

HU 2600—Introduction to Scientific & Technical Communication

Michigan Technological University • Fall Semester 2006

Check <http://www.hu.mtu.edu/~mabrady> for the most current version of syllabus & calendar

INSTRUCTOR	Ann Brady, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Director STC/A Program
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E-MAIL	mabrady@mtu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	T–Th 2-3, W: 3-4 in 329A Walker Arts & Humanities, and by appointment
CLASS HOURS	T–Th 12:35-1:50 in Walker 134
REQUIRED TEXTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Practice of Technical & Scientific Communication</i> • <i>Technical Report Writing Today</i> • Selected Readings
CLASS LIST	2600-1@mtu.edu
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

HU 2600 is designed to broaden your understanding of scientific and technical communication. Grounded in the knowledge that the best rhetorical theories have to offer, the course prepares you to write effectively in a variety of contexts and to consider the social and ethical responsibilities of the workplace.

COURSE GOALS:

Scientific and technical documents include a wide range of subjects, goals, information sources, readers, and circumstances that lead to their preparation. To be successful as a writer in the many genres that comprise the field, you need to be rhetorically informed and thus able to assess your audience and identify your own purposes. The course thus has two goals. First, it teaches you what science and technical communication is and how it differs from the conventional writing that is typically taught in high school and college. Secondly it teaches you how to think rhetorically and to produce transactional documents—that is documents that are designed to get things done.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Readings:

I expect you to read the texts assigned in the syllabus before the class session and to *actively and thoughtfully discuss* the topics for a given session. Additional readings may be assigned during the semester for which you will be responsible.

Written Assignments:

Although I may modify the assignment topics and due dates during the semester, I plan for six different types of written assignments.

1. A **letter** to a “live” and specific audience for a class client (1-2 pages).

2. A **memo** report based on your interview with someone who writes or designs as a professional communicator (2-4 pages).
3. A **communication assessment report** written for an organization to which you belong and (3-5 pages).
4. An **original piece of science writing** (3-5 pages).
5. A **self-assessment letter & revision** introducing a portfolio sample due at semester's end (1 page).
6. A **suite of shorter documents** :
 - **Proposals, peer reviews, and self assessments** (1 page each) are required for each writing assignment. More specifically, the documents you produce will typically go through a cycle that includes a proposal, a peer-reviewed rough draft, comments from me, and a final draft accompanied by a self-assessment memo.
 - Proposals indicate your audience, purpose, goals, and concerns.
 - Peer reviews prepare you for the collaborative and critically demanding work of document production, both in the classroom and the workplace. Since the reviews are a privilege and a responsibility, use them well. Come prepared, be clear, specific, and complete in your assessment of your peers' work, and demand the same for your own.
 - Self-assessments indicate what you like about what you produced, what you'd change about it, and what you've learned.
 - You can write a **trip report**. The STC/A Program brings professional communicators to campus to talk about their work. Dates and times are announced on the STC list (steadwise-l). If you'd like, you can attend one of the talks and write a trip report about it for "extra" credit.

Keep a digital copy of each assignment you complete

Submit your assignments in hard-copy using :

- 12-point font – Ariel, Bookman, Century Schoolbook, Garamond, Palatino, Times New Roman
- appropriate headings
- left justified paragraphs
- single-spaced paragraphs
- double-space between paragraphs

Teamed Oral Reports and Abstracts:

You'll be assigned to a team to investigate a particular area in the profession that is described in the required text by Lutz and Storms, or that you are interested in investigating (i.e. web design). If you use topics from Lutz and Storms, your investigation and report should begin with this text but should go beyond it using the additional resources at the end of each chapter to reinforce or amplify what you have to say. If you choose a topic not in Lutz and Storms, you should have access to information similar to what they present. In your oral report, you should introduce the professional area, explaining its applications, responsibilities and employment outlook. The presentation should not exceed 20 minutes; you should plan to devote 5 minutes of this time to audience questions. You should include one visual, although not necessarily PowerPoint. Finally, you should plan to submit a collaboratively written abstract of your presentation on the day of your talk.

Portfolios:

Throughout the semester, you should keep a running file of your work, which will serve as the basis for two portfolio pieces you will turn in at the end of the semester. In November, I'll ask you to choose one document you've produced in this class, revise it, and write an accompanying introduction in which you reflect on the piece and what you've learned as a result of working on it.

Professional writers use their portfolios to showcase their best work for possible employers and for professional awards. You'll begin yours in this class, watch it grow as you advance through the program, and present it as part of your capstone before you graduate.

Academic Honesty:

Unless the assignment calls for a collaborative effort, I expect that the work you submit to me will be yours. If you are referring to or using other sources, acknowledge them, using proper form. Evidence of copied or plagiarized work is cause for serious disciplinary action by the University.

Attendance:

I expect you to attend every class meeting and every conference, ready to participate fully and thoughtfully. If you miss more than three of our classes/individual meetings, I will drop your final grade. If you must be absent, please contact me via e-mail or speak with me in person.

Grading:

You can earn an A or B in this class if you complete all assignments and reach deadlines, do quality work, and demonstrate genuine commitment. You'll earn a C if you meet deadlines with satisfactory effort or if some of your assignments are incomplete. You'll receive a D or F if your assignments are poorly executed or overdue, or if your attendance, participation, or effort is unsatisfactory.

Note that while there is no formal category for participation and attendance, they will influence how I evaluate your performance at the end of this semester. This is a class in professional communication; I expect you to behave professionally.

- Portfolio self-assessment letter & revision 10%
- Teamed oral reports and abstracts 15%
- Client letter 15%
- Memo report 15%
- Science writing piece 20%
- Assessment report 25%

If you have questions about your grade at any time during the semester, let me know so that we can discuss your progress.

Grading Standards:

A—truly excellent

A work is an example of highly effective professional writing. It makes its purposes clear, reflects concern for its audience's needs and responses, and is detailed, persuasive, effectively organized, exhibits appropriate format and tone, and is grammatically correct.

B—very good

B work is effective and would succeed in most professional communication circumstances. It may lack the polish or effectiveness of an A.

C—satisfactory

C work is effective though it lacks features necessary to succeed completely with a professional audience. Its purpose may not be entirely clear, it may not be effectively organized, it may not exhibit an appropriate tone or format, or it entails grammatical errors that make it difficult to read or understand than necessary.

D—poor

D work does not communicate effectively for several reasons. It may display an inadequate understanding of purpose or audience. It may lack information or be unpersuasive. Its organization may be confusing or misleading, and its tone or format may be inappropriate. It may be difficult to understand or contain serious errors in grammar.

F—unacceptable

F work does not satisfy the requirements of the assignment.

Criterion for Grading

CRITERION	A—truly excellent	B—very good	C—satisfactory	D—poor
Content				
Meets assignment	Yes	Yes	Most aspects	Significant gaps
Argument	Interestingly and clearly advanced	Clearly advanced	May be good but only implied	Ambiguous or absent, generic or trite
Support	Valid and sufficient support provided	Some gaps or weak support	Some support, but weak or not clearly relevant	Poor support or connections not shown
Insight	Original and creative	Demonstrates thought	Conventional or generic	Superficial or incomplete
Organization				
Logical ordering	Establishes and follows a pattern	Follows a pattern	Generally follows a pattern; some gaps	Unapparent pattern or hard to follow
Paragraphs	Coherent and unified	Usually coherent and unified	Some incoherent or not unified	Incoherent or lacking unity
Transitions	Provided as needed	Provided as needed	Sometimes missing	Enough missing to cause confusion
Style				
Sentences	Correct and varied, according to meaning	Correct, with some variety	Correct, but elementary	Surface errors, such as comma splices or fragments
Diction	Precise, correct, creative	Correct	Some debatable word choices	Frequent misuse of words
Spelling	Correct	Correct	Very few mistakes	Misspellings confuse meaning