

# CSS 301 Technical Writing for Computing Professionals

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## Spring 2008

**CSS 301 A** Course time: T/Th 5:45pm—7:50 Room: UW2-040

Course website: <http://courses.washington.edu/css301/anderson/>

Professor: Dr. Laurie Anderson

Office: UW1-349 Office Phone (425) 352-3594

Office Hours: T/Th 8:00-9:00pm or by appointment

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## Purpose

If you are already employed as a software engineer, you know that exams and grades are replaced with promotions, choice work assignments, raises, and stock options when it comes to rewarding your competence. Workplace performance is judged not only on your technical abilities, but also on your ability to communicate your knowledge (in writing and speaking) to colleagues, clients, and even the general public.

However, an engineer's natural competence is to be great at communicating with their peers, and usually poor at communicating with other audiences of people who are not like them. Various communication problems are overly technical descriptions and a tendency to leap from one complex concept to the next without building the reader's understanding.

Therefore, to assist you both professionally and personally in your CSS degree, CSS301, "Technical Writing for Computing Professionals" is part of the CSS core curriculum.

## Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Analyze the communication situation fully and accurately, including the needs of the document, audiences or readers, and users, and then tailor your writing accordingly.
- Organize a document and gathered material for maximum clarity to raise and satisfy readers' expectations.
- Reveal the organization of your communications by using forecasting and transitional statements, headings, and effective page design.
- Write several specific kinds of documents that recur in technical communities.
- Demonstrate a clear, concise, and accurate writing style through the application of a few writing and revision principles.
- Design usable, clear, persuasive, and accessible documents through the effective use of tables, graphs, and technical illustrations.
- Collaborate effectively with your peers in groups and provide feedback on each other's work.
- Recognize a variety of technical writing forms used in the computing industry.
- Revitalize your knowledge of grammar from a technical writing perspective.

## Grading Breakdown

Writing Assignments (5) [11% each]	55%
In-Class Writing Assignments (2) [5% each]	10%
Mid-term Exam	10%
Final	20%
In-Class/Group Participation	5%
<b>Note: Students may <u>not</u> request individual extra credit opportunities.</b>	100%

## Policies

These policies provide an even grading policy and encouraging environment for all students to learn.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS are due at the beginning of the class. No assignment is accepted after one class day of being late. Every assignment includes a Draft version that is reviewed by your Writing Group and me/grader. An assignment may also include an outline. Your grade is derived from the Final version.

TURN-IN ASSIGNMENTS: You will turn-in your assignments on paper. Bring two paper copies of your Draft assignments to class on the day it is due, so that you can turn one into me and use the second to work with it in your writing groups. Turn-in your Final version (one printed copy) with all of my comments stapled to the back.

ASSIGNMENT GRADE DEDUCTIONS: If no Draft assignment is turned in, you receive a 50% deduction. Late (Draft/Final) assignments will result in a 20% deduction. Missing my comments from your Final version will result in a 20% deduction.

MISSED CLASSES: If you miss class, you are still responsible for turning in assignments on time and getting lecture notes from a classmate.

GRAMMAR HOMEWORK is not graded; however, you are responsible for learning its content and you will be graded on its content in your exam. Plus I expect good grammar in your writing assignments and final.

BACK UPS: You are responsible for maintaining electronic back-up copies of your work.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Please turn OFF all cell phones, pagers, etc. during class. Also, no instant messaging or email. You may take type notes in class, but turn off the key click.

FOOD: Snacking is permitted; however, please be courteous to everyone by avoiding crackling cellophane, crunchy foods, and foods with odors. Also clean up after yourself.

BOOKS: You don't have to bring your textbooks to class, unless I ask you ahead of time.

*If you believe that you have a disability and would like academic accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services at 425.352.5307, 425.352.5303 TDD, 425.352.5455 FAX, or at [dss@uwb.edu](mailto:dss@uwb.edu). They will ask you to provide documentation of your disability as part of the review process prior to receiving any accommodations, and then I will be contacted.*

## Texts

Sorby, Sheryl A. and Bulleit, William M. An Engineer's Guide to Technical Communication [ISBN-0-13-048242-0] REQUIRED

Williams, Robin. The Non-Designer's Design Book: Design and Typographic Principles for the Visual Novice. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition © 2008 Peach Pit Press [ISBN 0-321-53404-2] REQUIRED

Harris, Muriel. Prentice Hall Reference Guide to Grammar and Usage. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition © 2008 Prentice Hall [ISBN0-13-237949-X] OPTIONAL

Additional required reading may be assigned, such as articles through the library electronic reading.

## Resources of Related Interest at UWB Library

Miller, Casey, and Kate Swift. The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing.

Tufte, Edward. The Visual Display of Quantitative Information.

Strunk, William, Jr. and E.B. White. The Elements of Style.

## Daily Schedule &amp; Assignments (Subject to revisions)

T/Th	In-Class Activities	Assignments Due	Reading Due & Grammar
4/1	Syllabus; Technical Writing Process; Discussion of Assignment #1		Sorby Ch 1 & 4.2 (memos)
4/3	The writing group process; Est. groups Revising versus proofreading		Sorby Ch 2.1
4/8	Writing Compare and Contrast Papers Pick topic for Assign #2	Assign #1 (Per) Draft	Grammar #1 (website)
4/10	Speaker on Resumes & Job Fairs		Grammar #2 (website)
5/15	Incorporating Tables	Assign #2 (C/C) Draft	Sorby Ch 9.2.7 (Tables)
4/17	Evaluating Audiences Grammar Review		Sorby Ch 2.2 Sorby Ch 2.3
4/22	Writing Position Papers: outlines, args Pick Assign #3 (pos) topic		Sorby Ch 6.3 Grammar #3 (website)
4/24	Library Resources (speaker) <b>(meet in the Library)</b>	<b>Assign #1 (Per) DUE</b>	Sorby Ch 3
4/29	Writing Position Papers: Quotes & Paraphrasing; Abstracts; Logic errors	Assign #3 (Pos) Outline DUE	Grammar #4 (website)
5/1	Letters and Memos External vs Internal Correspondence X-raying Reading & Writing Summaries	<b>Assign #2 (C/C) DUE</b>	Sorby Ch 4.1 Sorby Ch 6.1
5/6	Organizing Information	Assign #3 (Pos) Draft	
5/8	Page Layout and Design: visual clarity Translating to MS Word <b>(meet in a Lab)</b>	Bring something that represents good or bad CRAP principles  Bring a CSS301 writing assignment in electronic format	<i>Non-Designer's Design Book</i> [all of it] <Bring book to class>  Sorby Ch 5
5/13	EXAM #1		
5/15	Writing Procedures and Instructions; Pick topic Assign #4	<b>Assign #3 (Pos) DUE</b>  Bring an instruction manual from a home appliance	Sorby Ch 6.4
5/20	Cause/Effect & Problem/Solution Writing; Pick topic for Assign #5	Assign #4 (Proc) Draft	Sorby 6.2
5/22	In-Class Writing #1 (Summary) In-Class Writing #2 (Letter) <b>(meet in a Lab)</b>		
5/27	Ethics in Writing	Assign #5 Draft	Electronic Reading
5/29	Integrating Graphics  In-class Exercise on common errors	Bring <b>all</b> graded draft & final papers, plus IC#1, IC#2 to class	<Bring Sorby to class>
6/3	Misuse of graphics <b>(meet in a Lab)</b>		Sorby Ch 9 <Bring Sorby to class>
6/5	Evals; Poster discussion Course Review	<b>Assign #4 (Proc) DUE Assign #5 DUE</b>	
6/10	FINAL (same time) <b>(meet in a Lab)</b>		Open Note Final: One 8 ½ X 11 paper with your study notes