

Fall 2026 Technical Writing Syllabus

ENGL 2311 | Distance Learning | Online
Texas A&M University-San Antonio

Professor April Poissant | apoissant@tamusa.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Delivery

This is an asynchronous online course delivered via Blackboard. Asynchronous means that you aren't required to login to the Blackboard course or attend a virtual lecture at certain times each week. However, you're required to complete weekly course tasks and writing assignments. In lieu of a formal lecture, instruction takes the form of assigned readings, videos, and other multimedia content that you can review at your own pace each week. Please plan to access course material and submit assignments throughout each week.

Catalog Description

ENGL 2311 examines the language practices of technical writers. The course addresses topics such as the history of technical writing and communication, the ethics of technical writing, and the visual dimensions of technical writing, including design and data visualization. Students gain practical experience writing in a variety of technical genres and develop a digital portfolio of their work. Prerequisite: ENGL 1301

Student Learning Outcomes

Program Outcomes

All First-Year Composition (FYC) courses are part of the Texas Core Curriculum. They are specifically designated as "Core 10" courses, which focus on communication. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, "Core 10" courses "involve the command of oral, aural, written, and visual literacy skills that enable people to exchange messages appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience." These courses are expected to achieve the following Core Curriculum outcomes:

- **Communication** – The effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
- **Critical Thinking** – Creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- **Personal Responsibility** – The ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making
- **Teamwork** – The ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal

Here are some of the ways your FYC course might help you to achieve these outcomes:

- **Communication** – Your instructor will likely teach you “rhetorical agency,” which is the ability to make intentional choices when composing texts for different audiences and contexts
- **Critical Thinking** – Your instructor will likely ask you to analyze a variety of texts, with particular attention both to the choices the authors/artists made and to the way language functions in society. This is called Critical Language Awareness
- **Personal Responsibility** – You’ll fulfill this outcome mostly through reflection on your writing practices and processes. This could take the form of “labor logs” and “labor journals.”
- **Teamwork** – You’ll do a lot of group-based work this semester. This could look like the formation of “Writing Communities,” but it could also look like small-group discussions and collaborative activities.

Not all FYC courses will help you to achieve the Core Curriculum outcomes the same way, but they are all designed to help you achieve the outcomes.

FYC Program Commitments, Goals, and Key Terms

Faculty in the FYC program help you to achieve the Core Curriculum outcomes through a specific set of commitments and goals. Our commitments guide what we teach, how we teach, and how we interact with you, and our goals support your growth and development as a writer. In short, our commitments and goals give us focus and direction and stand as a representation of what we value and believe in. If you’re ever unsure of what you’re doing for this course, you can always refer to this part of the syllabus for context.

Here are the things FYC faculty are committed to in our teaching:

1. collaborating with you with care and compassion,
2. emphasizing your learning and growth,
3. encouraging you to take risks and embrace failure,
4. honoring variations in your reading and languaging, and
5. centering and sustaining your cultural and linguistic identity.

And here are the goals we’re trying to achieve:

1. cultivating your sense of belonging as a writer,
2. increasing your rhetorical awareness,
3. strengthening your critical language awareness,
4. deepening your introspection and self-awareness as a writer,
5. increasing your skills and engagement as a reader,
6. inspiring creativity, risk-taking, and versatility in your writing,
7. increasing your self-determination and resilience as a writer,
8. helping you to see yourself as a writer,
9. increasing your confidence as a writer, and
10. increasing your appreciation of your languaging

FYC faculty promise to work toward each of those goals in everything we do with and for you this semester.

In addition to the commitments and goals, there's a set of key terms that inform all that FYC faculty do in the classroom. These terms guide the work FYC faculty do with you, and they help us all to deepen our understanding of writing specifically and of languaging generally. If you ever need a reminder of what FYC faculty are trying to teach you, please refer to the list of terms below.

- **Belonging:** the feeling of being valued, respected, and included as you are
- **Languaging:** the ongoing process of developing and communicating meaning and ideas
- **Translanguaging:** the process of using one's full linguistic repertoire to interpret, understand, and communicate meaning and ideas
- **Audience:** the person or the group of people languaging is intended to affect
- **Purpose:** the intended effect or impact of languaging
- **Genre:** a specific form of languaging that is shaped by social convention and audience expectation
- **Context:** the situation in which languaging occurs
- **Rhetorical Agency:** the ability to assess context and to make intentional choices when languaging
- **Critical Language Awareness:** the ability to examine and critique how language functions in society
- **Standard Language Ideology:** the belief that a language has an ideal, consistent, and "correct" form that should be privileged

Required Texts and Materials

- Equipment: A desktop computer or laptop with a reliable internet connection.
- Tablets and Phones are not recommended for completing weekly assignments due to the limitations with the Blackboard interface.
- Equipment: A webcam with a working microphone (This can be a phone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer with a camera and microphone.)
- Software: Microsoft Office Word Only (No other software is accepted including Pages, Goggle Docs, PDFs, or any other word processing programs.)
- Textbook: [Technical Writing Essentials: Introduction to Professional Communications in the Technical Fields](#) by Susan Last

Course Communication

Important course updates and announcements will be posted regularly on the Blackboard announcements page each week. You will also receive copies of Blackboard announcements and assignment reminders through your campus email account. If you need to contact your instructor directly, please email apoissant@tamusa.edu through your campus email account. You can

expect a response in 24-48 hours during campus business hours. Emails sent after business hours will be returned the next business day. Emails sent on the weekend or on a holiday will be returned on the next business day.

Assignments

Weekly Discussion Posts (150 points) / Due each Sunday at 11:59 pm

Each week, we'll focus on a different technical writing term or concept relevant to the course description. You'll learn about the term or concept through 1-3 course readings or videos posted in the weekly Blackboard Required Assignments tab. You'll then be asked to engage with the content by completing an activity or answering discussion questions and posting them on the discussion board. Completing each discussion assignment by the deadline earns you a total of 150 points towards your final course grade.

Weekly Writing Exercises (150 points) / Due each Sunday at 11:59 pm

Weekly writing exercises are brief assignments that ask you to apply what you've learned through the course material and reflect on your learning. You'll submit your writing through the designated writing exercise submission box on Blackboard. Completing each writing exercise by the deadline earns you a total of 150 points towards your final course grade.

Writer's Portfolio/Reflection Final Project (100 points) / Due Sunday, December 8

The Writer's Portfolio is the "final project" for this course. Throughout the course, you'll develop a digital writing portfolio that showcases your writing and expresses an aspect of your identity as a writer. You'll receive feedback on drafts throughout the course and submit a revised version at the end of semester. There should be significant development between the mid-term draft and the final end-of-semester submission. See Week 1 Blackboard tab for a detailed explanation of this assignment.

Writer's Portfolio/Reflection Draft (100 points) / Due Sunday, October 13

This midterm assignment invites you to develop and share a draft of your Writer's Portfolio for peer and instructor feedback. The points for this assignment are included in your midterm grade calculation, so sure to submit for evaluation. Guidelines for this assignment will be provided prior to midterms.

Class Conduct Policy

By remaining in this class, you agree to

- communicate with your instructor and classmates respectfully,
- use technology responsibly during class,
- check Blackboard and university email regularly, and
- ask for help when you need it.

Late Work Policy

All assignments are expected to be submitted by due dates. Exceptions MAY be made by the instructor given extenuating circumstances, which must be communicated with the instructor prior to assignment deadlines. DO NOT send late work by email. IF work is accepted late, the instructor will re-open an assignment for the student to submit their work. This will be communicated directly to the students. Late work sent to the instructor without authorization will not be accepted.

Attendance

Student attendance in an online course is determined by completion of the weekly assignments. Students who fail to complete 2 or more weeks of coursework WILL receive a failing grade for the course. Extenuating circumstances may be considered, but are not guaranteed to be accepted by the instructor to prevent failure. Students who do not log in to Blackboard by the Census Date WILL be officially marked as “never attended.” Students who wish to drop the course are responsible for submitting their request directly to the university. Please do not ask the instructor to drop you from the course or assume the instructor will request the drop for you.

Blackboard Discussion Policy

Sharing our writing with others is a vulnerable act. Please be mindful of the unique perspectives and identities of others and approach each classmate’s writing with empathy. Arrive at each discussion board with an open mind and use respect when communicating with me and your classmates. Communication that is deemed inappropriate should be reported to the instructor. Depending on the situation, a student may be reported to university administration for disciplinary action and could be removed from the course.

Generative Artificial Intelligence Policy

The FYC program expects you to generate your own content this semester. However, there are situations and contexts within our courses where you may use generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tools to support your work as a writer. For example, GAI technologies such as ChatGPT can work well as a starting point for written assignments, assisting you with brainstorming, outlining, generating ideas, and collecting basic information about a topic/idea. Note that the emphasis here is on “support.” GAI programs have been shown to provide biased or incorrect information, and to generate writing that lacks human imagination. For these reasons, the FYC program discourages you from using GAI technology to generate content **for you**. If you have reason to use GAI to generate content **with you**, consult with your professor before doing so. Using

GAI content without your professor's permission and/or without proper attribution qualifies as plagiarism.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is taken very seriously in this course. Students who submit plagiarized coursework, including information copied from other sources, assignments written by other individuals or AI generative programs, or documents/information bought from any resource will receive a zero for the coursework in question. The student will also be reported to the university administration for disciplinary action and may be removed from the course. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will be dealt with accordingly. Plagiarism, whether intentional or not is still plagiarism and will receive the same consequences. Be sure to document all coursework and be careful how source information is used for coursework. Students will not be allowed to make up the coursework which was plagiarized.

Student Services and Support

Jaguar Writing Center

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Students can make individual or group appointments with a writing tutor. The Writing Center is located in Central Academic Building, Suite 208. The Writing Center can be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu or calling 210-784-1222. Students can also make appointments with the Writing Center under the Student Services tab in JagWire.

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disability. If you believe you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. DSS is located at the Main Campus on the 2nd floor of the Central Academic Building in suite 210. The phone number for DSS is 210-784-1335 and email is dss@tamusa.edu.

Student Counseling and Wellness Services

The Office of Student Counseling & Wellness Services (SC&WS) provides short-term individual, couples, and group counseling services, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. SC&WS's staff of licensed mental health professionals can work with you to identify effective

strategies both to cope with difficult situations and to achieve goals set with your counselor. To schedule an appointment please call 210-784-1331 or email StuCounseling@tamusa.edu. SC&WS is located in Modular C, 166.

General's Store

General's Store is an on-campus food pantry to serve members of the campus community who need food assistance. Located in Patriot's Casa room 110, this service is available Wednesdays (2-6 p.m.), Thursdays (9 a.m. – 1 p.m.) and by appointment. For more information email foodpantry@tamusa.edu or visit <http://www.tamusa.edu/mays/generals-store/>

First-Year Composition Program Policies

Attendance

Your success and development as a writer depends upon your active participation within a community of writers. Consistent attendance in your FYC classes is, therefore, crucial. Barring exceptional circumstances, students who are absent more than two weeks may not earn a passing grade. If you are struggling to attend class, we urge you to communicate both with your Academic Success Coach and with your FYC instructor, who will work with you to negotiate a plan for attending and completing the class.

Plagiarism

We recognize that what constitutes plagiarism depends upon context. As such, we work with you to learn how different genres, professions, and academic disciplines define plagiarism. In the context of your FYC classes, plagiarism is defined as the intentional use of another's "language, ideas, or original (not common-knowledge) material" without acknowledgement ("Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism"). If you are found to have committed plagiarism as defined here, your instructor will report you for academic dishonesty, and you may be subject to failing the assignment or even failing the class.

Generative Artificial Intelligence Policy

The FYC program expects you to generate your own content this semester. However, there are situations and contexts within our courses where you may use generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tools to support your work as a writer. For example, GAI technologies such as ChatGPT can work well as a starting point for written assignments, assisting you with brainstorming, outlining, generating ideas, and collecting basic information about a topic/idea. Note that the emphasis here is on "support." GAI programs have been shown to provide biased information, to circulate misinformation, and to generate writing that is, at best, mediocre. For these reasons, FYC discourages you from using GAI technology to generate content **for you**. If you have reason to use GAI to generate content **with you**, then we ask that you consult with your professor before doing so. If your professor approves your use, you should acknowledge the GAI program

you have used, and you should identify which portions of the text you submit were produced by GAI. Using GAI content without your professor's permission and/or without proper attribution qualifies as plagiarism.

University Policies and Resources

[University Policies and Resources](#)

Course Calendar

Below is a tentative course calendar with assignment dates. Please visit the Course Content tab on Blackboard for detailed information for each week. Each week's assignments are due on Sunday by 11:59pm.

Important Dates:

August 24 th	First class day
September 7 th	Labor Day Holiday – No Classes
November 13 th	Last day to drop with a “W”
November 25 th	Study day – No Classes
November 26 th -28 th	Thanksgiving Holiday – No Classes
December 5 th -11 th	Final examinations

The complete [academic calendar](#) is available online.

Week 1: 8/24-8/30

- Topics: Getting Started
- Assignments: Discussion Board Introduction / Syllabus Acknowledgement
- Writer's Portfolio (Digication) Introduction

Week 2: 8/31-9/6

- Topic: Chapter 1: What is Technical Communication?
- Assignments: Writing Exercise and Discussion

Week 3: 9/7-9/13

- Topic: Chapter 2: Professional Style
- Assignments: Writing Exercise and Discussion

Week 4: 9/14-9/20

- Topic: Chapter 3: Document Design

- Assignments: Writing Exercise and Discussion

Week 5: 9/21-9/27

- Topic: Chapter 4: Teamwork and Communication
- Assignments: Writing Exercise and Discussion

Week 6: 9/28-10/4

- Topic: Chapter 5: Conducting Research
- Assignments: Writing Exercise and Discussion

Week 7: 10/5-10/11

- Topics: Chapter 6: Citing and Documenting Sources
- Assignments: Midterm Draft Writer's Portfolio and Midterm Reflection Drafts
- 9/11 Census Date

Week 8: 10/12-10/18

- Topic: Chapter 7 Common Document Types
- Assignment: Peer Response Discussion

Week 9: 10/19-10/25

- Topic: Chapter 7 Common Document Types
- Assignments: Writing Exercise and Discussion

Week 10: 10/26-11/1

- Topics: Chapter 7 Common Document Types
- Assignments: Writing Exercise and Discussion

Week 11: 11/3-11/8

- Topics: Chapter 7 Common Document Types
- Assignment: Writer's Portfolio Discussion

Week 12: 11/9-11/15

- Topics: Chapter 7 Common Document Types
- Assignments: Writing Exercise and Discussion

Week 13: 11/16-11/22

- Topic: Chapter 8 Oral and Visual Presentations
- Assignments Due: Writing Exercise and Discussion

Week 14: 11/23-11/29

- Topics: Final Writer's Portfolio and Course Conclusion
- Assignments: Complete Writer's Portfolio
- 12/28-12/30 Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15/16: 11/30-12/6

- Topics: Final Writer's Portfolio and Course Conclusion
- Assignments: Submit Writer's Portfolio and Course Reflection—Submitting both final assignments to Digication and Blackboard Assignments as a Word Document is Required of the First Year Composition Program