

WRD 204: Technical Writing

Winter Quarter 2021, Sections 801 & 802

Course Information

Professor: Andrew Roback
Instruction method: Asynchronous
Office hours: M/W 5:30-6:30pm or by appointment, [via Google Meet](#)
Email: aroback@depaul.edu (I typically respond within 24 hours)

Welcome

Welcome to WRD 204: Technical Writing. Technical communication is more than just writing instruction manuals and software documentation, and we will try to cover the wide range of activities technical communication practitioners engage in with the goal of giving you the skills to effectively communicate in your career.

Course objectives

- Learn and be able to write effectively in the genres used in business and technical writing;
- Develop the ability to confidently use the tools of technical writers;
- Apply the methods/tools of technical writing to projects in your discipline;
- Gain the ability to coherently discuss matters of writing style, genre, and presentation.

Required Texts

- Graves, H. & Graves, R. (2021). *A Concise Guide to Technical Communication*. Broadview Press: Ontario.
- All other texts provided by me on D2L

Required Technology

- A Gmail account and access to Google Drive
- Speakers or headphones for listening to A/V content
- Google Chrome or Firefox browser

Note on Participation in Course

This is an online course that has weekly requirements. While you should feel free to read ahead or plan for future periods of increased workload in your life, this isn't a self-paced course. As such, we'll review readings and assignments on a weekly basis, and work will be made available to you according to that schedule (see course schedule below for more information). This pacing allows for students to meaningfully interact with me and with each other.

If you miss work from an entire week without an excusable absence from the course, I'll decrease your final grade in the course by one letter grade per missing week. After four missed weeks, you'll receive a failing grade in the course. Contact me in the event of an emergency to make arrangements if you plan to remain in the course.

A note on readings and assignments

This course will make use of real-life examples and scenarios. Some of these examples discuss disturbing content such as accidental injuries and deaths. If you feel that you are unable to engage with this content and complete the course requirements, speak with me at the beginning of the course.

Assignments and Evaluation

All assignments have an associated day of the week on which they're due (see weekly due date schedule below). If you need an extension due to a personal emergency, please contact me as soon as possible. Keep in mind that some assignments are collaborative, so an extension may be impossible since it will cause undue hardship for your collaborators.

Unless otherwise specified in the instructions, you should submit all files in this course as a PDF through D2L. In the event that I ask you to share a Google Drive file, please make sure your sharing settings allow me to view *and* edit the file.

Discussion Board (30% – Post due on Thursdays, Two Replies due on Sundays)

On weeks where we have critical pieces to read or theoretical concepts to review, we'll have discussion board assignments. The general goal is a respectful, productive discussion of key concepts in the field.

I'll break you into small groups and have each group respond to a series of four or five questions. You should plan on posting once in response to a question (no later than Thursday) and replying to posts from two classmates (no later than Sunday).

Posts should be concise and should address the question directly. Please try to keep your responses direct as a courtesy to your classmates and myself.

Your two replies should engage with other students' ideas in a meaningful way (i.e. avoid replies limited to "great post, well done," as they don't convey much to the author). Note that one or more of your replies can take the form of a dialogue with students who commented on your original post (I encourage back-and-forth discussions).

The week after all students have posted, I'll give a brief recap of the most interesting discussion points from the previous week. This will likely be an audio recording you can listen to while reading a "supercut" of exchanges from the discussion board. I'll provide more details on this later.

Practice Exercises (PE) (25% – Due on Fridays)

Most weeks I'll give you a document with one or more practice exercises that I'll use to evaluate your ability to apply concepts we've read about/discussed that week to practical applications of technical writing. These exercises will ask you to write something, fix a problematic piece of writing, or describe a course of action you would take with respect to technical communication. I'll grade them using a rubric with emphasis placed on effort put into the assignment.

Please follow these rules when working on the exercises:

1. Feel free to ask me if you have questions about the assignment requirements, but work independently. Your submissions should be entirely your own work.
2. If you fail to submit before the deadline, I'll issue a grade of zero (no attempt).
3. If you can't open a file or don't understand the instructions, please ask for help well in advance of the deadline.
4. Submit all files as a PDF unless I specify otherwise in the instructions.

Quizzes (15% – Due on Thursdays)

We'll have three quizzes in the course to test your knowledge of the concepts covered in the critical readings and video tutorials. You should use your readings and notes when taking the quizzes, but you must work independently. Although I don't anticipate internet searches will be helpful, you can use the internet; cite any materials outside of the course readings listed on the syllabus.

Questions will be of the multiple choice and short answer variety. Please note that on weeks where a quiz is due, you will not be asked to complete a discussion board assignment.

Final Project (30%)

A group project that will ask you to utilize all the skills you have learned this semester to create a series of documents based on a scenario. You'll be evaluated on your writing skills; your ability to create well-designed, usable documents; and your knowledge of the core competencies of technical communication.

We'll have some incremental check-in dates and a peer workshop in the last week of the course. More details later in the semester.

Grading Scale

All grades on assignments are weighted to their corresponding values on the syllabus. To calculate your grade, take the percentage grade I give you on an assignment, multiply by the value on the syllabus, and add the resulting figures. That is your final grade in the course.

Percent	Final Grade
100–93	A
92–90	A-
89–87	B+
86–83	B
82–80	B-
79–77	C+
76–73	C
72–70	C-
69–67	D+
66–62	D
62–60	D-
<60	F

Center for Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success. There are two office locations:

Loop Campus - Lewis Center #1420 - (312) 362-8002

Lincoln Park Campus - Student Center #370 - (773) 325-1677

Students can also email the office at csd@depaul.edu

Students who are registered with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact me privately to discuss how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use in this course. This is best done early in the term. Our conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>) for further details.

If you are concerned that you may have plagiarized content in any of your assignments, please talk to me before you submit the assignment. Once you submit your assignment, I assume that everything you have written is your own work.

Dean of Students Office

The [Dean of Students Office \(DOS\)](#) promotes student learning and ethical decision making in an inclusive and validating environment. Utilizing a comprehensive approach to student advocacy that is informed by DePaul's Catholic, Vincentian, and urban mission, the office collaborates with students, staff, faculty, parents and community partners to support students in reaching their academic and personal success.

The Dean of Students Office is primarily responsible for administering and adjudicating violations of the Code of Student Responsibility at DePaul University. Additionally, the office provides the administrative withdrawal and absence notification process, and can help students

identify campus and community resources in times of personal and/or family crises and medical emergencies.

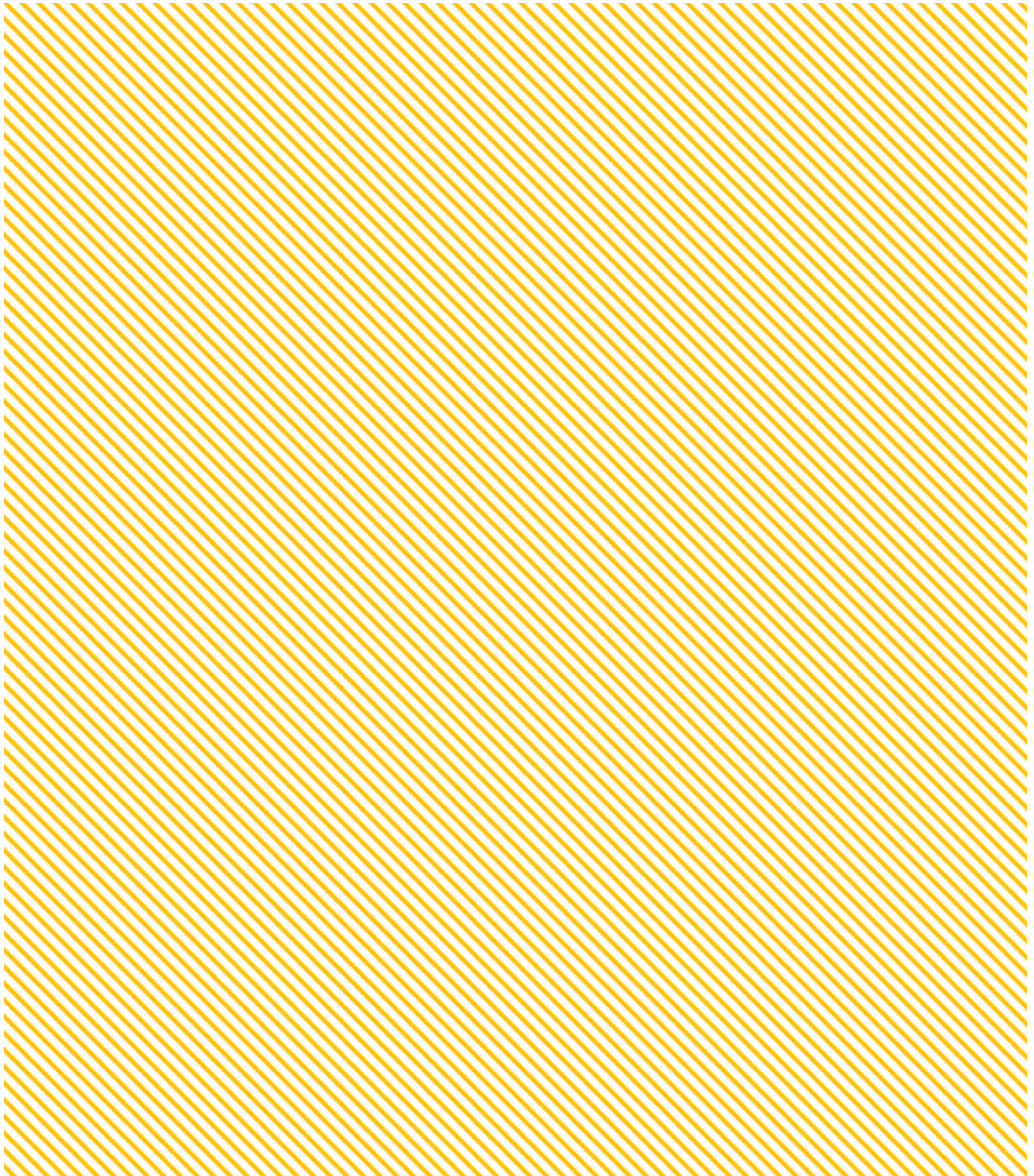
Writing Center

I strongly recommend you make use of the Writing Center throughout your time at DePaul. The Writing Center provides free peer writing tutoring for DePaul students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Writing Center tutors work with writers at all stages of the writing process, from invention to revision, and they are trained to identify recurring issues in your writing as well as address any specific questions or areas that you want to talk about. Visit www.depaul.edu/writing for more information.

FAQ and tips for a successful quarter

- If I give you an extension due to extenuating circumstances and you fail to meet the agreed upon deadline, you will receive a zero on that assignment.
- Other professors may have let you submit all your work late at the end of the semester, but I won't. If you miss the deadlines and I put a zero in the gradebook, that grade is final.
- There is no extra credit in this course.
- Please refer to the syllabus/course schedule/assignment guide before emailing me with questions. Questions about submission method, dates, or requirements that can be answered by the above documents will result in a friendly reminder to reread the documents.
- If you are having trouble with the coursework or understanding the material, come talk to me. I have office hours, and I have no problem staying after class (unless I have a meeting). If you have a conflict and can't make it to office hours, send me an email to set up an appointment to meet online.

— **Discovering Your Skills** —



Weekly due date schedule


Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Weekly content posted to course site by instructor		Discussion recap posted by instructor	Discussion board post due –or– Quiz Due	Practice Exercise (PE) due		Discussion board replies due



Note: All assignments are due on these days at 11:59pm CST (UTC -06:00).

Course schedule

Readings and assignment due dates subject to change. Check this document on D2L at the beginning of each week for updates.

Week	Topics	Readings	Assignments due
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome to course! ▪ Introductions and review syllabus ▪ What is technical communication? ▪ Academic vs. professional writing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction discussion board ▪ Discussion board 1
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The writing process ▪ Evaluating audience ▪ Selecting and evaluating medium 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PE 1: Audience and medium ▪ Discussion board 2
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stylistic conventions and common errors 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PE 2: Revision ▪ Quiz 1

4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ethics in technical communication 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PE 3: Ethical illustrations ▪ Discussion board 3
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document design 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PE 4: Document redesign and “Form Nightmares” ▪ Discussion board 4
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analyzing and presenting data ▪ Introduce final project and assign groups 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PE 5: Visualizations ▪ Quiz 2

7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instructions and procedures ▪ Communicating with icons and the semiotics of hazards 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PE 6: Instructions and labeling the UI ▪ Discussion board 5, 
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication failures and consequences ▪ Risk assessment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion board 6
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Writing technical documents for the web ▪ Re-mediation and packaging information ▪ Structuring content for remote learning ▪ Version control and content reuse 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PE 7: Packaging and content reuse ▪ Quiz 3
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshopping and peer review of final project 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No readings this week; see peer review instructions
Final	Final presentations format TBD		