

Course Syllabus

Course Information

<i>Course Number/Section</i>	ECS 3390.004
<i>Course Title</i>	Professional and Technical Communication
<i>Term</i>	Fall 2006
<i>Days & Times</i>	TR 11:00-12:15

Professor Contact Information

<i>Professor</i>	Lisa Bell
<i>Office Phone</i>	972.883.2052
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<i>Office Location</i>	JO 5.608E
<i>Office Hours</i>	TR 1:00-3:00

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

ECS 3390 requires students to have junior standing and credit for RHET 1302. As an upper-level class, students should have at least college-level writing skills and both written and oral proficiency in English. However, students also need sufficient technical knowledge to contribute to project design and to write and speak knowingly about technical content. For example, students who have only had Computer Science I or Introduction to Digital Systems will probably have a large learning curve that will make the class that much more difficult and time-consuming. Furthermore, the course curriculum is fast-paced and does not cover basic subjects, such as language mechanics, Microsoft Office functions, or WebCT operations. The course instead emphasizes developing a sense of professionalism and responsibility to produce high-quality assignments both individually and in teams.

Course Description

Technical and professional communication skills are critical tools for success in the “real world” of engineering and computer science professions. Therefore, Professional and Technical Communication will help you develop skills and competency in both oral and written communication as they occur in engineering and technology work environments. You will have opportunities to determine audiences’ information needs, assess what information is correct, reliable and responsive to those needs, and present that information in a form that helps the audience process and use it. You will work with industry-specific projects, determine technical communication needs, develop professional-quality documents, and make formal presentations on technical topics to technical and non-technical audiences.

Engineering and programming are collaborative activities; therefore, this course uses a collaborative-learning environment where you will work in teams to practice the fundamentals of collaborative decision making and communication in professional contexts. Course activities also raise related professional issues, such as meeting deadlines, carrying out instructions as specified, organizing your time so that you can work productively on more than one activity at a time, and developing an increased commitment to doing accurate work.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Using team and individual technical writing and presentation assignments, this course meets the following ABET Objectives:

- d: An ability to function on multidisciplinary teams
- f: An understanding of professional and ethical responsibility
- g: An ability to communicate effectively
- h: The broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global societal context
- j: A knowledge of contemporary issues
- k: An ability to use the techniques, skills and modern engineering tools necessary for engineering practice

Required Textbooks and Materials

The textbook is available at the campus bookstore and at Off-Campus Books.

D. Beer and D. McMurrey, *A Guide to Writing as an Engineer, Second Edition*, Wiley, 2005.

Suggested Course Materials

Additional readings will be posted in WebCT as necessary.

Assignments & Academic Calendar

Topics, Reading Assignments, Due Dates, Exam Dates

<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>DUE DATE</u>
Team Report	150	November 12
Team Presentation	150	November 2, 7
Individual Report	200	October 1
Individual Presentation	200	TBA
Team Organizational Memo	50	August 27
Industry Example Presentation	50	September 10
Team Merit Review	50	November 19
Communication Competency	50	Daily
Low Impact Assignments (Includes process work, class work, and homework)	100	TBA
TOTAL POINTS	1000	

Most *Low Impact Assignments* will be either accepted or rejected but not graded. Acceptance depends on the student making a good faith effort to follow the assignment; only if the professor feels that a student is not making a good faith effort will the assignment be rejected.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

(Blue highlights indicate major assignment due dates.)

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	OBJECTIVES
8.17	Introduction	◦ Chapter 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Describe course framework and expectations ◦ Model the communication process ◦ Develop criteria that constitute effective communication
8.22	Professionalism/ Working in Teams	◦ WebCT readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Give examples of effective team processes ◦ Identify team roles ◦ Discuss conflict-resolution strategies ◦ Discuss perception problems
8.24	Professionalism/ Working in Teams	◦ WebCT readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Identify productive meeting strategies ◦ Discuss project management and collaborative writing strategies ◦ Form groups for team projects
8.27			◦ TEAM ORGANIZATION MEMO DUE
8.29	Rhetorical Situation and Professional Communication	◦ Chapter 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Define guidelines for effective communication, focusing on purpose, audience, and "high level" constraints ◦ Differentiate between written and spoken rhetorical situations ◦ Compare and contrast different audiences: technical, non-expert, managerial, interested, disinterested, hostile, etc. ◦ Describe audience adaptation strategies
8.31	Rhetorical Situation and Professional Communication		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Differentiate internal vs external communication ◦ Analyze purpose ◦ Understand the effects of corporate culture on communicating ◦ Introduce credibility and tone
9.5	Eliminating Noise	◦ Chapter 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Describe "low level" writing issues, including spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and technical usage. ◦ Develop criteria to assess technical communication based on clarity, concision, coherence, cohesion and
9.7	Strengthening Style		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Extend "low level" to include style ◦ Demonstrate strong word choices to promote clarity and concision
9.10			◦ INDUSTRY EXAMPLE DUE
9.12	Form and Structure	◦ Chapters 4, 5, and 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Analyze the logic behind sentence, paragraph and document structures ◦ Practice partitioning, classifying and sequencing information
9.14	Form and Structure		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Identify elements of formal technical reports ◦ Understand different models of report organization ◦ Understand the purpose of visually effective documents ◦ Develop a strategy to create effective navigation in documents
9.19	Argument Development	◦ WebCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Analyze argument components, claims, and types of supporting evidence ◦ Assess logical tests of evidence quality

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	OBJECTIVES
9.21	Argument Support	◦ Chapter 8 and pages 235-241	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discuss general research strategies ◦ Practice summarizing, paraphrasing and introducing evidence
9.26	Communication Apprehension and Constructive Criticism		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discuss causes of communication apprehension and responses to it ◦ Describe what constitutes fair and professional criticism ◦ DRAFT INDIVIDUAL REPORT DUE
9.28	Peer Review Workshop		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Practice developing and presenting constructive criticism ◦ Analyze peer-generated documents for effectiveness (structure, argument development, style, etc.)
10.1			◦ INDIVIDUAL REPORT DUE
10.3	Persuasive Strategies	◦ WebCT	◦ Evaluate criteria for report arguments
10.5	Overcoming Obstacles	◦ WebCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Understand refutation strategies ◦ Discuss ways to overcome or reduce resistance ◦ Analyze how to target message strategies for specific audiences
10.10	Presentations: Structure	◦ Chapter 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Outline how to structure a presentation to maximize audience comprehension, agreement, and retention of arguments ◦ Explain how to develop effective introductions and conclusions
10.12	Presentations: Cohesiveness		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Identify methods for developing transitions and signposts in presentations to help audiences navigate and retain content ◦ Demonstrate unique cohesiveness demands in team presentations and describe strategies to resolve them
10.17	Delivery: Verbal and Nonverbal		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Outline advice for effective verbal and nonverbal speech delivery ◦ Understand how to use delivery to strengthen connections with the audience
10.19	Delivery: Credibility		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discuss how to enhance presentation credibility; develop strategies for team presentations ◦ Illustrate methods for handling audience questions
10.24	Visual Aids: Documents	◦ Chapter 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Develop a strategy for using visuals (graphics, figures, tables, etc.) in documents ◦ Analyze how to reduce visual noise in documents ◦ DRAFT TEAM REPORT DUE
10.26	Visual Aids: Presentations	◦ WebCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Understand and recognize characteristics of effective PPT slides ◦ Practice using visual aids effectively during presentations
10.31	Team Workshop	◦	◦ Team Work Day
11.2	Team Presentations	◦	◦ TEAM PRESENTATION DUE
11.7	Team Presentations	◦	◦ TEAM PRESENTATION DUE
11.9	Ethics and Professionalism	◦ Chapter 11	◦
11.12			◦ TEAM REPORT DUE

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	OBJECTIVES
11.14	Ethics and Professionalism		◦
11.16	Ethics and Professionalism		◦
11.19			◦ TEAM MERIT REVIEW DUE
11.21	Individual Presentations		◦ INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION DUE
Final	Individual Presentations		◦ INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION DUE

Grading Policy

In general, your work is assessed according to the resourcefulness with which the work:

- fulfills the criteria set out in the *assignment* specifications,
- accomplishes its multiple *purposes*,
- responds to its *audience's* needs and orientations,
- uses the opportunities and adapts to the *constraints* of its professional and technical environment,
- employs *rhetorical strategies* that develop logical arguments, strong claims, and adequate supporting evidence,
- meets the usage conventions and uses the expressive range of the verbal and visual and technical *language*.

Major assignments will include more specific criteria.

All work should also demonstrate the same professional and ethical standards expected of you in the workplace, including proofreading and editing carefully all work you submit in this class. Professionalism also means that you use appropriate source citation wherever and whenever necessary so that you avoid violations of copyright – even if those violations are inadvertent. Remember: your work reflects upon you and/or your group as a member or members of technical professions.

Final grades will be assigned according to the 2004-6 UTD Undergraduate Catalog scale:

	B+	870-899	C+	770-799	D+	670-699	
A	930-1000	B	830-869	C	730-769	D	630-669
A-	900-929	B-	800-829	C-	700-729	D-	600-629
						F	0-599

I will not award extra points at the end of the semester to raise your final grade.

Course Policies

Make-up work

We do substantial in-class work for “low impact assignments.” If you miss an in-class assignment, you cannot make it up.

Because of scheduling constraints and the logistical problem of creating an audience, presentations cannot be rescheduled, extended or made up. You must deliver your presentations on the day when you are scheduled to speak. If your scheduled day presents a problem, let me know as soon as possible so we can try to address the situation. *Do not come to class on your scheduled day and ask me to reschedule your presentation* – you cannot. If you do not present on your scheduled day, you will receive a zero for that assignment.

Extra Credit

I do not curve individual items, nor do I offer “extra credit” work or “special consideration” to allow students a chance to raise their grade. If a personal situation arises during the semester that may affect your classroom performance, please talk to me sooner rather than later. If you wait until the end of the semester, I won’t be able to help you. We are more likely to be able to work around the situation if you speak to me when it happens. I can’t help you if I don’t know you need help.

Late Work

Deadlines are an important part of technical communication work in the “real world;” thus, they are important in this course. In the “real world,” when work misses its deadline,

- product releases can be delayed,
- coworkers and customers can be inconvenienced,
- expenses can skyrocket,
- contracts can be broken,
- and clients can refuse payment.

Similarly, late or incomplete work is not acceptable in this course. Work that does not meet the assignment’s constraints (such as being late, improperly named or submitted by email rather than the WebCT assignments module) are unprofessional and create administrative headaches.

Technological problems and the vagaries of the WebCT submission clock are not valid excuses for late work, so plan accordingly. Recurring problems with improper submissions will reflect negatively on your grade. Moreover, no late or makeup submissions will be accepted for minor assignments, such as homework, process or class work. Late submissions of individual memos and team reports will receive a penalty of 10% of the total possible assignment points each day the assignment is late.

Class Attendance

Work assigned for this class carries no less priority than work you may have to complete for any other class or job. Moreover, class participation is a vital part of your learning process because this class revolves around discussion and activities. More than simply being physically present in class, participation includes your asking questions in class about readings, answering questions, offering suggestions, and you professional, positive attitude and demeanor.

You are required to attend class regularly, prepare the assigned readings, and actively contribute to the team project. You may miss up to two classes for whatever reason without penalty, but excessive absences or tardiness may negatively affect your Communication Competency grade. (Notice that no adjectives modify “absences.” I make no distinction between “excused” and “non-excused” absences.)

Failure to attend class regularly will lead to more than just a poor communication competency grade. You must attend class in order to complete low-impact assignments. Material and information will be presented in the classroom that cannot be replicated outside the classroom or made up at a later date. Based on past experience, it will be very difficult to do well in this course if you fail to attend class regularly and participate actively.

Classroom Citizenship

In keeping with this course’s professional communication mandate, students are expected to use every opportunity in the course to practice communicating in a civil and professional manner.

Civility in all course communication and behavior is explicitly part of our Communication Competency assignment.

Technology Requirements

The course is taught using WebCT, and you should develop the habit of checking both WebCT and your UTD email often for assignments and announcements. Reliable and frequent internet connectivity is indispensable – not having internet access will make your group projects more difficult and will not serve as a valid excuse for shortcomings. You also have the responsibility to ensure that you have access to the course for the duration of the semester and must submit all assignments, except for presentation booklets, through WebCT. Instructors are not responsible for tracking assignments submitted through the email and will assign zeros to all assignments not submitted through the WebCT assignments module.

Additionally, to protect your privacy rights, your instructor will only send email through your official UTD email address or WebCT email. If you choose, you can redirect both of these addresses to external addresses. Visit the Department of Information Resources' [User Account Management Tools](#) to forward your UTD email to another account. In WebCT, go to the Mail module and click the Message Settings button. On the Message Settings screen, click the box next to "Forward my mail to:" and enter your external email address, then click the Update button.

Failure to check UTD or WebCT email, errors in forwarding email, and email bounced from over-quota mailboxes are not acceptable excuses for missing course or project-related email.

Classroom and Equipment Use Policies

- Tampering with or destroying any of the computers, printers, Smart Board, white boards, networks or wiring in the classroom is strictly prohibited. Violations will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students' office.
- No cell phones, pagers, or other electronic messaging services may be used in the classrooms unless you have cleared it with the instructor first and only on an emergency basis.
- The room may be used only for ECS 3390 related activities. You may not work on other class projects, check your e-mail, print, work for other classes, burn CDs that are not part of the ECS 3390 assignments, install software (games, music, executables, programming languages, or any other unapproved software). Violations will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students' office.
- Food and drink are not permitted in the classroom.

Student Conduct & Discipline

The University of Texas System and The University of Texas at Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the UTD publication, *A to Z Guide*, which is provided to all registered students each academic year.

The University of Texas at Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the *Rules and Regulations, Board of Regents, The University of Texas System, Part 1, Chapter VI, Section 3*, and in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities of the university's *Handbook of Operating*

Procedures. Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SU 1.602, 972/883-6391).

A student at the university neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the Regents' Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating the standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work.

Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, statements, acts or omissions related to applications for enrollment or the award of a degree, and/or the submission as one's own work or material that is not one's own. As a general rule, scholastic dishonesty involves one of the following acts: cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic records. Students suspected of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Plagiarism, especially from the web, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalog for details). This course will use the resources of turnitin.com, which searches the web for possible plagiarism and is over 90% effective.

Email Use

The University of Texas at Dallas recognizes the value and efficiency of communication between faculty/staff and students through electronic mail. At the same time, email raises some issues concerning security and the identity of each individual in an email exchange. The university encourages all official student email correspondence be sent only to a student's U.T. Dallas email address and that faculty and staff consider email from students official only if it originates from a UTD student account. This allows the university to maintain a high degree of confidence in the identity of all individual corresponding and the security of the transmitted information. UTD furnishes each student with a free email account that is to be used in all communication with university personnel. The Department of Information Resources at U.T. Dallas provides a method for students to have their U.T. Dallas mail forwarded to other accounts.

Withdrawal from Class

The administration of this institution has set deadlines for withdrawal of any college-level courses. These dates and times are published in that semester's course catalog. Administration procedures must be followed. It is the student's responsibility to handle withdrawal requirements from any class. In other words, I cannot drop or withdraw any student. You must do the proper paperwork to ensure that you will not receive a final grade of "F" in a course if you choose not to attend the class once you are enrolled.

Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities, of the university's *Handbook of Operating Procedures*.

In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding grades, evaluations, or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance originates (hereafter called “the respondent”). Individual faculty members retain primary responsibility for assigning grades and evaluations. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the grievance must be submitted in writing to the respondent with a copy of the respondent’s School Dean. If the matter is not resolved by the written response provided by the respondent, the student may submit a written appeal to the School Dean. If the grievance is not resolved by the School Dean’s decision, the student may make a written appeal to the Dean of Graduate or Undergraduate Education, and the dean will appoint and convene an Academic Appeals Panel. The decision of the Academic Appeals Panel is final. The results of the academic appeals process will be distributed to all involved parties.

Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations.

Incomplete Grade Policy

As per university policy, incomplete grades will be granted only for work unavoidably missed at the semester’s end and only if 70% of the course work has been completed. An incomplete grade must be resolved within eight (8) weeks from the first day of the subsequent long semester. If the required work to complete the course and to remove the incomplete grade is not submitted by the specified deadline, the incomplete grade is changed automatically to a grade of **F**.

Disability Services

The goal of Disability Services is to provide students with disabilities educational opportunities equal to those of their non-disabled peers. Disability Services is located in room 1.610 in the Student Union. Office hours are Monday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The contact information for the Office of Disability Services is:

The University of Texas at Dallas, SU 22

PO Box 830688

Richardson, Texas 75083-0688

(972) 883-2098 (voice or TTY)

Essentially, the law requires that colleges and universities make those reasonable adjustments necessary to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability. For example, it may be necessary to remove classroom prohibitions against tape recorders or animals (in the case of dog guides) for students who are blind. Occasionally an assignment requirement may be substituted (for example, a research paper versus an oral presentation for a student who is hearing impaired). Classes enrolled students with mobility impairments may have to be rescheduled in accessible facilities. The college or university may need to provide special services such as registration, note-taking, or mobility assistance.

It is the student’s responsibility to notify his or her professors of the need for such an accommodation. Disability Services provides students with letters to present to faculty members to verify that the student has a disability and needs accommodations. Individuals requiring special accommodation should contact the professor after class or during office hours.

Religious Holy Days

The University of Texas at Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities for the travel to and observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, Tax Code, Texas Code Annotated.

The student is encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment. The student, so excused, will be allowed to take the exam or complete the assignment within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the chief executive officer of the institution, or his or her designee. The chief executive officer or designee must take into account the legislative intent of TEC 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the chief executive officer or designee.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.