

Fernando Sánchez  
JRC 346

[fsanchez@stthomas.edu](mailto:fsanchez@stthomas.edu)

Office Hours: Tues 12-1 and by appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to principles and skills necessary for writing in professional settings as well as the theory and research associated with exploring technical communication as a field of study. It includes study of rhetoric, ethics, and information design in workplace writing; examination of the roles of professional writers; close readings of texts and documents that model professional techniques; and practice composing in a variety of professional styles and genres. This course fulfills the Theory and Practice requirement in the English major. Prerequisites: ENGL 201, 202, 203, or 204

While courses in Professional Writing certainly teach students how to produce genres that circulate within professional and business organizations, they also treat writing in professional contexts as a subject of study. In this course, we will be doing both. This means that although we will be learning how to produce memos, emails, and reports—hence the D01 designation of the course—we will be doing so while studying the work that writing does in these particular areas. For this course, you will produce a report that centers on the way that communication practices and artifacts function within a professional context of your choice. I can help give you some guidance but overall, you'll be in charge of finding a location to study. Conducting this work will help us examine

- What role rhetoric plays in professional writing
- How professional writers utilize technologies
- How technologies change the work that professional writers accomplish
- What genres professional writers compose in
- Which competencies professional writers need to be skilled in
- How to conduct research ethically
- How to edit documents

This course will help you in

1. Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field of Professional Writing
2. Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)

## REQUIRED TEXTS

*Solving Problems in Technical Communication*, Johndan Johnson-Eilola and Stuart A. Selber, University of Chicago Press, 2012. 0226924076

Other pdfs as assigned. Check the Calendar and Canvas under “Files”.

## WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

This course is designated as a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) course. This means that you will learn about the genres and conventions of writing in the field of professional writing and the rationales behind them. For this course, this means, you will learn about small genres such as emails, memos, and proposals, but the main bulk of our work this semester will focus on constructing a report. There are many types of reports that professional writers compose, but, as is explained below, we will work on a formal report that discusses breakdowns in workplace communication processes. The writing process for this report will be supported at critical stages of development and will include instructor feedback on drafts.

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

### Reading Responses (15%)

Every student is required to participate in in-class and on-line discussions and activities. Please analyze the calendar closely to determine when responses will be due.

#### A couple of things to note:

- Although you will receive a score for all responses, I will only have enough time to respond to a handful per class period. I will be sure that I respond to everyone the same number of times.
- Typically, unless otherwise noted, these will be due either at 11:59 pm the night before we have class or at 8:00 am on the day of class. Check Canvas for specific dates and times.
- There are no extensions for these posts.
- Scores typically fall along the following logic:
  - 0 points- work not turned in on time
  - 1 point- work is turned in but seems rushed or is superficial; writer may receive feedback explaining this score.
  - 2 points- work meets or exceeds all expectations

### Mini Genres (10%)

#### *Mini Research Proposal*

You will submit a proposal that clearly and concisely describes the type of research that you will conduct for the Major Project.

#### *Email*

Prior to conducting your research, you will draft an email that professionally communicates your desire to conduct research on a site for your Major Project. If necessary, you will send this message to the proper contacts.

*Memo*

After we meet in conferences, you will submit a progress memo, detailing what we discussed and your next steps of data collection.

**MidTerm (20%)**

We will have a midterm exam covering the first half of the semester. This will include all skills-based and theoretical readings as well as important points raised in class.

**Major Project: Formal Research Report (35%)**

For our major project, you will conduct research into a communication problem that is occurring in a professional setting. You may choose your own places of employment or you may choose someone else's place of employment. This project will be graded based on effective writing and editing, as well as on how well the writer conducts primary research for this report. Note that this might be a collaborative project, depending on timing and enrollment.

**Activity Assignments (15%)**

More formal and involved than the responses, yet less so than the Mini Genres, these activities provide you an opportunity to test out some of the points that are explored in our readings. Please see Canvas for more information on each Activity.

**LinkedIn Profile (5%)**

We will end by having you create or update your Linked In Profile to reflect your proficiency with research methods and technologies.

**SCORES AND GRADES**

Every assignment requires different writing tasks which will be laid out in individual assignment sheets. In general, you can assume that the following descriptions relate to a particular score range that you receive.

**A+ (95-100); A- (90-94); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76) C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (63-66); D- (60-62); F (Below 60)**

**70 to 79 (C- to C+)**—You did what the assignment asked of you. Work in this range tends to need some revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style, verbal and visual, is straightforward but unremarkable.

**80 to 89 (B- to B+)**—You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range needs little revision, is complete in content, is organized well, and shows attention to style and visual design.

**90-100 (A- to A)**—You did what the assignment asked for at a high quality level, *and your work shows originality and creativity*. Work in this range shows all the qualities listed above for a B; but it also demonstrates that you took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a verbal or visual style.

Try to avoid the following score ranges. See me if you have any questions.

**60-69 (D to D+)**—You did what the assignment asked for at a low quality level. Work in this range tends to need significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Verbal and visual style is often non-existent or chaotic.

**Below 60 (F)**—The work does not meet the requirements or is not submitted completely or with care.

If you are a person who wants or *needs* a particular grade in this course, start working toward that grade right now. Don't wait until the end (or even the middle) of the semester to decide that you need a B or an A.

If you think I have misjudged or misinterpreted your work, come to my office and talk to me about it. I will not discuss grades in the classroom, but I don't mind if you come to my office and talk to me about your paper.

## ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS

There are three pertinent attendance policies I have.

1. Please attend every class day. You will receive an additional 3% on top of your final score if you miss 0 days. You will receive 1.5% on top of your final grade if you only miss one day this semester. Unfortunately, excused absences count as absences. I will keep track of attendance on Canvas but generally your absences will not impact your score unless...
2. If you miss more than 4 classes, you will automatically fail the course. This is two weeks of class. If you know that you will (potentially) miss more than 4 classes let me know ahead of time.
3. Exchange emails with at least two people in class. If you are sick or need to miss class, be sure to contact them for information on what you missed.

I will speak to you if you are persistently late to class. This may result in one or multiple absences.

## PARTICIPATION

I expect everyone to not only attend class but to contribute to class discussion. I will provide a few prompts, but you are generally in charge of what we discuss. If we continually reach the end of our discussions before the end of class, this is a signal to me that we do not have enough to talk about and will add more readings as necessary.

## EMAIL

I will respond to emails within 24-48 hours (excluding weekends).

If the campus needs to close due to an emergency, these policies may be changed. You will be notified via e-mail by me if class is cancelled.

## LATE WORK

My general policy is that I do not accept late work. The majority of the work is not for me. We use it in class, and if you miss a submission, there's generally no point in turning it in late. Occasionally, extension can be requested for larger projects just let me know in advance in a professional manner. That is all I ask.

## WORK SUBMISSIONS

I expect you to pay close attention to due dates by checking the calendar *and* Canvas. In order to keep the calendar as readable as possible, I cannot post many details on there as I can on Canvas. At the same time, not all work will be due on Canvas, so you will need to check the calendar to stay up to date as well. For example, much of your report will be due on a GoogleDoc so that we can look at it in class and apply what we are learning to your writing. Please do not wait until the last minute to ask a question about where or when something is due. Check the calendar and Canvas early so that I can catch any unintended inconsistencies.

## CENTER FOR WRITING

Writing, as I hope our discussion this semester will emphasize, is not a solitary act, but one that requires attention to social and interpersonal connections. I hope that you will consider making a consultation with the writing center on campus to help you along at any point of your projects.

**The Center for Writing:** *Before you write, as you write, and after you write*  
 JRC 361  
[www.stthomas.edu/writing](http://www.stthomas.edu/writing)  
 (651) 962-5601

Peer consultants in the Center for Writing provide free individualized conferences at any stage of the writing process to share strategies for:

getting started	focusing and organizing your ideas
understanding the assignment	incorporating and documenting evidence
revising and editing	gaining confidence

Go to [www.stthomas.edu/writing](http://www.stthomas.edu/writing) to:

- Make an appointment for face-to-face or online consulting
- Access APA, MLA, Chicago, and other formatting guidelines for your formal papers
- Find out how we work and how you can prepare for your appointment

Fall and Spring Semesters	Hours	Location	Appointments Recommended	Walk-Ins Welcome
Mondays – Thursdays	9am – 8pm	JRC 361; online	✓	✓
Fridays	9am – 12 noon	JRC 361; online		✓
Sundays	6pm – 9pm	OSF Library 1 <sup>st</sup> floor; online		✓
J-term and Summers	By appointment	JRC 361; online	✓	

If you need additional support in reading and writing in the English language, please contact English Language Consulting through the Center for Student Achievement in MHC.

Questions? Call (651) 962-5601 or email Dr. Susan Callaway at [writing@stthomas.edu](mailto:writing@stthomas.edu).

## ST. THOMAS BIAS REPORTING SYSTEM

St. Thomas is committed to providing an inclusive living, learning and working environment that supports the well-being of each member and respects the dignity of each person. Incidents of hate and bias are inconsistent with the St. Thomas mission and convictions and have no place here. If you are a student who has experienced or witnessed a bias or hate incident, we want to address the incident and provide you with resources. Go to the Bias or Hate Reporting website to get more information and to make an online report. Students can also report in person to the Dean of Students Office (room 241, Anderson Student Center) or to Public Safety.

## SYLLABUS STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Academic accommodations will be provided for qualified students with documented disabilities including but not limited to mental health diagnoses, learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, Autism, chronic medical conditions, visual, mobility, and hearing disabilities. Students are invited to contact the Disability Resources office about accommodations early in the semester. Appointments can be made by calling 651-962-6315 or in person in Murray Herrick, room 110. For further information, you can locate the Disability Resources office on the web at <http://www.stthomas.edu/enhancementprog>.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

Honesty and trust among students and between students and faculty are essential for a strong, functioning academic community. Consequently, students are expected to do their own work on all academic assignments, tests, projects and research/term papers. Academic dishonesty, whether cheating, plagiarism or some other form of dishonest conduct related to academic coursework and listed in the Student Policy Book under "Discipline: Rules of Conduct" will automatically result in failure for the work involved. But academic dishonesty could also result in failure for the course and, in the event of a second incident of academic dishonesty, suspension from the university. Here are the common ways to violate the academic integrity code:

### ***Cheating***

Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit

### ***Fabrication***

Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

### ***Facilitating Academic Dishonesty***

Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity.

### ***Plagiarism***

The deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas or words or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgment. You commit plagiarism whenever you use a source in any way without indicating that you have used it. If you quote anything at all, even a phrase, you must put quotation

marks around it, or set it off from your text; if you summarize or paraphrase an author's words, you must clearly indicate where the summary or paraphrase begins and ends; if you use an author's idea, you must say that you are doing so. In every instance, you also must formally acknowledge the written source from which you took the material. (This includes material taken from the World Wide Web and other Internet sources.)

[Reprinted from "Writing: A College Handbook" by James A.W. Heffernan and John E. Lincoln. By Permission W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., Copyright 1982 by W.W. Norton & Co. Inc.

Students are encouraged to report incidents of academic dishonesty to course instructors. When academic dishonesty occurs, the following procedures will be followed:]

### ***Consequences***

#### *a) Sanctions*

The instructor will impose a minimum sanction of failure for the work involved. The instructor also will notify the student and the appropriate academic dean in writing of the nature of the offense and that the minimum sanction has been imposed. The instructor may recommend to the dean that further penalties be should imposed.

If further penalties are imposed, the dean will notify the student immediately and the student will have five working days to respond to the intention to impose additional penalties. The student has the right to respond to the charge of academic dishonesty and may request in writing that the dean review the charge of academic dishonesty as fully as possible.

If the dean determines that no further sanctions will be applied, the instructor's sanction will stand and the instructor's letter to the dean and student will be placed in the student's file. If no further charges of academic dishonesty involving the student occur during the student's tenure at St. Thomas, the materials will be removed from the file upon graduation.

#### *b) Previous Incident*

If the student has been involved in a previous incident of academic dishonesty, the dean will convene a hearing, following guidelines listed under "Hearings and Procedures" in the Student Policy Book. During the hearing, all violations of academic integrity will be reviewed. The student and the faculty member charging the most recent incident will be present at the hearing.

### ***IN EITHER SITUATION, A OR B***

If the dean determines that further sanctions are warranted, the student will be informed in writing. Among the sanctions considered by the dean will be the following: failure for the course in which the incident occurred; suspension from the university for the following semester; expulsion from the university; community service; a written assignment in which the student explores the principles of honesty and trust; other appropriate action or sanctions listed under "Sanctions" in the Student Policy Book. The materials relating to the incident, including the instructor's original letter to the student and dean and the dean's decision following the hearing, will become part of the student's file.

### ***COMMITTEE ON DISCIPLINE***

The Committee on Discipline shall have the authority to investigate the facts of the particular case that has been appealed and the committee may:

Affirm the original decision and sanction.

Affirm the original decision and reduce or increase the original sanction.

Reverse the original decision.

Disallow the original decision and order a new hearing by the dean (or designee).