English 210E: Genres of Technical Communication
T Th: 2:30-3:50 (ML 349)

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Office Hours: T Th: 1:00-2:00 (or by appointment)

Course Description and Goals:

“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 Course Calendar).

 Usually taken in your 2B term, 210E is designed to provide students with the tools necessary for reading and writing technical documents. We will be primarily concerned with the theory and application of rhetoric in document analysis and design; that is, what makes a “good” (or bad) technical document? How can we improve upon existing industry practices? Although we will be drawing from the text throughout the term, much of the course will be focused on practical applications of analysis and design. Students will be required to write original technical documentation, as well as re-write existing documents (which will be provided). By the end of the term, students will have acquired an understanding of various technical writing processes, techniques, and will be required to apply these elements in a marketing presentation (or “pitch”) to the class.

Required Text:


Assignments and Marks:

Assignment 1: 20%
Mid-term: 25%
Assignment 2: 25%
Final Group Project: 30%

Assignments: The first two assignments will involve document analysis and design. For Assignment 1, students will analyze, critique, and re-write an existing technical document; for Assignment 2, students will be required to write their own technical documentation for a product provided by the instructor.

Mid-term: The mid-term will consist of two parts: 1) definitions of terms from the text and class; and 2) analysis of a brief technical passage. An absence from a mid-term will require a doctor's or other health care professional's documentation in the case of illness. Any other extraordinary circumstances will also require documentation. Only under these circumstances can an alternative examination be scheduled.

Final Group Project: In groups of 5 or 6, students will be required to deliver a presentation or “pitch” to the class on a particular product (to be chosen later in the term). Successful pitches will not only apply the concepts and vocabulary from the text, but will also be persuasive in nature – that is, why should we, for instance, choose to buy your product over another?
Class Schedule:

**Week 1 (Jan 12, 14):** Course Introduction; principles of rhetoric and design. **Readings:** Ch. 1 (Jan. 12), Ch. 2 (Jan. 14).

**Week 2 (19, 21):** Textual analysis; professional writing techniques; ethics. **Readings:** Ch. 3 (Jan 19), Ch. 4 (Jan 21).

**Week 3 (26, 28):** Persuasive techniques; writing technical documents. **Readings:** Ch. 5 (Jan 26), Ch. 6 (Jan 28).

**Week 4 (Feb 2, 4):** Explaining technology: “how stuff works”. **Assignment 1 due Feb 2.**

**Week 5 (9, 11):** Writing formal/informal reports and other genres. **Reading:** Ch. 7.

**READING WEEK (15-19)**

**Week 6 (23, 25):** Mid-term Feb 23. Group and topic selection for final project; brainstorming; how to effectively work in teams.

**Week 7 (Mar 2, 4):** Principles of marketing; pitching ideas and products.

**Week 8 (9, 11):** Oral presentations: design and delivery. **Reading:** Ch. 8. (Mar 9). **Assignment 2 due Mar 9.**

**Week 9 (16, 18):** Taking things apart and putting them back together; basic electronics; documenting the process.

**Week 10 (23, 25):** The job hunt: resumes, interviews, hiring, common mistakes. **Readings:** Ch. 9 (Mar 23), Ch. 10 (Mar 25). Students are asked to bring a copy of their resume to both classes.

**Week 11 (Mar 30, Apr 1):** Final presentations

**Note on plagiarism:**

The Faculty of Arts requires that the following statement on the avoidance of academic offences, including plagiarism, be included on all Arts course outlines:

“Note on avoidance of academic offences: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (section 1; on the Web at http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocat/UW/policy_71.html). If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your TA or course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.” Note: On November 18/02, Senate passed a motion that all course outlines also contain the following reference to the student's right to grieve: “Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve; refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocat/Policies/policy70.html.” For guidance on avoiding plagiarism and other academic offences, please consult the Arts Faculty Web page, “How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors” (http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html).