

ENG 585: Digital Communication and Professional Writing
Professor Alex Reid

Meeting Time: Tuesdays 12:30-3:10 Credits: 3 Room: Clemens 1032	Office Hours: TR 9-11 and by appt. Office: Clemens 433 Contact: areid@buffalo.edu
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Course Description

This is a special topics version of the first course in our soon to be approved graduate certificate in Professional Writing and Digital Communication. The 4-course certificate is designed to be of interest to three groups of students: those interested in pursuing careers in professional or technical writing; those entering STEM professions who recognize the value of improving their communication skills; and those pursuing academic careers with a primary or secondary interest in the study and teaching of rhetoric. This class is a version of the one required course, with the other three selected from a menu of options (which allows the certificate to be of use of a wide range of students). Please see me for more information about the certificate.

This course provides a practical and scholarly introduction to the fields of professional, technical, and digital communication. We will discuss research in professional and technical communication, particularly as the scholarship might be implemented in the workplace. The course will also explore theories and practices related to the design and composition of professional-technical genres including concepts of visual communication and rhetoric, user experience design, and multimodal composing. Students will have the opportunity to experiment with a variety of tools, and students in the intensive section will select a particular tool to investigate in greater depth.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Be introduced to the discipline of technical and professional communication including its primary theories and scholarly methods.
2. Learn and practice common methods of rhetorical analysis to study professional communication.
3. Identify and analyze professional communication genres and practices.
4. Practice common composing processes for genres of professional writing.
5. Investigate the uses of digital media in professional communication.
6. Develop skills with digital communication in professional contexts.

Required Texts

Balsamo, Anne. *Designing Culture: The Technological Imagination at Work*. Durham: Duke UP, 2011. Print.

Johnson-Eilola, Johndan, and Stuart A. Selber. *Solving Problems in Technical Communication*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2013. Print.

Spilka, Rachel. *Digital Literacy for Technical Communication: 21st Century Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

A-F Grading

(intensive)

Prototype:	20%
Experiments:	15%
Professional Portfolio:	25%
Project Proposal:	10%
Final Projects:	30%

(extensive)

Prototype:	20%
Experiments	30%
Professional Portfolio:	40%
Final Projects:	10%

Assignments

Prototype: working in small groups, students will prototype a card/dice/board game. This involves conceiving gameplay, designing the elements, and conducting usability testing.

Experiments: students will experiment with a range of composing tools during the class and create modest, experimental compositions: podcast, video/screencast, and infographic/poster.

Professional Portfolio: students will create a digital portfolio in a platform of their choosing (e.g., digication, word press, wix, hand-coded html, etc.)

Project Proposal (intensive only): proposals for group projects to create multimodal sites. Topics might range from local community issues to scholarly interests. We will select some number of these proposals to work on in groups.

Final Projects: these projects will be selected from the proposals. Students will work in groups of 3-5 with extensive students having limited responsibilities. Projects might take the form of a podcast series, an informational website, instructional videos, etc.

S/U Grading

Students must complete all assignments with a minimum of “B” quality work to receive an S. Students taking the class “extensively” will have a limited role in the final project assignment.

Incompletes

A grade of incomplete (“I”) indicates that additional course work is required to fulfill the requirements of a given course. Students may only be given an “I” grade if they have a passing average in coursework that has been completed and have well-defined parameters to complete the course requirements that could result in a grade better than the default grade. An “I” grade may not be assigned to a student who did not attend the course. Prior to the end of the semester, students must initiate the request for an “I” grade and receive the instructor’s approval. Assignment of an “I” grade is at the discretion of the instructor. Additional information on these policies may be found here (<http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/grading/explanation.html>).

Academic Integrity

As is written into Graduate School policies, academic integrity is a fundamental university value. Through the honest completion of academic work, students sustain the integrity of the university while facilitating the university's imperative for the transmission of knowledge and culture based upon the generation of new and innovative ideas. When an instance of suspected or alleged academic dishonesty by a student arises, it shall be resolved according to the university procedures outlined here (<http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.html>) and here (<http://grad.buffalo.edu/study/progress/policylibrary.html>).

Accessibility Resources

If you have any disability which requires reasonable accommodations to enable you to participate in this course, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources, 25 Capen Hall, 645-2608, and also the instructor of this course. The office will provide you with information and review appropriate arrangements for reasonable accommodations. <http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/>

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings Assignments
1/30	Introduction	
2/6		<p>Readings:</p> <p>Porter, "How can rhetoric theory inform the practice of technical communication?" <i>Solving Problems</i></p> <p>Blakeslee & Savage, "What do technical communicators need to know about writing?" <i>Solving Problems</i></p>
2/13	Rhetoric and design	Balsamo, <i>Designing Culture</i>
2/20	<i>Experiment: Podcasts</i>	<p>Carliner, "Computers and technical communication in the 21st century" <i>Digital Literacy</i></p> <p>Clark, "Shaped and shaping tools: the rhetorical nature of technical communication technologies" <i>Digital Literacy</i></p>
2/27	Usability Testing	<p>Ceraso, "How can technical communicators plan for users?" <i>Solving Problems</i></p> <p>Mirel, "How can technical communicators evaluate the usability of artifacts?" <i>Solving Problems</i></p> <p>Boyle & Rivers, "A version of access"</p>
3/6	Prototype Workshop	
3/13	Spring Break	
3/20	<i>Experiment: Infographics</i>	Prototype Due
3/27	Organizations/Networks	<p>Hart-Davidson, "What are the work patterns of technical communication?" <i>Solving Problems</i></p> <p>Henry, "How can technical communicators fit into contemporary organizations?" <i>Solving Problems</i></p>
4/3	<i>Experiment: Video</i>	
4/10	Project Proposals	
4/17	Cultural Differences	<p>Thatcher, "Understanding digital literacy across cultures" <i>Digital Literacy</i></p> <p>Amant, "What do technical communicators need to know about international environments?" <i>Solving Problems</i></p>

4/24	Ethics and Professional Writing	Katz and Rhodes, "Beyond ethical frames of technical relations: digital being in the workplace world" <i>Digital Literacy</i> Scott, "How can technical communicators work in an ethical and legal manner?" <i>Solving Problems</i>
5/1	Futures	Longo, "Human + machine culture: where we work" <i>Digital Literacy</i> Mehlenbacher, "What is the future of technical communication?" <i>Solving Problems</i>
5/6	Portfolio Workshop	Final Projects Due Professional Portfolio Due