

WRT 307: Professional Writing • Fall 2018

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When you write at work, you act. You exert your power to achieve a specific result, to change things from the way they are now to the way you want them to be. Anderson, 8

Professional and technical writers create the small documents that make the world run.
B. L'Eplattenier

Writing 307 prepares upper-division students to understand and take up the kinds of writing and rhetorical tasks common in many workplaces. You will examine the audience for and purposes of documents produced in and for professional sites, think about the culture of the workplace and the ethical and multicultural expectations you may face, and prepare your own workplace texts using appropriate technologies for research and document design.

During this semester, we will talk about ways that writing contexts in professional settings vary from those you've encountered in the academy, and we'll develop strategies to address these new contextual demands. Of course, since this is a writing studio, we will work with many of the practices you may have become familiar with in earlier writing courses: drafting and revising; peer responding; assessing your own work; and developing individual writing projects.

You will be asked to complete a variety of writing tasks, including short letters and memos, a feasibility study and several informal writing exercises. Specific assignment details will be provided in writing and discussed in class. Some writing projects will also be accompanied by a written self-assessment and/or a presentation.

As appropriate for a 300-level course, the standards in WRT 307 will be high. The quality of written work as well as engagement with and participation in class activities must be consistent with professional expectations.

Course Description

Catalog Description: Professional communication through the study of audience, purpose, and ethics. Rhetorical problem-solving principles applied to diverse professional writing tasks and situations.

Students will engage in professional practices and learn to respond to challenges in a flexible manner. In this course, you'll work with a variety of professional genres that are frequently encountered in the workplace. When we finish, you'll be better able to:

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

WRT 307 Outcomes

WRT 307 will function as an advanced, pre-professional studio:

This course prepares students to function as writers in workplaces that are increasingly networked and transnational. It provides a space for students to focus on producing common workplace genres distinct from other offerings in the department. Students will engage in professional practices and learn to respond to challenges in a flexible manner.

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.

Students will use rhetorical analysis and effective persuasion practices as central components of producing professional communication.

Students will learn and incorporate basic principles of working with multi-level documents, including information chunking, use of bullets, parallelism, etc.

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

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.

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.

Students will produce an instructions assignment that incorporates audience assessment, a basic usability assessment and report, and multi-level document principles.

Students will take responsibility for their own learning through project planning, revision, deadline compliance, managing team dynamics, and seeking expertise when needed.

Students will collaborate responsibly and manage tasks concurrently.

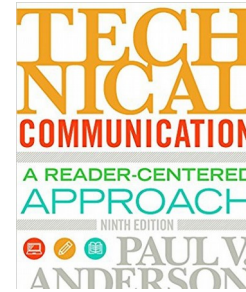
Students will learn to critically consider and adapt to emerging technologies. The technologies incorporated in assignments should prepare students for those they will encounter in the workplace and should support distributed collaboration, print production, document design, and the intricacies of developing professional texts. Other applications should be incorporated as necessary to develop multimedia and digital products.

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.

Texts and Materials

Anderson, Paul V. *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach*. 9th Edition.

I would also suggest you purchase/find/borrow a good handbook. If you decide to buy one, I recommend Rebecca Moore Howard's *Writing Matters: A Handbook for Writing and Research* (ISBN: 0077840283).



Major Assignments

Almost everything we do this semester will be part of three major projects. As in the workplace, these projects will not run consecutively. Rather, they will overlap, and the techniques, skills, and strategies gained from each will inform the others.

Following are brief overviews of the work sequence. Full descriptions will be available as each begins.

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.

- The first of these is that writing to teach, to instruct, to demonstrate, or to document procedures is a prevalent form of writing in which almost all professionals engage and yet is widely ignored as a skill to be learned and practiced.
- The second is the fact that much of the professional writing that you will do in the future will never see paper, will not be linear in design, and will require very different things of both readers and writers than traditional paper texts. The project will take up the design and navigation issues of non-paper, non-linear texts.

The Feasibility Study will require that you work collaboratively with a team who will create a workplace, starting with a problem or need and working through designing, producing, advertising, etc. the product or approach you propose as a solution. This project will officially launch near mid-term and continue to the end of the semester, but I suggest considering ideas, topics, possible teammates, and related issues now. This project involves multiple genres—most notably a substantial proposal and report—and consistent workflow management. More detail will be available later in the Assignments section of Blackboard.

Here’s how the grading breaks down:

Project	Available Percentages
Onboarding Project	30%
Instructions Project	30%
Feasibility Study	30%
Informal Work/Participation	10%
Total Available	100%

An elaborated breakdown of percentages within each unit will accompany each unit assignment.

All three projects must be completed; failure to complete any one project will result in an F for the course.

There is a common misconception that WRT 307 is a course in which students work on their resumes. In fact, it is not a major assignment in the 307 curriculum because it comes under the heading of pre-professional writing (rather than professional writing), and many of your home colleges already provide instruction in resume writing appropriate for your field. I encourage you to make use of the University's resume resources available at <http://careerservices.syr.edu/resumesletters/index.html>.

Grades

Since this is a course in professional writing, your work will be graded as though you were submitting it to your immediate manager.

A range	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.
B range	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.
C range	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.
D	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	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

Initiative and Responsibility

One of the most significant ways in which this course may differ from the other writing studios you've taken is the degree to which you will be expected to be responsible for and to initiate your own learning. For instance, when you are preparing for a presentation, you are responsible for determining what means will work best and for letting me know if you need some assistance to make things work.

My responsibility is to respond to your inquiries and requests for assistance, to offer whatever help I can, and to suggest alternatives when I don't think I can offer substantial help; however, I will not be

telling you what you should be doing. It is your job to determine what is appropriate and to ask questions when you don't know.

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to be in class on time, ready to work. You are expected to show up and participate in all class sessions, peer reviews, presentations, and out-of-class meetings with your writing partners and me. This requirement is fair to all students and consistent with what your future employer will expect of you. Responses to drafts, presentations, etc. are time-sensitive and cannot be made up: not attending class will affect your grade. *If you miss the equivalent of three weeks of classes or more without any official documented excuse you will not be able to pass the course.*

Late Work

Deadlines are crucial in professional contexts, whether for a job application, a client proposal, or a grant progress report. 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 that are late are reduced by one letter grade per *business day*. All major assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. In-class work cannot be made up.

That said nobody wants you to do well more than I do. If a documented emergency arises, please do not hesitate to let me know. The sooner you contact me, the sooner we can begin working together to make sure you remain on track in the class.

Collaboration

You will be working in groups throughout the course which may require you to use your Syracuse google drive. This work will include drafting documents, organizing team roles, and preparing for class, as well as collaborating on the production of actual texts. Relying on others and negotiating differences in working styles and tastes can be frustrating, but it is also part of the way work is done in the world. Therefore, 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.

I expect for you to be able to use your social skills to resolve your basic differences on your own. However, if you find a particular collaborative situation to be unreasonable or unresolvable, please notify me so that I can help you resolve it. If you find yourself considering taking this step, use this test: in a real job, would this be an issue worth taking to your boss and soliciting managerial intervention? If so, then it's time to let me know. If not, then find ways to work it out yourselves.

Professionalism and Respect

This course models the standards of professional conduct applicable in virtually any context. You are expected to behave professionally in your contributions to discussions, feedback given to your peers, interactions with the instructor, and, of course, in the work you do on class assignments. Respect works both ways. I do my best to be courteous and fair in all situations and at all costs. If you ever feel that you've been treated otherwise, come and talk to me about it.

Technology

Computers and networked applications are a part of writing culture, especially in the workplace, and any professional writing course must address current technologies. Obviously, we will be using computers as a means of communication as well as a means of production.

All texts produced must be cross platform compatible; despite what we may hear, the reality is that the working world is a mixed platform environment. You are responsible for knowing how to save files in formats that anyone can read. In most cases, saving text files in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx), for instance, is safe; I do not accept Microsoft Works, Word Perfect, Apple Pages, or Microsoft Publisher files. Much of class business will be conducted via email. We will use your SU email address; if you choose to use some other account, it is your responsibility to either (a) also check your SU account or (b) take care of forwarding your SU mail to that other account. 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; otherwise, I cannot guarantee that I will respond promptly. All attached files should bear names that indicate the writer and the assignment (e.g., smithproject1.doc). We may be doing some writing for the web; however, the degree to which this will become a significant feature of your work will depend on the choices you make in the nature of your projects and your level of experience and interest. None of the things we'll be working with require you to do any programming or have any special technical knowledge, but they do require that you be prepared to push yourself and ask questions when you need to.

In addition to the computer use that I assign, you will be responsible, just as you would be in the workplace, for using the technology in whatever ways will make your work more efficient and appropriate for the audience.

The Writing Center

Experienced consultants at [the Writing Center](#) (101 HB Crouse Hall, on the Quad) are available to work one-on-one with you at *any* stage of your writing process and with *any* kind of writing you're creating. Whether you need help understanding an assignment, brainstorming ideas, revising subsequent drafts, or developing editing strategies, face-to-face and online chat appointments are available for 25- or 50-minute sessions throughout the semester. Appointments can be reserved up to six 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, questions, or drafts (max of 5 pages) can be emailed to consultants via their eWC service. For more information on hours, location, and services, please visit <http://wc.syr.edu>. This is a free resource to all students and recommended for all writing assigned in this class.

Accommodations

If you believe that you need academic adjustments (accommodations) for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), visit the ODS website- <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 or TDD: (315) 443-1371 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting academic adjustments. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic adjustments and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since academic adjustments may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Religious Observances

SU's religious observances policy, found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, 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. For fall and spring semesters, 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.

Student Writing

Your work will be used for educational purposes during the current semester. For example, you may be asked to share your work with a peer, the class, or with me during classroom activities or for homework. Your work may also be used in program assessment. Your registration and continued enrollment constitute your permission.

Your work may also be used in subsequent semesters for educational purposes. Before using your work, I will either get your written permission or render the work anonymous.

Academic Integrity

Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. SU students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

Orange Success

This class will participate in Orange SUccess, which promotes student success through coordination and communication among students, instructors, advisors, and campus support service departments. If I observe that you are experiencing difficulties in the course (attendance concerns, low test scores or participation, in danger of failing, etc.), I may send an email to your syr.edu email account through the Orange SUccess system. My message will tell you about my concerns and ask you to meet with me or an academic advisor. Your advisor, TA, and/or I will work with you to create success strategies to address any difficulties you are having. In addition, if I observe that you are doing well in my course, you may also receive "kudos" from me acknowledging your efforts.

Orange SUccess may involve taking advantage of various campus support services, such as academic tutoring or advising. If I recommend that you use campus support services, I or your advisor will redirect you to that support office so they will be better prepared to assist you. Orange SUccess provides essential notices by email and/or text. Please check your syr.edu account frequently and respond quickly if you receive an email from Orange SUccess.