

## *Course Syllabus*

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### **ECS 3390: Professional and Technical Communication**

Section 001

Location: JO 4.502

Class Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Spring, 2012

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### **Instructor Information**

Instructor: Chris Ryan

Email: christopher.ryan@utdallas.edu

Phone: 972-883-2188

Office Location: JO 3.540

Office Hours: 2:15 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Wednesdays, and other days and times by appointment.

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

ECS 3390 requires students to have:

- Credit for RHET 1302
  - College-level writing abilities
  - Proficiency (oral and written) in English
  - Technical knowledge to contribute to projects and to communicate knowingly about technical content
  - A responsible and professional attitude
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### **Course Description**

ECS 3390 will prepare engineering and computer-science students to efficiently and effectively communicate through oral and written documents that correctly, concisely, and ethically present information. To that end, this class helps students develop communication competencies to:

- Identify audiences
- Determine the information needs of audiences
- Assess the accuracy, reliability and relevance of information
- Evaluate how to best present information to meet the need of an audience
- Create tools to inform an audience

Students will accomplish this through individual and collaborative activities, including projects and presentations. Course activities also underscore the importance of skills that will be necessary in the workplace, as well, including:

- Meeting deadlines
  - Following instructions
  - Organizing time
  - Multi-tasking
  - Committing to produce and present timely and accurate work.
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## **Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

As a Computer Science or Engineering major, you are virtually guaranteed to be required to demonstrate professional and technical communication skills throughout the course of your career. Professional and technical communication is about conveying specific information to an audience with the intent of that audience receiving the information in a way that proves useful in being able to make a decision or perform an action. Just as professionals in computer science and engineering fields work in collaboration with others to create communications for various media, students in this class will work at times independently and at other times collaboratively in producing professional and technical communications. You will also learn about important writing nuances, such as audience analysis, ethics, and communicating with different cultures. Specifically, students in this class will be expected to achieve the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) Assessment Objectives and Learning Outcomes listed below.

### **SACS Assessment Objectives**

- Students will be able to write effectively using appropriate organization, mechanics, and style.
- Students will be able to construct effective written arguments.
- Students will be able to gather incorporate, and interpret source material in their writing.
- Students will be able to write in different ways for different ways for different audiences.

### **ABET Assessment Objectives**

Students will demonstrate:

- An ability to function on multidisciplinary teams
- An understanding of professional and ethical responsibility
- An ability to communicate effectively
- A knowledge of contemporary issues

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## **Required Textbooks and Materials**

Textbook:

Technical Communication Fundamentals by William S. Pfeiffer and Kaye E. Adkins.  
ISBN: 13:978-0-13-237457-6. Copyright 2012 by Pearson Education, Inc., publishing as Prentice Hall.

Optional Textbook:

Pocket Book of English Grammar for Engineers and Scientists by Leo Finkelstein, Jr.  
ISBN 978-0-07-352946-2. Copyright 2006 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. Although this text is not required, I encourage its use by those who do not consider themselves strong in English grammar.

Internet connectivity is a requirement for the course. The course uses eLearning, which you should check frequently. Reliable connectivity is necessary for class preparation, submission of assignments, and work on group projects. All assignments that are to be submitted through eLearning must be submitted via eLearning for credit. (Submitting assignments via e-mail is only acceptable if there is a problem with the eLearning system. Otherwise, submission of assignments by any other method for work that is assigned to be submitted through eLearning, will not be accepted and will result in a grade of zero.) Assignments should be submitted in MS Word files (not pdf, .odt, etc.)

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## **Assignments & Academic Calendar**

The schedule for class topics, readings, and assignments (aside from low-impact assignments which will be provided in class) is as follows (Please note that all chapter readings are expected to be completed before each class on the dates the chapters are assigned.):

January 17

Introduction of syllabus, textbooks, students, and instructor  
Importance of professional and technical communication

January 19

Technical communication  
Reading: Chapter 1 (Introduction to Technical Communication)  
Return signed copy of syllabus

January 24

Ethical considerations

January 26

Correspondence  
Reading: Chapter 4 (Letters, Memos, and Electronic Communication)

January 31

Communication in the pursuit of employment (part I)  
Reading: Chapter 10 (The Job Search)

February 2

Communication in the pursuit of employment (part II)  
No reading assignment

February 7

Style  
Reading: Chapter 11 (Style in Technical Writing)  
Submit cover letter and resume

February 9

Working in teams  
Reading: Chapter 2 (Collaboration and Writing)  
In class: Select teams for team project

February 14

Cross-cultural audiences  
No reading assignment

February 16

Technical definitions and descriptions  
Reading: Chapter 5 (Definitions and Descriptions)  
Submit cross-cultural assignment

February 21

Proposals and recommendations  
Reading: Chapter 8 (Proposals)

February 23

Technical Reports  
Reading: Chapter 7 (Reports)

February 28

Process

Reading: Chapter 6 (Process Explanations and Instructions)

March 1

Presentations

Reading: Chapter 9 (Presentations)

March 6

Visual Design

Reading: Chapter 3 (Visual Design)

March 8

Wrap up Team Reports

No reading assignment

March 13 and 15

No Classes – Spring Break

March 20

Team Reports due

March 21

Attend Career Expo (Expo runs from 11:00 a.m. through 3:00 p.m. Students need not attend for the entire period but are encouraged to pay a visit to the Expo in order to perform the assignment. )

March 22

No class (for attending Career Expo on Wednesday)

March 27

Recommendation Report Proposals (in class)

Submit low-impact Career Expo assignment

March 29

Team Presentation practice

April 3

Team Presentations

No assigned reading

April 5

Individual Meetings; Review rough draft of Recommendation Report

Only those with appointments need to attend.

April 10

Individual Meetings; Review rough draft of Recommendation Report

Only those with appointments need to attend.

April 12

Individual Meetings; Review rough draft of Recommendation Report

Only those with appointments need to attend.

April 17

Individual Meetings; Review rough drafts of Recommendation Report

Only those with appointments need to attend.

April 19

Individual presentations; all attend  
Individual Recommendation Reports due for all

April 24

Individual presentations; all attend

April 26

Individual presentations; all attend

May 1

Individual presentations; all attend

May 3

Individual presentations; all attend  
Final Reflection and Portfolio due

**Grading Policy**

**Assignment and Grade Values**

Grading is based on the UTD Undergraduate Catalog and a 1000-point cumulative scale for points earned from assignments. Grades are awarded as follows:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cumulative Credit Points</b>
A	930-1000
A-	900-929
B+	870-899
B	830-869
B-	800-829
C+	770-799
C	730-769
C-	700-729
D+	670-699
D	630-669
D-	600-629
F	0-599

Credit points are awarded based upon the following maximum values per assignment or competency:

<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>VALUE</b>
Resume and Cover Letter Assignment	75
Cross-Cultural Assignment	75
Team Feasibility Report	100
Team Presentation (and Team Collaboration)	100
Individual Recommendation Report	125
Individual Presentation	125
Final Reflection and Portfolio	100
Communication Competency	150
Minor/Low Impact Assignments	150
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>1000</b>

Note: Students must complete and submit all major assignments (those with 100-point or higher values) to pass the course.

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## **Course & Instructor Policies**

### **Deliverables**

All assignments are due on the assigned date. Similarly, all presentations are to be conducted on the assigned dates. If the date for your presentation or any deliverable is a problem, you must notify me as soon as possible so that we can address the situation and consider any alternatives. Do not request a new date and time for a presentation in class on the day your presentation is scheduled. It cannot be rescheduled at that point, and you will receive a zero for your grade if you are not able to present.

### **Personal Circumstances**

If personal circumstances impact your performance, please address the circumstances with me as soon as possible. It is possible that we will be able to work around your situation if we can address the circumstance when it arises. Initiating the conversation late in the semester or well after the situation has arisen will limit the likelihood of us finding alternatives or any opportunity to work around your personal circumstances.

### **Deadlines**

In Technical Communication and in just about any other part of the working world, deadlines are a reality. Failure to meet deadlines leads to issues such as costly delays in product releases, breaking of contracts, lost current or future business, and inconvenienced co-workers. Consequently, this class will focus on the need to meet deadlines. Late or incomplete assignments will be penalized 20% of the assignment grade. For late assignments, the 20% deduction applies to each 24-hour period following the assignment deadline.

### **Attendance**

You are expected to attend all classes, read assigned material, perform all assignments, and contribute to the class. Although I expect you to attend all classes, you may miss one class without explanation or penalty. Additional absences will be reflected in your Communication Competency grade. Absences are also likely to adversely affect your grades in additional ways, as low-impact assignments conducted in class cannot be made up outside of class. Just as in a business, I encourage you to let me know in advance if you know when you are going to miss a class and explain your absence if you have missed a class for which you did not give me advanced notice. More than three unexcused absences could result in a failure of the course (grade of "F"). Out of respect for your fellow class members and your instructor, you are expected to be on time for class, too. I regard every three tardy arrivals as one absence.

### **Classroom Decorum**

Students are expected to operate in the classroom in a civil and professional way. Similarly, when working with classmates on projects outside the classroom, students are expected to work with fellow students in a cooperative manner.

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### **Technical Support**

If you experience any problems with your UTD account you may send an email to: [assist@utdallas.edu](mailto:assist@utdallas.edu) or call the UTD Computer Helpdesk at 972-883-2911.

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## **Field Trip Policies Off-campus Instruction and Course Activities**

*Off-campus, out-of-state, and foreign instruction and activities are subject to state law and University policies and procedures regarding travel and risk-related activities. Information regarding these rules and regulations may be found at the website address*

*[http://www.utdallas.edu/BusinessAffairs/Travel\\_Risk\\_Activities.htm](http://www.utdallas.edu/BusinessAffairs/Travel_Risk_Activities.htm). Additional information is available from the office of the school dean. Below is a description of any travel and/or risk-related activity associated with this course.*

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## **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 printed 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, Series 50000, Board of Regents, The University of Texas System*, 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) and online at <http://www.utdallas.edu/judicialaffairs/UTDJudicialAffairs-HOPV.html>

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, any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

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.

## **Copyright Notice**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials, including music and software. Copying, displaying, reproducing, or distributing copyrighted works may infringe the copyright owner's rights and such infringement is subject to appropriate disciplinary action as well as criminal penalties provided by federal law. Usage of such material is only appropriate when that usage constitutes "fair use" under the Copyright Act. As a UT Dallas student, you are required to follow the institution's copyright policy (Policy Memorandum 84-I.3-46). For more information about the fair use exemption, see <http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/copypol2.htm>

## **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)

[disabilityservice@utdallas.edu](mailto:disabilityservice@utdallas.edu)

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with the Coordinator of Disability Services. The Coordinator is available to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with Disability Services to notify them of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. Disability Services can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

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.***

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date