



CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM 2000-2001

**NON-GENERAL EDUCATION PROCESS A**

**\*DEADLINES:** Deadline dates for 2000/2001 submissions: Regular proposals: October 20, 2000 to be implemented in Fall 2001; Short-Term proposals: December 8, 2000 to be implemented in Fall, 2001; Regular proposals February 16, 2001 to be implemented in Spring, 2002; March 23, 2000 for short-term courses to be implemented in Spring 2002.

SCC 00-01-565

**PROPOSAL TITLE:** *Technical Communication Techniques writing*

**SPONSOR(S):** *Dr. Frances S. Johnson*

**DEPARTMENT:** *College Writing*

**COLLEGE:** *Communication*

IF LAS CHECK ONE:  History/Humanities  Math/Sciences  Social/Behavioral Sciences

Check one:  Undergraduate  Graduate

THE ATTACHED **NON-GEN-ED** PROPOSAL IS BEST DESCRIBED BY THE ITEM(S) CHECKED.

New non-gen-ed course

Short-term non-gen-ed course

Minor curricular changes (fewer than three) to:

- existing non-gen-ed course
- non-gen-ed degree requirements
- major
- minor, specialization, concentration, track, certificate program

**DEPARTMENT**  
(Signature indicates approval)

*David R. Bell*      *10/19/00*

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Dept. Curriculum Chair / Date

*Janice K. Kelman*      *10/19/00*

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Dept. Chairperson / Date

**ACADEMIC DEAN**

Approved       Not Approved       Comments:

Dean's Signature/Date *[Signature]* *10/19/00*

**COLLEGE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**

Date of open hearing (if necessary) \_\_\_\_\_ Approved 1/14/00 Not Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: change title, add to the committee

Signature of College Chair/Date: [Signature]

**UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**

Date Received/Processed 2/26/00

Comments:

Curriculum Chair Signature [Signature]

Date Announced At Senate 2-26-00

**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT/PROVOST**

Approved  Not Approved \_\_\_\_\_ If no, reasons are as follows:

Student Credit Hours \_\_\_\_\_ Faculty Load Hours \_\_\_\_\_ Equalized Credit Hours \_\_\_\_\_

Official Copy & Approval Sheet Filed (Date): \_\_\_\_\_ Executive VP/Provost Signature/Date [Signature] 3/5/00

**REGISTRAR**

Date Approved Course Description Received [Signature]

Hegis Taxonomy & Course Number Assigned 0121305

Registrar Signature/Date [Signature]

**NOTIFICATION FORWARD**

\_\_\_\_\_ Senate Curriculum Committee Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_ Academic Dean(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Department Chairpersons

\_\_\_\_\_ Registrar

\_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor(s)

## Course Proposal

### 1. Details:

- a) Course Title: Technical Writing
- b) Sponsor: Dr. Frances Swigon Johnson  
Department of College Writing  
College of Communication
- c) Credit Hours: 3 credit hours
- d) Course level: Graduate
- e) Curricular Effect: Required course for students enrolled in the proposed Managerial Communication track in Master of Arts in Writing. Open to graduate students throughout the University.
- f) Prerequisites: None.
- g) Suggested Time/  
Scale in Implementation: Fall 2001/Spring 2002
- h) Resources: Teaching faculty are on staff consistent with the College of Communication budget. New library acquisitions will be required over time.

### 2. Rationale and Course Description:

The proposed course is part of the Master of Arts in Writing degree developed by the Department of College Writing and the Department of Journalism and Creative Writing. It would be a required course for students enrolled in the proposed Managerial Communication track and an elective course for others in the M.A. program. The course could also be offered as an elective for students enrolled in graduate programs across campus and may be of particular interest to students enrolled in the College of Business and the College of Engineering. Local professionals working in engineering, medicine, public relations, human resources, and state and local government might also find this course of interest.

Technical writing is now and has been one of the most rapidly expanding courses in Departments of English and Writing, with some courses experiencing an 80% growth rate (Enos, "Rhetoric and the Discourse of Technology.")<sup>6</sup>. Despite the popularity of these courses, many of them do not go beyond skill-based instruction. A quick glance at many of the textbooks used to teach technical writing illustrates this philosophy. Only two books on the market today, Kristen Woolever's Writing for the Technical Professions and Mary Lay's and Cynthia Selfe's Technical Communication, establish any overt connection to rhetorical theory.

However, a more liberal arts based approach to teaching technical communication can be found in an examination of its rhetoric. Quintilian, the Roman rhetorician, suggests that rhetoric

<sup>6</sup> Worlds of Writing, Caroline Matalene, Ed. NY: Random, 1989.

holds a “usefulness. . .in creating connections and interrelationships among the theoretical, the productive, and the practical” (Enos, 1989). Since most technical writing actively engages the theoretical, the productive, and the practical (as does almost all persuasive discourse), a rhetorical framework seems best suited to this course. Consequently, this course would do more than highlight this connection: rhetoric would be the foundation for it. Importantly, deemphasizing this common skill-based approach would allow the writing class to become a discourse community “where students would see technical language in a broader context” (Enos, 1989).

Furthermore, the study of formats and the replication of static models has been under question by technical communication theorists, as most assert that this approach does not aid the writer’s understanding of the rhetorical situation and corporate necessities which often control the production of discourse. While some modern research informing technical communication has been based on analysis of corporate documents and study of discourse communities, current technical communication research is beginning to question this assumption as well. Woolever, Redish, Bell and others indicate that an analysis of the discourse community is limited, as discourse communities are not static and the principles that form each community will vary (1987, 1989).

To address these questions and indications in the research, this course will study the rhetorical principles that inform communication and have served as its basis since the time of the Ancients. An understanding of the rhetorical principles which underscore the standard formats, create discourse communities, and effect document design is essential for skilled and efficient communication in the twenty-first century. As such, this course will focus the rhetorical principles of communication; a recognition of the ways in which different discourse communities invent, arrange, and style documents; and an understanding of the impact of technology and the global marketplace have on technical writing.

Avenues for practical application will be provided through writing and analysis of technical documents, theoretical readings, class discussion utilizing a case study methodology, thoughtful journal recollection, and hands-on computer use. The course content will include the following:

- An understanding of the key differences between academic and non-academic writing
- An understanding of fundamental rhetorical principles, such as the rhetorical stance or situation; the communication triangle; and the roles author, audience, and text play in understanding
- An understanding of the intersections of persuasive discourse and global corporate communications
- An awareness of the strengths, weaknesses, and appropriate uses of common technical writing documents and styles
- An awareness of the uses and effects of the rhetoric of technology on managerial communications
- An awareness of the effect of the global marketplace on managerial communications
- An understanding of the role of precise editing and mechanical correctness in aiding understanding
- An understanding of the role of the importance of document design in aiding understanding
- An awareness of the necessity for accurate documentation of information
- An awareness of product liability issues
- An awareness of ethical issues

In sum, this course will provide novice and experienced professionals with practical and theoretical frameworks from which writers will be able to better understand the importance of technical communication in a global corporate setting. Through learning basic principles of technical communication, as well as developing a practical understanding of them in essential frameworks, students can develop a firmer foundation for understanding the complexities that

inform technical prose. As potential teachers of technical discourse, they will be better able to implement theoretically grounded pedagogies. They will also be able to write theory-based course material, thereby increasing their students opportunities for success. They will be able to better understand and investigate the discourse practices of world-wide corporate communities and learn how to apply this information as writers and researchers as well. They will, in short, be able to demonstrate, practice, and produce technical communication in a variety of formats, styles, according to the demands of the rhetorical situation.

Importantly, they will be able to place their understandings of technical prose into a meaningful framework for practical applications, fostering their life-long learning goals. Our students then will possess an advantage over their peers in their careers, as Rowan graduates will be better able to demonstrate to local agencies, corporate workplaces, and regional conferences their knowledge and application of technical communication principles.

While the course is designed primarily for M.A. in Writing graduate students, the course may also be beneficial for other graduate students in the Colleges of Communication, Engineering, Business, Education, and Liberal Arts and Sciences.

- 3. Essence of the Course:** This course presents a number of learning outcomes:
- (i) To expose students to the current discussions and issues in technical writing.
  - (ii) To provide students with expanded perspectives of technical writing and its applications.
  - (iii) To provide students with practical experience in producing technical writing
  - (iv) To assist students in developing their own ethical frameworks in corporate settings and technical research.
  - (v) To assist students in placing technical communication within the larger frameworks of rhetorical theory, composition studies, journalism, creative writing, and research.
  - (vi) To assist students in understanding the connections between technical communication theory and technical communication formats.
  - (vii) To introduce common technical communication styles.
  - (viii) To introduce the students to the importance of basic document design.
  - (ix) To introduce students to basic principles of editing and readability.
  - (x) To provide an understanding of the ways in which technology and the global market base has affected technical writing.

**b) Topical Outline:**

The topical outline and content of the course will include:

1. Introduction and Course Overview. An introduction to technical writing,, rhetorical theory, and their applications to writers, researchers, and teachers. An analysis of the individual students' strengths and weaknesses as technical communicators.
2. Comparing Worlds. An examination of the different standards in discourse communities, including an introduction to the global marketplace and cultural difference. An analysis of the composing processes of different discourse communities. Writing in collaborative teams. Strategies to manage difference.
3. Styles Common to Technical Communication. A critical overview of the basic formats and styles, such as analytical reports, trip reports, investigative reports, proposals, feasibility studies, manuals and their appropriate ethical uses.
4. Deep Analysis of Common Formats and the Role of Ethics. An in-depth analysis of technical

communication theory as applied to specific formats and models. The ethics of technical communication. Case study examples.

5. Introduction to Document Design. Basic principles of document design, including fonts, color, and integration of text and graphic material, including practical application of techniques. Students will work in the computer labs using PageMaker, Freehand, MS Word, and other available software to apply graphic design principles. Students will also perform a rhetorical and semiotic analysis of specific document designs.

6. Research Methodologies. An overview of research methods common to technical discourse (Government Documents, Corporate and/or Annual Reports, Technical Press Releases, etc.) and practical application of same. On-line and print research methodologies. The strengths and weaknesses of WWW research.

9. Editing and Liability Issues. A discussion and analysis of assorted readability guidelines, including the Fog Index, Dragg and Gong's Verbal and Visual Hierarchy, Janice Redish's audience studies from the Institute of Document Design. Discussion of key issues in product liability law (negligence, breach of warranty, and strict liability in tort), product law. Practical application of same

10. Global Communication and the WWW. Issues central to the global marketplace including cross cultural communication. An in-depth analysis and discussion of cultural understandings and difference as they effect the marketplace. The effect of technology on technical communications. Writing for an on-line age.

**c) Assignments: Technical Writing Assignments (Deliverables):**

To demonstrate their proficiency and mastery of the course material, students will produce a series of technical communication deliverables:

THREE Short Formal and Informal Written Projects (2-4 pages each)

Students will be required to produce three short technical documents, such as graphics and charts, technical descriptions, product specifications, or technical press releases. Proper documentation and research will be expected.

ONE Long Formal Written Projects (15-20-pages)

Students will be required to produce one longer technical documents, such as a manual, a feasibility report, or a proposal. Proper documentation and research will be expected.

ONE Oral Seminar Report (20 minutes )

Students will be required to make one seminar report discussing an area of technical communication. Handouts and a bibliography are expected.

ONE Reflective Theory-Based Journal

Students will be required to maintain a reflective theory-based journal, including (but not limited to) responses to the course readings, class discussions, and outside readings

Class Participation

Because of the case study methodology employed in this class, students will be expected to actively participate in class discussion.

Other:

Students may also be required to participate in a course bulletin board discussion group or a list serve.

Students may also be required to create web pages based on their own interest within the course readings.

## **Sample Week-by-Week Overview of the Course**

Week 1: Introduction and Course Overview. An introduction to technical writing, rhetorical theory, and their applications to writers, researchers, and teachers. An analysis of the individual students' strengths and weaknesses as technical communicators. Readings from Hardy, Matalene, Burnam and Carliner. Reflective journals, seminar report topics assigned, and student writing.

Week 2: Comparing Worlds. An examination of the different standards in discourse communities, including an introduction to issues of cultural difference. An analysis of the composing processes of different discourse communities. Strategies to manage these differences. Collaborative writing in cross-functional and document development teams. Readings from Matalene, O'Dell and Goswami. Seminar reports begin.

Weeks 3 and 4: Styles Common to Technical Writing. A critical overview of the basic formats and styles, such as analytical reports, trip reports, investigative reports, proposals, feasibility studies, manuals.

Weeks 5 and 6: Deep Analysis of Common Formats. An in-depth analysis of technical communication theory as applied to specific formats and models. Readings from Matalene, Halloran, Enos, O'Dell and others. Seminar reports and reflective journals. Student writing.

Week 7: The Role of Ethics in Technical Writing. Case study examples. Seminar reports. Reflective journals. Student writing.

Weeks 8 and 9 : Introduction to Document Design. Basic principles of document design, including fonts, color, and integration of text and graphic material, including practical application of techniques. Students will work in the computer labs using PageMaker, Freehand, MS Word, and other available software to apply graphic design principles. Students will also perform a rhetorical and semiotic analysis of specific document designs.

Weeks 10 and 11: Research Methodologies. An overview of research methods common to technical discourse (Government Documents, Corporate and/or Annual Reports, Technical Press Releases, etc.) and practical application of same. The strengths and weaknesses of WWW research. On-line and print research methodologies. Case study examples. Seminar reports. Student writing.

Weeks 12 and 13: Editing and Liability Issues. A discussion and analysis of assorted readability

guidelines, including the Fog Index, Dragga and Gong's Verbal and Visual Hierarchy, Janice Redish's audience studies from the Institute of Document Design. Discussion of key issues in product liability law (negligence, breach of warranty, and strict liability in tort), product law. Practical application of same. Case study examples. Seminar reports. Student writing.

#### Weeks 14 and 15

Global Communication and the WWW. Issues central to the global marketplace including cross cultural communication. An in-depth analysis and discussion of cultural understandings and difference as they effect the marketplace. The effect of technology on technical communications. Writing for an on-line age Case study examples. Seminar reports and writer's logs. Student writing.

#### c) Evaluation and Grading Procedures: \*\*

Final course grade will be determined based on the quality of the students assignments throughout the entire term. The assignments will include (but are not limited to) oral reports, short and long papers, and class participation. A professional portfolio is also an option.

\*\*The options in evaluations of students' work is left to the discretion of the instructor teaching the class. The goal of each assignment is for students to demonstrate understanding of the content of the material being presented in the seminar.

#### d) Course Evaluation:

The proposed course will be evaluated using the College of Communication student evaluation forms and critical review by the Department of College Writing and the Department of Journalism and Creative Writing. Student evaluation forms will assess effectiveness of content and content delivery, assignments, and texts. The critical review by the faculty will determine whether or not the course meets the goals outlined or whether additional courses are needed. Critical review by the department faculty can be met in several ways: classroom observation, syllabus review, and faculty meetings to assess progress.

### **4. Results of Consultations:**

#### a) Consulted Departments and Colleges: forthcoming

- ☑ The Department of College Writing Department
- ☑ The Department of Journalism and Creative Writing
- ☑ The Department of Communication Studies
- ☑ The Department of English
- ☑ The College of Engineering
- ☑ The College of Business
- ☑ The Graduate School

#### b) Consultant and Consultant Written Statements: forthcoming

## 5. Additional Supporting Information


The most likely text for this class will be a collection of essays and short readers found in the Baywood Press Technical Communication Series or the Allyn and Bacon Technical Communication Series. Course readings would be supplemented by a recommended reading list provided by the instructor. This list would include numerous articles in technical communication, rhetorical and communication theory, among others. It is also possible that articles selected by the instructor will be reproduced in a supplement and sold to students through the Rowan University Bookstore. Books and articles will also be put on reserve at the Rowan Library. Because of limited library holdings, students would be advised to use inter-library loan services. Possible primary texts that could serve as a primary or supplemental references for this course:

- Anderson, Paul V. R. John Brockman, and Carolyn Miller. New Essays in Technical Communication, eds. Farmingdale: Baywood Press, 1983.
- Barnum, Carol and Saul Carliner. Techniques for Technical Communicators. NYC: Macmillan, 1993.
- Bazerman, Charles. "Scientific Writing As a Social Act." Anderson et al. 156-84.
- Bolter, Jay David. Writing Space. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991.
- Covino, William and David Jolliffe. Rhetoric: Concepts, Definitions, and Boundaries. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995.
- Dobrin, David. "What's Technical About Technical Writing?" Anderson et al, 227-49.
- Faigley, Lester. "Nonacademic Writing: The Social Perspective." O'Dell and Goswami, 231-48.
- Geertz, Clifford. The Interpretation of Culture. Selected Essays. New York: Basic, 1973.
- Gerrard, Lisa, ed. Writing at the Century's End: Theory and Practice in Computers and Writing. New York: Random, 1986.
- Gere, Anne Ruggles. Writing Groups: History, Theory and Implications. Carbondale:SIUP, 1987.
- Geisler, Cheryl. Academic Literacy and the Nature of Expertise. Hillsdale, NJ:Earlbaum, 1994.
- Gross, Alan. The Rhetoric of Science. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996.
- Graubard, Stephen, Ed. Literacy: an Overview. New York: The Noonday Press, 1991.
- Harty, Kevin. Strategies for Business and Technical Writing. 4E. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.
- Heim, Michael. Electric Language. New Haven: Yale UP, 1987.
- Hillocks, George. Research on Written Composition. Urbana: ERIC and NCTE, 1986.
- Holdstein, Deborah and Cynthia Selfe. Computers and Writing: Theory, Research, and Practice. New York: MLA, 1990.
- Hult, Christine. Researching and Writing in the Sciences and Technology. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996.

- Jones, Dan. Technical Writing Style. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.
- Kinneavy, James. The Aims of Discourse. New York: Norton, 1971.
- Kostelnick, Charles and David Roberts. Designing Visual Language. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.
- Kuhn, Thomas. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. 2E. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Kynell, Theresa and Wendy Stone. Scenarios for Technical Communication. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996.
- Lay, Mary, et al. Technical Communication. Chicago: Irwin, 1995.
- Matalene, Carolyn, Ed. Worlds of Writing: Teaching and Learning in Discourse Communities of Work. New York: Random, 1989.
- O'Dell, Lee and Dixie Goswami. Writing in Nonacademic Settings. New York: Guilford, 1987.
- Ong, Walter J. Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word. London: Methuen, 1982.
- Porter, James. "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community." Rhetoric Review (1896):34-27.
- Simons, Herbert W. Ed. Rhetoric and the Human Sciences. London: Sage Press, 1989.
- Truman, Myron, Ed. Literacy On line. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh Press, 1992.
- Woolever, Kristen. Writing for the Technical Professions. 2E. New York: Longman, 2000

## **6. Course Description: Technical Writing**

Technical writing introduces students to the rhetorical, ethical, and professional issues associated with technical communication. It focuses on the rhetorical principles behind standard formats and styles of technical documents. It explores topics such as, document design; ethics (including issues of product liability); editing, style, and mechanical correctness; the role of technology; and the impact of the global marketplace.

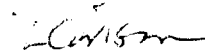
DATE: November 29, 2000  
TO: College of Communication Curriculum Committee  
FROM: Dr. Frances S. Johnson, College Writing 

Please note that the title of the TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (new Graduate Course) SCC#00-01-206 has been changed to reflect the concerns of the Communication Studies Department.

The new title is TECHNICAL WRITING. The course itself remains unchanged.

November 16, 2000

To: Dr. Frances Johnson

From: Dr. Cindy Corison, Chair Communication Studies 

Re: Proposed *Technical Communication* Graduate Course

The proposed course in Technical Communication seems appropriate for graduate students in the Master of Arts in Writing program, particularly those enrolled in the Corporate Communication track. The course would undoubtedly be useful for graduate students in business and engineering, as well. A rhetorical approach to the course also seems warranted, given that the technical writing does not exist in a vacuum, but is in response to numerous rhetorical situations. Attention to rhetorical theory and corporate communication does overlap with areas in the Communication Studies department, most notably courses in Rhetorical Criticism, Rhetorical Theory, and Organizational Communication. However, it is clear from the proposal that the course would focus primarily on technical writing (the composing process, examining various texts, such as trip reports, proposals, etc.). Many in the communication disciplines understand that technical communication can refer to both written *and* oral discourse. The title "Technical Communication" thus suggests a broader focus for the course than the actual content suggested in the proposal. The Communication Studies department would suggest that a slightly narrower title, perhaps "Technical Writing" or "Technical Writing and Communication" would be more precise, while not restricting the instructor from analyzing other communicative practices.

Date: Nov. 22, 2000

To: Dr. Frances Johnson

From: Carl Hausman 

Re: Technical Communication Course Proposal

I find the proposal to be complete, well-thought-out, and a valuable addition to our curriculum in the graduate program. I am particularly impressed by the attention to ethical issues and document design.

You have my complete support.

Janice Rowan  
Chair, College Writing  
College of Communication  
Rowan University

November 25, 2000

Dr. Frances Johnson  
College Writing Department  
Rowan University

Dear Dr. Johnson:

I have read your proposal for a graduate course in Technical Communication (Writing) with great interest. It complements another proposal for Managerial Communication which our Department is putting forward and will fill a well defined need in our Business Writing track within the M.A. in Writing.

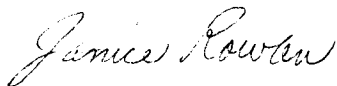
For several years, members of our Department have discussed the business community's interest in advanced instruction in communication skills, as demonstrated in the results of our surveys of potential students. There is an audience for the kind of course you propose.

The course emphasis on rhetorical theory, the combination of theoretical and practical, the instruction in document design—as well as the concern for ethics—all make this a very desirable course for business communicators and other writers.

I have no doubt that, if approved, Technical Communication, packaged with some and related courses, will be among the most popular certificates of graduate student in the master's program.

I extend my wholehearted support to this proposal.

Sincerely,



Janice Rowan



*Dean of The Graduate School*

To: Dr. Frances Johnson

From: Dr. Marion Rilling *M. R.*

Subject: Support for the new proposed course: Technical Communication

Date: November 14, 2000

I am delighted that you are continuing to provide new course options for students enrolling in the M.A. in Writing program. This proposed new course, Technical Communication, reflects a commitment to ensuring that our students have access to courses and learning that is timely and scholarly. My review of this course proposal clearly indicates that the topics to be covered, the focus of class work, and the assignments and expectations are at an advanced level and representative of graduate study. I believe there will be interest for this course from students in a variety of majors and from practicing professionals in many fields.

I would like to indicate full support for this proposed new course.

MR/klh

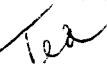
c: A. Libro  
D. Penrod



*College of Business  
Office of the Dean*

November 14, 2000

To: Frances S. Johnson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of College Writing

From: Edward J. Schoen   
Dean, College of Business

Subject: Proposed Graduate Course Entitled "Technical Communications"

I have received your request for a letter of support and consultation regarding the proposed graduate course entitled "Technical Communications," which is co-sponsored by the College Writing Department and the Department of Journalism and Creative Writing.

Because the MBA program offered by the College of Business recognizes communication skills as one of the areas it seeks to emphasize, Technical Communications can serve as a valuable elective course for MBA students.

I will be happy to submit the course to the MBA Advisory Curriculum Committee within the College of Business to ascertain their recommendation on recognizing Technical Communications as an officially sanctioned MBA program elective.

Should you have any questions regarding this matter or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.