



# Teaching Professional and Technical Writing

ENGL 775/875

Tuesday 7:10p-9:50p

Fall 2019

[engl775fa19.digitalodu.com](http://engl775fa19.digitalodu.com)

BAL 5009 / Zoom

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**OLD DOMINION**  
UNIVERSITY

## What Is the Course About?

Professional and technical writing is a broad field of study at the intersection of rhetoric and workspaces. From the more traditional writing of user manuals and research reports, to the more contemporary applications in public relations, visual rhetoric, and social media, the type of work professional and technical writers do depends more on the individual organizational context than a universal job description. This course surveys these extensive boundaries of the field, asking students to critically engage the most pressing questions facing technical writing scholars and the most common problems facing technical writing practitioners. It is only through this critical exploration and engagement that students can even begin to address the question driving the narrative of the course: *How do I teach it?*

## Why Should I Take This Course?

Professional and technical writing is a continually-growing, interdisciplinary field in English that has roots in rhetoric. As the field grows, and as other disciplines continue to realize the importance of communication (e.g., business, engineering, health sciences), many institutions of higher education are looking for qualified people to teach the increasing number of sections being offered. These qualified people often come from English. Students will walk away from the course with not only with a comprehensive sense of the scholarly field but with a practical ability and qualification to teach courses in technical writing.

## What Will I Learn?

My goals for you in this course are that you will:

- i. Develop strategies for creating brief, focused exercises designed to help writers improve targeted aspects of technical writing style;
- ii. Apply concepts learned in the course to improve and diversify your professional portfolios for the job market;
- iii. Connect your pedagogy with the theory that undergirds it;
- iv. Research and report on basic approaches to teaching technical writing in workplace and classroom settings;
- v. Work with un/familiar technologies; and
- vi. Demonstrate intellectual engagement by participating actively in class discussions, leading to a dynamic learning community.

## How Will I Learn?

In this graduate seminar we will engage with professional and technical writing as a: (a) pedagogical practice, (b) theoretical locus/scholarly field, and (c) workplace practice.

Students in this course will be expected to engage with professional and technical writing as a pedagogical practice and theoretical venue while exploring how to prepare students to write in a variety of workplace milieus. You'll achieve these goals by:

- i. Developing syllabi, calendars, and assignments for undergraduate courses in technical writing;
- ii. Contributing to a pool of assignments for these courses to share with the group and to integrate into a teaching portfolio for use on the job market;
- iii. Completing weekly reading responses and participating in discussion of technical writing praxis; and
- iv. Reading pivotal texts on teaching and professional and technical writing that will help construct a conceptual pedagogical framework for practice.

## How Will the Course Be Delivered?

This course will be held in Batten Arts and Letters room 5009 and simulcast via Zoom. MA, professional writing certificate, and on-campus PhD students must attend in person.

Students enrolled in the PhD program but with residence outside 50 miles from campus will attend class via Zoom. Distance students are responsible for using high quality microphones and cameras and for maintaining consistent internet connections to avoid lapses or distraction in discussion.

## What Is Expected of Me in Class?

Whether you are sitting in the classroom or joining us via Zoom, you are expected to be attentive, thoughtful, and civil contributors to class discourse. The nature of this course will be in large part driven by how much effort you the students put into our time together. I expect that each student will have read the assigned reading before class time, and thoughtfully prepared a series of points, questions, or challenges related to the course material. It is difficult to get the full experience of graduate courses unless the necessary preparation is done beforehand. Read closely, take diligent notes, anticipate possible points of discussion—this is your responsibility as a graduate student and I will expect this of *all* of you (MA, certificate, and PhD students) throughout the semester.

## What Resources Do I Need?

Students will need to **purchase** three books:

Bazerman, C. (1988). *Shaping written knowledge: The genre and activity of the experimental article in science*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Dubinsky, J.M. (2004). *Teaching technical communication: Critical issues for the classroom*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Readings, B. (1996). *The university in ruins*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

Students will need to **order a free copy** of one textbook:

Markel, M. (2015). *Technical communication*. 11e. Bedford/St. Martin's.

All other readings and resources will be provided as links or PDFs on the course website.

## What Are the Policies of This Course?

Here are the policies governing the course—some policies are from the university, some are from me, and some are a mix.

### Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism will result in the failure of the assignment and possibly the failure of the course. Students cannot use work completed for credit in previous courses to count towards this course nor can they lift ideas or content from an online source.

### Attendance

Attendance is required. You can miss one class; missing a second class affects your final grade (1/3 letter grade for each unexcused absence). Two lates count as one absence.

### Technology Requirements

Specific technology requirements are (i) an activated Old Dominion email account (to be used for all official communication), (ii) working knowledge of an internet browser, (iii)



working knowledge of a word processing program, (iv) working knowledge of Google Drive, and (v) the ability to convert files to PDF.

**Accommodations**

In accordance with university policy, a student who wishes to receive some instructional accommodation should meet with the instructor to discuss this accommodation. If you have questions about assistance, please contact the Office of Educational Accessibility at 757-683-4655 or visit [odu.edu/educationalaccessibility](http://odu.edu/educationalaccessibility).

**Religious Observances**

If you anticipate being absent from class due to religious observances, please inform me by the second class meeting.

**What Are My Assignments?**

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the class. There are different expectations for MA/certificate students and PhD students.

MA/Certificate Students		PhD Students	
Readings Responses	30%	Readings Responses	20%
In-Class Participation	20%	In-Class Participation	30%
Portfolio	50%	Portfolio	40%
		Final Exam	10%

**Reading Responses**

Each week students will type up responses to the assigned week’s readings. Each week will have a question for you to address in your response. Responses should: thoughtfully engage the ideas covered for the week; synthesize said ideas into meaningful commentary; and offer forth how one might translate these ideas into teaching practice. MA students will write a 2-page, double-spaced response to the week’s readings. PhD students will write a 3-page, double-spaced response and integrate an article/source researched on own time into the response. All responses will be in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1” document margins, will include a references page, and will be in APA format. Students will complete 12 reading responses and submit them every fourth response (total of three submissions).

**Discussion and In-Class Activities**

Each class will contain substantial discussion and a collaborative activity aimed at the application of the topic covered. Students will be assessed in terms of their level of participation and their completion of assigned tasks. There are higher expectations for PhD students in terms of leading and facilitating discussion.

## Teaching Portfolio for Technical Writing Course

In lieu of an academic paper, this course encourages you to think of the teaching portfolio as the final, deliverable artifact. Professionalizing as a teacher is an important part of being a successful academic, regardless of your level of passion or interest towards traditional academic research. The documents created below will be shared via an electronic portfolio of your choosing as just such a way to professionalize.

### Syllabus and Calendar

All students will create their own unique syllabus for ENGL 334 Technical Writing, a course offered here at Old Dominion University or a course of their own choosing after seeking professor approval. Each syllabus will be informed by institutional and field-based research and will have the following components:

- Course Description: What is the course about?
- Course Objectives: What are your goals as an instructor?
- Learning Outcomes: What skills/knowledge will students walk away with?
- Readings: Which books, articles, and other readings will be used?
- Assignments: What are the major projects?
- Grading: How will you be assessing student work?
- Policies: What are the rules, regulations, and culture of the course?
- Calendar: What will be covered and when?

The calendar should reflect a 15-week semester, accounting for 3 hours of class time per week. Students will follow the twice-a-week model. Each class period in your calendar should include the following components:

- Agenda: What work is being done today?
- Readings: What readings should students have done by this day?
- Due Dates: What are the students submitting this day?

Like all effective syllabi, yours should be informed by the scholarship we are reading this semester. Proper terminology, concepts, readings, and agenda items should reflect the best practices of the field as discussed during class. Overall, the syllabus should be ready to go when submitted at the end of the semester. It should be written as if the course were being taught next week.

### Project Description(s)

To supplement your syllabus, each student will create projects that meet the learning objectives outlined in the syllabus. It is imperative that the objectives outlined in the syllabus line up with the projects being created. Projects are meant to reinforce key ideas and prepare students for writing practice. MA

students will need to create one (1) project, while PhD students will create two (2). All students will share their project descriptions at the end of the semester so we will have a solid repository of theory-informed projects that could be used in an undergraduate technical writing course. Each project description should include:

- Context: What’s being asked of the student and why? What’s the situation?
- Connection to Objectives: How does this contribute to class goals?
- List of Deliverables: What needs to be turned in?
- Assessment: How will students be graded?
- Teacher’s Notes: How will you be teaching this project?

### Teaching Philosophy

Teaching philosophies not only help make sense of practice but also serve as important framing documents for applications for teaching positions. For those who have taught before, this is a useful framing document to help refine your thinking. For those who have not, this will prove a useful academic thought exercise to get you thinking about what theory-informed effective teaching means in the context of technical writing and English generally.

### Final Exam

The final “take home” exam for this course will be one single question (you will be given two to choose from). Students will have 24 hours to complete the exam question, and responses will be 1500 words in length. Students will be granted access to the question on December 6 at 9:00am. The question will ask students to make a supportable argument about a broad issue related to technical writing pedagogy. In doing so, students will find value in the work put into the reading responses when being asked to synthesize ideas, concepts, and texts from all weeks of the semester. The intention behind this exam question is to prepare PhD students for the structure of the comprehensive examination. While the length and time allotment differ, this exam is meant to simulate the experience of composing field-based responses to critical questions within a limited time-frame.

### What Is the University’s Weighting Scale?

Letter grades will be assigned for each component of the course. They are enumerated as:

A	92.5-100	B+	87.5-89.9	C+	77.5-79.9	D+	67.5-69.9
A-	90-92.4	B	82.5-87.4	C	72.5-77.4	D	62.5-67.4
		B-	80-82.4	C-	70-72.4	D-	60-62.4

Late assignments will receive a penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade per day, including weekends.

## Schedule

The course is divided up into three main sections, each with its own title, corresponding ancient Greek rhetorical concept, and main course text:

I. Institutions	<i>paideia</i> (παιδεία)	Readings, <i>University in Ruins</i>
II. Epistemology	<i>episteme</i> (ἐπιστήμη)	Bazerman, <i>Shaping Written Knowledge</i>
III. Teaching Praxis	<i>techne</i> (τέχνη)	Dubinsky, <i>Teaching Technical Communication</i>

Readings and due dates are subject to change. Students will be notified of any changes.

Strikethrough (e.g., ~~Jan 1~~) indicates no class meeting.

Week & Date	Section	Texts
1: Aug 27	I	Readings (pp. 1-43); Connors; Selfe & Selfe
2: Sept 3	I	Readings (pp. 44-88); Miller; Rutter
3: <del>Sept 10</del>	I	Readings (pp. 89-149); Barton & Barton; Moses & Katz
4: Sept 17	I	Readings (pp. 150-194); Katz; Sullivan & Porter
5: Sept 24	II	Bazerman (pp. 1-55); Blakeslee; Herndl & Nahrwold
6: Oct 1	II	Bazerman (pp. 59-79; 128-150); Lippincott
7: Oct 8	II	Bazerman (pp. 257-288); Graham <i>or</i> Richards
8: <del>Oct 15</del>	II	Bazerman (pp. 291-332); Slack, et al.
9: Oct 22	III	Dubinsky (Intro., 1-4); Herndl
10: Oct 29	III	Dubinsky (5, 8); Zoetewey & Staggers; Dombrowski
11: Nov 5	III	Dubinsky (14, 15, 27); Kolodziejewski
12: Nov 12	III	Dubinsky (20, 21); Van Ittersum
13: Nov 19	III	Dubinsky (11, 28, 19); Moore
14: Nov 26	III	Dubinsky (32); Wilson & Wolford
15: Dec 3	III	Cargile Cook; Rude

## How Do I Submit My Work? (And What If it is Late?)

All assignments will be submitted via email or through Google Drive, as directed. Students will get back an email noting that the assignment was “received.” Late assignments will receive a third of a letter grade penalty per day late, including weekends. Extensions will be negotiated on a situational basis, but permission must be sought in advance.