an appointment with the teacher.
2. Come to the appointment with a list of suggestions to improve the paper. The teacher will discuss those options with the student.

❑ Attendance Requirements

Random quizzes are used to check attendance. The quizzes cannot be made up so class attendance is essential because the quizzes will not be announced. The student has the responsibility to attend class and to be prepared for class. If the student misses class, the student should contact the teacher out of courtesy via office phone-mail or email **prior** to class.

This is a highly interactive course. The success of this course and your individual success depends on your regular presence and promptness, your thorough preparation for class, and your active participation within class. You may have **three class absences without a grade penalty**.

Please note: I make no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absence. You are responsible for saving your absence leave to accommodate unexpected illness or personal / family need.

Excessive absence will result in *deduction from final average of 1 percentage point per hour of absence over the limit*. If you miss more than three class periods, you will not be able to earn an A in the course. If you miss more than four class periods, the highest grade you can earn in the course is a C. If you miss five or more classes, you will earn an F in the course.

At the end of the semester, if you have **perfect attendance**, you will have a **bonus of 1 percentage point added to your final average**.

❑ E-mail

Students must have access to BYU-Idaho e-mail. If students prefer other email servers, students should arrange with their carriers to forward their campus email directly to them.

❑ Academic Honesty

“BYU-Idaho students should seek to be totally honest in all their dealings. They should complete their own work and be evaluated for that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct.” (*BYU-Idaho Catalog, 2010-2011*, p. 68. See catalog for full discussion of Academic Dishonesty, pp. 68-69.)

❑ Special Limitations

To accommodate students with special learning, physical, emotional, mental, social, or other limitations, the student must notify the teacher the first week of class. By law, BYU-Idaho is only required to assist those students who make these issues known during the first week.

❑ Caveat

The teacher reserves the right to make changes in course content and policy at any time during the semester.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION English 316:4 R. Keller Fall 2011

Lesson One

Sep 13 T Introduction to Course

- 15 H Riordan, ch. 1, “Definition of Technical Communication,” p. 2
Riordan, ch. 20, “Job Application Materials,” p. 551
Mechanics review (Commas)
Mechanics review (Semicolons and Colons)

Lesson Two

- 20 T Draft of Chronological Resume Due
Riordan, ch. 19, “Letters,” p. 497
Riordan, ch. 12, “Memorandums and Informal Reports,” (“The Elements of Memos”; “Ethics and E-mail”) pp. 288-294; 317-320
Mechanics review (Other Punctuation)
- 22 H Draft of Functional Resume Due
Draft of Letter of Application Due
Riordan, ch. 2 “Profiling Audiences,” p. 35
Mechanics review (Capitalization)

Lesson Three

- 27 T Draft of Job Materials Due
Riordan, ch. 3 “The Technical Communication Process,” p. 55
Mechanics Review (Possessive Nouns and Subject Verb Agreement)
- 29 H **Job Materials Due**
Riordan, ch. 16, “Proposals,” p. 415

Lesson Four–

- Oct 4 T Riordan, ch. 5, “Researching,” p. 112
Riordan, Appendix B, “Documenting Sources,” p. 571
- 6 H Three possible research topics
Limiting the subject
Riordan, ch. 4, “Technical Communication Style,” p. 87
Mechanics Review (Pronouns and Antecedent/Personal Pronouns)

Lesson Five

- 11 T Riordan, ch. 8, “Summarizing,” p. 204
Outlining
Research Report draft due

- 13 H **Research Report Proposal Due**
 Riordan, ch. 10, "Describing," p. 228
 Mechanics Review Exam

Lesson Six

- 18 T Description of Mechanism Report Draft Due
 Riordan, ch. 13, "Developing Websites," 321

- 20 H **Description of Mechanism Report Due**
 Riordan, ch. 11, "Set of Instructions," p. 262

Lesson Seven

- 25 T Riordan, ch. 6, "Designing Pages," p. 139
 Riordan, ch. 7, "Using Visual Aids," p. 174
 Process Report Draft due

- 27 H **Process Report Due**
 Riordan, ch. 9, "Defining," p. 215

Lesson Eight

- Nov 1 T Riordan, ch. 12, "Memorandums and Informal
 Reports, ("The Elements of Informal Reports";
 "Types of Formal Reports") pp. 289-313
 Web Design and Introductions Due
- 3 H Definition Report draft due
 Technical Communication Artifacts Posting Due

Lesson Nine

- 8 T **Definition Report Due**
 Riordan, ch. 15 "Recommendation and
 Feasibility Reports," 381
- 10 H Riordan, ch. 14 "Formal Reports," 354
 Major and Emphasis Artifacts Posting Due

Lesson Ten

- 15 T Recommendation and Feasibility Report Draft
 Due
 "Progress Reports," Riordan, 301-302
- 17 H **Recommendation and Feasibility Report Due**
 In-class essay—Progress Report
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Week Eleven

- 22 T Outline of term paper due
 Minor/Cluster/Miscellaneous Artifacts Posting
 Due

- 24 H Thanksgiving Day (no class)

Week Twelve

- 29 T Draft #1 of Term Paper Due

- Dec 1 H Draft #2 of Term Paper Due
 Riordan, ch. 18, "Oral Presentations," p. 474

Week Thirteen

- 6 T **Term Paper Due**
 Spori Technical Conference Presentation

- 8 H Professional Portfolio Due
 Spori Technical Conference Presentation

Week Fourteen

- 13 T **Evaluation Report Due**
 Spori Technical Conference Presentation

- 15 H Final 3:45-5:15
 Spori Technical Conference Presentation