English 210E: Technical Writing -- Fall term, 1994

“A study of the principles, processes and products which constitute technical writing. This course provides an introduction to techniques of audience analysis and principles of document design as well as experience in the process of creating technical documents. Writing practice will be provided in the many roles of the technical writer -- from researcher to editor.” University of Waterloo Calendar, 1993-94 Course requirements adhere to this description.

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My expectations for the course:

1) to define documents and documentation in a variety of ways so we examine critically their forms, uses and audiences’ expectations and abilities in interpreting them.

2) all students to have ways to assess and employ their writing skills and abilities to develop text in clear and logical ways.

3) students to see the ranges of documentation as genres and to prepare materials in the major ones for presentation during the course and at its conclusion as their assignments and their final projects.

4) to have students understand, from the course text, my notes and comments and from the illustrative lectures by visiting specialists something of the technology of document design and dissemination as these are practiced in commerce and industry at the present time. If resources permit, I would like to show something of emerging technology as well.

5) students to develop formulae for the preparation and expression of information from in-class models, from parts of the text we discuss and from post-assignment analyses which will enable them to examine documents in subsequent levels of their training and careers with confidence that they can isolate document elements and evaluate them for information about the subject, the intended audience and the narrator-authors.

6) students to be aware of and to use the basics of online communication -- e-mail, course notes access and manipulation, preparation of assignments and information searching.

Working conditions:

The class meets on every Tuesday through fall term 1994. It will begin at 7 pm, have a 15-minute break and conclude at 9:40. I will provide materials as notes online through student accounts, by overheads and as LCD displays in class. Changes to class times or locations and special lectures will be announced on student accounts and before the changes in class, as well as on my door at HH 265.
I expect students to have prepared their assigned materials, to be present for classes and to work within the timelines for online readings, e-mail and searching requirements and the submission of assignments.

Course accounts:

Students must use course accounts exclusively for course activities and assignments. Any breach of that agreement will constitute grounds for the account being closed and the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Students may not permit others to use their accounts or use them themselves for any purposes other than work in English 210E. The Dean of Arts may institute additional penalties for improper use of computer resources.

Course assignments, final examination and grades:

All students commence the course with a rating of 100%. This rating will be evaluated at the end of each assignment, with the received grade entered for the highest possible grade. Late work carries a penalty of 20% per assignment and all work is due by 4 pm on the assignment date. No assignments will be accepted 48 hours after each due date and the students not submitting work will receive 0% for that part of the course. Late work will be returned as markers can prepare it in the marking sequence. An uns submitted assignment must be counted as 0% in the course grade. [Details on how to submit assignments correctly will be provided in class before the first assignment.] All assignments and the final examination must be completed for a student to receive a successful course grade. The lowest of the completed three first assignments will be dropped from the student's final course grade. The fourth assignment and the final three-hour examination will each count for 30% of the course grade. Students seeking extensions on medical or compassionate grounds must provide formal evidence for their absences.

Assignments:

English 210E consists of four assignments distributed across the term and presuming increasing levels of subject matter knowledge, awareness of the field of documentation and expression of information in both language and form. It concludes with a final examination on materials studied in the course, allowing students choice among questions as they develop a 'report', with its formal elements on one of the subjects required.

Assignment 1: “Subject Matter”: an assignment of approximately 1500 words, online, with examples submitted under separate cover to the Department of English, care of Norma Snyder, HH 250. Collect and compare information from three Canadian financial institutions, including two major Banks exclusive of the CIBC. Choose public and customer information, advertising and marketing materials in print on a particular product or aspect of banking -- loans, accounts, mutual funds, etc. Assimilate the materials and compare them under three headings: subject matter, intended audiences and form. These
issues will have been addressed in class preparatory to your analysis. Present the information using accepted documentation standards and discuss your perceptions of the various agencies' effectiveness as your conclusion.
Due date: Wednesday, September 28th, at 4 pm from your student account. 20%

Assignment 2: “The Limits of Form” -- approximately 1500 words, online, with your design submitted online or as a separate document. Design your own document set on the subject you selected to analyse in Assignment 1. From your analysis, course and text notes, discussions and your extended reading, create information for a hypothetical campaign to address the subject of your first analysis. In your conclusion demonstrate what you have come to see of effectiveness from course lectures and discussion and how you have incorporated that into your materials.
Due date: Wednesday, October 19th, at 4 pm from your student account 20%

Assignment 3: “Audience” -- approximately 1500 words, online. From a survey conducted by you, according to usability principles, analyse your promotion materials from an audience’s perspective. Conclude by surveying your technique and methods, their effectiveness in application and the significance of your results.
Due date: November 16th, at 4 pm from your student account. 20%

Assignment 4: The Formal Document -- approximately 2,000 words, online. This material constitutes the student’s cumulative work across the term. It consists of a formal analysis of the projects as these have developed across the first three assignments and includes all aspects of documentation developed during the course -- references, notations, attributions, bibliography, comparisons, analysis, formal structuring and conclusions.
Due date: Wednesday, November 23rd at 4 pm from your student account.

The Final Examination: -- a three-hour analysis of a technical document provided by the instructor in a classroom setting. This will not be an online exercise but it will draw on the concepts, methods and structures studied in class and online during the term. No aids. Dates to be determined by the Registrar’s Office Examination Schedule.

Syllabus: English 210E: Technical Writing

September 13th
Introduction -- an overview of technical documentation: audience, subject and narrator
The course text, Technical Communication: Strategy and Process -- major readings

September 20th
Formal features of Technical Documentation
Review and discussion of assigned texts: chpts 1 -- 3, pp 4 -- 58.

September 27th
Limits of Language
Discussion of materials for assignment 1
Sept 28th -- Assignment 1 due at 4 pm from student accounts

October 4th
Special Lecture: Online methods of research and information recovery

October 11th
Procedures -- the Analysis of the Project

October 18th
Genres -- The Ranges of Expression

October 19th -- Assignment 2 due at 4 pm from student accounts

October 25th
Course Evaluations I

November 1st
Technical Description -- Technical Communication, pp 152 -- 183

November 8th
Graphics -- Visual displays -- functions and limits

November 15th
Special Lecture: Online Documents -- the Interactive Highway

November 16th -- Assignment 3 due at 4 pm from student accounts

November 22nd

November 23rd -- Assignment 4 due at 4 pm from student accounts

November 30th
Special Lecture: Emerging Technologies -- Online, Multimedia and the Net

Course Evaluations II

December 5th --

Final Examination: Date to be Announced