

Department of English, Foreign Languages and Journalism
MWSU, Division of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Spring 2012

[Schedule of assignments](#)

ETC 421: Worlds of Technical Communication
1:00 MWF 119 MUR

Professor: Dr. Kaye Adkins

Office: 222J Eder

Office Hours: 2:00-4:00 MWF, and by appointment

Email (my preferred method of communication): kadkins@missouriwestern.edu

Required texts and materials:

Alred, et. al. *Handbook of Technical Communication*. 8th ed. or newer

Perrin, *Pocket Guide to APA Style*, 3rd ed.

Peeples, *Professional Writing and Rhetoric: Readings from the Field*

Savage & Sullivan. *Writing A Professional Life: Stories of Technical Communicators On and Off the Job*.

Membership in the TechWR-L listserv. (For information about joining the list, see

<<http://www.techwr-l.com/techwr-l-list>>.) Only lurk, but in class we will be discussing issues that are raised on the listserv.

Recommended, especially for seniors:

Membership in Society for Technical Communication <www.stc.org>

Recommended for your professional library:

Johnson-Eilola, J. & Selber, S. (Eds.). (2004). *Central Works in Technical Communication*. New York:

Oxford UP. [Buy this. Ask for it as a graduation present. Read it during slow times on the job. It's a great overview of the important issues in the field.]

Hughes, M. A. & Hayhoe, G. F. (2008). *A Research Primer for Technical Communication:*

Methods, Exemplars, and Analyses. New York: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates. [Of interest if you are going to be serious about technical communication research. You may not need it now, but if you are asked to do research that will help solve a problem for your company, you should probably get a copy of this. This would be especially useful if you are planning on graduate work in technical communication.]

Useful on line resources:

TC Eserver <<http://tc.eserver.org/>> is a comprehensive database of articles, web sites, and more. We will be accessing some of the readings, especially those from *Intercom* and from the *STC Proceedings*, for class through this site.

Technical Communication on line (through IngentaConnect) <www.ingentaconnect.com> We will be accessing some of the readings for class through this site. You can access the articles from a campus computer. If you are an STC member, you can also access the articles from any computer.

Academic Superstore <www.academicsuperstore.com> is a good source for software and equipment like scanners and digital cameras. You will need to email them proof of your student status

Alibris <www.alibris.com> is an excellent source for used books, including out of print and rare books. Since you are buying from independent used-book sellers, you should check the information about how long it will take for the book to arrive. Some booksellers use "book rate" to mail your purchases, which can be very slow.

My page of useful links <<http://staff.missouriwestern.edu/users/kadkins/tclinks.html>>

About the Course: In this class, we will examine the rhetorical expectations of technical communication communities. During the semester, you will prepare to enter the discourse communities of professional technical communicators, of the international marketplace, and of business and industry.

Objectives: We will answer the following key questions:

- ▶ How do technical communicators create and share knowledge about the field?
- ▶ How can an understanding of rhetorical concerns help solve the problems writers encounter when creating user-centered verbal and visual texts?
- ▶ How do discourse communities (including technical communication) define themselves? How can we identify and define them?
- ▶ How do writers become accepted as members of “foreign” discourse communities (e.g. engineering, pharmacology)?
- ▶ How do writers adapt correspondence, documents, and Web sites for international audiences?
- ▶ How has technical communication developed as a professional field?

Assignments: Many of the readings will be available on line. Readings in journals may be accessed through MWSU’s library. Use the alphabetical list of periodicals to find the appropriate journal issue. Copies of some readings will be made available on the O drive.

There will be three major assignments.

The first will be a traditional *research paper* that will serve as background for the second assignment. Early in the semester, I will ask you to choose a technical communication issue or topic that you would like to learn more about.. Browse topics on TC-Eserver, past issues of STC publications and past issues of *Technical Communication Quarterly* to find topics that will interest you. I will also be able to make suggestions. This paper will take the form as a “review of the literature,” and can serve as the theoretical background for your second major assignment.

The second assignment will be a *rhetorical and textual analysis of a technical document or artifact (e.g. a Web site)* or a *(more traditional) analysis of an issue in technical communication (with your commentary)*. You will be able to check out a document from our TC document library or choose one of your own, with my approval. For example, you may wish to research usability, and apply that to a user’s guide, or you may wish to research visual rhetoric and apply that to a handbook or report. The results of this analysis will be turned in to me as a paper and submitted as a poster for Missouri Western’s Multi-Disciplinary Research Day and at the April meeting of the Kansas City chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. You will also present the results of your findings as a PowerPoint during the final exam period.

Finally, you will be asked to submit *a group of documents designed for international audiences*, possibly including correspondence, a set of instructions, and illustrations.

English majors with an emphasis in Technical Communication, Journalism, or Public Relations Writing are required to complete a graduation portfolio (EPR/ETC/JOU 401). I recommend that you consider the following assignment from this class for your portfolio:

- ▶ Formal research report

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Participation in class/homework	20%
Research paper (literature review) on tech. com. subject	20%
Research paper that combines review of literature with analysis of artifact(s)/analysis of issue	25%
Poster session presentation	10%
Collection of documents for international audiences	15%
PowerPoint presentation	10%

Communication: I welcome the opportunity to talk to students about reading or writing assignments during my office hours. You don't need an appointment. If you can't drop by during my office hours, please make an appointment.

Email is the official medium for communication at Missouri Western. You should check your *Missouri Western* email account at least every other day. This is how professors will contact you if they need to, and it is how you will receive information about campus events, scholarship and financial aid opportunities, and other important campus information. Some departments have student listservs to announce special events (like speakers or conference opportunities), scholarship deadlines, and the like. When you send an email to a professor or office on campus, you should send it from you Western email account, so that we know it is campus business.

A note on email etiquette: When you write an email to a professor, approach it as correspondence in a professional setting. This means including an informative subject line (at the very least, the course number), complete sentences, correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling, a salutation, and a signature. If you are including an attachment, you should tell the recipient what it is.

Absences: Absences are only "excused" if a student is representing the university in an official capacity (as an athlete, performer, etc.), and I have received notice from the on-campus sponsor of the event. In my classes, students are allowed three "sick days," or class periods that they can miss for any reason. Students missing four class periods will receive a "0" for their class participation grade. If you miss class, check with your classmates to find out what short assignments you missed. You can also find the *Schedule of Assignments* on line (see below). If you must be absent for a number of class sessions and you know in advance, please talk to me about it; otherwise, talk to me when you return. I understand that many of you have work and family responsibilities, but you should make success in your college courses your priority. Your education is your most important job, so you should arrange your schedule accordingly.

Disabilities: If you have been diagnosed with a disability or if you suspect that you may have a disability that has never been diagnosed and would like to find out what services may be available, please visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Eder Hall, room 203N or visit the ODS website at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/ds/> as soon as possible. This syllabus, as well as all other printed or electronic materials, can be made available in alternative/accessible formats if requested with sufficient prior notice. Missouri Western is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution. Please let me know during the first week of class about any physical handicap or learning disability if you need special help or accommodation in order to do your best work.

Schedule: I try to adapt each of my classes to the needs and interests of the students. This means that the Schedule of Assignments, <<http://staff.missouriwestern.edu/users/kadkins/TCWorlds>> and on the O drive, may change.