ENGLISH 421: Technical Writing

English 421 CRN: XXXX Time: XXXX Location: XXXX	Instructor: Daniel Ernst Office: XXXX Office Hours: XXXX Email: ernst9@purdue.edu

Required Course Materials
- *Technical Communication Today*, by Richard Johnson-Sheehan (6th edition). ISBN: 0134425731
- Access to a webcam and microphone
- Access to Adobe InDesign (all ITaP computers have this software)
- Additional readings as needed (on Blackboard or the Web)

Course Description
English 421 teaches students the rhetorical principles and writing practices necessary for producing effective technical communication in both academic and industrial contexts. The primary goal of this course is to teach both practical skills in the written and oral communication of technical information to lay audiences and a broader theoretical consideration of the rhetoric of science and technical methodologies. Concepts examined in the course consist of prose style, universal design, user experience, crisis communication, the ethics of technical communication, research literacy, data analysis and visualization, and more.

Throughout the semester, you will gain experience in the production of technical documents and genres and be challenged to think critically (and universally) about issues of design and presentation. In response to hypothetical scenarios, you will work independently and in teams to propose technical solutions to common problems. From design patents to board game instructions, students will consider the dynamic challenges of communicating effectively with a variety of digital tools and rhetorical skills to diverse audiences.

Assignments
Unit 1 – Job Application Documents (~5 pages + 10 min interview) | 25%
This unit will challenge you to construct a professional ethos. You will create a series of job documents, including a resume, cover letter, and job ad analysis, and you will prepare for and complete a professional interview, all of which will aid you in your professional development.

Unit 2 – Technical Instructions and Content Marketing (~4 pages)| 25%
Choosing a company to "work for," in this unit you will write a technical description or "guide" on a relevant topic to be used as content marketing online. You will also write a set of instructions for consumers of one of the company's products. The goal of this

assignment is to give you practice conveying technical information to lay audiences for different purposes. The key to success will be providing clear information while distinguishing the functions of content marketing descriptions and process-based instructions.

Unit 3 –Redesign Development Proposal (group project; 10+ pages & 10 min pres) | 25%
For the final project for the course, you will work in groups to write an extended proposal for a company on a new or redesigned product or technical development they should pursue. You will need to provide detailed technical explanations of your proposed changes, while simultaneously writing persuasively to convince the company to accept your proposal. This project requires that you not only brainstorm ideas but work toward actually implementing them, with mock-ups, production processes, and specific details.

Blackboard Responses + Small Assignments| 15%
There will be weekly Blackboard posts to write in response to the week's readings, due Thursdays. Additionally, there will be small assignments to be completed both in and outside of class throughout the semester. There may also be brief quizzes over reading material and class concepts.

Participation and Professional Ethos | 10%
Participation in this class is necessary and takes many different forms, including: attending, being on time, and being prepared for classes; actively participating in class discussions by offering up relevant examples from the reading, your own ideas, and other forms of evidence; working diligently on in-class assignments, including individual in-class writing, collaborative work, and short writing assignments; and being a positive and professional member of the class.

Selected Readings Outside Textbook
- Is Science Political?
- The Spiky Blob Seen Around the World
- Crisis Management and Communications
- What Statistics Can and Can't Tell Us About Ourselves
- The Wrong Patient
- Where Did Times New Roman Come From?
- The Ethic of Expediency: Classical Rhetoric, Technology, and the Holocaust
- Five Rules for Evidence Communication
- How The Escalator Forever Changed Our Sense of Space
- The Tyranny of Chairs: Why We Need Better Design
- Select Examples from the National Technical Reports Library
- The Surprising History of the Infographic
- How to Lie With Statistics
- The Thing Explainer: Complicated Stuff in Simple Words