Syllabus for ENC 6261: Theories of Professional and Technical Communication

Course Description, Student Learning Outcomes, and Major Assignments
Theories of Professional and Technical Communication serves several masters:

• It is an elective for rhetoric and composition graduate students, both at the masters level and the PhD level
• It is the core of the Professional and Technical Communication graduate certificate which is open to all English Studies graduate students AND (aspiring) working, professional writers: [http://english.usf.edu/graduate/ptcert/](http://english.usf.edu/graduate/ptcert/)

No matter which group you align yourself with, you will be asked to study professional and technical communication from several different perspectives (with thanks to Patricia Sullivan):

• We are writers looking to solve writing problems at work.
• We are writing teachers and administrators looking to continue or challenge curricular traditions.
• We are workplace researchers looking to theorize our observations.
• We are scholars looking to enter disciplinary discussions.

My goals for you in this class are the following:

• You engage in any combination of these positions—writer/teacher/researcher/professional/scholars—or better yet, all of them.
• You research an issue of importance to PW and take a stance on that issue.
• You extend your collaborative abilities.
• You connect theory and/or pedagogy and/or practice.

All students will:

1) **Read and talk about scholarship (25%).** This is your chief, ongoing responsibility in our class. Keep up with the reading and come to class prepared to discuss it. Don’t talk about readings you have not read; we can tell.

I will not lead discussions; I will facilitate them. Students who do not regularly and substantially participate in discussions cannot earn an A in this course.

Most of your readings are PDFs available through Canvas. Please purchase three books:


2) **Complete and share your weekly reading** grid (15%). In preparation for the 3 hour exam and to help you track the connections between readings, you will answer the following questions for each reading. With thanks to M. Santos:

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Focus</strong></th>
<th>What does this work suggest as a/the focus of professional writing?</th>
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| **Complication** | What does this work attempt to reconfigure, complicate, question, or change? To answer this question, you could address:  
  • Pedagogies (i.e., how we teach writing)  
  • Workplaces (i.e., how writing at work happens)  
  • Rhetorical concepts and theories (e.g., classical concepts, modern theories, or postmodern notions of rhetoric)  
  • Innovations (i.e., what's new here? Does this scholarship address a new site of investigation? A new theoretical apparatus? A new communications technology? A new method for studying PW? A new population previously overlooked? A new communications technology at work on in the workplace or professional writing classroom?) |
| **Conclusions** | In no more than 2 sentences, summarize the writers’ conclusions. |
| **Methodology** | Which methodology does the piece use to arrive at these conclusions? Does the writer explicitly state the methodology or is this something you have to infer? What counts as evidence? Is this piece purely theoretical? Qualitative (e.g., case study, ethnography)? Quantitative? Something else? |
| **Stakeholders** | Which stakeholders are represented? Who is left out that could have been included? |
| **Reciprocity** | If this is a workplace study, how does it inform the PW classroom?  
If this is a PW classroom study, how does it shape our understanding of the workplace? |
| **Connections** | (How) D/does this work connect to other writers and issues we have touched upon in this course? This is probably the most important question for you to consider in your gridding work. |
| **Sub/disciplinarity** | (How) D/does this work connect PW to other sub/disciplines inside English Studies? To disciplines external to English Studies? |
You’ll submit your reading grid for my review every week before class via Canvas. We’ll also share our completed grids before the 3 hour, in class final exam to support each other’s work in preparing for this test.

3) Discussion facilitation (with thanks to Diane Price-Herndl) (10%): Each of you will be responsible for directing one class discussion for about 30-45 minutes. You will choose one reading from that week to focus on. Please prepare a 1-page handout that contains
   • a brief summary of the reading you wish to discuss (one paragraph)
   • two or three quotations from the reading you wish to discuss
   • three questions to ground our discussion about the reading
   • secondary reading suggestions and synopses. Give us insight into two or three publications not included in the reading list for this class that build on or are closely related to your presentation

4) Take an exam (20%). You’ll answer one question in 1,500 words or less in the style of the R/C prelim exam. You’ll have exactly 3 hours to craft a response to a question that addresses the work we’re doing in our class. This exam demonstrates mastery over some facet of our reading. It will help those students on an academic path prepare for the R/C prelim (if you’re an R/C PhD student) and/or job interviews and/or campus visits.

5) Write a 20-25 page seminar paper (30%) in which you take an argumentative stance on an issue that is important (or should be) to the field.

I’m open to students pairing up to complete these assignments EXCEPT the exam and discussion leadership.

Seminar credit students will propose additional projects to satisfy the requirement no later than the fourth week of class.

Policies for Attendance, Make Up Work, and Academic Honesty
I expect that we’ll all do our best to maximize this opportunity to engage a multidisciplinary topic. Of course we can’t do this unless we show up, read thoroughly, help each other, and participate enthusiastically. If you anticipate being absent from class due to religious observance, please inform me by the second class meeting as University policy dictates.

No make-up work will be accepted.

Students attending USF are awarded degrees in recognition of successful completion of coursework in their chosen fields of study. Each individual is expected to earn his/her degree on the basis of personal effort. Consequently, any form of cheating on examinations or plagiarism on assigned papers constitutes unacceptable deceit and dishonesty. Disruption of the classroom or teaching environment is also unacceptable. This cannot be tolerated in the University community and will be punishable, according to the seriousness of the offense, in conformity with this rule.
Grading Policy

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent performance</td>
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Academic Accommodations

Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability may consult with the office of Students with Disabilities Services to arrange appropriate accommodations. Students are required to give reasonable notice prior to requesting an accommodation. Contact SDS at 974-4309 or http://www.sds.usf.edu.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1: January 7—Disciplinarity I: Mapping and Gridding


Week 2: January 14—Threading Together PW and TC

Intro, Ch. 2, 5-7 Longo, Bernadette. (2000). *Spurious coin: A history of science, management, and technical writing*. Albany: SUNY.
Week 3: January 21—Classification I

Week 4: January 28—Classification II
Proposals from seminar credit students are due

Week 5: February 4—Histories

Week 6: February 11—Methodology. What questions do we ask? How do we answer them?

**Week 7: February 18—Education**


**Week 8: February 25—Managing Bodies**


**Week XX: March 4—SPRING BREAK**

**Week 9: March 11—Risk**


Youngblood, Susan. (2012). Balancing the rhetorical tension between right to know and security in risk communication ambiguity and avoidance. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 26*(1), 35-64.


**Week XX: March 18—CCCC: NO CLASS**

**Week 10: March 25—Designing Information and Objects I**


**Week 11: April 1—Designing Information and Objects II**


Week 12: April 8—Plans and Situated Actions I

Week 13: April 15—Plans and Situated Actions II

Week 14: April 22—CATCH-UP WEEK

Final Exam Period: 3-hour Exam must be completed during a continuous 3-hr period of your choosing during Final Exam week.