

Spring 2009  
Lecturer: Peter B. Olson  
TR 8–9:15 AM



## EN 3313-02: Writing for the Workplace

According to a recent report by The National Commission on Writing, “Writing: A Ticket to Work” (2007), there is a direct correlation between the quality of writing in the workplace and compensation. The role of technical communication in workplace writing has become a “core competency,” due to increasing job competition in the global economy. It is common during the job interview process for applicants to undergo writing assessment, the report indicates. Over eighty percent of corporations in the financial sector alone require writing samples; forty percent of corporations interviewed in the study stress continual writing training in the workplace to overcome the estimated \$3.1 billion deficit incurred annually due to the writing deficiencies of employees (“Writing: A Ticket to Work” 2007). Clearly, employees with more advanced writing skills, particularly with a background in technical communications, have an advantage in landing corporate positions expecting value-added skill sets. Indeed, the study stresses that writing is a necessary condition for “high-wage work” and is a “gatekeeper” within the corporate world. Over eighty percent of Fortune 400 companies place writing in the workplace as their highest job skill (Markel 3).

The goal of EN 3313-02, then, is to gain mastery of the core competencies of workplace and technical writing. Within the scope of the course students will be introduced to the concepts of information design operating in a technical communication culture that is increasingly multicultural and collaborative. We shall regard communication strategies as a base of support for project knowledge management, demanding commitments to ethics and excellence. In view of writing as a core technology in the workplace, we will consider document design issues, and the attendant concerns of audience, planning, research, and document organization and structure. Moreover, the course will cover issues of online intellectual property and solutions endorsed by the Alliance for Computers and Writing. We will also cover rhetorical issues, addressing persuasive situations, writing definitions, considerations for global readers, coherence and style, and the implementation of visual design elements in documentation. The emphasis on design will be in document usability. We will cover generic applications from letters, memos, and email to the writing of proposals and reports, instructional manuals, and websites. Students will also gain experience in presentation.

### Required Texts:

Markel, Mike. Technical Communication, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Bedford-St. Martin's, 2007.

Munger, Roger. Document-Based Cases for Technical Communication. Bedford-St. Martin's, 2005.

Walker, Janice R. and Todd Taylor. The Columbia Guide to Online Style, 2nd ed. Columbia UP, 2006. ISBN: 978-0-231-13211-4