



ENGL 421: Technical Writing

Purdue University | Summer 2021

Instructor Information	Course Information
Instructor: Ryan M. Murphy	CRN/Section: 11823/001
Email: murph355@purdue.edu	Meeting Time: MTWRF, 11:00am - 1:10pm
Office: HEAV 215	Meeting Place: WTHR 114
Virtual Office: https://purdue-edu.zoom.us/j/3893049194	Drop-In Office Hours: T & R, 1:15 to 2:30 and by appointment (send me an email to request an appointment)

Course Description

English 421 helps students become better technical communicators, whose work is characterized by the presentation of technical material in written and visual formats that are user centered and aware of audience and context. The course and its principles are grounded in rhetorical theory and informed by current research in technical communication.

Technical communication is both a professional practice and a field of academic inquiry. This course will model workplace writing in networked environments for technical contexts. It will emphasize context and user analysis, data analysis/display, project planning, document management, iterative design, usability, ethics, research methods, and team writing.

Inclusive Learning Statement

Your success in this class is important to me. We all learn differently, and I am committed to making this class an inclusive learning space. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

Required Course Texts

Technical Communication Today, 6th ed. by Richard Johnson-Sheehan (Pearson, 2018). Revel version. ISBN: 0134438663. Access the text <https://console.pearson.com/enrollment/v2g9p3>

Additional texts and assigned media will be posted in weekly course content in Brightspace.

Please complete the readings by the beginning of the class for which they are listed on the calendar. As the class progresses, I also encourage you to look back and review readings as content and skills covered in the readings apply across the entire assignment sequence.

Technology Requirements

1. Access to a reliable internet connection
2. Access to Brightspace and Purdue email

3. A desktop or laptop computer
4. A word processor (e.g. Microsoft Word, Google Docs)

If, during this course you encounter problems with technology, please notify me as soon as possible. We can work through problems with technology, but you will still be responsible for completing the assignments.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Use technical writing theories and approaches to analyze and solve problems individually and in teams
2. Communicate complex technical information, processes, and procedures via a variety of media, genres, technologies, and presentations to a range of audiences and stakeholders
3. Adapt written genre conventions and expectations to both technical and non-technical audiences with changing organizational needs
4. Apply primary and secondary research methods and strategies to produce technical documents
5. Demonstrate awareness of both the technical and human needs of users, paying special attention to accessibility, cultural diversity, and global sensitivity
6. Interpret, contextualize, explain, and visualize data sets in specific rhetorical contexts or problems

Evaluation and Graded Course Components

Final letter grades in this class will be based on the cumulative total of the points that you have earned on the assignments in this class. 1000 total points are possible. Since there are no fractions of points, there is no rounding for grades.

Letter Grade	Point Range
A	1000–930
A–	929–900
B+	899–870
B	869–830
B–	829–800
C+	799–770
C	769–730
C–	729–700
D	699–600
F	599–0

In addition to my written comments on your work, you are always welcome to ask me for additional feedback, ask that I review additional preliminary drafts, or otherwise talk with me if you have questions or concerns about your grade.

There is no planned extra credit in this class; however, circumstances may arise that warrant creating an extra credit opportunity. No extra credit opportunity will be made unless it is made available to every member of class.

Graded Course Components

Course Component	Points Available
Unit I	250
Unit II	300
Unit III	250
Discussion Board Engagement	100
Class Activities	100
Total	1000

Unit I includes a series of deliverables related to document design and remediation of a technical text for accessibility and reader usability. The primary deliverables in Unit I include:

- A section of text from an end user license agreement (EULA) or Terms of Use (TOU) re-written and re-formatted for usability
- An audience identification statement or development of a persona
- A supplementary visual representation of the technical text
- A design memo that identifies your work process and rhetorical design choices.

Unit II centers around writing a research and action proposal. Responding to a hypothetical request for proposals, you will conduct preliminary research and then develop a proposal for future research and action. Unit II deliverables include:

- A topic brief that identifies your area of research
- Preliminary research in the form of an annotated bibliography or a pilot study.
- A proposal for future research and action
- Participation in a peer response workshop
- A process memo that documents your decision in design and composition

Unit III consists of collaboratively authored technical documentation stemming from Unit II proposals. You will work in small groups of 3 or 4 to write a portfolio of technical documentation materials. A series of project management documents that help you organize with your classmates will also comprise a substantial portion of this assignment.

Project management documents include:

- Team charter and work schedule
- Status updates
- Peer and self-evaluation memo at the completion of the project

Technical documentation deliverables include:

- A proposal of the technology you plan to document
- A technical description and specification of the technology
- Instructions for potential users of the technology

- A brief multimedia presentation of your technical documentation to share with class
- A transmittal letter

Discussion Boards & Class Activities

Each week there will be a combination of online discussion boards for you to participate in as well as other class exercises and activities. All of these discussions and activities will appear in the weekly modules in Brightspace.

There is no final exam in this class.

Late Work & Deadline Extensions

I do not accept late work; however, due date extensions can be offered if you have a circumstance that warrants one and you request an extension before the assignment is due.

As soon as you think you might need an extension, please contact me by email and we can discuss your situation and whether an extension might be appropriate. I generally allow each student one extension for the duration of the course. All agreements for extensions must be in writing. The best way to do this is to send an email letting me know when you think you can complete your work. If approved, I will send a return email confirming your new deadline extension.

Course Policies

Attendance

This is a course that is typically taught over 16 weeks, but we will be completing it in four weeks. Missing one class session in this course is roughly equivalent to missing 2-3 days in a regular semester. Please be prepared to schedule your workload accordingly. Let me know if you would like to discuss strategies for time or project management.

Classroom engagement is extremely important and associated with your overall success in the course. The importance and value of course engagement and ways in which you can engage with the course content even if you are in quarantine or isolation, will be discussed at the beginning of the semester.

You are expected to attend all classes in-person unless you are ill or otherwise unable to attend class. If you feel ill, have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, or suspect you have been exposed to the virus, you should stay home and contact the Protect Purdue Health Center (496-INFO).

In the current context of COVID-19, in-person attendance is not a direct factor in final grades in this class. Course engagement and timely completion of alternative assessments can be part of the final grade. Students need to inform the instructor of any conflict that can be anticipated and will affect the timely submission of an assignment.

Only the instructor can excuse a student from a course requirement or responsibility. When conflicts can be anticipated, such as for many University-sponsored activities and religious observations, the student should inform the instructor of the situation as far in advance as possible. For unanticipated or emergency conflicts, when advance notification to an instructor is not possible, the student should contact the instructor/instructional team as soon as possible by email or through Brightspace. In cases of bereavement, quarantine, or isolation, the student or the student's representative should contact the Office of the Dean of Students via [email](#) or phone at 765-494-1747. Our course Brightspace includes a link to the Dean of Students under "Campus Resources."

In the Event a Student is Quarantined or Isolated

If you must quarantine or isolate at any point in time during the semester, please reach out to me via email so that we can communicate about how you can continue to learn remotely. Work with the Protect Purdue Health Center (PPHC) to get documentation and support, including access to an Academic Case Manager who can provide you with general guidelines/resources around communicating with your instructors, be available for academic support, and offer suggestions for how to be successful when learning remotely. Your Academic Case Manager can be reached at acmq@purdue.edu. Importantly, if you find yourself too sick to progress in the course, notify your academic case manager and notify me via email or Brightspace. We will make arrangements based on your particular situation.

Drop-In Office Hours

Office Hours Link: <https://purdue-edu.zoom.us/j/3893049194>

I will hold regularly scheduled drop-in office hours in HEAV 215 for this class. My virtual meeting room will also be open Tuesdays and Thursdays after class from 1:15pm to 2:30 pm, and by appointment. If you would like to meet with me at a different time, just send me an email and we can make an appointment.

Supporting your learning is my priority. I sometimes call my office hours "drop-in hours" to emphasize that you can drop in with or without an appointment. I've scheduled this time for you so please don't hesitate to visit me.

To protect your privacy, I will use the waiting room feature in Zoom. If I'm meeting with another student, you might need to wait for a moment. Group meetings are also fine if you and others in class want to meet with me together.

Email

Communicating by Purdue email accounts will be the primary means of communicating outside of Brightspace. **I will respond to all emails within 24 to 48 hours (usually less). I expect you to monitor your email account as well.** Please send email from your Purdue email account and include a meaningful subject line and your name in your message. Because identities of senders from non-Purdue accounts cannot be guaranteed, I generally do not

communicate any class or personal details when I respond to email from external email addresses (e.g. Gmail).

Federal legislation pertaining to educational privacy (FERPA) prohibits me from discussing protected information, specifically student grades, over email. If you have questions or concerns about your grade in this course or a specific grade on an assignment, please visit me during virtual office hours or request to make an appointment.

Use Purdue Email for:	Use Office Hours for:
Class questions	Questions about grades
Requests for appointments	Class questions
Requests for assignment extensions	Consultations about assignments

University Policies and Resources

Nondiscrimination Policy

All class participants are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and sensitive manner towards others and the course material. Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. Purdue's nondiscrimination policy can be found at

http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea_eou_statement.html.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information that is submitted provides the greatest opportunity for the university to investigate the concern. Incidents of academic misconduct in this course will be addressed by the course instructor and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for review at the university level. Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that particular assignment, and at the instructor's discretion may result in a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university, may be considered.

Purdue Honor Pledge: As a Boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - we are Purdue.

Mental Health Services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (765)-494-6995 and <http://www.purdue.edu/caps/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office of the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

If you need support and information about options and resources: Please see the Office of the Dean of Students, <http://www.purdue.edu/odos>, for drop-in hours (M-F, 8 am- 5 pm).

Major Emergency Planning

In the event of a major emergency (campus, local, global), course requirements, deadlines, and grading are subject to change that may be necessitated by a revised calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted on Blackboard and I will send an email.

Writing Lab

Even the most accomplished writers need feedback. The tutors in the Writing Lab can work with students at any stage of the writing process, from planning and drafting to editing and polishing strategies. Writing Lab consultants work with undergraduate and graduate students from every department on any piece of writing from class assignments to job search documents. For more information, visit https://owl.purdue.edu/writinglab/the_writing_lab_at_purdue.html or call (765)-494-3723.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional homelands of the Indigenous People which Purdue University is built upon. We honor and appreciate the Bodéwadmik (Potawatomi), Lenape (Delaware), Myaamia (Miami), and Shawnee People who are the original Indigenous caretakers. Please take a moment to visit this interactive site to <https://native-land.ca/> to learn about the people on whose land we reside and depend for this class.

Cultural Centers on Campus

The following cultural centers are open at all students at Purdue University. They help promote learning and community spaces beyond the classroom; I encourage you to visit them.

[Asian American and Asian Resource and Cultural Center](#)

[Black Cultural Center](#)

[Latino Cultural Center](#)

[Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Center](#)

[Native American Educational and Cultural Center](#)