

SJSU CS200W Syllabus

Course Information

Section(s) Day and Time:

See SJSU Schedule of Classes

Location of Class:

Science 311

Instructor:

Name: Debra Caires

Office Hours (Days and Times): <http://www.cs.sjsu.edu/100w>

Telephone Number: 408-924-5166

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Course Description

The purpose of Advanced Technical Writing, CS200W, is to develop advanced proficiency in professional-level writing, and contemporary research strategies and methodologies through preparation of profession/graduate proposals, technical reports, and presentations based on peer-reviewed scholarly research. Participants broaden and deepen written, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills such that the mastery of discourse accepted in academia, industry, and the international business sector is achieved by practice and evaluation within the preparation of subject/discipline related reports, project proposals, and personal discourse.

All course assignments will be related to issues concerning careers in computer science, chemistry, physics, mathematics, biotechnology, business, and industry; all written, verbal, and non-verbal communication will be assessed for correctness, clarity, and conciseness.

Prerequisites: Graduate Level Standing

We will cover principles and practices of effective writing in the workplace. Technical, scientific, and electronic-mediated writing will be introduced. Each assignment includes audience and organizational needs, visual rhetoric, information design, electronic publication, ethics, technical style, usability testing, and team writing. It is strongly recommended that students have a solid college writing foundation, as this course is rigorous in its approach and fulfillment of the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR).

Required and recommended texts, readers, or other reading materials:

Required:

Pocket Book of Technical Writing for Engineers and Scientists - *Second Edition*,
By Leo Finkelstein, Jr., ISBN 0-07-246849-1 Copyright 2005, Part of
McGraw-Hill's (BEST) Basic Engineering Series and Tools
Course Reader for CS200W (Maple Press delivers the 2nd week of class)—cost
will be announced in class

Recommended:

The Bedford Handbook (Paperback) by Diana Hacker (Author) Publisher:
Bedford/St. Martin's; 7 edition (or any edition will work) (November 18,
2005) ISBN-10: 0312419333 or ISBN-13: 978-0312419332
Mastering APA Style: Student's Workbook and Training Guide. Editors: Harold
Gelfand, PhD and Charles J. Walker, PhD, 236 pages ISBN: 1-55798-
891-9 ISBN: 13- 978-1-55798-891-1 PUBLICATION DATE: November
2001 EDITION: Softcover

Other necessary equipment/materials/fees:

Access to the Internet, an E-mail account, and patience
2 Scantrons (# 882) and several #2 Pencils
Removable media (USB Drive)
12 Manila Folders and 12 Pendaflex (hanging folders) with Label Tabs
CD's (2) with covers
Microsoft Office™ or Open Office
3" Binder and a 2" Binder (for the Course Reader)

Student learning objectives for the course:

One of the goals of professional/technical communication has always been the ability to read, write, and speak well, of organizing, analyzing and displaying technical information, and of formulating reasonable and persuasive arguments, and negotiating contracts and technical information. The role of accurate, clear, and concise communication has become a mandatory component in the professional workplace, research, and industry. Information technology and wireless communication systems have redesigned our professional workforce by creating new roles for professionals in managing, organizing, and displaying information in a variety of media. Our society favors professionals who possess both scientific/technical training and broad skills in written, oral, and visual communication who respond intelligently to a wide range of critical situations. Typically, engineers, scientists, chemists, physics, and other professionals spend 40% or more of their day reading, writing, designing information, and delivering oral presentations. So with these challenges in mind, assignments and projects have been designed to hone the necessary skills for professional and research success.

Participants will read, analyze, and interpret material from their discipline specific fields, and will practice research and writing skills appropriate for topics in their selected subject area.

Student Outcomes**After completion of CS200W students will:**

1. Understand and know how to follow all the stages within the writing process (prewriting/writing/rewriting) and apply their understanding of such to technical, academic, and workplace writing tasks.
2. Know how to produce a set of professional documents related to technology, their discipline, and professional writing standards common for their discipline, and will have improved their ability to write clearly and accurately.
3. Understand the basic components of definitions, descriptions, process explanations, and other common forms of technical/research writing.
4. Be familiar with advanced technical/research writing concepts and terms, such as audience analysis, jargon, format, style guides, visuals, and presentation.
5. Be able to read, understand, and interpret material related to their discipline and advanced technology. Students will have an appreciation for some of the ideas, issues, and problems involved in writing about their discipline, the use of technology, and professional advanced workplace writing.
6. Be familiar with basic sources and methods of research and documentation on topics within their discipline, including on-line research. They will be able to synthesize and integrate material from primary and secondary scholarly sources with their own ideas in research papers (without plagiarizing).

Course and Assignment Goals

During the semester students will:

1. Explore the theoretical basis for practice and research in technical communication as it pertains to their discipline and industry, so that we may better understand how the field of science, in general, is developing and what directions it may take in the near, and distant, future.
2. Explore how Scientists, acting as technical communicators, build new knowledge, and to engage in these processes ourselves as future practicing professionals in the science industry.
3. Understand, generally, how theory and the results of research can shape practice, and to learn how we may apply specific theoretical approaches and research results to our own work.
4. Foster reflective practice, laying a foundation for a career that involves advanced professional writing, editing, and rewriting.
5. Understand the advanced features and processes of technical and professional discourse communities (scholarly research).
6. Specify and adapt to the constraints of specific rhetorical situations, including (but not limited to) audiences, purposes, and uses.
7. Develop strategies for accommodating multiple audiences in professional documents and for accommodating both technical and lay audiences.

8. Learn strategies for making documents accessible and end-user-centered. These include setting the context and creating pathways through a document.
9. Learn to strategically orchestrate elements of document design by using advanced style-guide directives, including (but not limited to) type, spacing, and color (understanding the 20/40/40 rule).
10. Design and integrate scientific tables, graphs, and figures in a user-centered, style guide driven format.
11. Develop individual and collaborative writing processes appropriate for technical documents within industry and the research sector.
12. Learn superstructures and conventions for common technical documents such as correspondence, reports, proposals, and instructions.
13. Refine writing style for more strategic clarity, concision, coherence, cohesion, and emphasis.
14. Work within limited time frames under budgetary constraints.
15. Understand the implications of plagiarism and legal ramifications of scientific miscommunication/false documentation.

Course requirements:

Assignments and Projects

Assignment	Unit(s)	Due Dates (TBA)
Statement of Objective*	1 Unit	
Abstract (descriptive and informative)*	2 Units	
Letter of Inquiry	1 Unit	
Executive Summary*	3 Units	
Introduction*	2 Units	
Specification Sheet	2 Units	
Research Report*	5 Units	
Thesis Proposal (Body)*	8 Units	
Design and Feasibility Report	5 Units	
Internal Proposal	5 Units	
Resume and Letter of Application	2 Units	
Set of Instructions	3 Units	
Final Exam	6 Units	
	Unit Total GPAs/45=s Overall Course Grade	

Each Unit =’s a weighted grade. Example: Set of Instructions=’s 2 units or if awarded a B it is calculated as 2 x 3.0=6.0

****Denotes parts of constructing the Thesis Proposal Assignment***

Assignment/Project Grades are as follows:

4.00 or an A	3.70 or an A-	3.30 or a B+
3.00 or a B	2.70 or a B-	2.30 or a C+
2.00 or a C	1.70 or a C-	1.30 or a D+
1.00 or a D	0.70 or a D-	.00 or an F = Missing or unacceptable work

Note: Each assignment has a weighted unit value and is multiplied by the GPA value above.

Unlike essay writing, advanced technical writing is defined by a set of standards often rendered as document templates. Faithfully following prescriptions for documents is often portrayed as the exclusive or single goal of technical writing. This is not the case. Professional document templates will help you organize your ideas by offering a working outline. Templates, based on a style guide, also provide for transitions among ideas. As you will see in the following grading criteria, emphasis is placed on the writer clearly defining the intended audience, utilizing advanced rhetoric development, clearly presenting the document's purpose, and a professional presentation of each document.

All assignments/projects are graded using a standardized rubric and are assessed as follows:

- A:** The overall communication and presentation show a high level of understanding and perspective. This assignment should be well-conceived and descriptive. The author must have a clear understanding of the audience. The work's purpose and objectives are clearly and convincingly stated. Concise background material clearly sets the context, frames, and introduces the subject. Technical content themes are logically stated and organized and support the overall objective. Data and descriptions are objectively stated and separated from interpretations. Content is detailed and suggestive. Conclusions are persuasive and well-supported by the data. The prose is easy to read. Exhibits a defined sense of unity and purpose. Includes topic, paragraph, and sentence transitions, and contains no major and few minor grammatical or technical errors. Graphics, when used, are highly informative, well-designed, and easy to interpret. The document template is used flawlessly.
- A-:** Generally means you meet all criteria for an 'A' except presentation and problems with one or two criteria. Audience and purpose may be clear, for instance, but you failed to develop an idea. For example, a proposal that addresses the criteria provided in an RFP (Request For Proposal) but fails to develop a section pertaining to the budget.
- B:** Presents content clearly and displays a firm grasp of the material but without as much focus and perspective as an 'A' paper. Successful effort is evident throughout the paper. Slight inconsistencies in identifying audience. The work's purpose and technical objectives may be somewhat ill-defined. Background material sets the context, frames, and introduces the subject. While well-written and adequately detailed, some sections

- may lack complete development and coherence. Unevenness in presentation and content. No major grammatical errors; some minor grammatical errors but none that disrupt an easy reading of the paper. Graphics are informative, intelligible and support the content of the paper. The document template used may be missing a minor element.
- B+:** Exceeds the criteria for a 'B' in one or more areas. For example, the purpose of the paper may possess greater clarity. Audience is clearly identified and the contexts governing the explanation and interpretation of the information are well-detailed. Greater consistency in execution than a 'B'; better paragraph development and coherence among sentences for example.
- B-:** A lack of connection among, for example, audience and purpose. A number of presentation errors affect the meaning of the sentences or structure of the text. A somewhat stronger relationship among the elements of the paper -- audience, purpose, content, style -- than a "C" paper. Still, the paper lacks full development of ideas and demonstrates some problems weaving together a complete understanding of the content with a clearly identified audience, purpose, and context.
- C:** Displays a reasonable grasp of the technical content but little original thought. The purpose of the work is inconsistently presented. The audience cannot be clearly identified. While understandable, the purpose and objective are not presented in relationship to the context set in the opening. Treatment of the topic is general. Lapses exist in coherence, organization, and development. Contains errors in technical content. Technical content marginally supports the conclusion. Some major grammatical errors and frequent minor grammatical errors. The paper is difficult to read and lack flow. Graphics do not support content objectives. The document template used may be missing a major element; a required section of a proposal for example.
- C+:** Exceeds the criteria for a 'C' in one or more areas. Perhaps more imagination in thought and explanation. Greater consistency in determining audience, purpose and objective. Fewer errors in technical content and somewhat greater coherence in the presentation and the conclusion. Fewer grammatical and cosmetic errors. An easier read than the 'C' paper.
- C-:** The elements of the paper -- audience, purpose, content, style -- are unclear and appear unrelated. For example, a final report about a weapons controversy may deal with a number of different systems in only a cursory way. No explanations are given about how the topics of the paper lead to one another. Presentation errors suggest no revision.

D (of any variety) or F

Warning: I will ask you revise documents awarded a grade of C, D or an F until you receive, minimally, a 'B'. You have the choice of whether or not to revise. If you choose not to revise, you will receive a failing grade and may be required to repeat CS200W for credit.

Lecture Schedule Basics (Schedule subject to change according to class needs.)

WEEK	Part One	Part Two
1	Course Syllabus and Introduction to Technical Writing	Portfolio Analysis
2	Select research project for the course. The objectives, nature, and style of technical writing. Audience profiling and participation	Library Instruction Assignment: Library Modules Discuss library lecture: abstracts, indexes, instructions
3	Writing Professional Memos Newsletter Positions Selected Yahoo Group Developed Gantt Chart & Organizational Chart	Euro Vita analysis Interviewing Techniques Personal Statements
4	Sentence style analysis Job listing analysis Résumé, letter of application Thank you letters Final report topics	Initial Memo Proposal for final project (E-mail assignment) Proposal: Background Section (Literature Reviews)
5	Sentence style: punctuation Avoiding Passive Sentences	An approach to technical writing tasks. Writing proposals: Request for Proposals or RFPs
6	Proposals: Proposals. Problem identification and solving. Objectives and approach in writing proposals. Proposal objective section **Assignment: Progress Report on preliminary research	Proposals: background section/level of technology Proposal: objective section Paraphrasing, quoting, and citing sources. Avoiding plagiarism. Writing abstracts/summaries Methods sections
7	Definitions//audience, paragraphs, key terms Scientific Method vs. Marketing Research	Proposals: Format and Structure Creating Scientific Graphics
8	Proposal: Layout	Proposal: Continued
9	Final Reports and analysis	Feasibility Reports
10	Description of a mechanism (in-class assignment). Definitions and descriptions	Description of a mechanism (in-class assignment). Due at end of class.
11	Completion reports, objectives, and approach. Analyzing information	Usability Reports More on graphics.
12	Section of final report Analyzing information. Format	Sentence style analysis Progress report II Final reports
13	Style. Elements of the final report	Final report introductions (revising the proposal sections that fit in the final report)
14	Oral presentations and PPT rules Work on elements of final report: front matter Editing the final report	Final reports: end matter Criteria for evaluating the final report
15	Class Wrap-up	Portfolio Assessment
16	Portfolio Presentations and Mini-Conference/Research Project (no absences permitted)	

Drop Information: College and departmental guidelines require serious and compelling reasons to drop a course. Grades alone do not constitute a reason for dropping a course (see San José State University's catalog). It is your responsibility to look-up SJSU's last day to add and last day to drop dates.

Late assignments, that cannot be rewritten, will receive a grade 10% lower than marked. Late assignments with a rewrite component, will forfeit the rewrite option for a grade increase. Assignments that have a rewrite component will be given an initial grade of 'F' if your instructor does not receive an "Extension Memo" requesting an extension without a penalty (we will cover this further in class).

Rewrite Policy: Students may increase a grade by one if the following rules are followed:

1. Original assignment was turned-in on time and includes ALL required parts.
2. Rewrite is submitted on the date instructor states it is due.
3. Rewrite is placed in the order instructor has stated.
4. Original graded assignment accompanies the rewritten document.
5. No exceptions.

**COURSE GRADE DISTRIBUTION:
A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, AND NO CREDIT**

Late Assignment Reminder!

Deadlines are to be met. Barring personal crisis, family emergency, or severe illness (please let me know ahead of time), all late papers will be subject to a 10% grade decrease per day late. Except for abrupt crises, no requests for extensions will be heard within 24 hours before the due date (that includes for reasons of computer malfunctioning, minor illnesses or being "behind"). Finally, please refer to the revision policy (below) in considering whether or not you should turn in an "unfinished" formal writing assignment.

Given the nature of formal and informal assignments, I will not accept late submissions.

Revision Policy

You may revise most formal writing assignments once during the semester (see assignment schedule). The rewritten assignment must be submitted with the original graded submission—no exceptions. If an original is not present, I will not grade the submitted document; if I do not have the original, graded assignment I do not know what you have corrected, changed, and/or improved within your document.

Submission Guidelines:

ALL assignments submitted for credit must be:

1. Typed (no exceptions)
2. Stapled (top left corner) (Exceptions: Proposals and Formal Report—these are bound)
3. Cover Sheet on top of submitted document (format covered in class)—no cover sheet equals no-credit
4. Audience Planning Form filled out completely (found in Course Reader)
5. Document in correct order
6. Turnitin.com color report with your written comments

Course Policies

You may be working with technologies that are unfamiliar to you; this course will require your patience and time to deal with technology. Here are the technologies you should have ready access to before you begin CS200W:

1. An E-mail account that lets you attach and receive files - this means that you need to have enough of your storage quota left to handle files for class. If you have an @sjsu.edu account and use something like Outlook for e-mail, you'll be fine. Accounts from third-party Internet Service Providers will also work, provided you have a POP or IMAP account. Be aware that g-mail and hotmail often reject email handouts I send to you.
2. Internet Access - you'll need a reliable way to browse the Web and store web-enabled files.
3. You will need Microsoft Office or similar Open Office software (especially Word and Power Point). If you work from home, you should be prepared to transfer files across platforms and versions of software.
4. Web authoring software - We'll be completing some web-related work, so it will be helpful to have software that supports web authoring. Even a simple visual editor such as Netscape Composer will be useful if you don't have access to a more full-featured package such as Dreamweaver or FrontPage for editing HTML, you can use a plain text editor like Notepad, though you can also use other code editors too. For image creation and processing it will be beneficial, though not always essential, to have access to Photoshop or a similar program.

In addition to having access to these technologies, you'll also need a positive attitude towards learning technologies that may be unfamiliar. In most cases, you will not need to be extremely experienced in the specific program or procedure you will be asked to complete.

Attendance & Participation Policy

Attendance and participation in this class are very important. In this class, much like a lab, you will do much of the work in collaboration with your peers and in the time provided for class meetings; it will be difficult or near impossible to make-up

missed work. When working in collaboration with your classmates, a lack of participation will lead to resentment among your peers and, often, a poor end result for the entire team, thus impacting your grade (and theirs) in a negative fashion.

Assignment Policies

You must complete all major assignments in order to pass CS200W. Production guidelines for each document will be discussed in class only, and I will not repeat lectures on an individual basis. Please take good notes and follow all guidelines. If you hand-in documents that do not conform to APA guidelines and CS200W's Style Guide, they will be returned to you for correction before they are graded and/or receive a no-credit.

If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out the assignments you missed and arrive prepared for the next class. Sign-up and stay in-touch with your Yahoo group for this purpose. I am not a participant in the Yahoo group, as this is strictly for peer-to-peer communication.

Computer Responsibilities

You have the following computer-related responsibilities in this class: You are expected to store primary and backup copies of your work, including drafts, e-mail, and notes, on your home directory and on backup media. Be prepared in the event that one of these backup methods fails! You are expected to check your e-mail regularly for updates to the schedule, new assignments, and messages; email is my preferred mode of contact. You are responsible for spending time outside of class to hone your computer skills and become knowledgeable with applications that are unfamiliar to you. You must be prepared to convert all in-class work, shared files for group projects, and electronically submitted files to the appropriate format (including computer platform, application, and version) once in class. You are responsible for learning and making any necessary cross-platform translations between machines.

Think of the network environment in this class as your workplace. Adapting to new computer systems, platforms, and software will be increasingly important as you progress in your professional development.

A Note About Academic Integrity:

"Academic integrity is essential to the mission of San José State University. As such, students are expected to perform their own work (except when collaboration is expressly permitted by the course instructor) without the use of any outside resources. Students are not permitted to use old tests, quizzes when preparing for exams, nor may they consult with students who have already taken the exam. When practiced, academic integrity ensures that all students are fairly graded. Violations to the Academic Integrity Policy undermine the educational process and will not be tolerated. It also demonstrates a lack of

respect for oneself, fellow students and the course instructor and can ruin the university's reputation and the value of the degrees it offers.

We all share the obligation to maintain an environment that practices academic integrity. Violators of the Academic Integrity Policy will be subject to failing this course and being reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Ethical Development for disciplinary action, which could result in suspension or expulsion from San José State University. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The policy on academic integrity can be found at http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct." Office of Student Conduct & Ethical Development.

The CSU Student Handbook defines various forms of academic dishonesty and procedures for responding to them. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with these policies and understanding the Academic Integrity Policy at SJSU.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Plagiarism and Cheating are examples of student code violations at SJSU. All students caught cheating will be reported to the university and their grade will be dropped.

University, College, or Department Policy Information (found in the Student Handbook)

1.0 DEFINITIONS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

1.1 CHEATING

At SJSU, cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means. Cheating at SJSU includes but is not limited to:

- 1.1.1. Copying, in part or in whole, from another's test or other evaluation instrument including homework assignments, worksheets, lab reports, essays, summaries, quizzes, etc.;
- 1.1.2. Submitting work previously graded in another course unless this has been approved by the course instructor or by departmental policy;
- 1.1.3. Submitting work simultaneously presented in two courses, unless this has been approved by both course instructors or by the department policies of both departments;
- 1.1.4. Using or consulting, prior to, or during an examination, sources or materials not authorized by the instructor;
- 1.1.5. Altering or interfering with the grading process;
- 1.1.6. Sitting for an examination by a surrogate, or as a surrogate;
- 1.1.7. Any other act committed by a student in the course of their academic work which defrauds or misrepresents, including aiding or abetting in any of the actions defined above.

1.2 PLAGIARISM

At SJSU plagiarism is the act of representing the work of another as one's own without giving appropriate credit, regardless of how that work was obtained, and/or submitting it to fulfill academic requirements. Plagiarism at SJSU includes but is not limited to:

1.2.1 The act of incorporating the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts of, and/or the specific substance of another's work, without giving appropriate credit, and/or representing the product as one's own work;

1.2.2 Representing another's artistic/scholarly works such as musical compositions, computer programs, photographs, paintings, drawing, sculptures, or similar works as one's own.

WARNING: Students are required to turn-in **ALL** assignments to

<http://www.turnitin.com> and provide their instructor with a printout of the COLOR report. Assignments submitted without the report will be returned to the student and given “**no credit**” for the assignment (No Credit equals an ‘F’). No exceptions.

Accommodations:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with the Disability Resource Center to establish a record of their disability (924-6000).

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