

English 3764 covers the principles and procedure of technical communication. This writing-intensive online course focuses attention on analyzing audience and purpose, organizing information, designing graphics, and writing such specialized forms as correspondence, instructions, and proposals. **Junior standing is required.**

Objectives

By completing English 3764, you will

- gain knowledge of technical communication’s rhetorical dimensions.
- learn to distinguish between effective and ineffective technical documents.
- write in several technical genres that use analysis, narrative, critique, persuasion, and argument.
- practice using the conventions of written, spoken, and visual composition.
- gain an understanding of the role of social media and visual rhetoric in technical communications.
- write and create texts in digital environments.

Required Resources

- Course Website: <http://3764f15.tracigardner.com/>
- Markel, Mike. *Practical Strategies for Technical Communication*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2013.
 - [Bedford e-Book to Go for Practical Strategies for Technical Communication](#).
 - [Amazon paperback to buy or rent](#).
 - [Barnes and Noble paperback to buy or rent](#).
- Virginia Tech Career Planning Guide ([available online](#) or in print from Career Services on the Blacksburg Campus).
- Additional required and recommended readings and resources available from the course websites.
- A reliable computer with working, dependable Internet access.
- A word processor or Google Drive.

Course Requirements

You must complete all major assignments and requirements in order to pass this course. All work must be submitted online, via Canvas. Your final grade is calculated on this distribution:

80%	<p>Five major projects, along with related drafts and other artifacts. These projects (listed below) will focus on different kinds of technical communication. For each major assignment unit, you will be asked to submit preliminary drafts to be discussed online by the class. You should plan to revise these assignments extensively before the due date. <i>There are no rewrites or revisions after work is graded.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project 1: Professional Biography Statement. Due Monday, Sep 14. Worth 15%.• Project 2: Analysis of Writing in Your Field. Due Monday, Sep 28. Worth 15%.• Project 3: Job Application Materials (with informal proposal). Due Monday, Oct 26. Worth 15%.• Project 4: Genre Analysis Report (with progress report). Due Monday, Nov 30. Worth 30%.• Project 5 (Final Exam): Course Completion Report. Due Monday, Dec 14. Worth 5%.
20%	<p>Participation (reading quizzes, daily course work, and discussion posts in Canvas). You will write each week, primarily in the Canvas Discussion forum. These forum activities include class discussion of readings and related issues, correspondence, peer feedback, and reflections. There is a quiz for each reading.</p>

Policies

Equal Access and Opportunity: If you need special accommodations in this course, please contact [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\)](#) in 310 Lavery Hall (above the Turner Place Dining Center) during the first week of the term to ensure that you have the resources you need. The procedures and forms you need are also available on the [SSD website](#). I am happy to work with the SSD staff to make sure that you have the support you need. Documentation from the SSD office should be sent to me by the end of the first week of class.

Communication Guidelines: Email is the best way to contact me. You can email me at tengrrl@vt.edu. I do not respond to students at any other address. I try to answer student email within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends and holidays. Since most students are not in the Blacksburg area, I do not offer on-campus office hours. We can arrange an online meeting if needed.

Participation: Class participation in online discussions and in all assignments is required. If you miss a deadline because of an illness, death in the family, or family emergency, see the [Student Advocacy page](#) from the Dean of Students Office for details on how to document the situation. *You must provide documentation within one week of any situation.*

If you have an issue that affects your ability to complete the course, you may qualify for Academic Relief. For personal medical issues, contact the [Schiffert Health Center](#), and for psychiatric or psychological issues, contact the [Cook Counseling Center](#).

Work Guidelines: All work and participation in this course is governed by the [Undergraduate Honor System](#) and the [Virginia Tech Principles of Community](#).

Late Policy: My late policy includes a grace period that should cover most problems that come up, whether academic conflicts, illness, or a personal issue. You do not need to ask in advance or explain why your work is late. Just take advantage of the grace period, as explained below:

Discussion forum activities and quizzes: Every week, you will complete writing activities and/or quizzes that you will submit online. This work counts as part of your participation grade and is relevant to the activities that will take place that week and the projects you are working on. This work is due by 11:55 PM in Scholar on the day indicated on the course website. You may submit any of this work up to 48 hours late, but realize that you will probably lose the benefit of getting feedback from your peers if your rough drafts are not submitted on time. You will receive a zero for any work that is submitted more than 48 hours late.

Projects 1, 2, 3, and 4: You will compose four projects, which you will submit online. Each major project will have a due date, a grace period, and a deadline:

- **The due date** is the day that your major project is due. Projects are due on Mondays, by 11:55 PM in this course. Every student has a one-week grace period after the due date during which the project can still be submitted.
- **The grace period** occurs between the due date and the deadline. Work submitted during the grace period will be marked as *late* in Scholar; however, there is no grade penalty for work submitted during the grace period. Note that we will not work on the projects after the due date.
- **The deadline** comes one-week days after the due date and is the final moment that Canvas will accept a project. You will receive a zero for any project that is not submitted by the deadline. There are no extensions on deadlines.

Project 5 (Final Exam): You will also complete a final exam. There is no grace period or make-up option for Project 5. Your final exam must be submitted by the due date (11:55 PM on Monday, Dec 15) so that I can turn course grades in on time. You will receive a zero if Project 5 is not submitted on time. If you have extenuating circumstances (like multiple exams on the same day), email me *before the last day of classes* to make alternate arrangements.

Religious Holidays: Please take advantage of the grace period explained in the Late Policy section above if the due date for any work in this class coincides with a religious holiday that you celebrate. Please let me know *before* the event if the grace period will not be adequate.

Backups: Save backups of all your work for this class. Maintain these backups in multiple places (your laptop, a flash drive, Google Docs, Dropbox). Printed backups can also be useful. Do not discard any files, notes, or other work until the term is over and you have received your final grade. Be sure that you maintain backups so that you can continue your work when you encounter computer problems. If you need assistance with your computer, check with [InnovationSpace](#) or [Customer Support Center \(4Help\)](#).

Program Assessment: Please note that the Department of English may use your written work in its assessment of its teaching and learning goals. In such cases, your name will be removed and your work assessed anonymously. Your work will not be shared with any individual outside of the department. It will be used strictly to help the department offer students the best possible academic experience.

Grading: I use the default Virginia Tech grade scale for Letter Grades with +/- . The Canvas gradebook manages all the mathematics. I do not round grades. I do not provide extra credit for people who have not met satisfactory performance goals.

A 93–100	B+ 87–89.99	C+ 77–79.99	D+ 67–69.99	F 59.99 & below
A- 90–92.99	B 83–86.99	C 73–76.99	D 63–66.99	
	B- 80–82.99	C- 70–72.99	D- 60–62.99	

Specific grading expectations will be posted with each major project. Generally, project expectations fall into these descriptions:

Grade Scale	Your manager might say...	Project Description
A A-	This is exemplary work. It will have a solid impact and will be remembered as a model for future tasks.	<p>This project...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meets or exceeds all the requirements for a B. • uses unique strategies and details that are clever, original, creative, and/or imaginative. • includes well-chosen graphics or visual elements that increase the project’s effectiveness. • makes explicit connections between the graphics and the text of the assignment or task. • is free of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, mechanics, linking, and formatting. <p><i>Any work that is incomplete or that contains multiple errors will not earn an A or an A-.</i></p>
B+ B B-	This is very good. The details and approach are impressive, and the document stands out visually. I’m happy to send this out/use this.	<p>This project...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meets or exceeds all the requirements for a C. • includes thorough details that make the information clear and convincing. • uses headings, layout, design, and visual arrangement to highlight key points and make the document easy to read and navigate. • has no more than two or three minor errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, mechanics, linking, and/or formatting.
C+ C C-	This is acceptable. It accomplishes the task completely. We can send it out, but some aspects of it are average. We can do better next time.	<p>This project...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is in the right format and genre for the assignment or task. • addresses all the audiences (e.g., primary, secondary, and tertiary) for the assignment or task. • fulfills the purpose(s) of the assignment or task. • includes the basic details, possibly using generic or predictable strategies and/or information. • uses a clear, friendly sentence style that matches the audience and purpose. • provides documentation for outside sources, including graphics, photographs, and other visual resources. • has no more than four minor errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, mechanics, linking, and/or formatting.

D+ D D-	This is flawed. It will have to be revised before we can send it to a client or coworkers.	This project... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is sloppy. • is in the wrong format and/or genre. • has missing information or is otherwise incomplete. • has more than 5 errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and/or mechanics.
F	This is unacceptable and unusable. Someone else will have to do this work, starting over from the beginning.	This project... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • doesn't exist or was never submitted. • does not relate to the assignment or task at all. • fails to address the audience(s) and purpose(s) of the assignment or task.

Tentative Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. It is your responsibility to check your Canvas notifications and [the course website](#) for updates and changes to the course schedule. Check the daily posts for specific quiz and Discussion forum activities.

Time Commitment: Virginia Tech classes require 36.25 hours of class time, so plan to spend about 2.5 hours on class work each day, plus time to complete your readings. You will probably spend more time on days you are drafting and revising your projects.

Week	Beginning	Activities
1	Aug 25	Course Overview Markel, Ch. 1: Introduction to Technical Writing Markel, Ch. 3: Writing Collaboratively and Using Social Media Assignment for Project 1: Professional Biography Statement, with related online readings
2	Sep 1	Markel, Ch. 4: Analyzing Your Audience & Purpose Markel, Ch. 6: Writing for Your Readers Markel, Ch. 2: Understanding Ethical & Legal Considerations
3	Sep 8	<i>Project 1 Rough Drafts for Peer Feedback due by 11:55 PM Tuesday</i> Peer Review of Project 1 due by 11:55 PM Thursday Markel, Appendix, Part B: Editing and Proofreading Your Documents Project 1: Professional Biography Statement, due by 11:55 PM on Monday, Sep 14
4	Sep 15	Assignment for Project 2: Analysis of Writing in Your Field Markel, Ch. 7: Designing Documents & Web Sites Markel, Ch. 9: Writing Correspondence Markel, Ch. 5: Researching Your Subject Markel, Appendix A: Documenting Your Sources Discussion of Project 2 example documents
5	Sep 22	<i>Project 2 Rough Drafts for Peer Feedback, due by 11:55 PM Tuesday</i> Peer Review of Project 2 due by 11:55 PM Thursday Project 2: Analysis of Writing in Your Field, due by 11:55 PM on Monday, Sep 28
6	Sep 29	Assignment for Project 3: Job Application Needs Markel, Ch. 10: Writing Job-Application Materials VT Career Planning Guide: Writing Resumes, pp. 43 to 61

7	Oct 6	Discussion of Project 3 example documents Project 3 Informal Proposal, due by 11:55 PM on Monday, Oct 12
8	Oct 13	Discussion of LinkedIn, GitHub, and Online Portfolios (Web-based readings)
9	Oct 20	<i>Project 3 Rough Drafts for Peer Feedback, due by 11:55 PM Tuesday</i> Peer Review of Project 3 due by 11:55 PM Thursday Project 3: Job Application Needs, due by 11:55 PM on Oct 26
10	Oct 27	Assignment for Project 4: Genre Analysis Report Markel, Ch. 8: Creating Graphics As appropriate for your report: Markel, Ch. 11: Writing Proposals, Ch. 12: Writing Information Reports, Ch. 13: Writing Recommendation Reports, and Ch. 14: Writing Definitions, Descriptions, and Instructions; and/or Ch. 15: Making Oral Presentations
11	Nov 3	Discussion of Project 5 example documents Review of Markel, Ch. 5: Researching Your Subject and, Appendix A: Documenting Your Sources
12	Nov 10	Discussion of Progress Reports Markel, "Writing Progress and Status Reports," pp. 302–311 Project 4 Progress Report, due by 11:55 PM on Monday, Nov 16
13	Nov 17	<i>Project 5 Rough Drafts for Peer Feedback, due by 11:55 PM Tuesday</i> Peer Review of Project 5 due by 11:55 PM Thursday Project 4: Genre Analysis Report, due by 11:55 PM on Monday, Nov 30
	Nov 24	Thanksgiving Break
14	Dec 1	Assignment for Project 6: Course Completion Report Markel, Ch. 12: Writing Information Reports Discussion of Project 6 example documents
15	Dec 8	Catching Up.... SPOT course evaluations due by midnight on Dec 10
16	Dec 14	Project 6: (Final Exam): Course Completion Report, due by 11:55 PM