OPTI 597B. Technical Writing and Communication

This class will review principles and procedures of technical communication; focus on analyzing audiences and purpose of communication; practice organizing information and writing specialized documents such as technical reports, funding proposals, journal publications, and dissertations/theses.

Instructor: Carl Maes, Room 403A Meinel Building, Phone 520-626-8837 office and 520-495-8369 cell, carl.maes@optics.arizona.edu

Office Hours: Preferably not Thursday, but otherwise open door policy. May also schedule appointment

Grading Criteria:
Regular attendance and participation in class discussions is required, and a superior execution of all assignments is expected in order to earn an A for this course. At the graduate level, the grade of B indicates substantive weaknesses in performance, and a grade of C is unacceptable. Class attendance and class participation is evaluated based on the number and quality of your contributions to class discussions; written assignments are evaluated based on the expectation of clear, thorough, and concise prose and the absence of excessive jargon. The only discussion posts that will be considered class participation are those that offer a scholarly perspective (i.e. “Great idea!” does NOT count as a class participation post unless followed by a scholarly reason that the idea is great). The assignments categories itemized below indicate relative weight of each as a percent of the course grade: >89% earns an A; 80-89% a B, and < 80% a C. There are no exams.

- Weekly Discussion Posts/Class participation: 50%
- Weekly written assignments: 30%
- Final oral presentation: 20%

There will be a grammatical grading component on each assignment. The format of this class is on-line and asynchronous. The expectation is that students will work collaboratively and learn from one another by participating in weekly class discussions and providing peer review via “posts” on a weekly thread regarding ideas and comments surrounding each topic presented by the instructor.

Required Text:

Recommended Text:
Course Objectives:

- To recognize and utilize correct rhetorical and stylistic elements necessary for successful scientific and technical communication
- To recognize the intended audience and present information in an appropriate manner for said audience
- To understand the genre and manipulate the structure of selected technical documents
- To effectively and correctly convey (through written and oral media) the technical aspects of a practice to both specialist and non-specialist audiences
- To appreciate your professional and ethical obligations in your communications as prospective practitioners in your chosen field

Topics:

- Module 1: Style I: Grammar and punctuation
- Module 2: Style II: Sentence structure and syntax
- Module 3: Professional and ethical considerations
- Module 4-5: Know your audience: From corporate to classroom
- Module 6-8: Technical Documents
- Modules 9-10: Writing for publication
- Module 11-12: Writing funding proposals
- Modules 13: Writing your Dissertation/Thesis
- Module 14-16: Creating successful oral presentations

Academic Integrity

According to the Arizona Code of Academic Integrity, “Integrity is expected of every student in all academic work. The guiding principle of academic integrity is that a student’s submitted work must be the student’s own.” Unless otherwise noted by the instructor, work for all assignments in this course must be conducted independently by each student. Co-authored work of any kind is unacceptable. Misappropriation of exams before or after they are given will be considered academics misconduct.

Misconduct of any kind will be prosecuted and may result in any or all of the following:

- Reduction of grade
- Failing grade
- Referral to the Dean of Students for consideration of additional penalty, i.e., notation on a student’s transcript re: academic integrity violation, etc.

Students with Learning Disabilities

If a student is registered with the Disability Resource Center, he/she must submit appropriate documentation to the instructor if he/she is requesting reasonable accommodations.

The information contained in this syllabus may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.