



INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. Tracy Bridgeford

Office: ASH 192D | ASH 192D

Office Hours: MW 3:00-4:00 | and by appointment

Contact: 402.554.3312 | tbridgeford@unomaha.edu

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T E C H N I C A L W R I T I N G

Syllabus

Course Description

This course emphasizes the interpretative and problem-solving processes associated with producing effective technical documents as a part of a community of practice. Students will study the practices, genres, audiences, and situations related to professional settings, the contexts in which writing occurs, the processes involved in individual and collaborative projects, and the production of technical documents. This course is required for the Technical Communication Graduate Certificate.

This course offers you a foundation in the writing practices associated with inventing, revising, and editing content, learning to control that content's placement, appearance, and style. It would probably be more accurate to say that you will develop your critical thinking skills concerning content. This foundation is part of a larger focus in the Technical Communication program on information design.

As technical communicators, our job is to create the content we will be shaping from Scott Russell Sanders's dystopian novel *Terrarium*. From this novel, we will create content for a globe-like enclosure for humanity called Oregon City, the central environment described in the novel. You can view the skeletal foundation at the course website: www.tracybridgeford.com/oregoncity/.

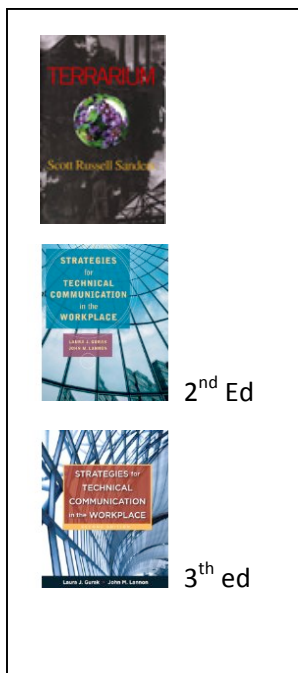
Course Books

Required

Sanders, Scott Russell. (1985). *Terrarium*. Bloomington & Indianapolis, ID: Indiana University Press. [available at bookstore]

Gurak, Laura J., & Lannon, John M. (2010). *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace*. (2nd or 3rd ed.) New York: Longman. [available at bookstore or used at amazon.com]

I will order this textbook for class, but feel free to purchase the previous edition of this textbook. You would end up paying \$89.00 plus whatever amount the bookstore adds to the publisher's price. I also think that the used copies through the bookstore are more expensive than simply finding your own used copy. So, I suggest that you purchase a used copy from amazon.com of the current (3th) or a previous edition (2nd). I've seen used



copies of the 2nd edition for as low as \$3.00-4.00. On the Schedule, I will list the current edition's chapter titles (as opposed to specific chapter numbers) to accommodate different version.

Course Policies

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Attendance and Participation

As in the professional workplace, much of the work we will be doing in this class depends on your interaction with others; therefore attendance is an essential component of your grade. If you must miss a class, please let me know ahead of time and be prepared to offer a plausible excuse. Missed classes do have a bearing on your grade: if you miss more than one class, you can expect a deduction in your grade. If you must miss a class, please find out from someone else in class what happened that day and the details of any assignments. I simply and honestly do not have the time or the energy to re-present what we've done in class—but if you ever want to discuss something that came up in class or look at versions of the work you are doing for class, I'll be more than happy to meet with you. **Keep in mind that a miss is still a miss, whether you have a good excuse or not. Students are required to attend ALL presentations.**

Instructor's Initial Expectations

You will complete many assignments as part of your development as technical writers. These assignments are not to be taken lightly. I will expect the level of competency generally associated with a 4000/8000-level writing course and therefore will assume that students are already well versed in the conventions of standard written English and responsible research. Written assignments should be scrupulously edited and virtually free from mistakes in grammar, spelling, and punctuation before they are turned in for a grade.

Assignments

Every class meeting will involve some type of assignment. Out-of-class assignments are due at the beginning of class, and in-class assignments are due at the end of class. All assignments are provided on this website. At the end of the semester, students will submit a semester portfolio that represents all work completed for this course with an end-of-the-semester self-assessment memo about what you learned in this class.

Determination of Grades

Because writing constitutes participation within a community of practice, two assessment methods will be used throughout the semester: participation evaluations and document assessment. Student participation in a community of practice established in the classroom will be evaluated using the participation criteria provided on the Performance Evaluation Worksheet. These criteria are designed from a communities of practice model that emphasizes member participation and identity building, and the negotiation of meaning.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

In addition to any sanctions the University may wish to impose about academic honesty and plagiarism, you will receive an F on the assignment for the first offense. For the second offence you will fail the course. Plagiarism is the presentation of writing or ideas as your own by either failing or forgetting to quote, failing to paraphrase properly, or failing to document properly.

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to using material from a journal or magazine article, excerpts from books, material from the web, ideas from you mother, the thoughts or work of another student, etc., without appropriate citation.

If you use the published, unpublished, or unwritten works or ideas of someone else, you must give proper credit to your source through correct documentation. Failure to do so, regardless of intent, will be considered plagiarism. If you plagiarize an assignment, you will receive an F for that assignment. A second offense, in addition to any sanctions the University may wish to impose, will result in your failing the course. Remember that any lectures given by the instructor are legally copyrighted material and should be treated as such.

Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are provided for students with registered disabilities. For more information contact Services for Students with disabilities in EAB 117 or 554-2872, TTY 554-3799.

About Grading

Everyone in this class works hard, and what I hear at the end of the term from almost everyone is "I put more time into this class than I have into any other class..."—with the implication that time alone should earn you an A.

You should expect to spend significant time outside of class working on assignments or collaborating with other students on assignments—especially revising your writing. But time alone does not make for excellent work; time alone does not alone make for work that gives you shivers of pride when you see it and gives others the sense that attentive thought went into the work.

As you work in this class, you need to be attentive to what you are doing. You need to be focused on this work and nothing else—while you are working on it. You need to look at your work continually and ask yourself if it gives you pleasure and pride, if it is an expression of all of which you are capable.

Completing assignments is all about demonstrating competence. To be competent is to be as knowledgeable and capable as everyone else is in a particular community. To demonstrate excellent work is to demonstrate competence beyond what everyone else can do. Students who do excellent work (A+ work) tend to engage with their work in the following ways:

Developing and sustaining lively engagement with the ideas and concepts of class

- You come to class prepared to discuss the readings (articles, textbook, or example documents), with questions and opinions and considerations of consequences.

- You actively seek feedback on your own work from others, before it is due.
- Your work is on time and complete.
- Your work shows that you think about and respond to the feedback you receive from me and from others.
- You discover new resources for helping you do the work of class and share them with your instructor and classmates.

Seeking to understand and applying the concepts and discussions of class

- You continually look around to see how people interact with the world (both natural and virtual) and other people, and ask yourself which interactions seem to support the kind of world in which you want to live—and then you work consciously at making your work encourage those kinds of interactions.
- You are continually attentive to how you and others learn and work to have the software you develop encourage others in their learning.

Taking personal responsibility for developing the technical skills you need in this field

- You recognize that the technologies of our time are changing rapidly (with consequences for the pocketbooks and attentiveness of all of us), and that there is therefore no way this class can be your only source for learning all the technical skills or critical abilities or all the computer applications you need or want.
- You therefore work consciously to develop a questioning and personal relation with the technologies you use in your work, being carefully attentive to what *you* need to learn and the approaches by which you learn best.
- You are continually on the lookout for designs that use the technology (including non-computer technologies) differently from how you do, so that you learn not only that your way is not the only way but you also learn to turn to others for support and assistance.
- You make use of the considerable technical resources of the class and the lab. You ask others for assistance, you look through the materials provided, and you come to office hours with questions about how to do something.
- You share that knowledge with others in your community of practice, whether it is the class itself as a community, or the various collaborative groups you may work with while taking Technical Communication courses.

Contribute to a final project that shows all of us—including yourself—that you are engaged, learning, and applying what we discuss in class.

- Your final project may not be as complete as you would like, but what it does have is the result of much experimentation on your part: you have tested out different possible interactions and approaches, and have found one (or more...) that seems to you to encourage people to learn what you intended and to learn it richly.
- Your final project is engaging: you have used experimentation and testing to redesign your project so that people *want* to use it and *do* learn from it.

- Your final project is designed fully to achieve your goals: its buttons and interactions and screens have the appropriate level of polish, cohesion, and color for your audience and intention; its structure and interactions support the overall intentions of the piece.