Special Topics: Legal Technical Writing (English 4953)  Summer 2012
Professor Diane Abdo  Office: BV 4.362
Email: diane.abdo@utsa.edu  Hours: M-F 8:30-9:15, 12:45-1:30

Texts

The Lawyer’s Guide to Writing Well. Goldstein and Lieberman
Handbook of Technical Writing. Alred, Brunsaw, Oliu

Course Description

Technical Legal Writing focuses on analysis and argumentative discourse with applications for pre-law majors. It addresses appropriate responses to issues, largely contained in fact scenarios and stresses logical thinking. It also instructs in editing conventions to produce clear, concise, coherent, and correct prose.

Course Objectives

This course will provide students the opportunity to hone their critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills. Also, it will provide a variety of opportunities to express students’ ideas clearly, concisely, and accurately to specific audiences and for specific purposes.

Course Requirements

In order to achieve these goals, you are expected to attend class, complete assignments, work within groups, and participate in class discussions. Writing assignments will be done in class and out of class.

• Out-of-class papers are due at the beginning of the class for which they are assigned. Each student is allowed one late paper without penalty, except for any group project.
• The first late paper shall be submitted the following class day after which time it will be penalized one letter grade for each day it is late. (Note: Rough drafts are subject to the above requirements.) Any subsequent late papers will be penalized one letter grade for each day it is late.
• Late papers are accepted up to one week from the due date.
• All final out-of-class papers must be formatted appropriately for the assignment, typed, and submitted with all research, prewriting, and revisions attached.
**Attendance Policy**

Please arrive on time and attend class regularly. Late arrival disrupts the flow of lectures, class discussions, and oral presentations. Sharing individual ideas with the class and working in groups are vital aspects of the educational process; this process cannot take place without you.

The attendance policy for this class is as follows:

- You are responsible for all material covered in and assigned for class.
- Only those students in class when quizzes/class work begin(s) or assignments are collected will be eligible for credit.
- Make-ups are not allowed for in-class work unless the absence was the result of an emergency, which then must be documented.

**Professionalism**

Classroom decorum requires the following:

- Electronic devices must be turned off prior to your entering the class.
- No texting may be done during class.
- No telephone communication may be done during class.
- Students should not leave the room during class unless they are responding to an emergency.
- No one should enter the classroom during a student presentation.
- Computers should not be used during class unless students are instructed to use them.

**Academic Dishonesty**

As members of this educational community and as future attorneys, you are held to a high standard of conduct. This means that you should avoid any semblance of impropriety, including any conduct that could be viewed as scholastic dishonesty or plagiarism.

Professional honesty begins in the classroom. Using another person’s work as if it were your own can ruin your educational career in the same way that it can ruin your professional career. Please visit the following web site to access information on academic dishonesty: http://www.utsa.edu/infoguide/appendices/b.html.

**Disability Services**

UTSA provides special services for students with disabilities. Support services, including registration assistance and equipment, are available to students with documented disabilities through the Office of Disability Services. Information is available at http://www.utsa.edu/disability/students.htm.
Evaluation

Your grade will be calculated using the following percentages:

- In-class and out-of-class papers 70%
- Quizzes, assignments, oral presentation 30%

Grade Values:
- A  93-100%
- A-  89-92%
- B+  86-88%
- B   83-85%
- B-  79-82%
- C+  76-78%
- C   73-75%
- C-  69-72%
- D+  66-68%
- D   63-65%
- D-  60-62%
- F   below 60%

Submitting Papers

When you are preparing your paper for submission, please be sure to include the following information on the cover sheet:

- Your name
- Date
- Audience
- Purpose
- Writing Goal

After reading comments on papers returned to you, identify the area of writing or editing you will work to improve in the next paper (writing goal). On the cover sheet, list that area as your writing goal.

The University of Texas Academic Honor Code

Preamble

The University of Texas at San Antonio community of past, present, and future students, faculty, staff, and administrators share a commitment to integrity and the ethical pursuit of knowledge. We honor the traditions of our university of conducting ourselves with a steadfast duty to honor, courage, and virtue in all matters both public and private. By choosing integrity and responsibility, we promote personal growth, success and lifelong learning for the advancement of ourselves, our university, and our community.
Honor Pledge
In the support of the ideals of integrity, the students of The University of Texas at San Antonio pledge: “As a UTSA Roadrunner, I live with honor and integrity.”

Finally. . .

You are invited and encouraged to consult with me to discuss assignments, review drafts, practice editing, brainstorm for approaches to writing. No appointment is needed for conferences during my office hours.
June 4-8

Opening program; diagnostic pre-test
Course introduction; writing sample; editing overview and discussion
Discussion of the writing process; Lawyer’s Guide (chapters 1-4)
Analysis exercise (identifying stakeholders): Handbook (punctuation)
Introduction to writing assignment #1; punctuation continued

June 11-15

Punctuation quiz: Lawyer’s Guide Writing the Lead, chapter 8
Writing assignment #1 draft due
Lawyer’s Guide Form, Structure and Organization, chapter 9
Writing assignment #1 editing; organization exercise
Writing assignment #1 due
Lawyer’s Guide (pp140-147) modifiers and parallel structure
Introduction to writing assignment #2; Lawyer’s Guide chapter 11
Practice in-class argument

June 18-22

Lawyer’s Guide (editing) pp 229-235
Assignment #2 draft due; Lawyer’s Guide Chapter 10 pp 107-127
Parallel structure/modifier quiz; Handbook (vocabulary); Lawyer’s Guide (209-228)
Assignment #2 editing; Lawyer’s Guide pp 128-140
Assignment #2 due; vocabulary quiz; pronoun use (chapter 10 cont.)
Introduction to assignment #3; In-class argument

June 25-29

Pronoun use (cont.):
Writing assignment #3 draft due
Guest speaker: Richard Noll; discussion of personal statements and resumes
Personal statement and resume brainstorming session; editing assignment #3
Writing assignment #3 due; Lawyer’s Guide pp 148-152

July 2-6
Quiz on remainder of chapter 10
Sentence Length practice  Lawyer’s Guide  pp 237-248
Writing assignment draft #4 due: editing
Writing assignment #4 due

July 9: Editing Post Test

Exam: 9:15 class  Meets Wednesday, July 11, 7:30-10 a.m.
        11:00 class  Meets Tuesday, July 10, 10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

This syllabus is provided for informational purposes regarding the anticipated course content and schedule of this course. It is based upon the most recent information available on the date of its issuance and is as accurate and complete as possible. I reserve the right to make any changes I deem necessary and/or appropriate. I will make my best efforts to communicate any changes to the syllabus in a timely manner. Students are responsible for being aware of these changes.