MEET YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Linda Adkins, Instructor, English Language and Literature

Hello! I am your instructor for Studies in Technical Writing (620:186). As I'll not be standing in front of you in a traditional classroom setting, the next few paragraphs will be used to introduce me to you.

I am a professional educator with over twelve years of teaching experience at the University of Northern Iowa (where I received my degrees). Each semester I teach three sections of College Writing and Research and advise English majors. I also have experience teaching Introduction to Technical Writing and Introduction to Literature. I teach one-two composition classes per semester at Hawkeye Community College. Additional teaching experience was obtained at the Waterloo campus of Upper Iowa University. I did not start out to be an educator, but I find that it suits me well.

Before beginning my academic career, I was Director of Human Resources at Humana Women's and Children's Hospital in San Antonio, Texas. Prior to that, I was Assistant Director of Human Resources at Human Hospital-Phoenix in Phoenix, Arizona. I have additional human resources experience and secretarial experience both in and out of academic settings. As you can see by this information, I have changed career areas three times—the average number of times experts say people change careers.

In all of my careers, I have performed various types of writing experience that includes

- Designing and writing packets for my classes at UNI;
- Compiling and writing reports requested for all administrative levels;
- Designing and writing employee newsletters;
- Designing fliers to recruit for positions, and writing job ads for newspapers;
- Designing, compiling, and writing portions of a handbook for professional and scientific employees; and
- Writing position descriptions for merit system employees.

I find all of this writing to be rewarding.

There is another type of writing that I do for myself: poetry. While I have not been published in major publications, I presented some of my poems at the Fifth Annual Des Moines National Poetry Festival and they were published in their chapbook. In addition, a shaped poem I wrote was published in innerWeather, the student literary publication at UNI.

Something else I do is read. Some of my favorite authors are J.D. Robb, J.A. Jance, Donald Harstad, and Nora Roberts. Barbara Delinsky and Sara Paretsky are also favorites. These authors have a common characteristic: They write good stories.

While we’re unable to meet each other face to face, hopefully, this information will help you know me a little bit.

Contact Information:

You may reach me at my office (219 Baker Hall), my telephone number (319-273-5969), or through my e-mail address (Linda.Adkins@uni.edu). My e-mail address is usually the best way to contact me.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This is a three credit, professional writing course from the Department of English Language and Literature, and it is being offered to you as a Guided Independent Study
(GIS) course by the University Continuing and Distance Education Office.

Studies in Technical Writing investigates the theories and principles of the technical communication field. It emphasizes the effective document design of technical information from the perspective of subject matter experts whose writing is a component of, but does not define, their job descriptions. Topics include rhetorical analysis, writing processes, and specific communicative purposes such as instruction and/or presentation.

What does this mean? Simply put, this course is for anyone who has technical writing as a part of his/her job; however, it is not the major task. Writing done on the job may not be called technical writing, but, in fact, it is.

Because this is a Guided Independent Study course, it will be impossible to do oral presentations. We will, however, read about oral presentations and have an assignment to go along with this chapter. In addition, we will read about writing collaboratively, but it cannot be accomplished easily in a GIS course.

The purpose of this course will be met through four major objectives:

1. Understand the importance of technical writing.
2. Plan successful documents.
3. Develop and evaluate verbal and visual information.
4. Learn and develop different applications of technical communication.

Each of these objectives is divided into specific areas; as you go through the textbook, you will understand what they are.

In your job, the technical documents you write are to be written for a specific audience and for a specific purpose. They represent you. If they are sloppily written, are not easily understood, and are not neat in appearance, people will transfer these characteristics to you. The saying “you don’t have a second chance to make a first impression” applies to your writing.

Please remember that if you have any questions or concerns, contact me.

Required Texts:

Markel, M. (2010). *Technical communication*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s. Because this is the main textbook for this course, become familiar with it by looking through the front of the book, the table of contents, and the appendices at the back. Look at the chapters and see how they are organized.

Dictionary. You will need a good dictionary that provides you with more than a short definition of the words. I use a good paperback dictionary that has over 70,000 entries. If I can’t find the information in it, I go to a collegiate dictionary. The paperback dictionary is great for carrying around with me; however, the collegiate dictionary may be more appropriate for you. The choice of which dictionary to use is yours.

Recommended Text:


Necessary Equipment:

You will need a computer or access to a computer to complete the assignments for this course. In addition, assignments will be completed in Microsoft Word. Works will not work (pun intended).
Documentation Style:
The APA documentation style will be used for this course. Pages 640 – 656 in the textbook should provide you with sufficient information about this style for use in your assignments. Documentation is needed whenever you refer to a source or obtain information from a source.

Other Information:
DrGrammar.org is a good website to go to for grammar, usage, mechanics, and documentation help.

The Purdue OWL (online writing lab) has an APA Formatting and Style Guide as well as help with grammar, usage, and mechanics. (http://owl.english.purdue.edu)

Academic Ethics Policy:
Students at the University of Northern Iowa are required to observe the commonly accepted standards of academic honesty and integrity. Except in those instances in which group work is specifically authorized by the instructor of the class, no work which is not solely the student’s is to be submitted to a professor in the form of an examination paper, a term paper, class project, research project, or thesis project.

Cheating of any kind on examinations and/or plagiarism of papers or projects is strictly prohibited. Also, unacceptable are the purchase of papers from commercial sources, using a single paper to meet the requirement of more than one class (except in instances authorized and considered appropriate by the professors of the two classes), and submission of a term paper or project completed by any individual other than the student submitting the work. Students are cautioned that plagiarism is defined as the process of stealing or passing off as one’s own the ideas or words of another, or presenting as one’s own an idea or product which is derived from an existing source.

The entire Academic Ethics Policy is on UNI’s website. I recommend you read the complete policy.

COURSE ORGANIZATION
This course will be delivered over the World Wide Web, utilizing web pages, and a learning management system (eLearning). The course is divided into 11 assignments. All written assignments will be submitted via eLearning.

Written Assignments: Each of the eleven written assignments is composed of a series of activities from the Markel textbook. Type written assignments using a word processing program and save as a file. If you are using a word processing program other than Microsoft Word, then please save the file as Rich Text Format.

Submit your assignment by clicking on the Assignment Submission link in the Course Content menu on the left and uploading your assignment. Need help? See the eLearning Tutorials for instructions on how to submit an assignment.

Time Allocation: Please allow plenty of time to read the material and do the assignment. For most of the chapters, you will need more than an hour to do the reading and complete the assignment. Set a regular schedule for doing the work for this class—don’t wait and try to get it done at one time. Also, submit one chapter assignment at a time.

Extra Credit Work: There are three extra credit assignments available in this course. You may choose one or two of them to do—do not submit all three. The extra credit assignments are from three different chapters and may be submitted after you have completed the required chapter assignment, submitted it, and received the graded assignment. The latest you may submit extra credit work is before submitting
Assignment 11. Type extra credit assignments using a word processing program and save as files. If you are using a word processing program other than Microsoft Word, then please save the file as Rich Text Format. Submit your extra assignment by clicking on the Extra Credit Submission link in the Course Content menu on the left and uploading your assignment. Each extra credit assignment is worth 100 points.

GRADING

UNI Guided Independent Study requires students to complete all assignments to receive a grade in the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1 (Chapters 1 &amp; 2)</td>
<td>200 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2 (Chapters 3 &amp; 4)</td>
<td>175 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 3 (Chapters 5, 6, &amp; 7)</td>
<td>350 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 4 (Chapters 8 &amp; 9)</td>
<td>250 pts.</td>
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<td>Assignment 5 (Chapters 10 &amp; 11)</td>
<td>300 pts.</td>
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<td>Assignment 6 (Chapters 12 &amp; 13)</td>
<td>200 pts.</td>
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<td>Assignment 7 (Chapter 14)</td>
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<td>Assignment 8 (Chapter 16)</td>
<td>400 pts.</td>
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<td>Assignment 9 (Chapters 17 &amp; 18)</td>
<td>250 pts.</td>
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<td>Assignment 10 (Chapters 19 &amp; 20)</td>
<td>475 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 11 (Chapters 21 &amp; 22)</td>
<td>200 pts.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3000 pts.</strong></td>
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Each extra credit assignment submitted is worth up to 100 points. Remember: If you do extra credit work, submit one or two assignments only.

A = 2700 – 3000
B = 2400 – 2699
C = 2100 – 2399
D = 1800 – 2099
F = 1799 & below

A = Superior work that follows the instructions, is well written, and contains very few (if any) errors. This writing exceeds expectations.

B = Highly competent work that is above expectations, follows the instructions, is written well, and contains few errors.

C = While this is competent writing, it lacks quality in execution. There are enough errors in the work that it takes away from its purpose and distracts the reader. Just barely follows the instructions.

D = Somewhat competent writing that does not follow all the instructions. Too many errors occur. Unclear meaning causes the reader to be confused.

F = Unacceptable work that does not follow the instructions. The writing is unprofessional and contains numerous errors that show the writer did not revise and edit the work.