

## WRT 307, Section M161: Professional Writing

“When you write at work, you act. You exert your power to achieve a specific result, to change things from the way are they are now to the way you want them to be.” — Paul Anderson

“Professional and technical writers create the small documents that make the world run.” — Barbara L’Eplattenier

Instructor: Allison H. Hitt  
Email: ahhitt@syr.edu  
Class Time: MW 5:15 - 6:35 pm  
Classroom: Heroy Geology Lab 114  
Office: HB Crouse Hall 001  
Office Hours: MW 4 - 5 pm, by appt.  
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### Course Description

Welcome to WRT 307, a course that focuses on professional communication through the study of audience, purpose, and ethics. This course examines rhetorical problem-solving principles applied to diverse professional writing tasks and situations. This semester, we

will engage in professional practices and learn to respond to challenges in a flexible manner. In this course, you will work with a variety of professional genres that are frequently encountered in increasingly networked and transnational workplace settings, such as professional bios, application letters, memos, emails, tech briefings, instructional texts, and feasibility reports.

At the end of the semester, you’ll be better able to...

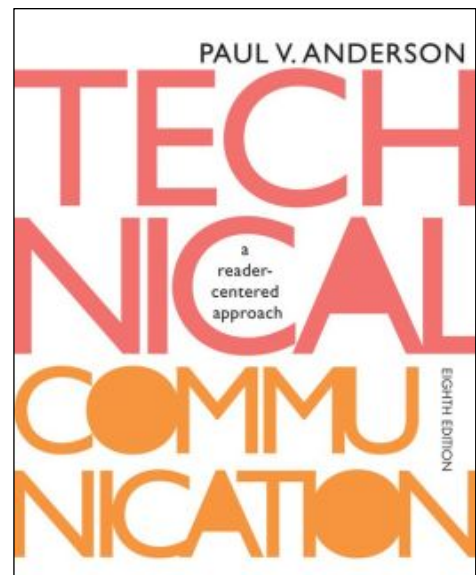
- Analyze audiences and situations
- Manage a sustained, multiple product project
- Work collaboratively
- Design and produce texts and graphics
- Conduct basic usability testing
- Develop effective oral presentations

### Texts & Materials

Anderson, Paul V. *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach*. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. Wadsworth, 2013. ISBN: 113330981X

Additional readings will be posted as PDFs to our course site, which you will be expected to check frequently for assignments, homework updates, and reminders.

<https://sites.google.com/site/hittwrt307/>



## Outcomes

1. Students will produce documents in user-centered workplace genres. Consideration of the workplace will be demonstrated through audience analyses and textbook discussions that are integral to the writing produced in the course.
2. Students will use rhetorical analysis and effective persuasion practices as central components of producing professional communication.
3. Students will learn and incorporate basic principles of working with multi-level documents, including information chunking, use of bullets, parallelism, etc.
4. Students will collaboratively produce and review work through multiple modes and contexts:
  - Print documents, informal and/or published
  - Digital documents, including networked and multimedia applications
  - Oral presentations supported by current slideshow techniques and technologies
5. Students will produce work that successfully demonstrates practical and design aspects of incorporating multimedia objects into print and digital texts and that comply with relevant intellectual property law.
6. Students will produce as the major product of this course a sustained, multiple-product group project that incorporates varied workplace genres (e.g., emails, status updates, proposals, reports, etc.) and technologies.
7. Students will produce an instructions assignment that incorporates audience assessment, a basic usability assessment and report, and multi-level document principles.
8. Students will take responsibility for their own learning through project planning, revision, deadline compliance, managing team dynamics, and seeking expertise when needed.
9. Students will collaborate responsibly and manage tasks concurrently.
10. Students will learn to critically consider and adapt to emerging technologies. The technologies incorporated in assignments should prepare students for those they will encounter in the workplace and should support distributed collaboration, print production, document design, and the intricacies of developing professional texts. Other applications should be incorporated as necessary to develop digital products.
11. Students will learn to ethically consider themselves as global citizens working in transnational workplaces: issues of corporate conduct, intellectual property, usability, accessibility, and equality as a central part of the composing process.

## Major Assignments

As in the workplace, our course projects will overlap. The techniques, skills, and strategies gained from each will inform the others.

**The Onboarding Project** will introduce the fundamental principles that will be central to the rest of the course. Employing the framing concept of the “onboarding process” many companies or institutions use to orient new employees, the project will establish the course’s expectations of you as a worker (writer, editor, collaborator...) and for the quality of your work. The project will result in a number of collaborative products and a **portfolio** of individual work that demonstrates understanding of and facility with the fundamentals of Professional and Technical Communication, rhetoric, workplace conventions, and genres.

**The Instructions Project** is designed to address two issues in modern professional writing: learning to write clear instructions and working collaboratively to produce non-paper, non-linear texts. You will work in teams of 3-4 and collaboratively decide on a task, write instructions for that task, design an instructional website, conduct usability testing, and revise accordingly. We will learn and work through the digital platforms for building websites as a class.

**The Feasibility Study** will require that you work collaboratively with a team to identify, research, and address a real-world workplace problem. Your team will research the issue and client, determine three feasible solutions, and make a recommendation to the client based on research and the needs or criteria of the client. This project involves multiple genres—most notably a substantial proposal and report—and consistent workflow management.

**The Tech Briefings** will be individual presentations on new-to-you professional technologies. After the first unit, everyone will sign up for a presentation date. The briefings will require a 10-minute presentation accompanied by a useful document that communicates information about your chosen technology. Relevant workplace technologies might include hardware (e.g. smart pens, tablets) or software (e.g. blogging platforms, networked spaces).

NOTE: All projects must be completed. Failure to complete any one project will result in an “F” for the course.

Project	Points
Onboarding Project	250
Instructions Project	250
Feasibility Study	400
Tech Briefings	100
Total	1000

## Grades

Because this is a course in professional writing, your work will be graded as though you were submitting it to your immediate manager. Final semester grades will be determined based on the following point scale:

A	940-1000	A manager would be very impressed with your work and remember it when a promotion is discussed. In our course, this means your final product has excellent content, clean text, and excellent document design. Additionally, your work is thorough, coherent, well supported, and organized in a useful fashion. It demonstrates a superior understanding of audience, purpose, and rationale.
A-	900-939	
B+	880-899	A manager would be satisfied but not particularly impressed. This means that your product meets the basic standards of writing and overall production, as well as demonstrates a step forward in your learning process. It is sufficiently developed, organized, and supported, and you have demonstrated a solid understanding of audience, purpose, and rationale.
B	840-879	
B-	800-839	
C+	780-799	A manager would be disappointed and would require you to revise the document before a client sees it. Your work may have clear but undeveloped ideas, or it may not engage or affect the reader. It likely contains some errors in logic, mechanics, or grammar.
C	740-779	
C-	700-739	
D	600-699	A manager would be troubled by the poor quality of your work and likely note it in your annual review. The level of writing skill forces the reader to work too hard to understand your ideas. The text may have incomplete information, lack clear organization and design, and have serious grammar or mechanical issues.
F	599 and below	A manager would start looking into replacing you. In this case, your work does not fit the assignment parameters, is so underdeveloped as to demonstrate incompetence, or is mechanically and grammatically incomprehensible. The most likely root cause is a pronounced lack of concern about audience perceptions of the writer as a professional.

## Course Policies

**Technology.** Computers and networked applications are a part of writing culture, and any professional writing course must address current technologies. In this course, we will use a Google site to house all assignments (major and homework), calendars, course documents, and class notes. I will ask you to use Google Docs to collaborate and to submit homework assignments.

You should bookmark our class site: <https://sites.google.com/site/hittwrt307/>

Much of class business will be conducted via email. You will be expected to check your e-mail daily and to respond promptly. *All email messages to me regarding this class should include "307" in the subject line, and all attached files should name the writer and the assignment (e.g., smithproject1.doc).*

**Attendance & Participation.** You are expected to show up and participate in all class sessions, peer reviews, presentations, and out-of-class meetings. Writing studios are courses in language learning, and language is learned in communities; therefore, it is essential that you attend class and participate. Absences and lack of preparation for class will affect your classmates work as well as your own. The work you do in class, the work you do to prepare for each class, is as important as any polished assignment you turn in for a grade. In addition, each unit calendar is only a projection and may be subject to occasional changes and revisions as it seems appropriate, necessary, or just interesting. That is another reason why your attendance is vital.

If you must miss class, you are responsible for work assigned. Please realize that class time cannot be reconstructed or made up and that your performance, your work, and your final course grade will be affected by absences. **If you miss the equivalent of three weeks of classes or more without any official documented excuse, it is unlikely you will pass the course.**

**Late Work.** Deadlines are crucial in professional contexts. They are similarly important in this course, where project planning and time management are part of the skill set you should be developing. Written assignments are due by the beginning of class or at the time specified for online submission. Major assignments are reduced by one letter grade per *business day*. In-class work cannot be made up. If you have an emergency or require an extension, please email me *before* the assignment is due.

**Professionalism & Respect.** You are expected to behave professionally in your contributions to discussions, feedback given to your peers, interactions with the instructor, and the work you do on class assignments. You will be working in groups throughout the course, and—as we know well—collaborating with others can be difficult. You will be expected to conduct yourself as a professional, to complete jobs on time, and to contribute to the success of the team and the class regardless of these tensions.

## SU Policies

**Accommodations.** If you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

**Academic Honesty.** The academic community requires ethical behavior from all of its participants. For writers, this means that the work we claim as ours must truly be ours. At the same time, we are not always expected to come up with new ideas; we often build our thinking on the ideas of others. We are expected, however, to credit others with their contributions and to clearly indicate the boundaries of our own thinking. In cases where academic dishonesty is detected (the fraudulent submission of another's work, in whole or part, as your own), you may be subject to a failing grade for the project or the course, and in the worst case, to academic probation or expulsion. (<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>)

**Student Writing.** All texts written in this course are generally public. You may be asked to share them with a peer, the class, or with me during classroom activities or for homework. You will also be asked to sign a consent form requesting the use of your writing for professional development, teacher training, and classroom instruction within the Syracuse University Writing Program.

**The Writing Center.** Experienced writing consultants at the Writing Center (101 HB Crouse Hall, on the Quad) can help you at *any* stage of the writing process. Face-to-face and online appointments are available for 25- or 50-minute sessions throughout the semester and can be reserved up to seven days in advance via their online scheduling program, WOnline. In addition, drop-in appointments are welcome Monday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and brief concerns or questions can be emailed to consultants via the eWC. (<http://wc.syr.edu>)

**Religious Observances.** SU's religious observances policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. An online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class. ([http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm))