

ENG 314

TECHNICAL DOCUMENT DESIGN AND EDITING

Fall 2011

MWF 11:20-12:10, T112

Kevin Brock (kmbrock@ncsu.edu)

Office Hours: MW 1-3pm, Ricks Hall Addition

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Course Overview

This course will introduce you to the practice of designing, evaluating, and editing technical documents. We will read research on document design and solve actual design problems. The fundamental productive and analytic principle underlying this course is that effective documentation comes from understanding how people use information and how they expect documents to deliver it. We will look at how texts act as artifacts that communicate information (both visually and verbally) to readers engaged in a variety of communication related tasks. We will examine the interplay of content, design, and delivery – treating them as three joint considerations in the writing process. Writers must have a strong grasp of the content that goes into a document. Yet that content must also be designed to fit the ways that people will expect to use it. This course focuses on print documentation; whereas, the companion course ENG 317 (Designing Web Communication) focuses on online and interactive content.

Course Objectives

By the end of this semester, you will have learned how to:

- analyze the purposes, audiences, and conventions of written communication
- communicate effectively, using both graphical and discursive content;
- design and organize content to accommodate readers engaged in specific tasks;
- manage the writing process, including planning, drafting, revision, and editing;
- edit graphical and discursive content at a variety of levels that include work flow, format, style, organization, accuracy, style, grammar, and punctuation;
- use common layout and image editing software packages, and
- work as a team to manage and complete major writing assignments.

ENG 314 is designed for students planning careers as technical or professional writers.

This course serves to partially satisfy the GEP requirement for the Humanities.

Required Texts / Software

Text:

Kostelnick, C. & Roberts, D.D. (2010). *Designing visual language: Strategies for professional communicators*. 2nd ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon. (\$85 new)

Software (see note below these bullet points):

- Adobe InDesign CS5 (\$199.99 as part of the CS5.5 Design Standard package from the NCSU Bookstore, or \$349.99 for the CS5.5 Design Premium package)

OR

- Scribus (a free and open source alternative to InDesign) - [<http://www.scribus.net/canvas/Scribus>]
- Adobe Photoshop CS5 (\$199.99 as part of the CS5.5 Design Standard package from the NCSU Bookstore, or \$349.99 for the CS5.5 Design Premium package)

OR

- GIMP, the GNU Image Manipulation Program (a free and open source alternative to Photoshop) - [<http://www.gimp.org>]
- Microsoft Office 2003 (or newer) (Office 2010 is \$79.99 from the NCSU Bookstore)

OR

- OpenOffice - [<http://www.openoffice.org>]
(a free and open source alternatives to MS Office)

a FTP client, such as:

- FileZilla - [<http://filezilla.net/>] (free and available for multiple platforms)

OR

- WinSCP - [<http://winscp.net/eng/download.php>] (free, for Windows; installed on classroom/lab machines)

(you'll want an FTP client in order to access your network drive files off-campus)

Regarding Software:

The classroom in which we will meet has Adobe CS5 software, MS Office, and OpenOffice installed on its machines, as does the CHASS computer lab and the computers in the DH Hill Learning Commons. In addition, you can access InDesign through the Virtual Computing Lab [<http://vcl.ncsu.edu>] to use the software remotely (VCL uses a remote-access client you can download and install for free from NCSU). You do not have to purchase MS Office or InDesign (or use Scribus) for home use if you would prefer to make use of a machine at one of the listed locations.

Participation

I expect you to participate in class on a consistent basis. Please prepare for class by finishing all of the readings, exercises, and paper assignments. Often, we will use class time to workshop and revise sections of your major assignment. Drafted sections of your papers will only count for credit if you bring them to class with you. 10% of your grade comes from participation.

Attendance

You have three unexcused absences to use as needed. For each absence beyond the third, I will subtract ten points from your overall score. Six or more absences (excused or unexcused) is grounds for failing the course. See NCSU REG 02.20.3 (Attendance Regulations) for more.

Late Work

All assignment due dates are listed in the schedule. Unless otherwise arranged, I only accept papers in electronic form, appropriately exported to PDF. For late papers: 1 calendar day late = -1 letter grade; 2-3 calendar days late = -2 letter grades; more than 3 days late = credit only (50% of points). You must turn in all major assignments to pass this class. Occasionally, I will grant extensions on papers for legitimate reasons. Please email a request for an extension at least 24 hours prior to the assignment due date. You must propose an alternate due date.

Revision Policy

The final project for this course is a portfolio containing all of your work throughout the semester. In effect, the portfolio is your opportunity to revise and improve your grades. However, in addition, I will also allow each of you to choose one of your revised submissions to replace the original grade in my gradebook.

Grading

Your overall grade for the course is calculated based on the accumulation of up to 1000 total points from our major assignments and class participation:

Resume & Cover Letter: 100 pts		Newsletter: 100 pts
Brochure: 100 pts		Instructions: 100 pts
Usability Report: 100 pts		Portfolio: 200 pts
Final Presentation: 100 pts		Class Participation: 100 pts
Editing Reports - 100 (25 each x 4) pts		

Grade Distribution

A+: 98-100		A: 93-97		A-: 90-92
B+: 88-89		B: 83-87		B-: 80-82
C+: 78-79		C: 73-77		C-: 70-72
D+: 68-69		D: 63-67		D-: 60-62
F: 0-59				

Academic Integrity

The NCSU policy on the Student Code of Conduct (11.35.1) [<http://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-1>] provides an explanation of academic integrity and dishonesty. Student-teacher relationships are built on trust. You must trust that I have made appropriate decisions about the structure and content of the course, and I must trust that you have turned in assignments that are your own. Acts that violate this trust undermine the educational goals of this university.

All work in this course should be original (or remade according to rules set forth in class). Any material that you paraphrase or quote must be cited according to APA style [<http://www.docstyles.com/apacrib.htm>]. If you would like an explanation of the actions that constitute plagiarism, please review the student code of conduct [http://www.ncsu.edu/student_affairs/osc/code_conduct/].

Disability

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students [<http://www.ncsu.edu/dso/>] at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus box 7509, 515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation (REG02.20.1) [<http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-1>].

Course Evaluations

Online class evaluations will be available to complete during the last two weeks of class. You will receive an email message directing you to a website where you can login using your Unity ID. All evaluations are confidential; I will never know how you responded to any question, and you will never know the ratings for any particular instructors.

- Evaluation website: [<https://classeval.ncsu.edu>]
- Student help desk: classeval@ncsu.edu
- More information about ClassEval:
[<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/classeval/index.htm>]

Course Assignments

All writing assignments must adhere to the following format requirements. Any submission that does not adhere to these requirements will be returned ungraded. You will be responsible for correcting the formatting and re-submitting prior to the paper deadline.

Four assignments (Resume and Cover Letter, Newsletter, Brochure, and Usability Report) all require early draft completion so that you can exchange drafts with a classmate in order for each of you to complete the appropriate Editing Report.

Unless otherwise specified, all papers must:

- have 1" top, bottom, left, and right margins
- be double spaced
- have page numbers
- contain citations [<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>] for all quoted and paraphrased material
- be saved in an accepted file format (i.e. ".pdf" or possibly ".doc")
- be appropriately named: LastName_Paper_Draft#
(e.g. Brock_Resume_2.pdf ; Brock_EditingReport3_1.doc)

Resume and Cover Letter

This assignment serves as platform for implementing different basic design techniques. Normally, you would tailor your resume and cover letter to a specific audience and a specific job posting. You may do that for this assignment. Alternatively, you could write your resume for an internship, a scholarship, or any other legitimate purpose. Choose a job/internship listing from ePack [<http://www.ncsu.edu/career/students/jobsinternships/epack.php>].

The resume should be one page (or more, experience warranting) and it should contain all of the standard resume content, written in a style that is clear and concise and punctuated perfectly. The resume should also demonstrate your ability to use page design and other aspects of visual rhetoric to communicate your skills and to make it easier for readers to work with your resume.

The cover letter should be addressed to a specific person whenever possible. In the letter, you should first mention how you learned of the job and why you are interested in it. Then, talk about 1-2 key skills that you would bring to the job and discuss why those skills would be valuable. Then close by re-stating your interest and request an interview.

Your grade will be based on: audience- and task-appropriate content, effective visual and verbal design choices, clear and concise writing, flawless punctuation and grammar.

Submission file name format:

- Lastname_Resume
- Lastname_CoverLetter
- OR Lastname_ResumeAndCoverLetter (if combined into a single file)

Newsletter

It is time to exercise your critical judgment to improve on the work of others. Start by finding a newsletter that you believe could be improved in terms of its overall design and in terms of how it addresses its intended audience. Use Adobe InDesign (or Scribus) to redesign this newsletter, using all of the content from the original.

Along with the redesigned newsletter, include the original newsletter and a brief (1-2 page) report that summarizes and critically justifies what you redesigned. Rely on the Kostelnick & Roberts text to support your arguments. Be sure to talk about how your changes improve the newsletter from a rhetorical standpoint. For example, talk about why your redesign will make it easier for readers to use and understand.

Your grade will be based on: skilled use of InDesign, effectiveness and appropriateness of visual and verbal design choices, degree of improvement over the original, clear explanation of improvements, flawless punctuation and grammar, and consistency in stylistic applications.

Submission file name format: Lastname_Newsletter

Brochure

Imagine that you are the sole writers for a small company and that your company is about to release a new web application to the marketplace. They need two pieces of documentation from you. The first is a brochure that is written to address the target market and to offer a broad overview of product functions, features, and specifications. The idea here is to introduce a product but not provide detailed instructions about how to use it. The goal is marketing. Create a 3-fold brochure that introduces the product, describes its functions and features, and provides other relevant specifications (e.g., version, hardware and software requirements, etc.). This brochure should contain a mixture of words and images.

My recommendation is that you choose a simple software or web application. A listing of web applications can be found at [<http://www.webapplist.com/>]. Please choose an application that does not already have written instructions and that is complex enough to require instructions. All topics require my approval.

Your grade will be based on: skilled use of InDesign, effectiveness and appropriateness of visual and design choices, effective use of visual and verbal content for persuasive purposes, clear and concise wording and images, and flawless punctuation and grammar.

Submission file name format: Lastname_Lastname_Lastname_Brochure

Instructions

This paper is a companion piece to the brochure. Choose one application from among the team to proceed. Where the purpose of the brochure was to introduce an application to the target market, the purpose of the instructions is to provide detailed, how-to content regarding its features and functions. If you have chosen a fairly complicated web application, you may choose to document only a few of its features for this assignment (check with me first if you plan to take this route).

Your instructions should have a very clear and rigid structure to them that 1) organizes instructions by tasks and 2) breaks down tasks into goals and steps. Each of the tasks, goals, and steps should be written in parallel structure (e.g., all tasks are questions; all steps are imperatives). Each step should be accompanied by screenshots, pictures, or drawings to help illustrate what you are trying to convey.

Your grade will be based on: consistent and clearly communicated structure, use of visuals to supplement verbal content, audience- and task-appropriate selections of content, design that maximizes efficiency of use and minimizes opportunities for reader error, clear and concise writing, and flawless punctuation and grammar.

Submission file name format: Lastname_Lastname_Lastname_Instructions

Usability Report

For this assignment, you will plan and conduct a small-scale usability test of the web application you have been working with in the previous two assignments. In preparation for this usability testing, you will write up a set of performance goals for your documentation, a small set of tasks, benchmark performance standards, and a data logging sheet. The goal is to uncover any usability problems with the application and to report those findings to developers.

You have two audiences for the usability report. First is the CEO of the company, who will want a short, persuasive report on the usability findings, including a breakdown of the problems and their severity. The second audience is the designers of the web application who are making preparations for the next release of the application. You can report on user feedback about the contents, the interface, the colors, the functionality, etc.

Your grade will be based on: audience- and task-appropriate selections of visual and verbal content, persuasive and concise uses of visuals, effective display of quantitative information, clear and concise writing, and flawless punctuation and grammar.

Submission file name format: Lastname_Lastname_Lastname_UsabilityReport

Portfolio

The portfolio is your opportunity to revise all of the work that you have done in this class and to reflect on what you did in those assignments to communicate effectively via design. You must include a revision of at least four of the five assignments we have done to this point (i.e., at least four of: resume & cover letter, newsletter, brochure, instructions, or usability report.). If the assignment was a team assignment, you can revise as a team or individually. Each project that you include in the portfolio should be accompanied by a brief reflection (1-2 pages) that describes how you approached the assignment and why it was successful.

If you so choose, you can designate one of your revised submissions to be considered for a grade replacement (see “Revision Policy” above). When you have finished your portfolio, zip all of the files together and submit it via YouSendIt [<https://www.yousendit.com/>], Dropbox [<http://www.dropbox.com>], or a similar “large file” sharing service, with a link sent to my email address [kevin_brock@ncsu.edu].

Your grade will be based on: improvements over the original documents, overall range of design abilities demonstrated, evidence of effective editing, thorough and thoughtful reflections, and flawless punctuation and grammar.

Submission file name format: Lastname_Portfolio.zip

Final Presentation

During our final exam period, we will give our final presentations. For the final presentation, choose one piece from your portfolio and give a presentation about what you did in the assignment and why you believe those choices would be rhetorically effective. You will need to submit a copy of the presentation slideshow you created.

Your grade will be based on: clarity of presentation, delivery, and design of presentation slides.

Submission file name format: Lastname_FinalPres

Editing Report 1

For the first of four editing reports, you will edit another person/team's work (with a focus on basic copy editing) and write a brief report (1-2 double spaced pages) summarizing your findings and recommendations for changes on the part of the author(s).

Information about assignment submissions can be located on page 7.

Submission file name format: Lastname_EditingReport1

Editing Report 2

For the second of four editing reports, you will edit another person/team's work (with a focus on format and style) and write a brief report (1-2 double spaced pages) summarizing your findings and recommendations for changes on the part of the author(s).

Information about assignment submissions can be located on page 7.

Submission file name format: Lastname_EditingReport2

Editing Report 3

For the third of four editing reports, you will edit another person/team's work (with a focus on content and accuracy) and write a brief report (1-2 double spaced pages) summarizing your findings and recommendations for changes.

Information about assignment submissions can be located on page 7.

Submission file name format: Lastname_EditingReport3

Editing Report 4

For the final editing report, you will edit another person/team's work (with a focus on quantitative content) and write a brief report (1-2 double spaced pages) summarizing your findings and recommendations for changes on the part of the author(s).

Information about assignment submissions can be located on page 7.

Submission file name format: Lastname_EditingReport4

Course Calendar

Week 1

Wed. 8/17 - Introduction to Course

In Class: Overview of course policies and assignments

Fri. 8/19 - Fundamentals of Rhetoric

Reading: *Designing Visual Language (DVL)*, pp. 3-22

Week 2

Mon. 8/22 - Language of Design

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 22-41

In Class: Introduction to network file system & FTP access

Wed. 8/24 - Basic Copy Editing

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 46-72

Fri. 8/26 - Copy Editing Workshop

In Class: Copy Editing with word processors (MS Office, OpenOffice)

Week 3

Mon. 8/29 - Typography

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 109-126

Wed. 8/31 - Typography and Editing

Due: Draft of Resume & Cover Letter

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 127-143

Fri. 9/2 - Working with Text Fields

Due: Editing Report 1

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 149-170

Week 4

Mon. 9/5 - NO CLASS (Labor Day)

Wed. 9/7 - Working with Text Fields

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 171-190

Fri. 9/9 - Newsletters

Due: Resume and Cover Letter

Reading: Carliner, S. (2000). Physical, cognitive, and affective: A three-part framework for information design. *Technical Communication*, 47(4), 561-576. [available online through NCSU Libraries]

Week 5

Mon. 9/12 - InDesign Newsletter Workshop

Reading: InDesign help files (Environment, Layout, Making Pages)

Wed. 9/14 - InDesign Newsletter Workshop

Reading: InDesign help files (Paragraph Settings, Managing Text)

Fri. 9/16 - InDesign Newsletter Workshop

Reading: InDesign help files (Page Panel, Styles, Page Design)

Week 6

Mon. 9/19 - Exploring Visual Analysis

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 78-100

Wed. 9/21 - Levels of Edit

Reading:

Van Buren, R. & Buehler, M.F. (1980). *The levels of edit*. 2nd ed. Pasadena, CA: Jet Propulsion Laboratory. [available online via Internet Archive]

Prono, J., DeLanoy, M., Deupree, R., Skiby, J., & Thompson, B. (1998). *Developing new levels of edit*. Proceedings of the 45th Annual STC Conference. Los Alamos, NM: Los Alamos National Laboratory. [available online via Energy Citations Database]

Fri. 9/23 - Drafting and Editing

Due: Draft of Newsletter

Week 7

Mon. 9/26 - Pictures and Graphic Elements

Due: Editing Report 2

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 293-327

Wed. 9/28 - Pictures and Graphic Elements Workshop

In Class: Discussion of raster vs. vector graphics & introduction to Photoshop

Fri. 9/30 - Task Analysis

Due: Newsletter

In Class: Task Analysis & flowcharting

Week 8

Mon. 10/3 - Nonlinear Components

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 201-217

In Class: Brochure workshop

Wed. 10/5 - Nonlinear Components

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 218-235

Fri. 10/7 - NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Week 9

Mon. 10/10 - Drafting and Editing

In Class: Brochure drafting

Wed. 10/12 - Drafting and Editing

In Class: Brochure drafting

Fri. 10/14 - E-Books and Electronic Formats

Due: Draft of Brochure

Week 10

Mon. 10/17 - E-Books and Electronic Formats

Due: Editing Report 3

In Class: Examining epub and XML

Wed. 10/19 - E-Books and Electronic Formats

In Class: Examining epub and XML

Fri. 10/21 - Supra-Level Elements

Due: Brochure

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 337-357

Week 11

Mon. 10/24 - Supra-Level Elements

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 357-376

In Class: Instructions workshop

Wed. 10/26 - Data Displays

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 245-266

Fri. 10/28 - Data Displays

Reading: *DVL*, pp. 266-284, color inserts 1-18

Week 12

Mon. 10/31 - Drafting and Editing

In Class: Instructions drafting

Wed. 11/2 - Drafting and Editing

In Class: Instructions drafting

Fri. 11/4 - Usability Test Design

Due: Instructions

Week 13

Mon. 11/7 - Interpreting Usability Test Data

In Class: Exploring types of usability tests

Wed. 11/9 - Writing about Data

In Class: Examining usability reports

Fri. 11/11 - Usability Testing

In Class: Usability test design & testing

Week 14

Mon. 11/14 - Usability Testing

In Class: Usability testing

Wed. 11/16 - Drafting and Editing

In Class: Usability testing & report drafting

Fri. 11/18 - No Class (you will need to arrange ahead of time for a classmate with whom to swap report drafts)

Due: Draft of Usability Report

Week 15

Mon. 11/21 - Drafting and Editing

Due: Editing Report 4

Wed. 11/23 - NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

Fri. 11/25 - NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 16

Mon. 11/28 - Drafting and Editing

In Class: Usability testing & report drafting

Wed. 11/30 - Designing Presentations

Due: Usability Report

In Class: Designing & drafting presentation materials

Fri. 12/2 - Designing Presentations

In Class: Designing & drafting presentation materials

Week 17 (Exams)

Fri. 12/9 - Presentation Period

Meeting: 8:00am - 11:00am

Due: Portfolio

In Class: Final Presentations