

# WRTG 3035: Technical Writing ~ Project Design and Management

Fall 2010

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Class times: 3035§ 01	2:00-2:50 MWF	HUMN 160
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Office Hours: 10:00-11:00 MWF – *and always by appointment*

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## An Overview:

Technical Communication: Project Design and Management hones writing and speaking skills in the context of functional design. Our approach to design will be collaborative, problem-based, and user-oriented. We will be working with community partners, so you will have the opportunity to participate in the business world and design projects with real-world application.

This section of Technical Communication is designed around three themes: rhetorical concepts, actual design and execution of projects, and management of the project through the documentation that normally accompanies such projects.

Specifically, you will:

- Apply rhetorical principles and strategies to design and evaluate user-driven projects.
- Apply your disciplinary expertise to design challenges presented by our community partners.
- Analyze and practice writing and revising professional genres as you write individually and collaboratively.
- Develop effective communication strategies as you work with clients and as a member of a project design team.
- Develop critical thinking skills and effective communication skills that you can transfer to tasks outside the Technical Communication classroom.

## An Overview: Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE)

WRTG 3035 meets the CCHE criteria for an Advanced Writing Course (GT-CO3) in the Colorado system of higher education.

## ***Extend Rhetorical Knowledge:***

Rhetoric is the art of shaping words and images to move a particular audience to a particular purpose. Knowledge of rhetoric sharpens the ability of a communicator to choose the most effective evidence, reasoning, and communication strategies for a given audience and purpose.

- Readings from *Technical Communication* by Mike Markel; *Professional and Technical Writing Strategies* by Judith VanAlstyne; *The Essentials of Technical Communication* by Elizabeth Tebeaux and Sam Dragga; and *Designing for the Digital Age* by Kim Goodwin introduce the rhetorical concepts that underlie technical writing and the communities it serves.
- Readings by Irene Clark and Amy Devitt introduce genre theory and the many way genres function within disciplinary communities.
- Readings by John Berger and Edward Tufte introduce concepts of visual rhetoric and literacy.
- Criteria for analyzing works in progress provide opportunities to apply and discuss rhetorical concepts.
- Blogging prompts provide multiple opportunities to reflect on the development of your work.

## ***Extend Experience in the Writing Process:***

Writing – including the writing involved in speaking – is an ongoing process that requires multiple drafts as well as a range of strategies for developing, revising, and editing texts. You will experience the various written and spoken genres of technical communication that form, and are informed by, the communities that use them.

- Workshops provide you opportunities to develop skills in offering constructive feedback as well as incorporating feedback into the development of your own work.
- Assignments provide you with multiple approaches to working collaboratively.
- Assignments allow you to practice the effective use of technologies such as document control websites, on line editing tools, PowerPoint, charts and graphs, electronic communication, and online research tools.
- Project-driven research engages you in the identification of specialized sources that connect you to the issues, language, and modes of analysis generated by your field and demanded by the specific project.
- Repeated examination of evidence and reasoning in the development of your research project gives you practice in evaluating sources for accuracy, relevance, credibility, reliability, and bias.

### ***Extend Mastery of Writing Conventions:***

The sequence of assignments gives you practice in analyzing and developing common forms of professional communication, in interpreting and using the language of your field, and in designing communication strategies that meet the expectations of specialized readers. You will learn the elements of effective business writing style. You will also become aware of elements of your own writing that can be improved, including syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

### ***Advance Content Knowledge:***

This class uses the concepts of project management to improve critical thinking skills and introduce a variety of genres used to design and document projects.

- Readings from *The Principles of Project Management* by Meri Williams describe the basic process of project management.
- A variety of websites provide supplemental information on project management:
  - “Project Management 101” [www.suite101.com](http://www.suite101.com)
  - *The ePMbook* [www.empbook.com](http://www.empbook.com)
  - “ProjectSmart” [www.projectsmart.co.uk](http://www.projectsmart.co.uk)

The service learning aspect of the course and design-driven nature of assignments, as well as exposure to the expertise and research of your peers, will heighten your awareness of the relationship between specialized content and various audiences. This awareness will translate into facility in adapting content and communication strategies to the expertise, needs, and expectations of a particular audience.

### ***Texts and Materials:***

- Williams - *The Principles of Project Management*
- Excerpts from Markel – *Technical Communication*
- Excerpts from VanAlstyne – *Professional and Technical Writing Strategies*
- Excerpts from Tebeaux & Dragga – *The Essentials of Technical Communication*
- Excerpts from Goodwin – *Designing for the Digital Age*
- Human Centered Design Toolkit [www.IDEO.com](http://www.IDEO.com)
- Tufte – [www.edwardtufte.com](http://www.edwardtufte.com)

### **Assignments: Overview**

This class requires you to write in a variety of genres you will actually encounter in the business world throughout the semester. Many assignments will be collaborative, and you will receive both a group and an individual grade for them.

Because you will be working with a client with changing needs, the major assignments will evolve to meet client needs. Your major writing assignments will be worth 100 points each and will fall into categories:

- Job Application Project (job analysis, résumé & cover letter)
- Memoranda and additional genres related to the project

- Design principles & visual literacy
- Project documents (project initiation document, project plan, research reports, status reports, lessons learned, closing documents)
- Presentations and client encounters

The first weeks of the semester are designed around multiple readings on rhetoric, genre theory, and project design and management theory. In subsequent weeks, many of the day-to-day activities will be designed by you, the students, with guidance from the instructor. This is because each project must be designed around its unique needs and challenges. The basic, required writing assignments remain relatively constant.

Daily and supporting assignments will generally be process work – going through the steps that help us revise and look at our work multiple times. I read these assignments and determine whether they are satisfactory (✓), exceptional (✓+), or perfunctory (✓-).

### **Assignments: How do you find them?**

A schedule of assignments, formal assignment sheets, and links to readings will be posted on the class blog. You can access the blog at two points:

<http://kathrynpieplow.pwrfaculty.org>

<http://3035fall10.wordpress.com/>

*Note:* The schedule will change over the course of the semester.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required in my classes. This class centers around project teams and we work in class. "Being there" and being prepared are essential. Both are crucial to your success as a writer and to the success of the project team. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and for completing any work on time.

**If you miss more than three (3) classes, for any reason, your final grade will be lowered one level for each additional absence (for example, from a B to a B-).**

Be punctual; if you walk in late, you miss important announcements and you disrupt the class. Late means you are not present in the classroom at the announced time for class to being and/or when I arrive.

**Two late arrivals are counted as one absence.**

### **Classroom Behavior - CU's take**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals

and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Please see the policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

### Classroom Behavior – KWP’s take

College is basically a job for each of us, whether instructor or student. The classroom is one of our work spaces, and we are all adults. Therefore, to echo some of the language in CU’s official policy, we need to treat each other with dignity, respect, sensitivity and courtesy.

Please turn off **cell phones** when in class. I will do the same so that I can give you my undivided attention. **No texting.**

Since all your drafts and assignments must be posted on the blog, computer access is necessary! You will have access to PWR computers in the classroom. However, you may prefer to bring your **personal computer** to class to take notes, access drafts or do research. Please use the computers only for activities related to this class.

I do not mind if you eat or drink in class, however, **university policy requires food and drink to be off the tables when the laptop computers are being utilized.**

### Computers and Computer Problems

If you are having problems with your personal computer, remember that there are computer labs all over campus where you can access the blog or an article, or print out a draft. Plan ahead!

**Computer problems do not excuse the failure to prepare.**

The **blogs** are integral to this course. Make sure you can access as soon as the semester begins.

See “Off Campus” access in this syllabus. I strongly urge you to download the VPN dialer so that you can access the Norlin databases from anywhere.

Know your “**Identikey**” password. Your Identikey provides access to the computers we use in the classroom.

**Back up your work regularly.** I strongly advise you to **invest in a flash drive** (memory stick, thumb drive, external hard drive,s whatever). **Posting drafts and assignments on the blog – or emailing them to yourself – also helps preserve your work.** But every semester, without fail, I have at least one student who spills coffee on his/her laptop (thereby frying the hard drive) or whose hard drive simply quits (usually in the last week before finals with all class notes and papers on it).

### Disabilities Assistance

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>.

### Drop/Add Policy for the PWR

Please be aware that the published policy of the PWR permits an instructor to administratively drop any student who misses two classes during the drop/add period (roughly the first two weeks of the regular semester). The absences need not be consecutive – any two absences during that period count. Because I frequently have long waiting lists for my classes, I will drop students after their second absence so that others who are on the waiting list and have been attending regularly may be admitted.

### Email

You may e-mail me at [kathryn.pieplow@colorado.edu](mailto:kathryn.pieplow@colorado.edu). I use email to notify you of changes in assignments or answer questions, and to exchange drafts and comments, among other things. Please make sure that I have a **current email address** - for an account you check frequently. It does not have to be your CU account - it just has to be current and used daily. You will use email to communicate with me and your classmates, and to receive updates, critical information and changes to the syllabus.

All CU students have Internet access and e-mail accounts through the University. You can always access your e-mail account and access the Web from campus. If you don't have access or are having problems, please call ITS.

NOTE: I generally do not access my email after about 5:00 in the evenings. If you have a question about the next day's assignment, ask it early. In my experience, I go to bed "early" and you get up "late." Be aware that this not a good combination for a question asked at midnight such as "where is the reading for class tomorrow morning?"

### English as a Second Language

If you speak English as a second language, you should contact me the first week of classes so that I can better assist you in the course, advise you about special ESL courses, and/or refer you to appropriate services on campus.

### Grading

The breakdown of your final grade is as follows:

- ◆ Written work: memos, résumé & cover letter, reports (50%)
- ◆ Daily work: blog, status reports, quizzes (20%)
- ◆ Project work: participation, leadership & project documents (30%)

The last thing I will look at is your attendance. If you have more than three (3) absences, your final grade will be lowered for each absence. See Attendance Policy above.

### Honor Code

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible or knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include cheating, plagiarism, academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. I will report all incidents of academic misconduct to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information may be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode>.

### Military Obligation

Please give me as much advance notice as possible if you must be absent to fulfill a military obligation. You will need a note from an officer verifying the reason for your absence. You will also need to arrange in advance for any work that needs to be completed.

### “Off campus” Library access – VPN dialer

If you live off campus, you should arrange for what is called "off campus access." The instructions for obtaining off campus access are on the Norlin library and ITS websites. Off campus access makes the library think you are on campus, which means you can access anything available through the library electronically any time of day or night. It takes about 10 minutes to set up off campus access – and ITS can talk you through it.

### Participation & Workshopping

Full credit for participation requires high achievement: to receive full credit, you must demonstrate leadership skills, including respect for your peers, engagement in class activities and inclusion of others in those activities.

If you do not attend class, interact only with some class members, fail to contribute to class discussions, or disrupt class, you will receive less than full credit for participation.

### Permission to Use Work

Enrollment in a course offered through the Program for Writing and Rhetoric implies permission to reproduce and use any part of a student's writing for educational purposes. Any writing used will be used anonymously.

### Plagiarism

It is my policy in all my classes to fail anyone who engages in "academic dishonesty." Academic dishonesty includes, among other offenses, plagiarism of the writing or ideas of others, improper citation, cheating on exams, falsification and fabrication of data, and submitting the assignments or papers of others as your own.

One type of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. Plagiarism is adopting or using someone else's words or ideas without proper attribution. Incidents of plagiarism are serious offenses and will be dealt with accordingly. Please see the section above on "Honor Code."

### Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, please notify me at least one week in advance so that suitable schedule accommodations can be made. See full details at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html).

### Sexual Harassment

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships applies to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been sexually harassed should contact the Office of Sexual Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the OSH and the campus resources available to assist individuals who believe they have been sexually harassed may be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

### Texts

Every effort has been made to keep the cost of textbooks low. Most of our readings can be accessed electronically. However, the project management text is not available electronically. Please see your instructor for ways to obtain the text.

- Meri Williams - *The Principles of Project Management*