

**ENG 333: Technical Writing:  
Writing in Professional and Public Contexts**  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
Summer 2013

**Instructor:** Dr. Rachel N. Spear  
**Office:** virtual – online course  
**Email:** rachel.spear@usm.edu  
**\*Use email as primary contact.**  
**Office Phone:** 601.266.6734

**ENG 333 H081 - Online Course**  
**\*You must have internet access.**  
**Office Hours:** Tues 6:00pm-7:00pm  
\*and\* Wed 9:00am-10:00am \*and\*  
available by appointment

## Course Overview

### Course Description

English 333 aims to prepare students to read, conduct research, and communicate more effectively in a range of academic, professional, and public settings. Specifically, you will complete a number of projects designed to acquaint you with the audiences and types of documents you are likely to use as you advance in your educational and professional careers. Because successful communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> century increasingly requires writers to engage their audiences in a variety of media and formats, in addition to producing traditional print documents (i.e., letters, reports, proposals, etc.), you will also be exposed to a number of digital genres.

Two assumptions will be key to this work:

- Writing and speaking are rhetorical: effective communicators must carefully consider their audiences and their purposes as they plan, draft, and revise their communications.
- Academic, professional and public audiences often differ in how they read and respond to communications: effective communicators must learn to recognize and negotiate such shifting demands in each new context they face.

### Course Material

The following are required:

- Johnson-Sheehan, Richard. *Technical Communication Strategies for Today*. Boston: Pearson, 2011
- Regular access to the internet to complete assignments and download materials from our Blackboard companion site at: [usm.blackboard.com](http://usm.blackboard.com)
- A mindful presence – with the material, with yourself, and with all course participants ☺
- A positive attitude, open mind, attentive ears, and respectful tongue ☺
- A willingness to grow as a reader, writer, critical thinker ☺

### Student Learning Outcomes

At the successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Analyze a writing task and its rhetorical context, including the purpose of the document, its audience, its uses, and its constraints.
- Understand the basic features of several academic, professional and public genres, and how to modify these features in response to new audiences and situations.
- Create usable, persuasive, clear, accurate, and readable documents.
- Understand the specific expectations of audiences in your chosen academic and professional field, and to adapt your communications to more effectively address these expectations
- Develop a professional style of working in teams and managing group projects.

- Conduct more advanced research in a variety of contexts, and to more effectively incorporate this research in your writing.

## Course Design

English 333 is an online course, and its design should ideally give you more flexibility in terms of how you go about studying and learning. Given that this course may be different from others you have taken, you may need to adjust how you think about and prepare for both class and your assignments.

Each week the course will be composed of three different but closely related components: 1) course readings and assignments; 2) an online course lecture; and 3) online office hours. In order to succeed in this course, you will need to actively engage in all three of these components on a regular basis.

### Readings and Blackboard Assignments

You will need to buy a print copy of the required textbook *Technical Communication Strategies for Today*. In addition to reading from the text, you will also be required to read a range of supplementary material designed to help you with your **discussion board and journal assignments**, which you will need to complete and post by the weekly deadline.

### Course Lectures

Every Monday a video lecture that you are required to download and watch will be posted to Blackboard around 8am. These lectures will go over key aspects of the course readings, as well as specific writing and research strategies relevant to your weekly assignments and course postings. Occasionally, guest speakers from different fields/professions may also be invited to discuss aspects of writing in real-world situations. All major **course projects** will be discussed during the course lecture.

### Online Office Hours

On **Tuesday evening (6pm-7pm) and Wednesday morning (9am-10am) or by appointment**, I will be available on Blackboard IM (BB IM) to discuss, via text chat, voice chat or video conference, any questions you might have regarding readings, lectures, assignments or anything else you might wish to discuss with me. At times, you might also be asked to use the chat option to communicate with other students in this course. I am also available to chat at other times via appointment (and I can always be reached via e-mail). \* Please note that you will be required to sign-up for a BB IM account and must download the software.

**\* Most major assignments will be due by Sunday 11:59pm, the week in which they are assigned – unless noted otherwise on that particular assignment. Other assignments (such as discussion forum posts or small writing(s)) may have specific deadlines, dispersed throughout the week to assist with the course objectives.**

## Online Material

To access the online components of this course, you must first go to <https://usm.blackboard.com>, then follow the log-in instructions. You will need to have your EMPLID and password (the same information you use to access SOAR and register for classes). If you have any questions or run into difficulty accessing the Blackboard material for this course, please call the iTech Help Desk at 601-266-4357 or [helpdesk@usm.edu](mailto:helpdesk@usm.edu). You can also get specific instructions on how to use components of Blackboard by visiting [www.usm.edu/elo](http://www.usm.edu/elo).

## Course Requirements and Method of Evaluation

In order to earn at least a “C” in this course, students must satisfactorily fulfill all of the following:

- Complete all **reading assignments**;
- Complete all **weekly discussion forum and journal assignments**, to be posted online;
- Submit all four **course projects** (see Course Schedule for details);
- Compile a **final portfolio** to be submitted with a **final self-evaluation** (in lieu of a final exam);
- Participate in **assigned video/audio conferences**;
- Complete any additional homework or activities assigned.

Below are the basic course requirements with brief explanations of assignments and grading. The following should serve as only a guide and changes may be made as the course evolves; you will be informed accordingly.

**Small Assignments and Teamwork (TW) Journal Assignments (10 %)**

Short writing assignments related to material covered in readings and course lectures will be required. Each student is responsible for completing the assignments and the teamwork journal entries by the posted due date. Each submitted assignment will be scored on a scale of 1-10 and averaged together at the end of the course. Students may lose points for not submitting assignments or for submitting assignments that do not meet expectations, are incomplete, or late; this can result in a negative grade for this portion of the class.

**Project One—Employment Project (10%)**

An individual project in which students create a resume and application letter targeting a specific position or opportunity and present them to the instructor via a professional, introductory email.

**Project Two—Team Project: Analysis and Recommendations (20%)**

A collaborative project in which students will work in groups to propose and then create a series of documents that address a business scenario requiring analysis, recommendations, and online presentation. The group project will consist of several components, and all members will receive the same grade on all items.

**Project Three—Brochure (10%)**

A design project requiring students to rethink a previous piece of writing and design an original instructional or marketing brochure.

**Project Four—Research Project (25%)**

A longer project requiring students to utilize online surveys to research an issue in the news. The project will require students to write a proposal, progress report, and research report.

**Final Portfolio (15 %)**

Each student will submit a final portfolio at the end of the semester containing the following items:

- Portfolio Cover Letter
- Revised Application Letter (Project 1)
- Edited Research Report (Project 4)

**Participation: Conferences and Discussion Forums (10 %)**

During the semester (see the course schedule for general dates) you are required to participate in web conferences with me to discuss particular issues and course topics. Discussion Forums are designed to create an interactive space for you and your peers – to establish the communal work that often takes place in a face-to-face classroom. Assignments related to essays, smaller writing assignments, or material covered in readings and course lectures will be posted periodically. Each student is responsible for completing the assigned activities by indicated due dates. Discussion posts and workshops will be scored on a scale of 1-10, using the “Discussion Board” rubric and guidelines, which is located on Blackboard. Students may lose points for not submitting posts or for missing conferences. This can result in a negative grade for this portion of the class.

Please keep track of your marks using this handy chart:

Assignments	Percentages (or Points – Pts)	Space to Record Your Grades
Smaller Assignments &TW Journal	10%	
Project One: Employment Project	10%	
Project Two: Team Project	20%	
Project Three: Brochure	10%	
Project Four: Research Project	25%	
Final Portfolio	15%	
Conferences and Discussion Forum	10%	

**Grading Scale:**

A = 100-90; B = 89-80; C = 79-70; D = 69-60; F = 59 and below

### General Expectations and Format of Written Assignments:

Because this is an online course, it is important that you **keep yourself accountable** for weekly assignments and deadlines. You will find it extremely important to stay organized and to check Blackboard frequently. It is also a good idea to maintain contact with me throughout the course. If I notice that you have not been logging in to Blackboard or completing weekly assignments, I will assume you have decided to drop the course. You want to be proactive about establishing a routine that works for you and your schedule while giving you the time needed to excel in this class.

All formal papers should follow MLA format and should be typed, double-spaced, having 1-inch margins and using 12-font, Times New Roman. In the upper left corner, you should include your name, course (and section), date, and (at least) the Project number. All essays should have a title, but please no title page! Also, use MLA documentation when appropriate. Please do not email me your assignments; there will be a way for to submit essays on Blackboard.

Papers are DUE on the indicated deadlines (time and day). Please plan for technical difficulties – example: spotty Internet connection – and be sure to submit your essays well in advance because I will not accept the excuse of technical difficulties. This is an online course, so you must be able to meet the online component.

### Late Policy

No late work will be accepted unless a prior agreement has been made with me at least 48 hours before the deadline. If you feel you may be unable to turn in an assignment on time, you should contact me as soon as possible, but no later than two days before the due date. After reviewing the work you've done on the project, I *may*—at my discretion—give you a new deadline. In all other cases, work turned in late will automatically be docked one letter grade for every twenty-four hours past the deadline. After an assignment is a week late, I will no longer accept it. (And yes, Saturday and Sunday count as days. Thus, if an assignment is due Friday at 8am, and you submit it Monday at 8am, then it is three days late.)

*Note: For program assessment purposes, some final portfolios may be randomly selected for institutional review at the conclusion of the semester. In such cases, portfolios will be collected anonymously from among all available sections. This review is intended solely to improve the quality of the curriculum; it will not affect your grade in any way.*

## **Additional Policies and Expectations**

### Course “Netiquette” Policy

For this online course, you will be expressing your thoughts in various types of writing and should use a certain etiquette when doing so:

- **Avoid internet speak.** This means that you should spell out words instead of using abbreviations often seen in chat rooms and text messaging. And this applies to conversations with me, your instructor, as well as with conversations/posts with/to peers. For example, the following questions would be unacceptable: What did u think of the 2nd paragraph? When r we supposed to turn this in?
- **Proofread.** Even in a reply to a discussion post, you should be sure to proofread what you have written. You should also try to use correct grammar in all situations.
- **Use proper capitalization.** The beginning of a sentence should always be capitalized, even in online writing. You should also avoid typing in all caps. For instance, you should not write: THE STYLE OF THIS ESSAY WAS EFFECTIVE. This is the equivalent of shouting.
- **Use names:** When responding to a discussion thread, blog post, chat message, email, etc., use the name of the person to whom you are responding. Ultimately, we want to foster a positive community through this course, and this starts by addressing each other with our proper names.
- **Be polite.** This is an environment where students should feel comfortable communicating ideas. Therefore, when responding to classmates' ideas/posts/chats, you should always be polite, even if you want to express disagreement. Watch your tone, and profanity, of course, is unacceptable.

### Academic Honesty and Policy on Plagiarism

You are expected to abide by USM's policy on **plagiarism**. All members of the academic community at USM are expected to take responsibility for academic honesty and integrity: <http://www.usm.edu/institutional-policies/061701-academic-dishonesty>. Plagiarism – the willful copying/presenting of another person's work as if it were your own – and other forms of cheating are unacceptable. As a basic and ethical, **do not plagiarize ANY assignment, written, visual, or**

oral – formal projects, drafts, journal posts, in-class writings, presentations, etc. Give credit where credit is due (with ideas, words, images, etc.), and do your own original thinking, writing, responding. **This course cares what YOU think.**

All plagiarism cases will be reported and will be handled appropriately. The penalties for such behavior can include being failed for the course and in some cases even expulsion from the university. Some examples of plagiarism may include, but are not limited to, the following: passing off others' analyses as your own, neglecting to attribute to the original source, and auto-plagiarism (or *your* previous work). Your assignments for this course should be *your original work for this course*. If I find, or suspect, plagiarism, I am obligated to report it, and the guilty party will face the appropriate consequences. Note that you should cite your drafts *and* journal entries! Improper documentation in any assignment may be considered plagiarism. If you have any doubts as to what constitutes plagiarism, refer to your student handbook for USM policies on Academic Honesty, or come talk to me. ☺ Also note that work submitted for this course may be screened using plagiarism detection software. By enrolling in this course, students give permission for their essays to be submitted to and analyzed by Turnitin.com, employed by the University to identify and document plagiarism.

\* *Plagiarism, of any sort, will result in a zero on assignment at minimum, will be reported, and will receive any additional, appropriate consequence deemed necessary (i.e., failing the course, being removed from the university).*

### Campus Vision, Mission, and Values

You are joining a campus with a certain statement related to campus vision, mission, and values, and you are expected to uphold your part. USM aims to engage and empower individuals and to transform lives and communities through research, actions, and presence. Its mission is to cultivate intellectual development and creativity through generation, dissemination, application, and preservation of knowledge. Also, it values personal well-being; well-read, articulate, creative and critical thinkers; innovations that evolve with a changing world. Furthermore, it encourages civic responsibility, integrity, diversity, and ethical behavior: <http://www.usm.edu/about/vision/vision-mission-values>.

## Services and Resources

Yourself, your campus, and me!

First, **you are your own resource!** It sounds corny. But college is your job, *your* learning process. It will prepare you for *your* future goals, career, if you let it. Thus, you should work towards developing skills that will translate to other disciplines, other objectives while you also work towards becoming more self-aware. This may mean that you will have to learn how to study, how to manage your time better, how to plan ahead...in short, learn how you learn.

USM has a **Student Success Center (ULC)**, which is good to know! This free Center is to help you succeed and make at college. I encourage you to use it! Visit their website for details: <http://www.usm.edu/success/about-us>.

There is a **Writing Center** with peer readers. This free program is available to all student writers at USM. It offers one-on-one help with any type of writing project and at any stage of the writing process. It is located in Cook Library 112. For more info, and to make an appointment, visit the following website: <http://www.usm.edu/writing-center>. Phone: 601-266-4821. This Center is important in this course design; be sure to plan ahead and utilize this resource. ☺

USM also offers a **Speaking Center**, with consultations at no cost to all students, faculty, and staff. The center is available for advice on all types of oral communication—formal individual presentations, group presentations, class discussion, class debates, interviews, campus speeches, etc. Tutors at the Speaking Center will work with you on brainstorming, organizing and outlining, editing and revising, and practicing delivery. The center has several practice rooms for recording presentations and practicing with delivery aids (such as PowerPoint and internet). It is located in Cook Library 117. For more information, call (601-266-4965) or visit the website at [www.usm.edu/speakingcenter](http://www.usm.edu/speakingcenter).

The **Cook Library**, in general, is a helpful resource for research, computers, and space for group activities: <http://lib.usm.edu/>. You can even rent out a laptop to write your essays! ☺

**ADA Notice** (Accommodations for Students with Special Needs): USM is committed to equal educational opportunities and offers reasonable accommodations for students who have documented disabilities. Please work with the **Office for Disability Accommodations** to make appropriate arrangements, providing me with documentation, within the first two weeks of the semester: <http://www.usm.edu/disability-accommodations>. If you think you have a disability that

qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act and requires accommodations, you should contact the Office of Support Services for information at Southern Station, Box 8586, tel/TTY: 601-266-5024; Fax: 601-266-6331.

USM strives to ensure quality services for students, promoting sound mental health and skills for successful pursuit of educational and personal goals; USM does not tolerate violence or harassment. If you experience an emergency, are feeling harassed, or need assistance of this nature, you should call 911 or contact the **Student Counseling Services** (601-266-4829): <http://www.usm.edu/student-counseling-services>. There are a number of available **resources**, including after hours **mental health emergencies (601-606-4357)** and **campus police (601-266-4986)**.

Lastly, **I am here to help!** The best way to get in touch with me is **email**. However, you should work on assignments in advance and plan accordingly – as I do not check email all hours of the day – and will reply to messages within 24 hours after they are sent. In addition, I will check email up until 6pm Sundays-Thursdays and up until 4pm on Fridays. Please note that you have my office phone number; however, I do not anticipate being on campus much. Thus, if you need to “speak” with me, it will be best for you to email and set up a conference to do so. In addition, my virtual office hours will allow for us to chat and/or video conference, and I encourage you to make the most of those. Again, you are always welcome to schedule appointments outside of the designated times! If you have a question, just ask ☺

*\*\*\* If you have concerns or suggestions throughout the course, please let me know. I invite any and all feedback. \*\*\**

## Summer 2013 Important Dates\*

First day of summer term: Tuesday, May 28  
Last day to register for first half term (5W1) classes: Wednesday, May 29  
Last day to register for full-semester classes: Friday, May 31  
Last day to drop 5W1 classes without financial penalty: Monday, June 3  
Last day to drop first half-term (5W1) without academic penalty: Monday, June 10  
Last day to drop full-term classes without financial penalty: Monday, June 10  
Last day to drop full-term classes without academic penalty: Friday, June 21  
Last day of and final examination for first half-term (5W1) classes: Tuesday, June 25 – also midpoint in semester  
Second half-term (5W2) begins: Wednesday, June 26  
Last day to register for second half-term (5W2) classes: Thursday, June 27  
Last day to drop 5W2 classes without financial penalty: Tuesday, July 2  
Independence Day Holiday (Night classes meet): Thursday, July 4  
Last day to drop second half-term (5W2) without academic penalty: Thursday, July 11  
Last day to process a form to add/drop or withdraw from the university for term: Wednesday, July 17  
Last face-to-face class for term and 5W2 classes: July 26  
Exams: July 29-Aug2; Grades due into SOAR by 11am, August 5

## Tentative Course Schedule and Assignments

A tentative schedule is below with the disclaimer that this schedule is subject to change, in any way, as the course progresses. I will update you with these changes, additions, deletions accordingly. It is your responsibility to be aware of any change and to stay on task. I recommend that you partner with a peer and exchange numbers/emails to help with this.

*Week 1: Overview of the Course; Readers and Context of Use* *May 28-June 2*

Reading: *TCST* Chapter 1 & 2  
Introductions Forum and **Introductory Conference**  
Discussion 1 and Assignment 1: Mission Statement  
Discussion 2 and Assignment 2: Website Comparison

*Week 2: Introduction to the Job Search; Résumés and Application Letters* *June 3-June 9*

Reading: *TCST* Chapter 5  
Discussion 3a: Beginning Job Search  
Discussion 3b: Writing Workshop

**Project 1: Résumé and Application Letter Due,  
Saturday, 06/08, 11:59pm**

*Week 3: Teamwork; Work Plans*

*June 10-June 16*

Reading: *TCST* Chapters 3 & 11, Online Resources on Website Design  
Discussion 4: Individual Strengths  
Assignment 4: Website Evaluation  
Project 2: Work Plan Due

*Week 4: Decision Making; Recommendation Reports*

*June 17-June 23*

Reading: *TCST* Chapter 16  
Teamwork Journal Entry 1: Four Stages of Teaming  
Teamwork Journal Entry 2: Progress Report  
Group “Pitches”/ Presentations

**Project 2: Recommendation Report Due**

*Week 5: Introduction to Document Design; Writing for Brochures*

*June 24-June 30*

Reading: *TCST* Chapters 7 & 8  
Assignment 5: Chart Analysis  
Discussion 5a: Brochures and Document Design  
Discussion 5b: Writing Workshop

**Project 3: Brochures Due**

*Week 6: Introduction to Project 4; Writing Proposals; Online Surveys*

*July 1-July 7*

Reading: *TCST* Chapter 6 and Chapter 14  
Discussion 6 and Assignment 6: Research and Report  
Project 4: Proposal Due

*Week 7: Conducting Research; Progress Reports*

*July 8-July 14*

Reading: *TCST* Chapter 15  
Discussion 7 and Assignment 7: Research in a Larger Context  
Project 4: Progress Report Due

*Week 8: Analytical Reports*

*July 15-July 21*

Reading: *TCST* Chapter 16  
Discussion 8a: On the Sample; Discussion 8b: Writer’s Workshop

**Project 4: Final Research Report Due**

*Week 9: Final Portfolio Introduction*

*July 22-July 28*

**Final Conference**  
Discussion 9: Writer’s Workshop

*Week 10: Final Portfolio Due*

*Term Exams: July 29-August 2*

Discussion 10: Class “Thanks”

**Final Portfolio Due mid: Tues, July 30, 11:59pm**