

AP/WRIT 2201 3.0 (C) EFFECTIVE WRITING AND RESEARCH IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Course Meetings: All Online Materials Posted and Due Fridays

Professor Contact Information:

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Online Office Hours: By Appointment – Email to book

What's this course about?

This course primarily focuses on practical forms of technical writing research to interrogate the way you and others think about and act in the world. This involves formulating questions, understanding different genres, gathering information and evaluating sources. It is not enough to be able to problem solve, however, but to communicate effectively so that solutions can be meaningfully shared.

This course works as a supportive and collaborative setting for students to perform university level research in non-standard academic ways. This course builds on strengths that students bring to the course, and build new ones, in order to produce practical documents that are designed to solve real-world problems, and building on this, help produce a world-facing presentation of your work.

What will we learn?

In this course, students will develop critical understandings and essential skills for research in contemporary contexts of professional and technical writing. Through engaged practice and reflection, students should develop

- strategies, tactics, and skills for locating, gathering, evaluating, using, and citing information
- critical awareness of the ways tools and guides enable and constrain research practices
- best practices for research ethics and related issues
- appreciation for context-dependent nature of communication and audience expectations
- a deeper understanding of technical writing as an interdisciplinary study of diverse contexts of practice
- effective practices of giving and incorporating user and peer-feedback
- *Apply the knowledge and skills described above by making appropriate choices in your own writing and presentations, by producing a set of instructions on behalf of a client organization and an E-Portfolio that documents and reflects on your capabilities*

In order to get the most out of the course, we will need to learn from each other. Working collegially in a supportive environment of a large community project and publishing their work publicly, students should

- gain confidence sharing their written work and seeking constructive feedback

- provide supportive constructive feedback to their peers
- develop a professional approach to task schedules and assignment deadlines
- value recursive writing processes as much as the final product
- gain awareness of the power that writers have to magnify and silence voices

Persevering through different writing projects, working with unfamiliar tools, and writing “from the side of not knowing,” students should not only build their skills, but also their self-confidence as researchers capable of confronting unknowns.

What is the “culture” of the course?

This course “believes” that we work best when we listen and support each other. No writer or researcher is an island. One of the indisputable benefits of learning within (or in our case, outside) a classroom setting (even one fully online) is the opportunity to work with peers toward mutual goals. This opportunity is wasted in classrooms that have peers work in isolation alongside or in competition with each other, or that treat students as passive recipients of knowledge. Our virtual classroom is a community space organized around two projects, but is centred around the goals of developing writing skills. Our classroom community values invention, collaboration, mutual enquiry, inclusivity, accessibility, and practical leadership that enhances power and knowledge.

What are we reading?

There is no required textbook for this course, and students will not be asked to purchase anything. There will be a “Living Course Schedule” on eClass that will offer a helpful collection of online resources that students will be expected to read and engage with. Students will be expected to read over any posted readings, PowerPoints and/or videos and engage with them. These will all be provided to you via the eClass site!

It is important to note that several platforms will be used in this course (e.g., eClass, Zoom, iFixit, Wix, etc.) through which students will interact with the course materials, your Professor, as well as with one another.

Students should note the following:

- Zoom is hosted on servers in the U.S. This includes recordings done through Zoom.
- If you have privacy concerns about your data, provide only your first name or a nickname when you join a session.
- The system is configured in a way that all participants are automatically notified when a session is being recorded. In other words, a session cannot be recorded without you knowing about it.
- Technology requirements and FAQs for eClass can be found here - <https://lthelp.yorku.ca/student-guide-to-moodle>

How can I do well in this course?

The central philosophy of this course is that writing is a process, and that there is no one clear path to doing well. The assignments in this course are designed around two projects, and in order to help students through this we have broken down the process. This will help you develop your ideas and expand on your thinking. However, this means that not participating, not getting involved, and not being active in your own education will have negative consequences for learning (and grades). Writing requires revision, and so every assignment builds towards the whole. **ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE SUBMITTED TO OUR COURSE eCLASS PAGE!**

How will this course be taught?

All work on this course will be done online asynchronously (outside of a specific live lecture time). Lectures, Power Point slides and Notes, with additional handouts and video tutorials, will be posted on eClass (York University's course website system) every Monday. You are expected to read and view the posted materials and engage in responses to all the posted material.

Our's will be an interactive, virtual classroom. Assignment Descriptions will be posted at least one week prior to the due date but will be discussed further during our recorded Lectures and Discussion Forums. In addition, you will be given practical exercises and questions as part of your preparation for upcoming assignments. For that purpose, virtual participation is of great importance.

What is the late policy?

Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized one grade point/one-half letter grade per day that assignment is late. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be granted and may require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor's letter). If you have fallen or anticipate falling behind in the course, get in touch with me as soon as possible. I understand that it can feel embarrassing to reach out, but the sooner you do so, the sooner we can get back on track.

Anything else to highlight?

Perhaps the most important thing to note is that it is extremely important to keep up with assignments. As this is a writing course, a large portion of what we'll be doing will be process oriented. That is, we'll be breaking down the assignments into their component parts. Doing things in this way means it's very important to keep up with the assignment schedule. If you feel you are falling behind, please get in touch with me ASAP. Reach out before things pile up too much!

So, Assignments?

Yup! Here's the breakdown:

- 1) Fast Fix Proposal – 10%
 - a. This assignment will be handed-in in two stages. The Draft Proposal should be handed in by 9:00am to iFixit on **September 15th**.
 - b. The Final Proposal should be handed in by 11:59pm to eClass on **September 22nd**.
- 2) Checkpoint 1 – 5%
 - a. This assignment will be handed-in in two stages. The draft of Checkpoint 1 should be handed in by 9:00am to iFixit on **September 22nd**.
 - b. The final Checkpoint 1 should be handed in by 11:59pm to eClass on **September 28th**.
- 3) Checkpoint 2 – 5%
 - a. This assignment will be handed-in in two stages. The draft of Checkpoint 2 should be handed in by 9:00am to iFixit on **September 27th**.
 - b. The final draft of Checkpoint 2 should be handed in by 11:59pm to eClass on **October 2nd**.
- 4) Fast Fix Final – 15%
 - a. This assignment will be handed-in in two stages. The draft should be handed in by 6:00pm for Peer-Review on **October 5th**.
 - b. The Final document should be handed in by 11:59pm to eClass and iFixit on **October 6th**.
- 5) Process Assignments – 10%
 - a. This assignment contains two short documents. The 1st is a genre analysis of e-portfolios (5%) and the second is an analysis assignment (5%). These should be handed-in by 11:59pm to eClass on **November 3rd**.
- 6) E-Portfolio Proposal / Draft – 5%
 - a. This Proposal should be handed-in by 11:59pm to eClass on **November 17th**.
 - b. The Draft should be made available for Peer-Review by 11:30am **November 24th**.
- 7) Final E-Portfolio – 20%

The Final E-Portfolio should be handed-in to eClass by 11:59pm **December 1st**.
- 8) Participation – 15%

The Participation grade is based on ongoing work done in the course Forums. This is cumulative and is very important. In order to do well on this portion of the grade students will need to be actively contributing to group and discussion Forums.
- 9) Peer-Review – 15%

This grade will comprise several smaller peer-reviews administered during both key projects.

These are the assignments that make up the course grade. Alternative or “make-up” assignments will not be made available. It's important to keep on track and make sure you meet these deadlines. If something comes up that might impede your progress, you are responsible for reaching out to the teaching team as soon as possible. I am committed to working with you to do your best. Booking an online appointment or getting in touch with the iFixit team is essential if you need help, advice, or want to talk through an assignment and get additional feedback.

What are the projects?

Your work each week will give you practice with some of the kinds of research and writing used in professional and academic environments and will help you develop two major projects.

1. *Fast Fix Project*. The first project you will work individually to develop a *web-based service manual* for a real device, for potential publication on the iFixit website. During the first half of the course, your team will work in collaboration with iFixit to:
 - Prepare a project proposal,
 - Research common hardware failures for your device
 - Write a troubleshooting wiki
 - Prepare a device page
 - Write instructions and capture high-quality photos to illustrate procedures for replacing faulty components
 - User-test and revise drafts
2. *E-Portfolio Project*. The second project challenges you to strengthen and expand the capabilities introduced in the first part of the course. Your *E-Portfolio* describes, documents and reflects on your capabilities and development as a researcher and writer. This culminating, digital project requires you to integrate and demonstrate course learning outcomes including genre awareness, writing in/with multimedia, and document design, as well as research/writing processes and skills. Preparing your E-Portfolio will also provide you with a foundation of skills and material for writing future job applications and interviews.

To contact our partners at iFixit, send an email to techwriting@ifixit.com. Each time you contact iFixit (e.g. submitting your proposal, a Checkpoint pdf, informing them of changes to your Project) you must:

- Include your team tag and the purpose of the email in the subject line.
- cc your email to me and to all members of your team.
- Include a brief professional message and sign the email with your full name.
- Attach project documents (e.g. proposals) as PDF documents.

Other Important Information:

Grading

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments will bear a letter grade designation (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.). For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar. Final course grades may

be adjusted to conform to Program or Faculty grades distribution profiles. Students may take a limited number of courses for degree credit on an ungraded (pass/fail) basis. For information on this option see Alternative Grading Option in the LA&PS section of the Undergraduate Calendar.

Late Withdrawal

Please note that the last date to drop this course without receiving a grade is March 18th. For more information, contact an academic advisor or your program's Undergraduate Program Assistant. See other important dates here: <https://registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/fw21>

Deferred Standing

To request deferred standing in the course, make an appointment with the course director. Deferred Standing will only be granted to students who have:

- Documentation supporting a valid reason for being unable to complete the course by the end of the semester
- Evidence demonstrating their ability to complete the coursework by the deferred deadline (e.g., changed circumstances that permit the student to complete outstanding coursework and a clear plan for doing so)
- Completed all assignments except the final podcast episode

Please note that deferred coursework is self-directed. The instructor may not be available to provide instructional support.

Classroom Etiquette

Even though we are fully online in this course, normal rules of conduct and respectful interaction are our baseline. Do note that recent research strongly suggests both that multitasking is a myth, it is next to impossible to focus on two tasks simultaneously, and that taking handwritten notes can be much more effective for processing and retaining information. See:

Rosen, C. (2008). The myth of multitasking. *The New Atlantis*, (20), 105-110.

Hamilton, J. (2008). Think You're Multitasking? Think Again." npr.org. NPR Morning Edition.

Poldrack, R. (2011, April). Multi-Tasking Adversely Affects the Brain's Learning Systems." *psych. ucla. edu*. Jul. 2006.

Stacy, E. M., & Cain, J. (2015). Note-taking and Handouts in The Digital Age. *American journal of pharmaceutical education*, 79(7).

Additional Information

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Academic Standards, Curriculum & Pedagogy webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents) - http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ASCP.htm
<http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/ascp/index-ascp.html>

- Senate Policy on Academic Honesty and the Academic Integrity Website
- Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation

Making use of Learning Support & Enhancement Programs on Campus
YU START list of all resources at York to support students at <http://yustart.yorku.ca/all-resources-a-z/>

The Writing Centre supports students as they develop the skills and strategies required to become effective, independent writers through one-to-one tutoring, writing workshops, and elective writing courses. You may book appointments through the Writing Centre to work with a writing instructor on assignments at any stage in your writing process from understanding your assignment and getting started to substantive revision of drafts. Please note that the Writing Centre is not an editing service. In order to uphold your academic integrity, you are to play an active role in all decisions related to your writing.

The Writing Centre is fully operational via online appointments. Click the “Enrol Here” link on the Writing Centre website: <https://writing-centre.writ.laps.yorku.ca>