

**Instructor: Meg Hudson (she/her)**

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**Class Meetings**

2:00- 3:50 PM on Tuesday/ Thursday

**Location**

SRTC Rm. 155

**Office Hours**

In-person: 1:00-2:00 PM on Tuesday and Thursday

Online: 4:00-5:00 PM Monday and Wednesday

## Technical Writing

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### Course Description

WR 227Z introduces students to producing instructive, informative, and persuasive technical/professional documents aimed at well-defined and achievable outcomes. The course focuses on presenting information using rhetorically appropriate style, design, vocabulary, structure, and visuals. Students can expect to gather, read, and analyze information and to learn a variety of strategies for producing accessible, usable, reader-centered deliverable documents that are clear, concise, and ethical.

### Course Learning Outcomes

1. Apply key rhetorical concepts through analyzing, designing, composing, and revising a variety of deliverable documents for technical/professional contexts
2. Engage in project-based research, applying appropriate methods of inquiry for clearly defined purposes (e.g., user experience research and client/organization research)
3. Collaborate with various stakeholders to develop and apply flexible and effective strategies for managing projects
4. Develop and adapt document design and composition strategies to meet the demands of diverse clients, organizations, and multicultural audiences
5. Examine and respond to individual and professional ethical responsibilities across organizational contexts.

### Land Acknowledgement

Portland State University occupies the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Tumwater, Watlala bands of the Chinook, the Tualatin Kalapuya and many other Indigenous nations of the Columbia River. It is important to acknowledge the ancestors of this place and to recognize that we are here because of the sacrifices forced upon them. In remembering these communities, we honor their legacy, their lives, and their descendants.

# Course Requirements

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## Workload

College coursework occurs primarily outside of class time. Conventional wisdom has it that for every 1 credit hour, students should spend 2-3 hours outside of class working/studying. **For this 4-credit course, that means about 8-12 hours of work per week in addition to class hours.** Ultimately, your success in this class depends on your work ethic as well as effective time management.

It is worth mentioning that we are still living through the effects of a global pandemic. The social and ecological crises have affected our ability to think, write, read, plan, etc. Furthermore, everyone in this class has different lifestyles, different schedules, and different needs when it comes to their education. If at any point you are struggling with the workload, please feel free to get in touch with me, either over email or during my office hours— I'm happy to work together to help you get through this course.

## Grading System

To emphasize process and practice, this course uses a combination of labor-based and specifications grading. I will provide clear expectations for each assignment and if your work meets those expectations, you'll receive full credit. If it somehow misses the mark, you'll receive half credit and an invitation to revise. If it's missing for more than a week (without making specific arrangements with me), I will not be able to give you credit for that assignment. **All 4 major assignments must be completed to pass this course.** If you have any questions along the way about the course or your assignments, please ask!

## Required Materials

Our course [Canvas](#) site will be the hub for course communication and materials. PSU has student tutorials and resources [here](#), and [Canvas's student guide](#) is quite helpful. This is a no-cost course, meaning we will use free resources provided through Canvas. You are expected to have access to all required materials in class, whether printed or accessed on your computer.

# Assignments and Grading

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## Preparation and Presence – 25%

Becoming a better writer is an active practice, and it relies on individual and collective engagement. In this course, you have the opportunity to connect with fellow novice writers as you embark on this journey! Our class will be a supportive environment where errors are not judged, questions are welcomed, and discussion takes place frequently. Building this community is a collaborative endeavor and active participation from everyone is crucial to its development.

This course blends a variety of learning methods and invites you to experiment and evaluate what works best for you. If you encounter challenges, I'm open to discussing them and finding solutions together. My goal is to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate through various avenues—it won't solely hinge on raising your hand and speaking in class. Occasionally, I will incorporate written check-ins at the beginning or end of class as well as reading reflections and discussion posts (outlined in the course schedule) that will also count toward your participation grade.

Ultimately, if you come ready to engage in reading discussions, participate in activities, work on drafts and revisions, contribute to workshops, and reflect on your progress, you'll be successful in this class.

## Course Deliverables – 75%

### D1: Audience Analysis Project

1. Introductory email to your instructor that follows formal email etiquette and guidelines and introduces yourself and goals for this course.
2. Choose a small passage of a technical article related to your field of study and translate it for a wider and more general readership.

### D2: Document Design Project

1. Create a technical report over a technology or topic related to tech writing/communication.
2. Create an instructional document with a rationale explaining your organization and design choices of how to use the technology you chose for your technical report or a new topic.

### D3: UX-based research project

1. Write a proposal memo for changes to be made for UX experience to a website of your choice.
2. Create user personas based on UX research and accessibility tests ran on site of choice.
3. Create a recommendation report for ways to make UX better based on all the testing.

### D4: Final Portfolio and Reflection

1. Collect all the work done over the course of the term. Make a list of competencies you have learned.
2. Complete the end-of-term course reflection survey to evaluate and reflect on your growth.

# Community Expectations

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## Ethical Conduct

Whether you approach this class with a high level of confidence in your ability to write or minimal assurance, writing can be a sensitive subject for various reasons— but the only way to improve is to take chances. For that reason, working together to create a safe and supportive environment is essential. You will be working together regularly in class discussions, workshops, and peer review sessions. This is how composition in the real world works; collaboration and negotiation are essential.

It's therefore crucial that we all treat each other with respect and care. If you experience any problems in this area, please don't hesitate to reach out; we will work together to resolve the situation.

For general university expectations, please view [PSU's Conduct Resources for Students](#).

## Access & Inclusion

PSU is committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. I will do everything in my power to help you achieve your goals, and I welcome your help in creating a learning environment that is equitable, usable, inclusive, and welcoming. **If anything gets in your way, please tell me.**

If you have (or think you have), a learning difference or disability related to your learning that may affect your work in this class, you can get assistance and support from the [Disability Resource Center](#). Their mission is to identify, evaluate, and reduce or eliminate barriers to student access and equity. Please call their office at 503-725-4150, email at [drc@pdx.edu](mailto:drc@pdx.edu), or visit their front desk at 116 Smith Memorial Student Union (Monday-Friday 9 am-5 pm).

## Attendance

Attendance is a requirement for this class. This course is based on discussion, collaboration, and practice. For that reason, participation in class activities constitutes a significant portion of your grade. In particular, individual conferences and peer review sessions are essential, and you must make arrangements with me to make up any you miss. **You'll be allowed 2 personal days with no penalty, but any more than 5 unexcused absences put you at risk of failing the course.** Absences for religious holidays and athletic obligations are always excused. If you need to miss class for any other reason, please send me an email ahead of time if possible to let me know so that I can send you any materials that you'll miss.

Of course, we all share the responsibility of keeping ourselves and each other safe, which means abiding by [PSU's classroom requirements \(see below\)](#). That being said, **please don't come to class if you're sick!** Contact me, take advantage of PSU's student clinic ([SHAC](#)), stay at home (except to get medical care), separate yourself from others, monitor your symptoms, and follow medical advice.

## Deadlines and Extensions

Deadlines are designed to ensure your successful completion of the course. Keeping up with the process is essential to your individual progress and our collective work. It will also prevent you from being overwhelmed by work later in the term. For that reason, you are expected to submit your work—especially drafts!—on time and according to specifications.

If you miss a peer review session, you may make it up by either dropping in during my office hours to discuss your work or by visiting the Writing Center and documenting that visit in your submission.

Late drafts and informal exercises will receive only partial credit. These assignment portals will be closed after a week; if you wish to make particular make-up arrangements, please reach out to me.

All “final” assignment submissions have a 2-day grace period, after which a point will be deducted per day late. You are welcome to request (in advance) a deadline extension of up to 5 days in order to navigate your schedule and ensure a product that makes you proud. **No late assignments will be accepted more than 2 weeks after the deadline** unless we make arrangements.

As always, talk to me if you’re struggling to keep up so we can strategize solutions together.

## Intellectual Property & Academic Integrity

Intellectual property is a central concern of writing and research, and we will cover appropriate methods for using others’ work. For the purposes of this class, I will not consider AI-generated writing to be your own, and submitting it as such constitutes academic dishonesty, just like more conventional plagiarism. (It’s also fascinating and potentially field-changing, so we can definitely talk about and play with it!)

If either situation arises, you will attend a mandatory conference, then revise and resubmit the work by an agreed-upon deadline. A second offense will result in an F on the assignment, and I may submit a report of [academic misconduct](#) to the [Dean of Student Life’s Conduct Office](#).

## Wellness & Safety

College can be hard on your body and brain. Science proves we work best with 8+ hours of sleep, regular exercise, and solid nutrition. Try to take care of yourself; you’ll learn and perform better. Take advantage of campus resources to keep you sane and strong:

- Students have access to all kinds of free and confidential services via the [Student Health and Counseling Center \(SHAC\)](#), as well as [Wellness Education](#) from the [Wellness and Health Action Team](#).
- My Student Support Program @ PSU offers free and easy access to mental health counselors at any time, from any place via the My SSP app (from [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)), [My SSP website](#), or by calling 866-743-7732 or, if calling from outside US or Canada, 001-416-380-6578.

- If you see a peer in distress, [PSU's C.A.R.E. program](#) can help you help them.
- For security concerns, please refer to [Campus Public Safety](#).
- For information about emergency preparedness, visit the [Fire and Life Safety webpage](#).

## Mandatory Title IX Reporting

One of my responsibilities is to create a safe learning environment for students and the campus as a whole. Please be aware that as a faculty member, **I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence, and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination.** If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination with a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find [a list](#) of those individuals or contact a confidential advocate at 503-725-5672 or [psuwrc.youcanbook.me](mailto:psuwrc.youcanbook.me).

## Basic Needs

It can be challenging to do your best in class if you have trouble meeting basic needs like safe shelter, sleep, and nutrition. Resource centers across campus are here to provide referrals and assistance:

- [Student Homelessness and Economic Crisis resources](#)
- [Emergency Funds](#)
- [PSU Food Pantry](#)
- [SNAP Training and Education Program \(STEP\)](#)
- [Support for Students with Children](#)
- [Financial Wellness Center](#)

## Community Support

Success is (or should be) a team sport. Take advantage of these campus connections:

- [Diversity and Multicultural Student Services](#)
- [Multicultural Retention Services](#)
- [Multicultural Student Center](#)
- [La Casa Latina Student Center](#)
- [Middle East, North Africa, South Asia Initiative](#)
- [Native American Student and Community Center](#)
- [Pacific Islander, Asian & Asian American Student Center](#)
- [Pan-African Commons](#)
- [Queer Resource Center](#)
- [Women's Resource Center](#)
- [Veterans Resource Center](#)

## Flexibility Statement

I reserve the right to modify course content and/or substitute assignments and learning activities in response to institutional, weather, or class situations. I will communicate any changes as far in advance as possible, via email and Canvas.

## Course Schedule (refer to Canvas for more details)

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Week	Major Topics	Readings	Assignments
<b>D1: Audience Analysis Project</b>			
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Course Introduction</b>	<b>Read before class 01/09:</b> <a href="#">“Email”</a> (Gross et al) “Chapter 2: Audience Analysis” and “Chapter 13: Communicating Across Cultures” (Gross et al.)	Introductory email (200 words) due by 01/13 @ 11:59 PM  Fill out course intro survey
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Rhetorical and Audience Analysis</b>	<b>Read before class 01/14:</b> “2.2. Technical Communication, Action, and Community” and “2.3. Audience and Access” (Mussack)	Pick a technical article related to your field and find a 300-500 word passage to bring to class due by 01/16  Audience Transformation Assignment (300-500 words) due by 01/20 @ 11:59 PM
<b>D2: Document Design Project</b>			
<b>Week 3</b>	Information Literacy and Research	<b>Read/ watch before class 01/21:</b> “Chapter 4: Information Literacy” (Gross et al.)  <a href="#">14 Technical Writers on the Future of AI</a> (from TWHQ.com)  <a href="#">“Using AI Tools in Your Research”</a> (WLU)  60 Minutes: “Chat GPT and Large-Language Model Bias”	Start working on technical report draft #1

<b>Week 4</b>	UX, Plain Language, Grammar, and Accessibility	<b>No readings, see Week 5</b>	technical report draft #1 due for peer review in class on 02/04 @ 2pm
<b>Week 5</b>	Document Design	<b>Read before class 02/06:</b> <a href="#"><u>"4.2. Definitions and Descriptions" (Mussack and Fuglsdud)</u></a>	technical report final draft due by 2/10 @ 11:59 PM
<b>Week 6</b>	Writing Technical Instructions	<b>Read before class 02/13</b>  "Technical Definitions and Descriptions" (Arnett)  "4.3. Instructions" (Mussack)  "2.6: Instructions" (McMurrey and Race)  "Chapter 8: Creating and Integrating Graphics"	First draft of technical instructions due by 02/20 @ 2 PM for peer review in class  Final draft Instructional Document w/ Rationale due by 02/24 @ 11:59 PM
<b>D3: User-based Research Project</b>			
<b>Week 7</b>	UX Research and Testing	<b>Read before class 02/18</b>  "Chapter 6: Usability" (Race)  "Usability 101" (Nielsen)  "4.4. Proposals" (Mussack)	Completed website analysis sheet in assigned groups due by 02/25 @ end of class
<b>Week 8</b>	UX Research and Testing and User Personas	<b>Read before class 02/25</b>  Sample user persona excerpt from "Web for Everyone" (Horton)	Start brainstorming and drafting D3 proposal memo
<b>Week 9</b>	Recommendation Reports	<b>Read before class 03/04</b>  "The Recommendation Report" (from TC blog)	First draft UX research proposal memo (based on results from website analysis) due 03/04 @ 2 PM for peer review 3 user personas due for peer



			review by 03/06 @ 2PM Proposal Memo due by 03/07 @ 11:59 PM
<b>D4: Final Portfolio</b>			
<b>Week 10</b>	Peer Review and Independent Work	<b>No readings—last week of class :)</b>	Rough draft of recommendation report due by 03/11 @ 2PM for peer review  Final draft recommendation report due 03/20 @ 2PM
<b>Week 11</b>	No class!	<b>No readings- all coursework due by 03/23 @ 11:59 PM</b>  <b>Thanks for an awesome term :)</b>	Final portfolio, course reflection, and all late work due by 03/23 @11:59 PM