Technical Writing Course Manual

English 3764 @ Virginia Tech, Taught by Traci Gardner, Spring 2021

Last updated January 12, 2021

I acknowledge the Tutelo/Monacan people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognize their continuing connection to the land, water, and air that Virginia Tech consumes. I pay respect to the Tutelo/Monacan Nations, and to their elders past, present, and emerging. To learn more, visit the Monacan Nation website. You can also visit the American Indian & Indigenous Community Center in 122 Squires Student Center.

I also acknowledge the enslaved Black people who lived and worked on the former plantation lands upon which Virginia Tech stands. These families include the Fractions, McNortons, and Saunders, as well as others. Read more about these families in the *Virginia Tech Magazine* article "Family Tree."

If you have any questions about the course, please ask them in the General Q&A Discussion Board in Canvas.

Table of Contents

How to Use this Manual

This course manual is a reference guide to English 3764, Technical Writing, as taught by Traci Gardner at Virginia Tech. The manual is arranged in three large sections:

- **Syllabus and Basic Course Information:** all the information typically included on a syllabus, including details on course assessment and the textbook.

- **Requirements:** explanation of the work that is expected in the course.

- **Policies:** all the guidelines that apply in the course, listed in alphabetical order.

The good news is that you do not have to read the manual cover-to-cover. To do well in the course, follow these suggestions during the first week of the course:

- At the beginning of the course, skim through the entire manual. Pay attention to the kind of information that is included in the manual as you skim.

- Read the information on key details on the class carefully, such as the "Tentative Course Schedule" and the "Late Policy."

Return to this manual throughout the term for the answers to your questions. Use these tips to navigate this Google Doc:

- Click on headings in the Table of Contents to scroll directly to that section of the manual.

- Use the bookmarks in the Outline sidebar on the left side of the document to jump to a specific section.

- Click in the body of the Google document and use the **Find** command to search for text within the document.

Always check the manual before asking me or other class members in a Canvas or email message. Most general questions about the course are answered here.

Syllabus & Basic Course Information

Course Description

English 3764: Technical Writing will enable you to gain an understanding of the theories, issues, and practices of technical communications you might encounter in the workplace, such as general correspondence, proposals, reports, and presentations.

From a foundation based on the principles of rhetoric, you will learn to analyze writing situations, consider the needs of your audience, assemble researched and original evidence, and design final documents that are user friendly and visually persuasive. By the time this course is over, you should be able to understand these documents and produce them with ease and confidence.

Course Objectives

Having successfully completed this course, students will be able to perform the technical writing tasks defined by the course learning objectives (CLO):

- Analyze the rhetorical situation and determine the appropriate audience or users of written communication, considering the needs of global audiences and people with disabilities. **[CLO 1]**

- Conduct research appropriate to workplace problem solving, such as literature review, evaluation of online resources, interview, and site inspection. **[CLO 2]**

- Interpret research findings with understanding of ethical and human implications. **[CLO 3]**

- Use conventions of various workplace genres, such as proposals, instructions, correspondence, reports, and slide decks, with understanding of how the genre conventions can be used as heuristics and as principles of arrangement. **[CLO 4]**

- Collaborate with classmates in planning, researching, writing, revising, and presenting information. **[CLO 5]**

- Apply principles of effective visual design for print and electronic presentation, including hierarchical, chronological, and spatial arrangements. **[CLO 6]**

- Identify and apply the principles of effective style in the composing of usable, reader-centered written communications. **[CLO 7]**

Your Teacher

I'm Traci Gardner, an instructor in the professional and technical writing program in the English Department. In the past, I worked at a small, educational software company in Austin, Texas, where I did technical writing, user support, and interface design. I did just about everything except coding, though I did learn to hack code a bit.

I also worked as a web developer and writer for a nonprofit, educational association (National Council of Teachers of English). I created and maintained flat-file and database-driven websites, wrote online and print content that was published on various association sites and in journals, and wrote blog posts and social media updates for the association.

I have a B.A. and an M.A. in English from Virginia Tech. I originally taught in the English Department from 1986 to 1994, before I set off for Austin. I returned to the English Department in the Fall of 2013. My research focuses on ways to use digital tools for writing and teaching.

Teaching Philosophy

I am committed to developing equitable and compassionate ways to support students in the courses that I teach. No matter what challenges you face, I want you to have what you need to do well in this course—and ultimately, in your career field.

I focus on anti-racist topics and strategies in the course to explore how multicultural audiences influence the ways people communicate in the workplace. As you work on projects in the course, you will consider how to adapt your messages so that all readers understand the information you are communicating.

In terms of course assessment, I use an anti-racist assessment system, adapted from Asao Inoue's work on contract grading, labor-based grading, and anti-racist assessment strategies. The customary process of comparing student work to an ideal text means your progress depends upon perfect grammar and style. But who gets to decide what the word *perfect* means? Rather than comparing your writing to an ideal, I consider the labor you put into your projects. I ask you to tell me about your effort, the intensity of your work, and how well you address the expectations of the assignments and respond to the feedback that you receive.

I will ask you to help me assess the labor you put into the course. To do so, I follow Jesse Stommel's advice: "Start by trusting students." I trust you to do your best work and to report the work you complete in weekly work logs and self-assessments. You are the best judge of your own learning, and I trust you to truthfully tell me how you are doing.

Contact Info

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns.

- **Name:** Call me Traci or Ms. Gardner please.

- **Pronouns:** she, her, hers

- **Email:** tengrrl@vt.edu

- **Office:** 214 Shanks Hall (Because of COVID-19, I will not be in the office)

- **Office Phone:** 540-231-6739 (Canvas Inbox is the best way to reach me.)

- **Details of Contact:** I check email and Canvas messages several times a day, every day. I try to answer student messages within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends and holidays. I will not check messages on Spring Break days. I will respond to any messages on the next class day.

- **Questions about Your Grade or Work:** For personal questions, send a private message in Canvas, using the Inbox tool. Because Canvas messages are secure, they meet all FERPA requirements and protect your privacy. I only answer messages about grades and course work via Canvas for this reason.

- **Personal Info:** I'm straight, cisgender, and white. I have several disabilities, including being a person with diabetes who has mobility challenges as a result of a knee injury. I'm a lifetime Girl Scout. While I love LOLcats, I'm a dog person, specifically a poodle lover.

Texts & Course Materials

Resources to Buy

- Selber, Mike, and Stuart Selber. *Technical Communication*. 12th ed. Macmillan, 2018. (Print or e-book). You do not need Launchpad (an electronic supplement to the textbook).

  > Other editions may work, but page numbers will differ. I cannot provide page numbers for every edition. If you choose an alternate edition, you may need to consult a classmate to access resources that are not in the text you have.
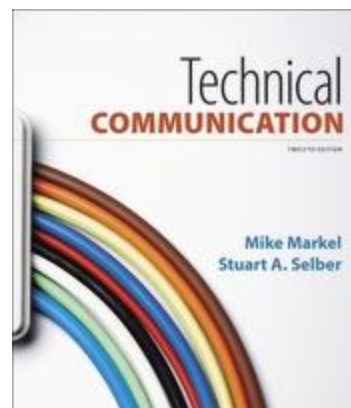
Digital Resources You Need

You probably already have all these things, but if not, be sure to get them during the first days of class. Since this is an online course, you must have the necessary technology and accessories.

- A reliable **computer**—Linux, FreeBSD, Windows, or Mac. I don't care as long as you know how to use it and can access the tools we are using on it.

- Working, dependable **Internet access** and a backup access plan. This course takes place online, so you need to be online. If the connection where you live goes out, know where you can go for free WiFi.

- A **word processor** or Google Drive. Again, I don't care which as long as you know how to use it. Whatever word processor you choose must be able to save your work as a *.DOC, a *.DOCX, or a *.PDF file, OR to share a link that will give others permission to read and comment on your work.

- **Image editing software** that can save a *.JPG or *.PNG file. The image software that came with your operating system or on your phone will usually work.

- A **camera** or a phone with a camera (optional). Some of the activities will include images, and you may want to take your own photos. A borrowed camera will be fine.

- **Earphones**/Earbuds and a microphone (optional). Some of the activities can include audio and video, so earphones are handy. Additionally, you may create audio or video projects that you will need a mic for.

Sites You Will Use

Everything for this course will be posted and shared online. Most of your writing will be public, shared with classmates and others who are interested in the course. The following sites are all free for you, but you may need to create logins if you have never used them.

- **Canvas**: https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/126055 (for turning in work and to access course assignments and resources).

- **LinkedIn Learning Tutorials**: https://linkedinlearning.vt.edu/ (free with your VT PID and password).

Other sites will be used, but you will not need to create a login or have any special access to use them.

Modules & Course Structure

Modules Instructions

This course uses Modules in Canvas to organize the information and activities. In this course, a module is like a bucket. It contains everything you will need for a week. Inside, you will find details on the readings and other activities that you are to complete each week.

The Module Instructions page, the first item in each module, provides instructions for the week. It tells you what to do with everything that is in the bucket and gives you the dates when things are due.

Read more about modules in this course in the infographic A Module in Canvas Is Like a Bucket.

Course Structure

This course consists of 16 modules. *Project Module 1: Introduction to Course* is a prerequisite to all other modules. Within each module, pages are linked by **previous** and **next** buttons at the bottom of the page. All readings and assignments can be found on the individual module pages.

- Project Module 1: Course Intro (Opens Week of January 19)
- Project Module 2: Getting Started in Tech Writing (Opens Week of January 25)
- Project Module 3: Convincing Your Audience (Opens Week of February 1)
- Project Module 4: Pitching Your Ideas (Opens Week of February 8)
- Project Module 5: Designing Your Pitch (Opens Week of February 15)
- Project Module 6: Conducting Research (Opens Week of February 22)
- Project Module 7: Writing Instructions (Opens Week of March 1)
- Project Module 8: Designing Your Instructions (Opens Week of March 8)
- Project Module 9: Describing Objects & Processes (Opens Week of March 15)
- Project Module 10: Using Graphics (Opens Weeks of March 22)
- Project Module 11: Designing Your Descriptions (Opens Week of March 29)
- Project Module 12: Structuring Your Recommendation (Opens Week of April 5)
- Project Module 13: Designing Your Recommendation (Opens Week of April 12)
- Project Module 14: Finalizing Your Recommendation (Opens Week of April 19)
- Project Module 15: Evaluating Your Progress (Opens Week of April 27)
- Project Module 16: Taking the Final Exam (Opens Week of May 3)

Requirements

Course Expectations

This course is 100% virtual. We will never meet in a classroom. As a result, it is important that you understand how the course will be conducted and what will be expected of me as the teacher and of you as a student enrolled in it.

My Responsibilities in this Course

As your teacher, it is my responsibility to (among other things)

- Answer any questions you might have that are not covered by the textbook or another course reading.

- Provide links or page numbers to any questions answered in the textbook or in other course readings.

- Provide feedback to you about your work as promptly as possible.

- Update your points totals in Canvas Grades, if necessary.

- Inform you promptly of any alterations to the schedule, such as due date changes.

Your Responsibilities in this Course

To do well in this course, you must

- **Possess Junior-Level Writing Skills**
  This is not a remedial course designed to assist you in the development of basic writing skills (which includes spelling, grammar, and punctuation skills). You are not expected to already know how to write professional documents (like memos and reports). Since this is a 3000-level course however, I assume that you possess writing skills on the junior level, and I provide feedback on your work based on this assumption.

- **Be Aware of Due Dates/Times**
  All assignments are submitted online in Canvas and are due by 11:59 pm (Eastern Time). You can, of course, upload your work earlier. I do not accept emailed course work since I can only grade your work in Canvas to ensure your FERPA rights are protected.

- **Read All Announcements in Canvas and in Email**
  Announcements are the primary way I keep in touch with everyone in the course, so read each one completely. If you do not read these Announcements, you may miss information about activities and assignments that are due, changes in course work, or revisions to the class schedule. You are responsible for the information in the Announcements, so be sure that you read them. Occasionally, I will send out information in an email message. Read these messages promptly as well.

- **Read the Textbook and Review Examples**
  At the end of each chapter of our textbook, you'll find Writer's Checklists. You'll also find example documents in the textbook and on Canvas. Review them. Pay attention to them. Many of them are real A-level documents produced in this (or a similar) course.

- **Apply What You Are Learning**
  Do your best to apply what you have read and what you have learned to your own work. Applying these lessons can help you as you produce and improve your projects.

- **Follow Assignment Instructions**
  Each assignment provides you with a description of the deliverable and the specifications, including length, project format, and other requirements.

- **Conduct Yourself Professionally**
  As a student at Virginia Tech, you are expected to adopt and follow the [Principles of Community](). For this course, just as for one that meets in a classroom, you should be civil to other participants and to the instructor, apply what you are learning about professional correspondence to any messages or discussion posts, and contribute conscientiously to any group assignments.

- **Conduct Yourself Honestly**
  All work and participation in this course is governed by the [Undergraduate Honor System](). In this course, you are expected to be honest and forthcoming as you assess your work, to follow all self-assessment guidelines fully, and to document any work that you borrow from others. All work that you submit in this course must be your own, original work. All self-assessment responses should claim points only for work that has been completed.

Kinds of Work in the Course

There are four basic kinds of work in this course: reading, writing, discussing, and tracking. These kinds of work are typical of college courses; however, the way they are defined in this course may differ from other courses. Each kind of work is described below.

Reading

The reading work in this course is much like that in any other course you take. Examples of the things you will read in this course include the following:

- Information in this Course Manual
- Chapters and specific sections in the course textbook
- Announcements and pages in the Canvas site for our course
- Videos from LinkedIn Learning and other sites
- Drafts of your projects and projects by classmates
- Discussion posts in Canvas

Writing

The writing work in this course relates to both the projects and class activities that you work on and to the class communication and general class discussions. Examples of the writing you will do in the projects for this course include the following:

- Gathering ideas on a possible topic by freewriting, brainstorming, or listing
- Taking research notes
- Completing audience analysis
- Outlining a project
- Drafting your ideas
- Revising your project
- Editing and proofreading your project

Discussing

The discussing work in this course consists of reflection, analysis, and updates related to technical writing projects and concepts. Examples of the discussing activities you will do include the following:

- Posting questions about a passage from your draft
- Asking questions about a passage from someone else's draft
- Discussing feedback you receive by replying with questions or ideas
- Responding to feedback you receive by rethinking a section of your draft

Tracking

The tracking work in this course focuses on recording the various kinds of work you do in your Weekly Work Log and your Weekly Self-Assessments. Examples of the tracking and reflecting you will do include the following:

- Logging the different kinds of work that you do in the course
- Summarizing your accomplishments for the week
- Reflecting on which tasks went well and which were more challenging
- Forecasting the tasks you will work on in the future and how you will do them

Course Activities

This course includes a variety of activities that you can complete to earn points in the course. These activities constitute the labor, or work, of the course. I describe each of the activities you will complete below. For each, I will provide more complete explanations of the task and related expectations with the assignments in Canvas.

Weekly Work Log

Completed as an Assignment in Canvas

Since your grade in this course is based 100% on how much work you do, you need to make your work visible. You will log your work, noting what you did, how long you worked, and how hard you worked. You should always be able to tell how you are doing in the course by checking your log entries.

Submitting your weekly labor log does two things:

- It allows you to keep track of your progress in the class, making sure you are up-to-date on your work.
- It allows me to learn what is working well for you and where you may need more support.

At the end of the term, you can use your logs to write a performance review (your optional final exam) that explains what you have accomplished overall and provides a self-evaluation of your work in the course.

Feedback & Grading Process for Weekly Work Logs

You will claim points for your Weekly Work Logs in your weekly self-assessment. Partial credit is possible if you have not met all the expectations for your logs.

When I read your logs (two or three times during the term), I look for strong details and reflections on the various tasks you complete each week. I will answer any questions you ask me and comment on how closely you have met the expectations for your logs.

If you do not post your log by the end of the grace period, you cannot claim any points for your log during the related week in your self-assessment.

Projects and Class Activities

Completed in your word processor, slide software, or image-editing software, and submitted in Canvas

You will compose a recommendation report in this course, along with a series of activities that will contribute to or relate to your report. The goal of these projects is to learn how to write a variety of genres that are common to technical fields.

The projects focus on these kinds of writing:

- Correspondence (e.g., memos, letters, and email)
- A Pitch Presentation (a short Ignite-style presentation)
- Instructions
- Technical Description
- Recommendation Report (longer report)

Each of these projects will include shorter activities and documents that will help you compose your project, such as the following:

- An Audience Analysis Profile
- A Rough Draft
- Check for Professional Design
- A Final, Finished Draft

The specific activities will vary, though most projects will include a rough draft and a final, finished draft.

Feedback & Grading Process for Projects

You will claim points for your Projects in your weekly self-assessment. Partial credit is possible if you have not completed all the possible activities for your projects.

When I review your projects and the related activities you have completed, I look for details that demonstrate you paid attention to the expectations of the assignment. I will answer any questions you ask me and comment on how closely you have met the expectations for your projects.

If you have not put in adequate effort, I will ask you to revise before earning points for your work.

If you do not post your projects and the related activities by the end of the grace period, you cannot claim any points for those activities during the related week in your self-assessment.

Discussions

Completed primarily in Discussions in Canvas

You will request and give feedback on projects in informal class discussions, which will take place in Discussions. You won't make judgments of quality (summative feedback); instead, you will focus on comments that help one another strengthen your projects by giving detailed and constructive feedback (formative feedback). If appropriate, we may use the Peer Review feature in Canvas.

You will also reflect on your work in the course and various technical writing genres and concepts. You can think of these discussions as in-class conversations about what you are learning and what you are having difficulty understanding.

Feedback & Grading Process for Discussions

You will claim points for your Discussions in your weekly self-assessment. Partial credit is possible if you have not completed all the possible activities for your Discussions.

When I review your participation in these discussions, I look for details that demonstrate you are asking for specific feedback on passages from your own work and that you are providing formative feedback to others on their work. I will remain largely hands-off in these peer-review-style discussions. Specifically, there are no "right" answers to revision questions, so I will not be providing any final judgments.

You need to post requests for feedback early enough to allow others in the course to respond before the end of the grace period. Similarly, you need to provide feedback for others by the end of the grace period. You need to allow enough time for others to benefit from your feedback.

If you have not put in adequate effort or I notice a pattern of waiting until the last minute to add to Discussions, I will adjust the points you earn for the relevant week.

If you do not participate in Discussions by the end of the grace period, you cannot claim any points for those activities during the related week in your self-assessment.

Self-Assessments

Completed in Quizzes in Canvas

You will claim the points for various activities you complete each week by taking a quiz in Canvas. The questions in these self-assessment quizzes each have multiple answers, which allows you to take partial credit for each kind of work you do.

Feedback & Grading Process for Self-Assessments

You will claim points for your work in your weekly self-assessment. Partial credit is possible if you have not completed all the possible activities for your projects.

Canvas will record the points you claim automatically in Grades. The points will add to those you have already accumulated in the course. See the Assessment & Grading Policies section for more details on how these points contribute to your course grade.

If you do not complete your weekly self-assessment by the end of the grace period, you cannot claim any points for the week.

Assessment & Grading Policies

This course uses a modified labor-based grading system, which is a form of anti-racist assessment (see the Teaching Philosophy for more information). Here's the simplest explanation of the system:

Do the work → **Earn the points**

It really is that simple. You complete various activities in this course, explained in the Work of the Course section of this manual, and you earn points for the work you complete. These points accumulate during the semester to determine your overall course grade.

Simple does not mean easy however! You have to complete each activity fully, paying attention to the assignment and assessment criteria. If your work is unfinished, doesn't match the assignment, or doesn't meet the requirements, you do not earn any points.

Assessment Based on Points

The points system runs on self-assessment. Every week you complete a quiz in Canvas that records the work that you have done for this course. The quiz grades automatically, giving you the relevant points for each activity you have completed.

The points from your self-assessments add up over the semester. The more points you earn for your work completed, the higher your course grade is. All points are of equal value, and all add up toward your course total.

By completing all of the required work each week, you will earn 830 points, yielding a B in the course. To earn a grade higher than a B, you will also need to complete some additional, optional activities. There are 1000 points total in the course. Most weeks you can complete activities worth 50–60 points, which are outlined in the week's module.

I compare your self-assessment to the details in your Weekly Work Log and the work you have submitted in Canvas. If your work does not fulfill the requirements of the course, I will adjust the number of points you earn for the week. Such changes are rarely necessary, but are possible.

Typical Weekly Points Distribution

The table below shows examples of a week's activities. Naturally the points and activities that are available each week will vary. See the Points Totals by Week table for more information.

Course Work	Example Activities	Approximate Points Available Each Week
Reading	- Reading Announcements - Reading the textbook - Reading course pages - Watching videos	12 points
Writing	- Preparing for & beginning a Project - Completing audience analysis - Conducting research - Writing and revising a draft	24 points
Discussing	- Posting questions about your work - Providing feedback on others' work - Reflecting and forecasting	12 points
Tracking	- Tracking your work in the course - Summarizing your accomplishments	12 points
	Total	**60 points**

⚖️ Points and Grade Scale for the Course

Grades in this course are based on the VT Grade Scale for Letter Grades with +/-. The number of points you need for each grade level is the grade number multiplied by 10. For example, for a B (83 minimum), you need 83 * 10 = 830 points.

The table below outlines the number and points values for each grade level:

Grade	VT Letter Grade	Number of Points Required
A	93–100	930–1000
A-	90–92.99	900–929.99
B+	87–89.99	870–899.99
B	83–86.99	830–869.99
B-	80–82.99	800–829.99
C+	77–79.99	770–799.99
C	73–76.99	730–769.99
C-	70–72.99	700–729.99
D+	67–69.99	670–699.99
D	63–66.99	630–699.99
D-	60–62.99	600–629.99
F	59.99 & below	599.99 & below

📅 Points Totals by Week

The table below indicates the number of points that you need at the end of each week to stay on track to earn a B or a C in the course. To earn a grade higher than a B, you will need to complete some additional, optional activities.

Week of	Week	Points Available	For a B	For a C
January 19–22	1	40	40	35
January 25–29	2	60	100	88
February 1–5	3	50	150	132
February 8–12	4	60	210	185
February 15–19	5	60	270	238
February 22–26	6	50	320	282
March 1–5	7	60	380	334
March 8–12	8	60	440	387
March 15–19	9	50	490	431
March 22–26	10	60	550	484
March 29–April 2	11	60	610	537
April 5–9	12	50	660	581
April 12–16	13	60	720	634
April 19–23	14	60	780	686
April 26–30	15	50	830	730
May 3–5	16	No points available during the last week.		

Additional, Optional Points in the Course

Additional, optional activities will be available at various points during the term. The activities will include tasks such as the following:

- Reading optional posts and watching related videos
- Writing additional short documents

The amount of work necessary to complete these optional tasks will determine the number of points they are worth, typically about 10 points each. These additional points add to the other points you earn in the course, allowing you to make up points for uncompleted work and/or work toward a grade higher than a B in the course.

The course will include 130 additional, optional points. If you are aiming for a grade higher than a B in the course, keep these details in mind:

To earn	You need to earn
a B+	40 total additional points beyond a B (830 points)
an A-	70 total additional points beyond a B (830 points)
an A	100 total additional points beyond a B (830 points)

Additional, Optional Points in the Final Exam

The largest number of additional, optional points is available in the Final Exam, which is worth 40 points. If you have reached the number of points you need to meet the goal you set for your course grade by the last day of classes, you do not need to take the final exam.

If you are still a bit short of your goal, go ahead and take the final exam. Taking the final exam cannot harm your grade in the course. You can only add points to your total, never lose them.

General Grading Policies

- All work and participation in this course is governed by the [Undergraduate Honor System](#).

- All submissions in this course are due by 11:59 PM Eastern US time zone on their designated days (see individual assignments and activities for due dates).

- The **Grades** tool in Canvas calculates your points and will have the current total number of points you have claimed in the course.

- Your grades for all points-bearing work in the course are set to zero at the beginning of the course to ensure that the **Grades** tool accurately reflects your current course points total.

- I do not round grades or provide extra credit.

Questions about Your Grade(s)

If you have questions/concerns/issues with your grade(s), please send me a private message using [the Inbox tool in Canvas](#) as soon as you can. To protect your privacy, I only discuss grades in the Canvas Inbox.

Tentative Course Schedule

This schedule and other course materials may change to adapt to your needs and those of others taking the course.

You can always find the current assignments and information for the course in Canvas. It is your responsibility to check your Canvas Announcements for updates and changes to the course schedule. Check the Module Instructions each week for specific details on the work due.

Schedule was last updated on January 11, 2021.

Week of	Textbook Material Covered
January 19	Project Module 1: Course Intro ● Syllabus & Course Info ● Requirements ● Policies, including VT Policies and Resources
January 25	Project Module 2: Getting Started in Tech Writing ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 1: Understanding the Tech Comm Environment ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 2: Understanding Ethical & Legal Considerations ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 3: Writing Technical Documents 🔔 Last Day to Add: Monday, January 25, 2021
February 1	Project Module 3: Convincing Your Audience ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 5: Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 8: Communicating Persuasively Spring Break Day: Friday, February 5, 2021
February 8	Project Module 4: Pitching Your Ideas ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 21: Making Oral Presentations
February 15	Project Module 5: Designing Your Pitch ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 9: Emphasizing Important Information ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 11: Designing Print and Online Documents Pitch Presentations Due: Friday, February 19, 2021, by 11:59 PM
February 22	Project Module 6: Conducting Research ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 6: Researching Your Subject ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 7: Organizing Your Information ● Markel & Selber, Part A: Skimming Your Sources and Taking Notes ● Markel & Selber, Part B: Documenting Your Sources Spring Break Day: Thursday, February 25, 2021

Week of	Textbook Material Covered
March 8	Project Module 8: Designing Your Instructions Review textbook as needed ⏰ Instructions Projects Due: Friday, March 12, 2021, by 11:59 PM
March 15	Project Module 9: Describing Objects & Processes ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 20: Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions, pp. 535–555 🌳 Spring Break Day: Wednesday, March 17, 2021
March 22	Project Module 10: Using Graphics ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 12: Creating Graphics
March 29	Project Module 11: Designing Your Descriptions Review textbook as needed ⏰ Description Projects Due: Friday, April 2, 2021, by 11:59 PM 🔔 Last Day to Resign without Penalty: Tuesday, March 30, 2021
April 5	Project Module 12: Structuring Your Recommendation ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 18: Writing Recommendation Reports 🌳 Spring Break Day: Tuesday, April 6, 2021
April 12	Project Module 13: Designing Your Recommendation Review as needed: ● Markel & Selber, Ch. 11: Designing Print and Online Documents
April 19	Project Module 14: Finalizing Your Recommendation ● Review textbook as necessary ⏰ Recommendation Reports Due: Friday, April 23, 2021, by 11:59 PM 🔔 Last Day to Reschedule Final Exams: Wednesday, April 21, 2021
April 26	Project Module 15: Evaluating Your Progress 🔔 No weekly work accepted after 11:59 PM on Friday, April 30, 2021 🌳 Spring Break Day: Monday, April 26, 2021
May 3	Project Module 16: Taking the Final Exam ● No course activities due during the last three days of classes, by policy in the Virginia Tech Faculty Handbook, 9.6.1. 🔔 Classes end & Last Day to Withdraw: Wednesday, May 5, 2021
May 10	⏰ Final Exam Due: Wednesday, May 12, by 11:59 PM. No grace period.

Policies (listed alphabetically)

Absences & Missed Work

You need to participate in this course on a regular basis every week by turning in your projects and collaborating with others in the class. If something prevents you from turning in your work, let me know as soon as possible so that we can find a way for you to catch up.

If you miss a deadline completely because of an illness, death in the family, or family emergency, see information from the Dean of Students Office for details on how to document the situation. *Please provide official documentation within one week of any situation.*

If you have an issue that affects your ability to complete the course, you may qualify for Academic Relief. For personal medical issues, contact the Schiffert Health Center, and for psychiatric or psychological issues, contact the Cook Counseling Center.

Accessibility

I may need help with this course. What do I do? Everyone needs special accommodations at some point because we all learn differently. I am happy to work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) staff or directly with you to make sure that you have the support you need.

How do I document what will help me? To document the special accommodations that will help you the most, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in 310 Lavery Hall (map link, above the Turner Place Dining Center) as soon as possible to ensure that you have the resources you need to participate in the class. The procedures and forms you need are also available on the SSD website.

I am happy to work with you and the SSD staff to make sure that you have the support you need. Please let me know what you need during the first week of the term so that I can be sure you have the resources you need as soon as possible.

Also email me your documentation from the SSD office by the end of the first week of class if possible. If not possible, send the information as soon as you can. Because I am not on campus due to COVID-19, do not take your documentation to my office.

What if I do not have official documentation? That's okay too. I know that the official testing can be expensive and time-consuming. Send me a private message in Canvas that tells me what you need, and I will try to help.

I need extra time on projects. You can use the grace period if you need more time on a project or need to complete work in a less distracting environment. Check the late policy for more details. If the grace period is not adequate for your situation, send me a message using the Inbox tool as far in advance as possible so I can fix the settings in Canvas for you.

What course accessibility resources are available online?

- VT Accessibility Policy: https://vt.edu/accessibility.html
- Canvas: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2061-accessibility-within-canvas
- Kaltura: https://corp.kaltura.com/products/video-accessibility/
- Zoom: https://zoom.us/accessibility

What course resources are designed for accessibility?

- I test HTML content with WebAIM's Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (WAVE).

- Most resources we use can be magnified on your computer screen if the font is too small.

- All the LinkedIn Learning videos we use have accompanying text transcripts.

- Images in Canvas should all have descriptive alt attributes (unless they are purely decorative).

- Links have title attributes if the page title differs from the linked text.

- Canvas is accessible by screen readers.

What course resources may be inaccessible? Student projects used as examples may not be fully accessible. For instance, there may not be captions or alt attributes for the images in student work.

Anonymous Use of Student Texts

The work that you and your classmates create in this course may be used anonymously to demonstrate revision strategies.

In the case where student texts are used to show a weakness or error, the presentation will also include examples of how to revise and strengthen the text. As the author of such a text, you will gain direct examples of how to change your draft.

When student work is used in this course, it will be used according to these guidelines:

- Student work is always used anonymously.

- Anonymous texts are typically analyzed in one of two ways:

    - To demonstrate a weakness and then show how to revise.

    - To model a strength and show how to use similar strategies.

- Anonymous work will be changed as necessary to remove any personal or potentially identifying information.

- Several examples of student work may be combined to create one composite example when appropriate.

Backup

Save backups of all your work for this class. Maintain these backups in multiple places (your laptop, a flash drive, Google Docs, Dropbox, Box). Printed backups can also be useful.

Do not discard any files, notes, or other work until the term is over and you have received your course grade. Be sure that you maintain backups so that you can continue your work when you encounter computer problems.

If you need assistance with your computer, check with the [Customer Support Center (4Help)](#).

Communication Guidelines

We will use Canvas for class discussion. Rather than emailing general questions to me, post your questions in the [General Q&A Discussion Board in Canvas](#) so that anyone who knows the answer can help you.

- General questions about logistics (including the course or assignments) should be posted to the [General Q&A Discussion Board in Canvas](#). This will guarantee you a faster response time over emailing me.

- I respond to your questions as quickly as possible, but please be prepared for a 24 to 48-hour response time.

For personal questions, send a private message in Canvas, using [the Inbox tool](#). Because Canvas messages are secure, they meet all [FERPA requirements](#) and protect your privacy. I only answer messages sent via Canvas for this reason.

I try to answer student messages within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends and holidays. *I will take all Spring Break Days off, replying to any messages on the next class day. I encourage you to take the Spring Break Days off as well.*

Normally, I am online from late afternoon through early morning hours, so look for responses from me during those hours. I'm not a morning person, and I usually take a two- or three-hour break each evening around 7:30 PM for family time.

Honor Code

All work and participation in this course is governed by the [Undergraduate Honor System](#).

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

> "As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do."

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for working according to the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation.

Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. Academic integrity expectations are the same for online classes as they are for in person classes. All university policies and procedures apply in any Virginia Tech academic environment.

For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit the [Undergraduate Honor System page](#).

Late Policy (Grace Period)

My late policy includes a grace period that should cover most problems that come up, whether academic conflicts, an illness, a religious holiday, or a personal issue. It applies to most work in the course and can be used multiple times. You do not need to ask in advance to use the late policy or to explain why your work is late. Just take advantage of the grace period, as explained below, for any work OTHER than your final exam:

- **The due date** is the day that your work is due (usually Fridays). Every student has a 3-day grace period after the due date during which the project can still be submitted.

- **The grace period** occurs between the due date and the deadline. Work submitted during the grace period may be marked as *late* in Canvas; however, there is no penalty for work submitted during the grace period. I pay no attention to the *late* label.

- **The deadline** comes 3 days after the due date (usually Mondays) and is the final moment that Canvas will accept a project (usually listed as the "available until" date in Canvas). There are no extensions on deadlines. If you do not turn in your work by the end of the grace period, you receive a zero for that activity, and you cannot revise or make up the work.

Final Exam: There is *no grace period and no make-up option for your final exam*. Your final exam must be submitted by the due date (11:59 PM on Wednesday, May 12, 2021) so that I can submit course grades on time. There are no make-ups or extensions unless approved by the Dean of Students.

You can choose any time from the moment the final opens (Friday, May 7 at 12:00 AM) up to the moment the exam closes (11:59 PM on Wednesday, May 12, 2021). If you have three exams on a particular day during final exams, complete your final exam for this course on another day to avoid the conflict.

Extenuating Circumstances for General Course Work

In the case of extenuating circumstances, let me know immediately. I understand that things happen.

To pace course work for everyone, I will not post work early to resolve a conflict. If you let me know reasonably ahead of time, we can find a solution. As long as you are honest and timely in letting me know what's going on, we can try to work something out.

Learner Support

Please contact me with concerns or questions about special needs or considerations that fall outside of the services listed in this section. All information shared will be kept confidential. For complete information on student services at Virginia Tech, see the [Division for Student Affairs](#).

Primary Contacts for Mental or Physical Well-Being

- **Emergencies**: Dial 911. Subscribe to [campus alerts](#) Emergency Warning System.
- **Personal Counseling** (including help with drinking, drug abuse, mental health, stress, sexual assault recovery): Contact the Thomas E. Cook Counseling Center (240 McComas Hall) at [231-7473](#) or visit the [Cook Counseling Center](#) online.
- **Reporting [sexual assault](#)**: Dial 911, or call the Student Health Care Center at 231-7642, or contact the Women's Center (206 Washington Street) at 231-7806.
- **Health Care Appointments**: Call the Schiffert Health Center at 231-7642, or visit the [Health Care Website.](#)
- **Legal Concerns**: Contact Student Legal Services at 231-4720 or visit the [services website](#).
- **Food Pantry**: [209 Manna Ministries](#) helps VT students in need. Email [209MannaVT@gmail.com](#) with questions. You may also find help from the [Interfaith Food Pantry](#) and the [Giving Tree Food Pantry](#). Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support.

Academic Support Services

If you require academic support, investigate the University's services. Service areas include:

- [Student Success Center](#)
- [Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program](#)
- [Student Athlete Academic Support Services](#)
- [University Academic Advising Center](#)
- [Office of Veterans' Services](#)

There are orientation services for [new graduate students](#) and for [new or transfer undergraduate students](#). For tutoring, visit the Student Success Center in 110 Femoyer Hall, call the center at 231-5499 or visit their [website](#). For career counseling, visit Career Services in the Smith Career Center, call them at 231-6241 or refer to the [Career Services website](#). For study skills advice, visit Thomas E. [Cook Counseling Center](#) in 240 McComas Hall or call 231-7473.

Virginia Tech Official Accessibility Policy

Students will be provided access to educational materials, buildings, library, computer and classroom opportunities. Videos will have closed captioning. All lecture videos have audio. It is uncertain if the textbook or reading material outside of the textbook is offered in a braille version or on audio. Visually-impaired students may request that the instructor verbally describe the required figures and the images used in the video lectures. Students may request that any requirement to do a field delineation project, attend a field trip, and to lead Zoom sessions be waived, modified, or enabled. Review questions and exams may be presented in audio format upon request, and questions answered verbally by voice recording. Read more information in the university's accessibility policy.

Accommodations for Special Needs

Any student who has been confirmed by the University as having special needs for learning must notify me in the first week of the course. The university provides services for students with disabilities. If you are a student with disabilities and/or challenges, visit the student services website for course support.

Library Assistance

The library has extensive help services, including services and guides for those using the library through the Internet. There are several methods to contact a librarian.

Technical Support

I cannot provide technical support. For requests for technical support for Canvas, use the help button at the end of the leftmost toolbar in Canvas . VT specific technology support can be directed to 4Help via the Help Request Form. or by calling (540) 231-HELP (4357). You can also refer to Zoom support for help.

Writing Support

The Writing Center—located on the second floor of Newman Library—is for all writers. Due to COVID-19, all tutoring sessions take place online. You can go if you have a draft, an outline, or just ideas. Bring your assignment description with you. You can make appointments online by setting up an account with WCOnline.. In addition, multilingual or international students may be interested in their Conversation Groups. (Click on this option from the drop-down menu on the online appointment page.)

Principles of Community

This course adheres to the the Virginia Tech Principles of Community:

- We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.

- We affirm the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely.

- We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.

- We affirm the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.

- We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.

- We pledge our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve).

Privacy

Please be aware of these privacy policies:

- **Canvas**: https://www.instructure.com/policies/privacy/
- **Zoom**: https://zoom.us/privacy
- **FERPA**: Student educational records are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These rights apply to all students age 18 and above, and it may benefit you to know your FERPA rights so that you can best protect your own educational records. Please visit the Office of the University Registrar's Privacy Page for more information.

⭐ Program Assessment

The Department of English may use your written work in its assessment of its teaching and learning goals. In such cases, your name will be removed and your work assessed anonymously. Your work will not be shared with any individual outside of the department. It will be used strictly to help the department offer students the best possible academic experience.

☪ ✡ ☦ ☸ Religious Holidays & Events

Please take advantage of the grace period explained in the [Late Policy section above](#) if the due date for any work in this class coincides with a religious holiday that you celebrate. Please let me know *before* the holiday if the grace period will not be adequate, and we will come up with an alternative plan.

Technology

Students in this course need a working and reliable computer and Internet access that will allow the use of Canvas course site tools, Zoom, Kaltura, and any online resources provided.

You are not required to purchase any special software, but you will need access to a word processor and a slide show program. Microsoft Office products, namely Word and PowerPoint, or Google Drive products, specifically Docs and Slides, will fulfill these requirements.

As part of your online course experience, you can expect to utilize a variety of technologies:

- Communicate via Canvas Inbox, including sending attachments.

- Navigate the World Wide Web using a Web browser such as Chrome or Firefox.

- Use office applications such as Microsoft Office (or similar) to create documents.

- Be willing to learn how to communicate using a discussion board and upload assignments to a classroom Canvas site.

- Be comfortable uploading and downloading saved files.

- Have easy, reliable access to the Internet.

- Navigate Canvas, including using the Inbox component within Canvas.

Mobile Access Disclaimer

Though Canvas provides a mobile app which works well for the majority of course content, the course site is still best viewed via a desktop or laptop computer running a complete operating system, as opposed to a tablet or smartphone. Some interactive course elements may not be viewed via mobile devices, and it is certainly not recommended that you attempt to complete assignments or take graded quizzes or tests via mobile devices.