ENGL 3309: Technical Writing and Document Design

Summer 2019, Online Course

Instructor: Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr.

E-mail: bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu

Office: Warrior Hall 420A or University Writing Center

Office Hours: Walk-in or Email for an Appointment

Course Description: This class acquaints students with the processes and rhetorical strategies for professional communication, including researching, drafting, editing, revising, and designing in various professional writing genres such as job application documents, written instructions, proposals, and feasibility reports. The primary focus of the class is on creating rhetorically effective professional written communications that incorporate effective design principles and practices to inform, explain, and persuade a variety of different professional audiences.

Course Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Comprehend, and apply to their professional writing practices, key rhetorical concepts through composing a variety of texts for different audiences/purposes
- Use effective design principles in their professional communications
- Become familiar with, and adhere to, various genre conventions for professional writing, including understanding the pragmatic and epistemological rationales behind such conventions
- Integrate text, images, graphs, graphics, and other modalities to enhance the rhetorical effectiveness of their professional communications
- Engage with and apply criticism and feedback from both peers and their instructor in order to improve their writing and view writing as a social process
- Develop their writing through multiple drafts by refining their composition practices and employing successful revision and editing strategies
Required Textbooks and Materials:

- Various .pdf articles and selections from texts (available through Canvas)
- Access to a Computer (the university provides a number of computer labs)

This course is an online course and will use the TAMUCT Instructure Canvas learning management system.

Logon to [TAMUCT Canvas](https://tamuct.instructure.com)

Username: Your MyCT username (xx123 or everything before the "@" in your MyCT e-mail address)

Password: Your MyCT password

**Grading Scheme:** For this class, your grade will be comprised of your class activities (detailed below) and four major projects. Additionally, you will revise one of your first three major projects for a new grade. The weights for each component are as follows:

Class Activities= 10%

“Getting Hired! Creating an Effective Résumé and Cover Letter”= 20%

“You Don’t Need to Punch a Hole in the Wall! Redesigning Written Instructions for Clarity and Usability”= 20%

“Hey A&M–Central Texas, This Might Work Better! Writing a Persuasive Memo/Text to Affect Change”= 20%

“Have That Report on my Desk by 4:30 p.m. Today! Composing an Effective, and Persuasive, Proposal or Feasibility Report”= 30%

“Realize (No Text is Ever Perfect) and Revise! Improving and Polishing Your Text”= Substitutes as the Grade for “Getting Hired!”, “You Don’t Need to Punch a Hole in the Wall!”, or “Hey A&M–Central Texas, This Might Work Better!”

**Class Activities:** Throughout the various modules you complete for this course, you will have specific class activities to complete. For each class activity, you are expected to follow the instructions provided (please contact me promptly if you are unclear about the instructions) and put forth a sincere effort toward the task. The primary purposes for these class activities are to allow you to practice the skills and concepts you learn in this course as well as receive informal feedback from me as to your progress along with your understanding and application of these skills and concepts. Additionally, you will also be required to submit early drafts of certain assignments and offer feedback to your peers.

For your class activities, you will receive one of four marks: a ✓+ (100), a ✓ (90), a ✓− (70), or a 0. A ✓+ reflects work that goes above and beyond the expectations of the class activity; a ✓ reflects quality work that meets the expectations of the class activity; a ✓− reflects work that
does not meet the expectations of the class activity and/or demonstrates minimal effort; and a 0 will be given for an incomplete assignment. These class activities are for your benefit and will help you to practice the skills and concepts needed for the various major projects you will complete. Take them seriously and put forth your maximum effort.

**Reflective Memos:** For each of the four main projects you will submit a reflective memo. This memo is a vital component of your grade; it allows me to understand the audience you are writing for, your rhetorical intentions, and the thought processes behind the decisions you made. When I go to assess your projects, my assessment is heavily influenced by the rationales you articulate in your reflective memo.

These memos should be concise, yet you do need to provide detailed answers for all of the reflective questions. A solid paragraph (four to five sentences) for your response to each question will most likely be sufficient.

Be forewarned, though. If your reflective memo does not provide sufficient detail, it can result in you being asked to resubmit it and/or a reduction in your overall grade. This is your opportunity to make me aware of your rhetorical intentions—take advantage of it!

**Class Civility Policy:** This class will tolerate neither disruptive language nor disruptive behavior. Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to, violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic or anti-ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category). While each of you have a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.

Disruptive behavior includes harassing other students, interfering with the activities of the class for the purpose of agitation, etc. This class functions on the premise of respect, and you will be addressed and/or face reprimand if you violate any part of this statement on civility.

However, please do feel free to engage in constructive criticism and debates. This policy is not meant to discourage disagreement or passionate discussion. It is not my intention to censor your opinions. Yet, I do feel it is important to foster an environment conducive to learning where no one feels threatened and/or not entitled to their opinion.

Remember, if you disagree with someone (including myself), always remember to argue against the IDEA the person is presenting—not the individual.

**Late Work:** While I understand that circumstances may arise that could prevent you from turning an assignment in on time, I do not accept late work—period! However, I am always willing to discuss extensions ahead of time. If you have a reasonable reason why you believe
you should be entitled to an extension, email me and we can discuss an extension via email or set-up a time to meet in person to discuss the issues you are experiencing.

**Academic Integrity:** Texas A&M University–Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M–Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student’s academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of sources, using another student’s work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be reported to the university’s Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university’s standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

**Class Plagiarism Policy:** As an instructor, I operate by the WPA (Council of Writing Program Administrators) definition of plagiarism: “In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer **deliberately** uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” The key here is deliberate—I do not want you to be so paranoid about plagiarism that it inhibits your creativity.

To that extent, any instance of “plagiarism” that **does not appear to be deliberate in intent** will be dealt with “in house.” You may be asked to revise; I may even deduct from your grade if this was a result of negligence. However, unless intentional, you will not fail merely as a result of plagiarism nor will you be brought up on plagiarism charges.

That being said, deliberate plagiarism will not be tolerated in any manner. If you willfully steal someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledgment, or submit an assignment for this class that you submitted for another (without previously discussing it with me), be forewarned—you will receive a 0 for the assignment, and I will pursue plagiarism charges with the utmost zeal! Such behavior hinders your learning, is unfair to your classmates, is a violation of my trust, and—above all else—is highly unethical. This is your one and only warning—you would be wise to heed it!

**911 Cellular:** Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University – Central Texas

911Cellular is an emergency notification service that gives Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate health and safety emergency information quickly via email,
text message, and social media. All students are automatically enrolled in 911 Cellular through their myCT email account.

Connect at 911Cellular [https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in 911Cellular, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.

**Technology Support:** For technology issues, students should contact Help Desk Central. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

Email: helpdesk@tamu.edu

Phone: (254) 519-5466

Web Chat: http://hdc.tamu.edu

When calling for support please let your support technician know you are a TAMUCT student. For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

**Drop Policy:** If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete a Drop Request Form:

[https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf](https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf)

Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar’s Office will provide a deadline on the University Calendar for which the form must be completed, signed, and returned. Once you return the signed form to the Registrar’s Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar’s Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

**Academic Accommodations:** At Texas A&M University–Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier free education. The Department of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the University’s programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations please contact the Department of Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

For more information please visit our Access & Inclusion Canvas page (log-in required): [https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717](https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717)

**Important information for Pregnant and/or Parenting Students:** Texas A&M University–Central Texas supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and related guidance from US Department of Education’s Office of
Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs’ Office can assist students who are pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. Students should seek out assistance as early in the pregnancy as possible. For more information, please visit the Student Affairs web page: https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/index.html. Students may also contact the institution’s Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these requirements and guidelines online, please visit the website: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf.

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and gender—including pregnancy, parenting, and all related conditions. A&M-Central Texas is able to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to pregnant and parenting students. All pregnant and parenting students should contact the Associate Dean in the Division of Student Affairs at (254) 501-5909 to seek out assistance. Students may also contact the University’s Title IX Coordinator.

University Writing Center: Located in Warrior Hall 416, the University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University–Central Texas (A&M–Central Texas) is a free workspace open to all A&M–Central Texas students from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday with online only hours Monday thru Thursday from 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process. While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. By providing a practice audience for students’ ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students’ texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. In addition, students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs the Microsoft Office suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting our resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the UWC is here to help!

Students may arrange a one-to-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by visiting the UWC during normal operating hours (both half-hour and hour sessions are available) or by making an appointment via WCOnline at https://tamuct.mywconline.com/. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu if you have any questions about the UWC and/or need any assistance with scheduling.

Tutoring: Tutoring is available to all A&M-Central Texas students, both on-campus and online. Subjects tutored on campus include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Tutors are available at the Tutoring Center in Warrior Hall, Suite 111.
If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, or have any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at (254) 519-5796, or by emailing Dr. DeEadra Albert-Green at deeadra.albertgreen@tamuct.edu.

Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject from on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log in and receive FREE online tutoring support. This tool provides tutoring in over 40 subject areas. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.

**University Library:** The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 250,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 85,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders. Research assistance from a librarian is also available 24 hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place on Skype or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.

Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our [Library website](http://tamuct.libguides.com/index).

**A Note about Sexual Violence at A&M-Central Texas:** Sexual violence is a serious safety, social justice, and public health issue. The university offers support for anyone struggling with these issues. University faculty are mandated reporters, so if someone discloses that they were sexually assaulted (or a victim of Domestic/Dating Violence or Stalking) while a student at TAMUCT, faculty members are required to inform the Title IX Office. If you want to discuss any of these issues confidentially, you can do so through Student Counseling (254-501-5955) located on the second floor of Warrior Hall (207L).

Sexual violence can occur on our campus because predators often feel emboldened, and victims often feel silenced or shamed. It is incumbent on ALL of us to find ways to actively create environments that tell predators we don’t agree with their behaviors and tell survivors we will support them. Your actions matter. Don’t be a bystander; be an agent of change. For additional information on campus policy and resources visit the Title IX webpage: [https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/compliance/titleix.php](https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/compliance/titleix.php).

**Artifact Collection:** To ensure the learning outcomes are met in the English Department, there is a program-wide artifact collection process. To that end, artifacts from ENGL 3309: Technical
Writing and Document Design this semester may be used for programmatic assessment. Please note that all efforts will be made to keep your identity anonymous; as such, all identifying markers will be removed from your work if used for programmatic assessment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu.

**Syllabus Change Policy**: Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.
ENGL 3309: Technical Writing and Document Design—Major Projects

“Getting Hired! Creating an Effective Résumé and Cover Letter”
(precisely 1 page each unless applying for a position that deviates from conventions)

For your first assignment, you are going to begin where all careers begin—you are going to produce documents in order to obtain a job! Your first step will be to find a job advertisement for a position that you will theoretically be eligible for upon your graduation from A&M–Central Texas. Take your time; you want to find a job advertisement that fits you so that when you graduate, you will be able to draw upon the materials you have created. If you do not currently fit the job criteria, do not worry. For the purposes of this assignment, you are allowed to project yourself forward (i.e. list credentials and discuss experiences you will have by the time you graduate) in order to produce the best possible job materials.

Once you have found your job advertisement, examine the job advertisement and the organization’s website thoroughly. What type of employee are they looking for? What characteristics of a potential employee are valued the most? How do you fit this position? In what ways can you tailor your materials to highlight your strengths and, perhaps, hide your weaknesses?

After you have analyzed your advertisement and your potential audience, you will next want to contemplate an arrangement and layout for your résumé. You have no specific guidelines for how to do so, yet you will want to include the main information and sections that your textbook suggests. Beyond that, however, you are free to organize your résumé in any way you like. A chronological approach might work best for you; perhaps you wish to emphasize skills; you might want to highlight your education first. Regardless of what strategy you choose, you will want to articulate in your reflective memo how this strategy was apt for the particular rhetorical situation in which you are composing. You will also need to create a cover letter. Once again, you are free to layout your cover letter in any way you desire; however, you should follow the basic strategies from your textbook as well as have sound justifications for the choices you make.

When you submit your assignment, you will need to provide me with a link and/or a digital version of your job advertisement. (If you use a link, please provide the link in your reflective memo; if you use a .pdf, please attach it along with your other materials.) In addition, remember—polish is imperative!
Your résumé and cover letter will primarily be assessed predicated on how well you tailor your documents to the rhetorical situation, your ability to present yourself in a professional and successful fashion, the effectiveness of your document design and arrangement, and the overall polish of your documents (e.g. proper formatting, apt use of design principles, grammatical perfection, etc.). The main question I will ask myself as I assess your résumé and cover letter will be: *If I were this employer, would I give significant consideration to this applicant?*

**Reflective Memo:**

1. What employer, and for which specific job, are you applying for? What are the ideal characteristics, educational background, and skills of a potential employee for this specific position?

2. How did you tailor your résumé and cover letter to meet the needs of this particular rhetorical situation? What specific strategies did you employ in order to make your materials more effective rhetorically?

3. What are the biggest strengths of your job documents? What are their greatest weaknesses? How might you improve upon those weaknesses if you choose to revise this project at the end of the semester?

4. How would you like me to focus my response to your job documents? In other words, what aspects of your professional materials do you most want feedback in regard to?
“You Don’t Need to Punch a Hole in the Wall! Redesigning Written Instructions for Clarity and Usability”
(detailed enough so that your readers can follow the instructions perfectly)

We have all been there! Maybe you were building a piece of furniture you just purchased. Perhaps you had a new child on the way and were attempting to assemble a crib, baby swing, etc. Or you might just have been trying to complete a task on your computer. Regardless of the circumstances, you know the frustration that can emerge when you are working with poorly written instructions. Nothing can get tempers flaring quite like written instructions that are difficult to comprehend and apply.

Here is your chance to save others from that frustration! For this assignment, you are going to find poorly written instructions and redesign them from the beginning, creating a new set of instructions that are clearer and more user-friendly. Your first task will be to find a set of instructions that you believe are particularly problematic. These could be instructions for assembling a product; they might pertain to performing a common cleaning and/or maintenance task; you may be inclined to redesign a set of pesky instructions for a digital task. You have a multitude of possibilities for this project.

Once you have chosen a set of instructions, take some time to examine them for why they are failing. How did you get confused and/or frustrated while assembling this product and/or trying to complete this task? Where did the process go wrong? What steps are missing? Why are certain aspects of the instructions unclear? Are the images and/or graphics difficult to decipher? Are parts not labelled well? Etc. Furthermore, take the time to assemble the product, complete the task, and/or follow the process to get the desired result. Take detailed notes on how you were successful.

After you have mastered the assembly, task, and/or process, begin to create your instructions using your experience and your notes to guide you. Plan ahead and create an effective design and concise, yet sufficiently detailed, text to aid your reader in assembling the product, completing the task, and/or following the process. Also, contemplate what possible design elements and writing strategies might make these instructions easier for your readers. Would graphics be helpful? Should you use a larger font size since readers might be reading at a distance? Would a certain style of folding the instructions make them easier to work with? Can you add part labels to make finding pieces less complicated? Etc.

When you submit this assignment, you will need to include images of the original instructions, a digital version of the instructions, and/or a link to the instructions. Furthermore, especially for this assignment, make sure to be extremely articulate when answering the questions on your reflective memo. This will allow me to clearly understand how your
redesigned instructions are improving upon the original instructions as well as why you redesigned your instructions in the manner that you chose. Your instructions have no set length; however, they should be detailed enough to make sure your reader can assemble the product, complete the task, and/or follow the process.

Assessment for your instructions will primarily be based upon the functionality of your design; the level of sufficient detail you provide; the ease of use of your writing style and design; the overall efficiency in which your instructions allow someone to assemble a product, complete a task, and/or follow a process; and the degree to which you improved upon the original instructions. Essentially, when I assess your instructions, I will ask myself: How well do these instructions aid a reader in assembling this product, completing this task, and/or following this process? To what extent did this writer improve upon the original instructions?

**Reflective Memo:**

1. Why did you choose to redesign this set of instructions? Overall, what issues did these instructions present that you wished to improve?

2. What specific changes did you make to these instructions during your redesign? How do you believe these changes improved these instructions from a user standpoint? Why are these instructions better than the originals?

3. Overall, how did you tailor your instructions to meet the needs of your readers? What specific strategies did you employ in order to make your instructions more user-friendly?

4. How did you integrate multiple modes into your instructions to improve the user experience? Why did you choose these modes instead of alphanumeric text and/or other modes? What specific affordances do they offer?

5. What are the biggest strengths of your instructions? What are their greatest weaknesses? How might you improve your instructions if you choose to revise this project at the end of the semester?

6. How would you like me to focus my response to your instructions? On what aspects of your instructions would you benefit the most from receiving feedback?
As students of A&M–Central Texas, you have probably noticed an aspect of the university that you believe could be improved upon. After all, your position as a student provides you with a unique perspective on how A&M–Central Texas operates. What causes you problems at A&M–Central Texas? Have you noticed any aspect of A&M–Central Texas that is done in a disorganized fashion? Are certain students currently being adversely affected by a particular policy? Is A&M–Central Texas (gasp!) spending money inefficiently? Would a change in a process, program, or the use of certain resources save A&M–Central Texas money? Etc. The change might be significant (e.g. a revision to a major A&M–Central Texas policy) or could be rather small (e.g. switching an office supply currently used to save money). The possibilities are endless!

After you have selected the issue you would like to address, you will then want to compose a memo or other persuasive text to a member or members of A&M–Central Texas, policy makers, fellow students, and/or any other audiences invested in A&M–Central Texas’ mission, attempting to persuade this audience to adopt a plan, embrace a certain course of action, listen to your suggestion, donate money, etc. You will want to contemplate the best persuasive strategies to convince your audience to embrace your suggestion(s) and/or take action. Thoroughly contemplate: Why does A&M–Central Texas currently take the approach they are taking? How would your plan, course of action, suggestion, request for donations, etc. enable your audience to better accomplish their goals? Why might this audience be reluctant to accept your ideas/requests? In what ways could you convince them that your ideas align with their interests?

Your persuasive memo/text should be one to two pages single-spaced and no more than two pages single-spaced. (In this case, brevity is the soul of wit!) As far as formatting is concerned, you can follow the format a particular office at A&M–Central Texas uses or design your own effective format (use your textbook for guidance).

When I assess your persuasive memo/text, I will primarily be focusing on the effectiveness of your persuasive appeals, your ability to cater your rhetoric to your specific audience, the appropriateness of your tone and style, and the overall polish of your finished product. The main question I will ask myself is: If I were a member of the intended audience at A&M–Central Texas, would I be persuaded by this memo/text?
Reflective Memo:

1. What is the main plan, course of action, suggestion, request for donations, etc. for which you are trying to persuade your readers? Why do you believe it would improve A&M–Central Texas’ operations and/or educational practices?

2. Who is the audience for your memo? How did you cater your rhetoric to this particular audience? What types of persuasive appeals did you believe would work best?

3. Why is your memo/text formatted in the manner you have chosen? Is it a university standard or did you design your own formatting? If a university standard, what do you believe works about the design and, conversely, what do you believe could be improved upon? If you used your own formatting, why did you choose the design that you did?

4. What are the biggest strengths of your memo/text? What are its greatest weaknesses? How might you improve this memo/text if you choose to revise this project at the end of the semester?

5. How would you like me to focus my response to your memo/text? Where can I focus my attention to help you improve it the most?
“Have That Report on my Desk by 4:30 p.m. Today! Composing an Effective, and Persuasive, Proposal or Feasibility Report”
(4-5 pages single-spaced minimum including images, graphs, tables, etc.)

While many students operate under the delusion that they will never write a report again once they graduate college, the fact is—for most students—nothing is further from the truth! Throughout your professional career, you will most likely compose a variety of summaries, proposals, and feasibility reports. Now is your time to practice and help improve A&M–Central Texas in the process!

For starters, you will choose from one of the two genres allowed for this assignment: a formal proposal or a feasibility report. Talk to students, faculty, and employees at A&M–Central Texas or members of the communities surrounding A&M–Central Texas. What do they need and want? Would an effective strategy possibly allow for a better course of action to be taken, streamline a process in a more efficient manner, etc.? A proposal is probably your best option. Is A&M–Central Texas facing a key decision between multiple options? You might want to create a feasibility report to help A&M–Central Texas make this crucial decision in a more informed and reasoned manner.

After you have selected your genre, you will need to conduct research. What types of background information will be necessary for your readers? What information will you need to provide empirical and/or reasoned arguments for your proposal? If you are composing a feasibility report, what criteria will you be using? How will you gather information about this criteria? What types of evidence will be the most beneficial and pertinent for your readers? Thorough and diligent research are key to both of these genres.

Next, you will want to consider the arrangement for your proposal or feasibility report. If you are composing a proposal, you are required to have the following sections: introduction, problem, solution, and costs (although you can use different names for your headings). Furthermore, as your textbook suggests, you will possibly also wish to include objectives, a methods section, and any other pertinent information necessary to make your proposal effective. If you are composing a feasibility report, you are required to have the following sections: introduction, overview of alternatives, criteria, evaluation, and conclusions (although you can use different names for your headings). You will also possibly benefit from including a
methods section as well as a recommendations section. Additionally, depending on the rhetorical situation, you may also need to include other sections to reach your rhetorical aims. The key to your arrangement will be providing all of the information necessary in as concise and reader-centered a way as possible.

As you compose your proposal or feasibility report, continually keep your audience in mind. How can you best frame the problem for your readers? What are the best strategies to persuade them of the ideas and suggestions in your proposal? Why might they be reluctant to accept your suggestions? How might a reluctant reader question the criteria for your feasibility report? What strategies can you employ to get them to accept your criteria? How can you convince your readers that your chosen alternative is the best for A&M–Central Texas? Remember, always keep your audience in mind as you compose these documents.

Your proposal or feasibility report should be a minimum of four to five pages single-spaced including images, graphs, tables, etc. While the page minimum includes multiple modalities, these modalities need to be rhetorically effective; you cannot merely litter your report with pictures and pointless graphs and tables to meet the requirements of this assignment. In addition, it will need to have all of the required sections for the particular genre and be structured in a logical fashion for your particular rhetorical aims.

You are required to have at least two outside sources and at least one data set from original research. Your sources should be cited in MLA style, APA style, Chicago style, or the citation format employed by the particular office you are composing for or are addressing.

Assessment for your proposal or feasibility report will primarily be predicated upon the overall rhetorical effectiveness of your document, the efficacy—and underlying logic—of your organizational structure, the quality and pertinence of your research, your incorporation of multiple modes to communicate your message, and the overall polished nature of your proposal or feasibility report. The primary question I will ask myself when I evaluate your proposal or feasibility report will be: If I were a decision-maker for this particular office at A&M–Central Texas, how likely would I be to accept the suggestions in this proposal or support the alternative chosen in this feasibility report?

Reflective Memo:

1. What is the main plan, course of action, suggestion, etc. for which you are trying to persuade readers of your proposal? If you are composing a feasibility report, what major decision are you trying to provide information about to allow your readers to make an informed choice?

2. Who is the audience for your proposal or feasibility report? How did you cater your rhetoric to this particular audience?

3. Why is your proposal or feasibility report organized in the particular manner you have chosen? Why is this organizational strategy the most effective for your audience?

4. How will your proposal or feasibility report enable A&M–Central Texas and/or a particular office at A&M–Central Texas to better accomplish its mission? In essence, what value does your document bring to A&M–Central Texas?
5. What are the biggest strengths of your proposal or feasibility report? What are its greatest weaknesses? How might you improve this document if you had the opportunity to revise it?

6. How would you like me to focus my response to your proposal or feasibility report? Where can I aim my attention to help you improve on composing in such a genre in the future?
“Realize (No Text is Ever Perfect) and Revise! Improving and Polishing Your Text”
(a revision of one of your first three projects accompanied by a 2 page reflection)

Great texts are not created immediately—they are crafted through thorough and diligent revision! For your final assignment, you have the opportunity to revise one of your first three assignments (i.e. “Getting Hired! Creating an Effective Résumé and Cover Letter,” “You Don’t Need to Punch a Hole in the Wall! Redesigning Written Instructions for Clarity and Usability,” or “Hey A&M–Central Texas, This Might Work Better! Writing a Persuasive Memo/Text to Affect Change”). Additionally, you will provide a two page reflection detailing how you revised this text and why you believe these revisions improve the text substantially.

Your first step will be to decide which project you wish to revise. Be careful with this decision—you may be attempted to merely revise the project on which you received the lowest grade. Be leery of such a quick choice, however. If you are going to be applying for jobs soon, revising “Getting Hired! Creating an Effective Résumé and Cover Letter” may be your smartest decision even if you received a high grade. Furthermore, different writers excel at different genres; your lowest grade may be in a genre you are not confident you can improve enough in to receive a substantially better grade. In the end, the choice is yours, but make it wisely.

Next, you will want to identify the areas of the project which need the most improvement and the revisions you can make to improve them. Did you struggle with making rational arguments for your “Hey A&M–Central Texas, This Might Work Better! Writing a Persuasive Memo/Text to Affect Change” project? You may wish to specifically focus on your rhetorical strategies for that assignment. Were the modes you included for your “You Don’t Need to Punch a Hole in the Wall! Redesigning Written Instructions for Clarity and Usability” project ineffective? You might possibly desire to spend more time with the visual design of your instructions. Additionally, you might engage in some user-testing in order to determine which areas of your project are the weakest and most in need of revision. Whichever areas you identify, be precise. Trying to grapple with every issue in a text at once can be overwhelming and ineffective.

Once you have identified the areas you want to improve, decide which improvements will be the most impactful for your text. While you want to improve as much as you can, making all possible revisions may not be feasible in the time that you have. Carefully contemplate the changes you wish to make and how important they are to improving your text. Prioritize and make the most pertinent revisions first.

When you begin editing your first draft

[Image: Dark and difficult times lie ahead. Soon we must all face the choice between what is right and what is easy.]
Along with your revisions for the project you chose, you will also need to compose a two page reflection detailing the specific revisions you made (be as clear as possible—this is part of being a great technical writer) and offering insight into why you made these revisions in order to improve your text. This is your opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned in this class and how you can apply it to revising professional documents.

Assessment of your revisions will emphasize the overall quality of the revised document, the impact your specific revisions had on your document, your ability to describe the changes you made in a clear and concise fashion, the manner in which you articulate the rationales behind the revisions you made, and the overall polish of your work. When I am finished reading your revised text and reflection, the main question I will ask myself will be: How substantially did this student improve the project s/he revised and articulate these revisions to me in a clear, concise fashion while providing insight and nuance toward the discussion of her/his revisions?