

Fall 2016
ENGL 3365: Professional Report Writing
Syllabus

3365-009 (13680): 2 – 3:20 pm, ENGPIL 353
3365-010 (32527): 3:30 – 4:50 pm, ENGPIL 353
Website: report3365.wordpress.com
Get Dropbox: bit.ly/dropbox3365

Dr. Kendall Gerdes
Email: kendall.gerdes@ttu.edu
Office: ENGPIL 474
Office hours: W 2-4 pm, TTh 1-2 pm, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Professional Report Writing encompasses a variety of genres and styles: so how do you know which conventions to adopt, and when? To answer this question, you have to be able to identify your audience, imagine their expectations, and tailor your writing projects to their needs. This course introduces students to professional report writing from a rhetorical perspective. Students will learn to compose writing projects that center the needs of their intended audiences, including experts, professionals, laypeople, and mixed audiences. Students will become conversant with select digital media tools that augment their rhetorical goals.

READINGS

Markel, Mike. *Practical Strategies for Technical Communication*. 2nd edition (2016).

ACCESSIBILITY

University policy says: “Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as possible to make necessary arrangements. Students must present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor’s office hours. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact Student Disability Services office in 335 West Hall or call 806-742-2405.” (OP 10.08)

I’d like to add: Every student learns differently. If you are facing a barrier to access in my class, I invite you to talk with me about it by email or in my office hours. Additionally, the university offers many kinds of support services that are available to all students:

- **Student Disability Services** is online at <http://depts.ttu.edu/sds>, on Twitter @TTUSDS, and on Facebook. You can also reach them at 806-742-2405. They are located at 335 West Hall. They handle requests for

accommodations. Concerns about violations should go to the Associate Vice Provost for Student Affairs.

- **Military and Veterans Programs** is online at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/diversity/mvp/index.php>, on Twitter @TTUMVP, and on Facebook. They are located at Drane Hall Room 147.
- **Cross-Cultural Academic Advancement Center** hosts a variety of cultural events. They are online at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/diversity/ccaac/index.php>, on Twitter @TTU_CCAAC, and on Facebook. They are located in 101 Doak Hall.
- **Risk Intervention & Safety Education, or RISE**, is online at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/rise/>, on Twitter @TTURISE, and on Facebook. They are located in Student Wellness Center 204.
- **Student Counseling Center** offers **free** counseling at the walk-in clinic (M-F 12:30-3:30 pm). They are located in the Student Wellness Center 201. They are online at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/>.
- Texas Tech has a free, confidential **Crisis Helpline** available 24/7/365: 806-742-5555.
- **Student Health Services** is online at <https://www.ttuhsc.edu/studenthealth/>. Call 806-743-2848 for appointments.
- **University Writing Center** is located in ENGPIL 175. They are online at <http://uwc.ttu.edu/>, and you can get tutoring online when you login with your eRaider ID.

EXPECTATIONS

I expect each of you to come to class prepared, having read any assigned readings and completed any assignments that are due. Since grades in this class depend on the basic theory that you are responsible for your own education, I expect you to anticipate when you will need help, ask for help when you need it, and ask early enough for help to be useful to you.

ATTENDANCE

You are allowed a maximum of 4 absences. There is no difference between "excused" or "unexcused" absences, meaning you need never prove to me you saw a doctor, or whatever. (In fact, please stay home if you are feeling sick!) You may use your 4 absences however you see fit. **However**, if you miss 5+ classes, you will fail. You are responsible for making up all missed class activities.

TARDINESS

If you know you will be late, please let me know why in advance of class. If you are 15+ minutes late, you'll be docked 1/2 an absence (that is, two tardies count as one absence).

DISTRACTIONS

Turn off your phones when you walk in the door. Students with family responsibilities should discuss any communication needs with me in office hours. When we use

computers during class, do not check your email, twitter, instagram, snapchat etc. unless I asked you to do so.

**** If I see you fooling around, texting, or otherwise tuning out, I will mark you absent. ****

LATE WORK

If think you need a deadline extended, you must propose and *get me to agree* to an alternative deadline at least 24 hours in advance of the original. Your proposal must include the reason for your request.

PLAGIARISM

All work submitted for this class must be composed by you for this class. If you represent someone else's work as your own, you will fail my class and be reported to the Dean of Students.

BACK UP YOUR DATA

All hard drives fail. They get old and hot and they fail. It's a matter of when, not if. Drive failure is not a valid reason for late work. You should regularly back up all the data that's important to you. Back up your work to multiple sites: email it to yourself; save it to a free Dropbox account; put it on a USB drive; etc. You can get a free Dropbox account here: bit.ly/dropbox3365

EMAIL

You should use your @ttu.edu email address for official university communication, including this class. You should check your account daily.

SCHEDULE

Because much of our class time will be devoted to writing exercises and discussion, the day to day schedule is subject to change at my discretion. An up to date schedule will be maintained on the class website.

Important dates & deadlines for the semester:

9/1	Learning Record Self-Assessment
10/13	Learning Record Midterm
10/11	Deadline to register to vote
11/8	Election Day
11/24	Thanksgiving Day
12/6	Last Class Day
Finals week	– Learning Record Final tbd
ongoing	Learning Record Reflections

LEARNING RECORD

Grades for the course are determined by a portfolio-style, evidence-based model called the Learning Record (LR). Once at the midterm and once at the final, you will compose a persuasive essay that documents your improvement as a student by explaining both what

you learned and how you learned it. You will base your assessment on your other coursework, including writing, revision, and class participation, as documented in your LR reflections. You will argue for the grade you think is fair. I will review your argument and either agree with or revise your request. We will discuss the Learning Record in more detail throughout the semester.

The Learning Record documents for ENG 3365 were adapted from the originals, published online at learningrecord.org.

COURSE GOALS

These goals describe specific learning objectives established for our course. You should expect to deepen your knowledge, acquire new skills, and become more confident and creative in each of these areas over the course of the semester.

When you compose your Learning Record essays, you will analyze how and how much you have learned in each area or Course Goal. Read and re-read these descriptions carefully (especially while you write your evaluations): you will likely cite from these descriptions as you craft your argument.

1. RHETORIC

Rhetoric is an ancient art with a rich tradition. Over the last two and half millennia or so, rhetoricians have studied how arguments turn into beliefs (and vice versa) – aka persuasion. There are dozens of ways to analyze what persuasion is and how to make it happen. This course goal includes analytical skills that students can use to identify and center the needs of specific audiences in various rhetorical situations. Students should demonstrate the ability to identify an author's or rhetor's position, conjecture about what may be at stake, and imagine the possible consequences.

This course goal also includes rhetorical skills that students can use to craft their own arguments. Students should demonstrate the ability to argue persuasively for a position or claim, including the ability to gather, select, and incorporate evidence, to analyze and explain evidence, and to connect evidence to claims. Students should also demonstrate the ability to responsibly appeal to emotions, and to solicit trust and to demonstrate goodwill.

2. PROFESSIONALISM

For professionals in nearly every field, writing can be a way of solving workplace problems. This course goal is designed to get students thinking like professionals in their chosen fields. Students should develop an understanding of how members of their profession conceive of an engage in rhetorical practices. Students should become familiar with key conversations, genres, and conventions of writing within their profession, including citation of sources, and should understand these writing practices as rhetorical. Students should practice writing in the style of their profession, as well as practice

balancing clarity and complexity when addressing outsiders to their profession. And crucially, students should be capable of working collaboratively with their peers, distributing a workload fairly, and thoughtfully responding to feedback.

3. RESEARCH AND REVISION

Writing is a process that involves much more than the final product you turn in when the deadline arrives. The writing process includes a range of activity that often begins with research and reading and continues from planning (perhaps through brainstorming, note-taking, outlining, etc.) through drafting to revision.

Research is a process of discovering useful sources of argument or information, which may be thought of as nodes, networked together by citation. Citation, beyond simply a set of conventions (such as MLA), also has rhetorical, ethical, and stylistic concerns. Students should demonstrate the ability to cite others effectively, not only through conventions but also through direct quotation, summary, and paraphrase, and even imitation.

Revision is a crucial part of the writing process in which writers evaluate their work, identify changes they wish to make in their argument and its structure, and even reconceptualize their argument in response to new information or circumstances. The rhetorical force of writing can be cultivated through revision. Students should demonstrate creativity in their revisions, as well as insight in their evaluative comments for their peers. Students should also demonstrate the ability to plan, draft, and revise their own papers & projects.

4. DIGITAL LITERACY

It hardly needs to be said that digital media have become increasingly important to both academic and professional worlds. Most if not all of you probably do most of your daily writing in some kind of digital environment: on social media, by email or text message, in Word or Google Docs. This course goal may require you to learn some new digital tools for designing graphics or preparing presentations. But literacy is much broader than mastery. For this course goal, students should learn to navigate online environments, make use of tutorial resources as needed (such as Lynda.com or even YouTube), and compose multimodal texts using digital technologies.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

Learning is an organic process that unfolds in complex ways according to its own pace and rhythm. All students learn in different ways, and any course will accommodate each student differently. The Learning Record requires students to pay attention to their own learning styles, and it enables students to document evidence of their own development in multiple areas. We'll call these areas the Dimensions of Learning.

The six dimensions that follow can't really be separated out from one another; rather, these dimensions cut across one another. Our Course Goals are designed to encourage student development across multiple dimensions. Using the Learning Record helps you measure your progress throughout the semester, picturing your learning as a trajectory across the course.

When you compose your Learning Record evaluations, you will use the Dimensions of Learning to help you analyze how and what you have learned. Read and re-read these descriptions carefully (especially while you write your evaluations): you will likely cite from these descriptions as you craft your argument.

1. CONFIDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE

Learning should make you feel more confident, but more confidence alone is not necessarily a sign of deeper learning. Too much confidence and independence can keep you from seeking help when facing an obstacle; it can force you to rely on faulty or underdeveloped skills and strategies. Learning requires you to extend yourself beyond your existing comfort zone, but that zone should also expand along with your abilities, knowledge, experience, and reflectiveness, preparing you to meet new challenges on your own.

2. SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

Skills and strategies are ways of approaching problems or topics, and they should help you respond successfully to challenges. Some students might start their work with research, casting a wide net and taking in possibilities. Others might talk things through with peers, friends, or teachers, coming up with questions about an assignment. You probably have skills and strategies that work well for you in lots of learning environments, but you should try out alternatives and evaluate how well they work for you.

3. KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Knowledge and understanding describes what you probably already think of as the object of learning. What do you know now that you didn't know before our class? This "content knowledge" is usually specific to the discipline of a learning environment, including topics; research methods; disciplinary theories, concepts, and practices; and so on.

4. USE OF PRIOR AND EMERGING EXPERIENCE

What can you draw on from your own experience and how can you connect it to your current work? Making use of your prior experience (or of your emerging/ongoing experiences) is a crucial dimension of learning. It's important to think about how you use your experience in the context of time (say, over the course of a semester). Prior experience can help you scaffold your way to developing new skills or deepening your understanding.

5. REFLECTION

Reflection is at the heart of the Learning Record. The ability to step back and consider your situation critically and analytically creates distance that can give you insights into your own learning processes. Learning theorists call this metacognition, or thinking about your thinking. In order to use what you are learning in other contexts than our classroom, you'll need to practice reflecting on not just what you learn, but *how* you learn.

6. CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION

Building on the above dimensions of learning, engaged students often become more playful, experimental, and creative in their work. The value of creativity and imagination in a class like ours is hard to overstate: students who take pleasure in their learning can often spread their enthusiasm to others. Imagination requires you to connect your coursework to other issues and insights. Even when the final result of a creative risk you take may not turn out as you'd hoped, it may still pay off in what you learn from it.

GRADE CRITERIA

These criteria describe the performance that must be evidenced by your Learning Record evaluations in order for you to justify a request for the grade described. Read and re-read these descriptions carefully (especially while you write your evaluations): you must cite from these descriptions when you explain your grade request.

A Continual participation in all course activities, perfect or near perfect attendance, and all assigned work completed on time. Excellent quality in work produced for the course along all dimensions of learning and in all Course Goals. LR reflections cite explicit and accurate evidence for quality of work. LR demonstrates both an awareness of student's place along the dimensions of learning and development along the dimensions throughout the semester, showing an awareness of both strengths and areas to work on in the future.

B Almost continual participation in all course activities, near perfect attendance, and all assigned work completed on time. Good quality in work produced for the course along all dimensions of learning and in all Course Goals. LR reflections cite explicit and accurate evidence for quality of work, but do not provide the most appropriate evidence or fail to connect some claims about quality of work and development to evidence in the LR. LR demonstrates both an awareness of student's place along the dimensions of learning and development along the dimensions throughout the semester, showing an awareness of both strengths and areas to work on in the future.

C Varied participation in all course activities, minimal absences, and all assigned work completed on time. Average quality in work produced for the course along all dimensions of learning and in all Course Goals. LR reflections cite explicit and accurate evidence for quality of work, but do not always provide appropriate evidence or fail to connect some claims about quality of work and development to evidence in the LR. LR

demonstrates some awareness of student's place along the dimensions of learning and development along the dimensions throughout the semester, but does not describe development fully.

D Intermittent participation in course activities, poor attendance, some late, incomplete or missing assignments, and/or below-average quality of work produced according to the Course Goals. LR provides little evidence of awareness of development along the dimensions of learning, not discussing one or more dimensions and/or Goals.

F Minimal or no participation in course activities, poor attendance, several late, incomplete or missing assignments and/or well below average quality of work produced according to the Course Goals. Evidence of development across the dimensions of learning is not given or does not support claims made in the LR reflection, and LR does not discuss multiple dimensions and/or Goals.

Plus and minus grades will be awarded where LR evidence falls between the criteria for two whole letter grades. Per university policy, plus/minus grades will appear on your transcripts, but are not used to calculate GPA (OP 34.12).

WEAPONS

With the exception of concealed handguns, no weapons may be brought into the classroom. If you have a license to carry a handgun and you bring it into the classroom, you must keep it concealed and on your person at all times. If a gun or any other weapon becomes visible, the person who sees the weapon should leave the classroom and call 911.

You may not bring a handgun into the classroom in a backpack, bag, or purse because you may be called upon at unpredictable times to move about the room, go to the front of the room and participate in a presentation, or otherwise be separated from your belongings. Concealed handguns must remain on the person of a licensed carrier while on campus at all times.

No weapons of any kind may be brought into my office.