COM 221: Technical Report Writing/User Experience (UX) Writing
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Department of Humanities & Communication
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University Course Description
This version of technical and professional communication will emphasize instruction in user experience (UX) writing. Bringing together theories of user-centered design and methodologies of inclusive design, you will design digital writing portfolios that feature your own implementation of UX methods to drive their content design. You will compose UX writing using industry technological tools to ideate, design, prototype, test, revise, and edit your UX writing across different platforms for end users.

To enroll in COM 221, you must have previously earned a C or higher in COM 122 or the equivalent.

Course Overview
COM 221 equips you to become skilled technical communicators in the professional workplace. You will learn genre conventions to compose and design professional written and digital texts in the form of memos, internal and external copy, portfolios, and reflections. Across all assignment sequences, you will engage all stages of the writing process—inventing, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing—to compose original technical documents that are responsive to instructor feedback and peer review feedback. You are also invited to hone their oral communication skills by delivering formal classroom presentations that are attuned to audience expectations. Additionally, you will be introduced to various technological tools to compose and design technical documents for diverse audiences and rhetorical purposes. The classroom lectures, discussions, and assignments are informed by current theoretical conversations in user experience that engage the role of the professional communicator in ethical and professional contexts.

Learning Outcomes
At the conclusion of COM 221, you will achieve the following learning objectives:
- Implement User Experience (UX) methods to conduct primary and secondary foundational research (e.g., user personas, empathy maps, user journey maps), design research, as well as develop plans for post-launch design research.
- Plan and practice composing effective UX writing by using industry technological tools to design content for UX portfolios.
- Develop research plans to ground their writing that is attentive to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion to design content for diverse users.
- Identify and implement effective project management and team collaboration skills through the production of multimodal deliverables.
- Summarize, evaluate, synthesize, and apply theories, methods, and principles of user-experience design and participatory design.

- Apply the multimodal writing process to invent, draft, revise, and edit their writing for a professional writing style that is responsive to a rhetorical purpose and audience.
- Document research using a professional style guide to ensure ethics and transparency in writing.
- Plan and deliver effective multimodal presentations, employing effective communication across different modes, media, and genres.

Goals

This course will prepare you to become competent in UX writing. You will prepare digital portfolios with a range of multimedia artifacts (e.g., user personas, empathy maps, user journey maps, internal and external copy, resumes, case studies) to showcase your approach to human-centered writing.

Conferences

See me when you have questions about an assignment, when you would like to try out some ideas before a document is due, or when you have questions about a comment. You should also see me to get help with writing problems, to resolve questions about grades, or to suggest ways to improve the course.

Required Materials

To fully participate in this class, students will be required to have access to the following:

- *The Encyclopedia of Human-Computer Interaction, 2nd Edition* from the Interaction Design Foundation. This open-source textbook can be found: https://www.interaction-design.org/literature
- *Open Technical Communication* by Tiffani Reardon, Tammy Powell, Jonathan Arnett, Monique Logan, and Cassie Race. This open-source textbook can be found: https://alg.manifoldapp.org/projects/open-tc
- Canvas Login to access additional course readings and documents
- Adobe Creative Suite & Lookback software (access to the following is provided in the COM 221 computer lab classroom)
- ERAU student email

Assignments

Instructions for each assignment will be explained in a detailed handout. Below are general descriptions.

Assignment 1: Basic Technical Communication Analysis
Technical communication is meant to be used and not just read. Good technical communication communicates information to an audience who will act on that information in a variety of ways: in making hiring decisions, in following technical procedures, in developing research plans, and more. In this assignment, you will evaluate the usability of a piece of technical communication—that is, you will analyze whether the document effectively communicates the necessary information to its audience and where it fails to do so. In this way, the assignment will introduce you to basic elements of technical communication.

Assignment 2: Job Application Package
The process of applying for a job is an extremely important scenario for technical communication. As a job applicant, you have a vested interest in communicating your suitability for the position with

the specific audience making employment decisions. This assignment will ask you to create resumes and application documents attuned to the rhetorical situations of two actual job offerings in your field. You will also discuss your writing and communication decisions in a reflective memo.

Assignment 3: UX Research Plan
The field of user experience includes research, design, and writing. This assignment introduces you to qualitative and quantitative research methods for UX, including field visits, observations, surveys, interviews, and design sprints. As a class, we will explore various approaches to UX research and practice research methods. In this assignment, you will develop user personas, empathy maps, and user journey maps. Next, you will craft a research plan describing methods you might use to address a "wicked problem" in your industry or field. Finally, you will conduct user testing for your specific product, website, or process.

Assignment 4: Digital Portfolio
Digital portfolios are an increasingly common vehicle for developing a professional online identity. Professionals are beginning to create them and employers are beginning to expect them. Employers are interested in e-portfolios for a variety of reasons: they provide multiple writing samples, display skills with computers and new media, and require reflection and meta-knowledge. As a final course assignment, you will design a digital portfolio including work from this course and from others. You will create your portfolio for an audience of potential employers.

Final Exam

You will submit their digital portfolio on Canvas as the final exam for the class. There will not be an in-person final exam. Final drafts are due by the end of our scheduled final exam period on May 4th.

Grading[1]
This class uses labor-based contract grading. **Therefore, the default grade for the course is a "B" (3.0).** In a nutshell, if you do all that is asked of you in the manner and spirit it is asked, if you work through the processes we establish and the work we assign ourselves in the labor instructions during the quarter, if you do all the labor asked of you, then you'll get a "B" course grade. It will not matter what I or your colleagues think of your writing, only that you are listening to our feedback compassionately. We may disagree or misunderstand your writing, but if you put in the labor, you are guaranteed a B course grade. If you miss class (do not participate fully), turn in assignments late, forget to do assignments, or do not follow the labor instructions precisely, you will get a lower course grade (see the final breakdown grade table on the last page of this contract).

"B" Grades
You are guaranteed a course grade of "B" (3.0) if you meet all the following conditions.

1. **Presence and Participation**. You agree to **fully participate in at least 86.6%** (26 of 30) of our scheduled class sessions and their activities and assignments, which means **you will need to be present in class, as most activities cannot be done before or after class and require your colleagues to complete**. So, you cannot miss more than 4 class sessions and still meet our contract's guidelines. Usually, attendance in class equates to participation.

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[1] This grading description is adapted from Asao Inoue's (2019) *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom*.

NOTE: Assignments not turned in because of an absence, either ones assigned on the schedule or ones assigned on earlier days in class, will be late, missed, or ignored (depending on when you turn it in finally, see the guidelines #4, #5, and #6 below).

Any absence due to a university-sponsored group activity (e.g., sporting event, band, another class field trip, etc.), military-related absences (e.g. deployment, work, duty, etc.), or documented illness will be considered independently of the above attendance policy, as long as the student has FIRST provided contacted me (Ashley) as soon as they are aware of the days they will be absent. This will allow us to determine how he/she will meet assignments and our contract, despite being absent. Each of these circumstances will be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation between the student and me (Ashley) in a manner that is fair to all parties involved.

2. **Lateness**. You agree to come on time or early to class. Walking into class late 1-2 times in a semester is understandable.
3. **Sharing and Collaboration**. You agree to work cooperatively and collegially in groups. This may be the easiest of all our course expectations to figure out, but we should have some discussions on what we expect from each other.
4. **Late/Incomplete Work**. You agree to turn in properly and on time all work and assignments expected of you in the spirit they are assigned, which means you'll complete all of the labor instructions for each assignment. During the semester, you may, however, turn in a few assignments late. The exact number of those late assignments is stipulated in the table on the last page of this contract, which we negotiate. **Late or incomplete work is defined as any work or document due that is turned in AFTER the due date/time BUT within 48 hours of the deadline.** For example, if some work (say a written reflective piece) was due on Thursday, February 15 at 11:59 pm, that piece must be turned in by 11:59 pm on Saturday the 17th.
5. **Missed Work**. If you turn in late work **AFTER the 48 hours** stipulated in #4 above (Late/Incomplete Work), then it will be considered "missed work," which is a more serious mark against your grading contract. This is due to the fact that all assignments are used in class when they are due, so turning in something beyond 48 hours after it is due means it is assured to be less useful, and its absence has hurt your colleagues in class (since they depended on you to turn in your work for their use).
6. **Ignored Work**. You agree not to ignore any work expected of you. Ignored work is any work unaccounted for in the quarter – that is, I have no record of you doing it or turning it in. My sense is that ignoring the work so crucial to one's development as a learner in our community is bad and unacceptable, so accumulating any "ignored work" will keep you from meeting our contract expectations (see table below).
7. **All Work/Labor** needs to meet the following conditions. To be ***complete and On Time***, you agree to turn in on time and in the appropriate manner complete essays, writing, or other labor assigned that meet all of our agreed upon expectations. (See #4 above for details on late assignments). This means you'll carefully follow ALL of the LABOR INSTRUCTIONS given for the assignment, and be honest about completing labor that asks for particular time commitments of you (for example, "write for 20 minutes," etc.).

Knowing Where You Stand

This system is better than regular grading for giving you a clear idea of what your final grade looks like at any moment. If you are doing everything as directed and turning things in on time (no matter what anyone says), you're getting a B. As for participation in class, you'll have to keep track of it, but you can check with me at any time. I'll tell you what I have recorded. If I mark you absent / non-participatory, I'll always email you and let you know.

Improving Your Contracted Grade

The grade of B (3.0) depends primarily on *behavior* and *labor*. Have you shown responsible effort and consistency in our class? Have you done what was asked of you in the spirit it was asked? Have you put in the appropriate amount of labor? Higher grades than the default, the **grade of A (4.0)**, however, require *more labor that helps or supports the class* in its mutual discussions and work. In order to raise your grade, you may complete as many of the following items of labor as you like. **Each item completed fully and in the appropriate manner will raise your final course grade by one grade category**.

- **A lesson/activity/handout**: These handouts are on a topic and material that you research for the class's benefit and will need at least 2 weeks lead time, working with me (Ashley) on the materials. While we'll determine together the scope of your lesson, the main elements of your labor will be to produce: (1) a 1-2 page handout for the class's benefit in our writing and thinking; (2) some outline for our in-class activity that introduces your handout; and (3) a short reflective essay to me (Ashley) of about 1-2 pages (300-600 words) on what you learned in the process of doing this labor and what you feel the class stands to gain from the lesson you offered us.

- **Revised Drafts**: You may do the optional labor instructions for revising two final drafts for Assignments 1-3. You may turn these in to me (Ashley) any time **before week 14**.

- **Some other labor that benefits the class** and our mutual learning. Do you want to write about and report to us on an event related to the class? Or maybe you would like to read an article for us and summarize some of its findings or ideas that you think will help us do our work in class? If you have an idea, come to me (Ashley) early. We will plan it, while making sure the amount of labor is commensurate with the other items above, and schedule it.

For every item you complete on the above list, your contracted grade will **improve by one grade category** on the breakdown table below. So if you meet all the conditions for a B-contract (3.0), then your grade can improve in the following ways:

- **1 item** completed = course grade of **4.0 (A)**
- **2 items** completed = just you being awesome

If you only meet the requirements for a C-contract (2.0) or lower, the same movement up the grade ladder applies by completing items on the list above. You may even do more than two items and continue to raise your grade regardless of what grade you are qualified for. For example, if you only meet the requirements for a C (2.0) contract in the table below but do 3 extra labors above (the max), then your final course grade will be an A (4.0).

In accordance with FERPA regulations, I am not allowed to discuss your grades via email or in public settings. Similarly, I cannot discuss final grades via email once the semester concludes. These

policies are in place to protect your privacy. If you have questions about your grade, please reach out to me to set up an in-person meeting in my office to discuss my evaluation of your performance in the class.

Course Policies

Contacting Me
I will primarily communicate with students individually via ERAU email. Some announcements and updates will also be posted on Canvas. Please check our classroom spaces and your email regularly so you don't miss any important updates or adjustments to our schedule. Please post any questions about the class or assignments in the appropriate forum in Canvas. I will answer messages and emails during regular business hours (roughly 8am–5pm local time). Keep these hours in mind when sending messages that may require a quick response. I expect you to use a professional approach when communicating with your peers and with me. If you do not know what this means, please ask.

Technology Use
Since the course meets in a computer lab, students are expected to use technology for class purposes.

Accessibility Accommodations
ERAU is committed to access for all students. It is University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who qualify for services. Students with a documented (dis)ability should meet with me during the first two weeks of class to discuss possible accommodations through the Disability Support Services (DSS) office. However, if a student receives documentation of a (dis)ability later in the semester, I would still like to meet to discuss accommodations. Please feel free to speak with me privately, as I am happy to speak with you about making arrangements that will help you get the most out of this class. If you would like to discuss and/or request accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services. DSS is located on the first floor of Hazy Library, at the end of the hall. You may stop by, call 928.777.6750, or email the director at <u>marcee.keller@erau.edu</u>.

Classroom Civility
Students at ERAU are expected to exhibit professional and ethical behavior in the classroom. Respect for other students and instructors is required to contribute to a productive learning experience both in and out of the classroom. Students who do not cultivate a professional ethos in the classroom will receive either a warning or dismissal if the behavior is not corrected.
Please be respectful of the different experiences, beliefs, and values expressed by everyone in this course. This class should be a safe space where everyone feels comfortable sharing perspectives, asking questions, and taking productive risks. Behaviors that threaten, harass, or discriminate against anyone will be addressed with disciplinary action, which may include being referred to the Office of the Dean of Students. Unacceptable, inappropriate behaviors include:
- making rude comments regarding students, me as the instructor, or the course material
- inhibiting the participation of other students or posting distracting remarks
- physically or verbally disrupting class spaces or activities
- abusing other students' contact information
- refusing to engage in scheduled learning activities.

Be a generous and kind colleague. Engage with each other respectfully at all times. This doesn't mean we have to always agree, but we should strive to interact with kindness and understanding. If you at any time feel uncomfortable in our class spaces or are upset with any aspect of our course, please let me know privately in a mature, respectful way.

Academic Integrity

Embry-Riddle is committed to maintaining and upholding intellectual integrity. All students, faculty, and staff have obligations to prevent violations of academic integrity and take corrective action when they occur. The adjudication process will include the sanction imposed on students who commit the following academic violations, which may include a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade for the course, suspension, or dismissal from the University.

1. Plagiarism: Presenting as one's own ideas, words, or products of another. Plagiarism includes use of any source to complete academic assignments without proper acknowledgment of the source.
2. Cheating: A broad term that includes the following:
    a. Giving or receiving help from unauthorized persons or materials during examinations.
    b. The unauthorized communication of examination questions prior to, during, or following administration of the examination.
    c. Collaboration on examinations or assignments expected to be individual work.
    d. Fraud and deceit, which include knowingly furnishing false or misleading information or failing to furnish appropriate information when requested, such as when applying for admission to the University.

My assumption will always be that your writing is original and generated purposefully for this course during the spring semester of 2023. There are many types of plagiarism—some more obvious than others, but there are subtle forms you may not be aware of. A good rule of thumb to live by: if you're not sure whether you're violating these rules, talk to me about it before turning in the work in question. We are here to learn, after all.

Privacy of Student Records

The University respects the rights and privacy of students in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The University may disclose certain items of directory information without the consent of the student, unless the student submits a written non-disclosure request. Students are required to file requests for non-disclosure with the Office of the Registrar. Non-disclosure forms remain in place permanently, unless the office is notified otherwise.

Nondiscrimination Statement/Title IX

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University continually strives to recognize, respect, and celebrate the differences and cultural identities among individuals as we recruit, support, and embrace our diverse community. We work to provide a safe environment where self-expression is welcome. We strive to create a campus climate that is free of discrimination so that networks, partnerships, and cultural competency can be fostered through leadership, integrity, and respect.

In so doing, *Embry-Riddle does not permit discrimination or harassment in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, predisposing genetic characteristic, age, religion, pregnancy status, or any other characteristic protected by University policy or state, local or federal law.*

This policy covers nondiscrimination in employment and in access to educational opportunities. Therefore, any member of the campus community, guest or visitor who acts to deny, deprive, or limit the educational, employment, and/or social access, benefits, and/or opportunities of any member of the campus community on the basis of their actual or perceived membership in the protected classes listed above is in violation of the University policy on nondiscrimination. When brought to the attention of the University, any such discrimination will be appropriately remedied by the University.

If you have questions or need guidance regarding your Title IX rights, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at 928-777-3747.

Other Student Responsibilities
All Embry-Riddle students are responsible for knowing all academic regulations and procedures required for continued attendance at the University. These regulations and procedures are presented in University publications such as the catalog, the Student Handbook, the Flight Operations Manual, and the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual. These documents are available for reference either online or at the Office of the Registrar, student government offices, and academic departments throughout the University. A student who requires clarification of any policy or regulation should seek help from their academic advisor, program/department chair, or the Office of the Registrar. University regulations will not be waived because a student pleads ignorance of established policies and procedures. The University reserves the right to change curricula and academic regulations and procedures without notice or obligation.

COVID-19 Policies
Barring unforeseen circumstances, all classes will be held in-person unless otherwise noted on the syllabus. In order to keep us all safe and healthy together, I encourage you to take advantage of ERAU's vaccination clinics. Finally, office hours and individual assignment conferences will be offered over Teams and/or in person to accommodate your health needs.

Syllabus Change Policy
Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

Campus Resources

Please feel free to drop by during my office hours, as this can be a productive opportunity to discuss questions, concerns, or to simply work through potential ideas for a project. If you are not available to meet during my scheduled office hours, I am happy to meet with you if you make other arrangements with me ahead of time. If you can't drop by, I make it a point to check my email regularly during the weekdays from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, so don't hesitate to send me a message if you have questions or concerns about the class.

Hazy Library and Learning Center
The Hazy Library and Learning Center is actively involved in promoting your academic success and enriching your learning experience and research. Ask a Librarian about any of our many services we offer for students, staff, and faculty, including:
- Course Reserves: course support materials
- Information Resources: Research and Course Guides (LibGuides), and Databases

- Materials: <u>Borrowing</u>, <u>My Library Account</u>, <u>Interlibrary Loan (ILL)</u>, and <u>Purchase Requests</u>
- Research Assistance: <u>ASK Desk</u>, <u>Faculty Research Support</u>, and <u>online reference assistance</u>
- Space: <u>Computers</u>, <u>Study areas</u>, and <u>Online Room Reservation</u>
- Technology: Computers and other technology, Computer Commons, and <u>Technology Lending Services</u>

University Tutoring

The Tutoring Program at the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Prescott campus provides free tutoring for all students. Our experienced peer tutors have already taken the courses for which they tutor, provide specific and knowledgeable guidance, suggest effective study strategies, and encourage independence in learning. For more information, email <u>prtutor@erau.edu</u>.

Counseling Services

The mission of Counseling Services is to enhance the emotional well-being of ERAU students. We believe that good mental health is a key part of overall health, and good health is essential to academic success! We support students' academic experience by providing brief mental health counseling and consultation services that help them identify barriers, improve coping, and achieve personal and academic goals. For more information, call 928.777.3312 or email <u>prcounsel@erau.edu</u>.

Assignment 1: Basic Rhetorical Analysis
Rough Draft Due: January 27th
Final Draft Due: January 30th

Project Overview
Technical communication is meant to be used and not just read. Good technical communication communicates information to an audience who will act on that information in a variety of ways: in making hiring decisions, in following technical procedures, in developing research plans, and more. In this assignment, you will evaluate the usability of a piece of technical communication. That is, you will analyze whether the document effectively communicates the necessary information to its audience and where it fails to do so. In this way, the assignment will introduce you to basic elements of technical communication.

Your analysis should demonstrate that you understand the basic principles of technical communication discussed in the first chapter of your textbook. The process you will follow in this assignment is relatively straightforward. I will provide you with analysis points based on the introductory chapter. You will study a document and then determine how well it relies (or doesn't) on effective technical communication practices. You will then present your analysis in a memo to me.

COM 221 Learning Outcomes
- Explain the importance of audience analysis in technical communication and apply it in practical contexts.
- Communicate in writing with minimal errors in grammar, usage, mechanics, and sentence structure.
- Apply the particular conventions of definitions, descriptions, instructions, processes, and other types of professional communications, including electronic correspondence, to all technical documents.

Deliverables
Your final draft should be 2 pages **(minimum 1,000 words)** single-spaced, with 12-point font and 1" margins. Therefore, you must be as concise as possible. However, don't mistake brevity for superficiality. I'm looking for a high-quality analysis that shows you can look at a technical document with a critical eye.

Strategies for Success
There are three steps to this assignment:

1. Choose a piece of technical communication to analyze. I have provided you with three documents below from which to choose, and you can also choose your own. These documents are representative of technical communication.

2. Evaluate your chosen document for usability. This will involve reading the document carefully, paying attention to the features that enable use. In other words, how did the author structure the document so that readers could access and use the information effectively and efficiently? I provide specific points of analysis below.

3. Write a memo to me that organizes your rhetorical analysis in both a logical and convincing way (I am your audience). Follow the format for writing memos discussed in your textbook.

Be concrete in your analysis. Use examples from the document as you make your key points. Be sure to analyze and not just describe the document. This will require you to evaluate—and pass judgment on—both content and design. Be sure your analysis is well organized.

Analysis Points
Your introductory textbook chapter offers a set of characteristics for technical communication:
- Addresses particular readers
- Helps readers solve problems
- Reflects an organization's goals and culture
- Is produced collaboratively
- Uses design to increase readability
- Consists of words or images or both

Use these characteristics to organize your analysis. Be sure that your analysis addresses each of these areas.

Submission Instructions
Upload your final draft to the Assignment 1 drop box on the course Canvas page by 11:59PM on Monday, January 30th.

Criteria for Evaluation
I will provide feedback on the analyses according to the following criteria:
Completeness. The analysis addresses the six characteristics of technical communication.
Organization. The analysis is well organized. It has a clear structure supported by headings.
Support. The analysis is concrete in that it uses examples from the document to support major points.
Interpretation. The analysis interprets, analyzes, passes judgment—it does not just describe.
Style and Grammar. The analysis is well written. Topic sentences are clear. The analysis is free of grammatical and proofreading errors.

Assignment 2: Job Application Package
Job Ad Selections Due: February 3rd
Resume Drafts Due: February 6th
Cover Letters Drafts Due: February 8th
Final Draft Due: February 17th

Project Overview

Most people obtain jobs through a multi-stage process. First you research the types of jobs you are qualified for and the types of employers you would like to work for. Then you try to convince specific employers to consider you for a job. These days, most employers have too many applicants per job to interview each personally. These employers sort through job application packages (resumes and cover letters) to decide which applicants to consider further. So your first communication with your future employer is likely to be in writing and must persuade them to continue the conversation.

COM 221 Learning Outcomes

- Explain the importance of audience analysis in technical communication and apply it in practical contexts.
- Communicate in writing with minimal errors in grammar, usage, mechanics, and sentence structure.
- Recognize and discuss ethical implications of decisions in technical communications.

Deliverables

For this assignment, you will write:

- Two cover letters addressed to different prospective employers and that apply for two different types of jobs. The letters should highlight different aspects of your experience relevant to the different jobs.
- Two resumes that may well differ significantly in content or in layout or both. The choices of content and layout should emphasize appropriate experience for each job.
- A cover memo addressed to me that overviews the two jobs, reviews what you know about these particular employers, and describes the strategies you have used to adapt your letter and resume to each situation. I expect you to make good use of the information in this memo in the arguments you present in your cover letters to the employers.

Strategies for Success

Cover Memo

Write a brief memo (no more than two pages, single-spaced) addressed to me that will help me read, understand, evaluate, and "coach" your resumes and cover letters. For each of the two jobs, the memo must contain a separate job description and audience analysis, as well as a commentary highlighting how you adapted your resumes and cover letters to the different jobs. Since the memo will be of use to you in designing the rest of your job application package, you probably should think about it early—even begin drafting it early. It's not due until the end, and you may not finish drafting it until after you've written the other parts of the assignment. Either way, you should look over it carefully at the very end of the project to make sure that it tells me "how to read" your resumes and cover letters.

Job Description. You may base your job description on job listings that you find in a professional or trade journal, on the Internet, or in other resources on campus at Career Services. The jobs should be different enough that you will have to emphasize different parts of your experience to qualify for the positions. You may also (with my permission) write for a summer job, an internship, or for a scholarship or other award. Note that you must hand in copies of the job ads you use.

Audience Analysis. Investigate the particular companies you are applying to. You may obtain information on companies from the library, on the Internet, from Career Services, or other places. You may also contact the personnel office of the company directly. Then write one or two paragraphs that specify any special qualities or experience that this company may be looking for in its employees. For example, suppose you are applying for a job as a chemical engineer. A small company may be looking for an engineer who can work on a variety of projects, while another may be looking specifically for someone who has experience with polymers. This is also the place to describe anything you know about the particular person you are writing to. I expect you to make extensive use of this information in your cover letter. It might also have a big impact on the organization and choice of details in your resume.

Rhetorical Analysis. Describe how you adapted each resume and cover letter for its particular type of job, company, and reader and why you made those changes. Normally, your reasons will be closely related to the information in the job description and audience analysis.

The Resumes

The purpose of the resume is to describe your qualifications for a type of job. Since this assignment requires you to apply for two somewhat different jobs, you should create two somewhat different resumes.

Content. Your resume should include contact information and relevant details of your educational training, professional training, special accomplishments, and skills. A resume is not a life history. The goal is to argue that you are qualified for a particular type of job and that you would be a capable, responsible, and personable employee who communicates effectively.

Format. Your format may be traditional or innovative as long as it is appropriate and as long as the information is highly accessible and is organized in a way that highlights the most important items—from the employer's perspective.

Style. Your style should be fairly formal. You need not use complete sentences, but you should use a concise, active style and show consistency in expression from section to section.

The Cover Letters

While your resume is addressed to any employer with a certain type of job opening, the cover letter is most effective when tailored to a particular employer. The purpose of the cover letter is to persuade that specific employer to grant you an interview. Just as you appreciate being treated as an individual rather than as a statistic, so does an employer. Are you applying hit-or-miss to every

company in the country? Or have you invested some effort into finding a company that you are well suited for?

> **Content and Organization.** The opening of your letter should establish why you are writing to your reader. Be explicit about the fact that you are looking for a particular kind of job and explain why you would like to work at that particular company. Preview the body of the letter by stating your major qualifications for the job. The body of the letter develops each qualification with specific evidence. The goal is to show the reader both that you know what that specific company needs and that you have what it takes. You may organize this section in various ways: around your training and experience, around what the job or the company requires, or some other way. The letter should close by inviting a response.

> **Style.** Cover letters are difficult to write because they aim at somewhat conflicting goals. On the one hand, you want to make a good first impression. So you want to sound polite and fairly formal. On the other hand, you want to stand out from the crowd—otherwise, why should the employer hire you rather than any of the other applicants? The best policy is probably to talk to your reader as directly and naturally as possible. Avoid hype.

> **Format.** Use a conventional business letter format. If possible, stick to one page.

> **Standards for Correctness.** Employers impose strict standards of correctness on application materials: An error is the equivalent of a bad spot on your shirt. Accordingly, I will mark this assignment on a somewhat stricter scale than usual. If any letter or resume contains more than two typographical or grammatical errors, your entire package may be reduced by one letter grade, and possibly even more if there are numerous typographical or grammatical errors.

Submission Instructions
Upload your final draft to the Assignment 2 drop box on the course Canvas page by 11:59PM on October 4th.

Evaluation Criteria
I will provide feedback for your job application package based on the following criteria:

Adaptation and Organization. The application letters and resumes demonstrate proficient application of genre conventions in response to different rhetorical situations. Organizational strategies are clear, effective, and appropriate. The writer understands organizational strategies and is able to adapt them to specific job application situations.

Content. The writer makes information choices dependent on resume and application letter conventions and audience needs. Content focuses on skills, results, and qualifications, quantified where appropriate.

Style, Tone, and Design. The documents are correct and concise. Tone is appropriate to the rhetorical situation but is in all ways professional, conversational, and tailored to the specific audience. Design works to make the documents attractive and accessible.

Correctness. Employers impose strict standards of correctness on application materials. Accordingly, I will provide feedback for this project on a somewhat stricter scale than usual.

Assignment 3: UX Research Plan
Proposal Due: March 3, 2023
Rough Draft Due: March 10, 2023
Final Draft Due: March 23, 2023
User Testing Reflection Due: March 31, 2023

Project Overview
As internet users, we constantly judge the usability and attractiveness of the websites we visit. We are more likely to enjoy and return often to sites that are easy and pleasant to navigate, while we might stop visiting sites that are overly confusing or unhelpful. From usability.gov, we learn:

"Usability refers to the quality of a user's experience when interacting with products or systems, including websites, software, devices, or applications. Usability is about effectiveness, efficiency and the overall satisfaction of the user."

We can also apply principles of usability to printed documents—a book, for instance, may have features (table of contents, page numbers, running headers, or an index) that make the book's contents more accessible and easy-to-navigate for readers. Because websites are an increasingly common mode of circulating information in the 21st century, knowing what makes a website usable and effective can be a valuable skill professionally and in life generally.

The field of user experience includes research, design, and writing. This assignment introduces you to qualitative and quantitative research methods for UX, including field visits, observations, surveys, interviews, and design sprints. As a class, we will explore various approaches to UX research and practice research methods. In this assignment, you will develop user personas, empathy maps, and user journey maps. Next, you will craft a research plan describing methods you might use to address a "wicked problem" in your industry or field. Finally, you will conduct user testing for your specific product, website, or process.

COM 221 Learning Outcomes
- Implement User Experience (UX) methods to conduct primary and secondary foundational research (e.g., user personas, empathy maps, user journey maps), design research, as well as develop plans for post-launch design research.
- Develop research plans to ground their writing that is attentive to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion to design content for diverse users.
- Identify and implement effective project management and team collaboration skills through the production of multimodal deliverables.
- Summarize, evaluate, synthesize, and apply theories, methods, and principles of user-experience design and participatory design.

Deliverables
Your final draft should be a single-spaced report in size 12 font that includes the following documents: problem statement, user persona, user empathy map, user journey map, testing methodology, evaluation measures, and conclusion.

Strategies for Success
You will address these key elements of a UX research plan:

Problem statement/test objectives
What is the background on the issue and the particular issue/problem your product is designed to address? What are the needs that have driven this project? What are the particular objectives you hope to achieve with your project? What are the particular objectives you hope to achieve through this usability testing?

User Persona
Detailed description of your "user" or users. Who they are? What they know and do related to the activity you are designing or testing? What is their "situation of use?" What are their needs? Motives?

Testing Methodology
The Method section is where you present the "script" for your usability test. This section will be divided into two parts:
1. **Overview of the Test**
   Here you will present a general description of your test including your Pre-test Activities, your Scenarios/Task Based Questions, and Exit Questions. Generally describe what will be done in each portion of your test, as well as some of the rationale for doing the test this way.
2. **Script for the Test**

This script will cover all three parts of the test. It should be word for word what will be said or used in the test and include the following sections:
- Pre-Test Activities Script
- Welcome
- Outline of the Usability Test Agenda/Test Preparation.
- Entrance Questions
- Task Based Questions Script: Here you present the exact wording for scenarios and tasks that you will use in your test. The goal of these scenarios is to enter your test participants into a "scene" or fiction and to get them to play the role of your user in what you envision is a common situation or task. Each scenario should make clear to the test participant the 5 Ws: Who, What, When, Where, Why?
- Exit Questions: Here you will present the exact questions you will ask of your participant when they complete the Task Based Questions section of the test.

Test Environment/Equipment
Describe where the test will be conducted and the equipment to be used.

Test Monitors Roles
In this section of your plan, you will describe the roles of the "test monitors" while the test is going on. An individual may play multiple roles and tests may not require all roles. You will include your plan for rotating these roles through however many tests you plan to conduct.

    Facilitator: Guides test participant through all three sections of the test: pre-test activities, task-based questions, post-test questions. The facilitator's role is particularly important in prompting the test participant to continue thinking aloud. You could rotate the facilitator role during a test (pre-test facilitator, test facilitator, post-test facilitator).

    Data Logger: Records participant's actions and comments

    Test Observers: Silent observer. Assists the data logger in identifying problems, concerns, coding bugs, and procedural errors. Serves as note takers.

Evaluation measures

These should include quantitative and qualitative measures: that is, you try to measure some things that you can count and things you cannot count (opinion, impressions). Describe both the quantitative measures (what you can count) and the qualitative measures (what you can't count) in your test. Also, discuss the definition of usability as a quality metric (i.e. the five key criteria of usability) and how your test will help assess these criteria. Provide actual copies of the data sheets you will use to log your data (both quantitative data and qualitative).

Submission Instructions

Upload your final draft to the Assignment 3 drop box on the course Canvas page by 11:59PM on March 31, 2023.

Criteria for Evaluation

I will provide feedback on your UX research report according to the following criteria:

Audience adaptation. The deliverables are appropriate for the intended audience. They're written from a user-centered, rather than system-centered, perspective. They anticipate the user's questions, difficulties, and needs. The document uses visuals when necessary to help the designated audience understand the content.

Content. The document is complete. It has all the necessary information for the genre requirements.

Format and Organization. The document uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the genre conventions. The overall design is clear and consistent. The instructions use fonts, white space, contrast, alignment, headings and sub-headings appropriately and consistently.

Style. The document uses the present tense unless it covers a topic from the historical past. The document uses technical communication conventions.

Mechanics. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are correct.

Assignment 4: Eportfolio
Proposal Due: April 7, 2023
Rough Draft Due: April 19, 2023
Final Draft Due: May 1, 2023

Project Overview:
Electronic portfolios are an increasingly common vehicle for developing a professional online identity. Professionals are beginning to create them and employers are beginning to expect them. Employers are interested in e-portfolios for a variety of reasons: they provide multiple writing samples, display skills with computers and new media, and require reflection and meta-knowledge. Professionals like e-portfolios because they help them keep track of their projects and accomplishments. As a final course assignment, you will design an e-portfolio using the Penn State Sites environment (sites.psu.edu). The portfolio will include work from this course and perhaps from others. You will create your e-portfolio for an audience of potential employers.

Your e-portfolio should demonstrate that you understand basic principles of organization and presentation of information online, as well as considerations of a professional ethos online. This includes, for example, helping readers navigate your website with links (tabs on the e-portfolio), headers, chunked text for readability, bullet lists when appropriate, alt tags for visuals (for the visually impaired), well-phrased links, consistent design across pages, and attributions for images and/or quotations. How you develop your ethos will depend on which of your attributes and qualities you want to emphasize, as well as how you frame, share, and discuss your projects and experiences. Projects that you share on your e-portfolio (from this course and from other experiences) should be introduced and framed in a way that emphasizes their value to reader-users.

COM 221 Learning Outcomes:
- Plan and practice composing effective UX writing by using industry technological tools to design content for UX portfolios.
- Apply the multimodal writing process to invent, draft, revise, and edit their writing for a professional writing style that is responsive to a rhetorical purpose and audience.
- Plan and deliver effective multimodal presentations, employing effective communication across different modes, media, and genres.

Deliverables:
Your final eportfolio should include the following components:
- A home page that introduces visitors to your e-portfolio
- A Personalized image
- Navigation tabs for pages
- A web-based version of your resume
- Sample work from this course and other courses, and a discussion of this work
- An about page (example: a biographical narrative)
- Contact information (e.g., email; please be cognizant of your privacy)
- Visuals (giving credit to sources if you are not the copyright owner)
- A reflection on the course and your career

Strategies for Success:

An important aspect of this e-portfolio will be a reflective page in the navigation bar of your e-portfolio. This reflection asks you, in at least 500 words, to reflect on the course, specific projects, your career, OR the e-portfolio itself. You have choices to make, but here are some possibilities:

- *The Course*: Reflect on the class in general. Look back on the course objectives from the syllabus. What did you learn? How did your idea of what technical writing is or what technical writers do change in this course? What concepts from the course will be useful in the workplace? Explain with an example or two.
- *Projects*: Write about the projects you have included in your e-portfolio. What did you learn from writing these assignments? What do these projects show about you as a technical writer and potential employee? What skills did you gain during the course, and what old skills did you revisit or improve? What do you hope visitors of your website learn about you based on these projects?
- *Career*: Place this course and your projects in the context of your education and your career. How does what you learned make you a better job candidate? How does this course fit with your career goals? What connections can you make between this course and your undergraduate program (including other courses, activities, and internships)?
- *The Portfolio*: Describe the choices you made in constructing and writing your e-portfolio. What design choices did you make and why? How did you take potential visitors of your site into account (both your primary audience of potential employers, but also other visitors)? What did you learn from the course that informed your decisions?

Questions to Consider as You Draft

As you work on your e-portfolio, you will want to consider what information is important for you to include. You might consider the following questions as you work:

- How did you choose your major?
- What are your short-term and long-term career goals?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of? Why?
- What is the most significant project that you have completed? Why?
- What experiences do you have working collaboratively?
- Why should someone hire you?
- How do you approach a difficult project?
- What projects are worth showcasing on your e-portfolio, and what are you trying to portray about yourself by sharing them?
- What did you learn from this course that will carry over to potential jobs or careers?

Submission Instructions:

Upload your final draft as a URL to the Assignment 4 drop box on the course Canvas page by 11:59PM on May 1, 2023.

Criteria for Evaluation:

I will evaluate your eportfolio according to these criteria:

Completeness. The eportfolio includes the required aspects.

Organization and Navigation. The eportfolio is well organized and helps readers navigate through design elements (e.g., chunked text, useful links).

Professional Ethos. The eportfolio portrays you as effective, reflective, and ethical.

Reflection on the Course. The reflection draws on clear examples, moves beyond the superficial or obvious, and shows engagement with ideas from the course.

Style. Pages on the eportfolio are well written (e.g., clear, concise, free of mechanical errors) and follow conventions of technical writing.

Course Schedule

Key: ***HCI****—Encyclopedia of Human-Computer Interaction*
            OTC*—Open Technical Communication*

Mode of Delivery: In person classroom instruction (unless otherwise noted)

Week 1: Introduction to Technical Communication

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
1/11	W	Why write? Syllabus Overview; Class Introductions		
1/13	F	Defining technical communication	Read *OTC* Chapter 1 "Introduction to Technical Writing"	Introduction Letter (Prompt in Canvas)

Week 2: Reviewing Rhetorical Analysis

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
1/16	M	**MLK Day. No class.**		
1/18	W	Responding to the rhetorical situation; Introduction to Assignment 1	Read *HCI* "User Experience and Experience Design" (Marc Hassenzahl)	Sign up for individual conferences
1/20	F	**Class cancelled for individual conferences**	Read *OTC* Chapter 5.10 "Strategies for Peer-Reviewing & Team Writing"	Assignment 1 Proposal

Week 3: Memos, Email, and Professional Writing Genres

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
1/23	M	Memos and Email		
1/25	W	Introduction to Assignment 2; Researching Jobs and Scholarships	Read *OTC* Chapter 2.13 "Memos and Email"	

1/27	F	Peer Review Workshop	Read *OTC* Chapter 5.2 "Audience Analysis"	Assignment 1 Rough Draft

Week 4: Resumes and Cover Letters

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
1/30	M	Resumes	Read *OTC* Chapter 2.1 "Business Correspondence and Resumes"	Assignment 1 Final Draft
2/1	W	Cover Letters		Sign up for individual conferences.
2/3	F	**Class canceled for individual conferences.**		Assignment 2 Proposal + Bring job ads for approval

Week 5: Peer Review of Job Application Materials and Understanding Audience

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
2/6	M	Peer Review Workshop; Communicating Effectively	Read *OTC* Chapter 5.5 "Power Revision Techniques" Read *OTC* Chapter 5.7 "Basic Patterns and Elements of the Sentence"	Drafts of both resumes
2/8	W	**Asynchronous class—Dr. Rea at funeral.**		
2/10	F	Peer Review Workshop; Writing Effective Sentences	Read *OTC* Chapter 5.8 "Common Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation Problems"	Drafts of both cover letters

			Read *OTC* Chapter 5.11 "Information Structures"	

Week 6: Inclusive Approaches to Understanding Users + Intro to User-centered Research

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
2/13	M	Writing for the Web + Font	Read *OTC* Chapter 4.8 "Graphics"	
2/15	W	**Class cancelled for snow day.**	Read *Writing is Designing: Words and the User Experience* "Strategy and Research: Beyond Best Practices" (Michael Metts & Andy Welfle)	
2/17	F	**Class cancelled— Dr. Rea is presenting research at a conference.**	Read *HCI* "What are Wicked Problems and How Might We Solve Them" (Euphemia Wong)	Assignment 2 Final Draft

Week 7: Primary Research Methods, Secondary Research Methods, Writing about Methods

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
2/20	M	**Presidents' Day. No class.**		
2/22	W	**Class cancelled for snow day.**		
2/24	F	**9AM class: cancelled for snow day. 10AM class: technical descriptions + definitions.**		

Week 8: Designing for Belonging

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
2/27	M	Introduction to Assignment 3; User Personas Setting Research Goals, Wicked Problems & User Research	Read *HCI* "Empathy" Read *HCI* "Creating Personas from User Research" Read Quesenbery, "Using the 5Es to understand users"	
3/1	W	Qualitative Research Methods; Qualitative Research Methods Human-Centered Design	Read *HCI* "Human-Centered Design" Read *HCI* "What is Qualitative Research?" Read *HCI* "What is Quantitative Research?"	Sign up for individual conferences
3/3	F	**Class cancelled for individual conferences.**	Read *OTC* Chapter 3 "Ethics in Technical Communication"	Assignment 3 Proposal

Week 9: Document Design + Using Graphics in Technical Communication

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
3/6	M	The Ethical Implications of Instructional Documents Data Visualizations	Read *HCI* "Data Visualization for Human Perception" (Stephen Few)	
3/8	W	Document Design; Emphasizing Important Information	Read *OTC* Chapter 2.11 "Titles, Abstracts, Introductions, and Conclusions"	

3/10	F	Peer Review Workshop	Read *OTC* Chapter 6 "Usability Testing"	Assignment 3 Rough Draft

Week 10: Spring Break

Week 11: Introduction to Usability

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
3/20	M	Introduction to Usability **Guest Speaker: Allana Wooley, Senior UX Researcher at Lutron Electronics**		
3/22	W	Usability Testing Continued	Read Duhigg, "What Google Learned…"	
3/24	F	Testing Protocols & Heuristic Evaluation	Read *HCI* "Heuristic Evaluation"	Assignment 3 Final Draft

Week 12: User Testing

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
3/27	M	Accessibility in Web Design; Peer Review Workshop	Read Usability.gov "Accessibility Basics," "Interaction Design Basics," and "User Experience Basics"	
3/29	W	Piloting User Testing		

3/31	F	User Testing with Lookback		Assignment 3 User Testing Reflection

Week 13: Iterative Design

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
4/3	M	Iterative Design; Introduction to Assignment 4	Read *Observing the User Experience* "Balancing Needs Through Iterative Development" (Elizabeth Goodman, Mike Kuniavsky, & Andrea Moed)	
4/5	W	Technical Reports; Contextualizing Data	Read *OTC* Chapter 2.9 "Recommendation and Feasibility Reports" Read *OTC* Chapter 2.13 "Memos and Email"	Sign up for individual conferences.
4/7	F	**Class cancelled for individual conferences.**		Assignment 4 Proposal

Week 14: Digital Portfolio Design

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
4/10	M	Accessibility, Usability, and Inclusion for Web Design	Read Web Accessibility Initiative "Accessibility, Usability, and Inclusion"	
4/12	W	UX Case Studies	Read *HCI* "What are UX Case Studies?"	
4/14	F	Universal Design for Websites	Read *HCI* "Learn to Create Accessible Websites with the Principles of Universal Design" (Ruby Zheng)	

Week 15: Peer Review of Digital Portfolios & Oral Presentation Strategies

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due

4/17	M	UX Portfolios	Read _HCI_ "What are UX Portfolios?"	
4/19	W	Peer Review Workshop		Assignment 4 Draft
4/21	F	Oral presentations	Read _OTC_ Chapter 2.12 "Oral Presentations"	

Week 16: Final Presentations & Reflections

Date	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Writing Due
4/24	M	Assignment 4 Presentations		Assignment 4 Presentations
4/26	W	Assignment 4 Presentations; Course Wrap-Up		Assignment 4 Presentations
4/28	F	**Study Day. No class.**		

Finals Week

Date	Day			Writing Due
5/1	T	_There are no in-person class meetings during Finals Week. Instead, your final draft of your digital portfolio is due on Canvas by the end of our exam period._		Assignment 4 Final Draft