

WEB 2.0 IN TECH COMM

Contact

Instructor: Krista Kennedy

Office: HBC 228

Office Hours:

Tuesday 8:30 - 9:30 am

Wednesday 4:00 - 5:00 pm

By appointment, both f2f and via IM

Contact:

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Overview and Objectives

This class explores the impact of social media applications in Professional and Technical Communication. We'll be working as a team to continue development of an online Newcomer's Guide to Syracuse. Our team formation, project design, and written work will include a variety of applications, including blogs, wikis, chat, del.icio.us, WriteMaps, Twitter, Flickr, and Project Pier.

Our work here is not just about fiddling with new and interesting web applications, though. We're going to think critically about them and build things with them: both a community and a multi-modal text. By the time we wrap things up in May, you should have gained the following experience and skills:

- 1. You'll have worked with a wide range of established and emerging technologies relevant to the field of Professional & Technical Communication.** You'll understand what they are, what to do with them, and how they might be used in various projects. Ideally, you'll also have gained the confidence to continue evaluating, learning, and incorporating future technologies as they emerge.
- 2. You'll have learned techniques that allow you to critically examine the impact technologies have on the manner and form in which we communicate.** This includes not just various forms your textual product might take, but also the ways in which virtual teams communicate and function.

3. **You will have strengthened your writing and composition skills.** Specifically, you will have gained experience in communicating professional and/or technical topics to variable, non-expert audiences. You will also understand basic principles of information architecture.
4. **You will have developed or increased your ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical, workplace projects.** We will cover the theory and practice of creating a professional digital identity, of successfully working with team members you are not always in physical proximity to, and of designing and building a navigable web resource.

All of you should walk away from this course with a broad vocabulary and understanding of these ideas and with a sense of how different workplace environments are coping with the challenges of technical information in our time of complex products, multiple audiences, and fast-changing tools and hardware.

Masters-level students (and interested undergrads) will also do some extensive reading on usability testing protocols and conduct the initial usability testing of our site.

Texts and Materials

Required for everyone:

Aoki, Boyle, and Jenkins. *Bound By Law: Tales From the Public Domain*. New expanded edition. Duke Law School, 2008. (Amazon: \$8.95, used from \$4.10)

Krug, Steve. *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*. New Riders, 2006. (Amazon: \$26.40, used from \$17.99)

Rosenfeld, Louis. *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web: Designing Large-Scale Web Sites*. 3rd ed. O'Reilly, 2006. (Amazon: \$26.39, used from \$13.99)

Zelenka and Sohn. *Connect!: Web Worker Daily's Guide to a New Way of Working*. Wiley, 2008. (Amazon: \$21.36, used from \$0.01)

Other required readings will be distributed via our course site. You'll need to make sure you have the most recent version of Adobe Reader so you can view them. You should also familiarize yourself with Ning and the wiki and find a way to remind yourself to check in regularly online.

Getting Things Done

Major assignments: You will be graded on two major components over the course of the semester.

400 points: You will contribute 4,000 words of text on a unified set of topics to the wiki. This make take the form of 4 longish pieces or a larger number of short pieces.

120 points: You will participate the overall site planning; that is, in the gathering of site materials, decisions about the style of the wiki, and planning for its architecture.

I have also reserved 130 discretionary points, as you'll see in the table below. These points are earned by your participation in our various weekly non-writing projects: workstreaming, project planning, information tagging, etc. In other words, you earn these points by showing up and pitching in consistently.

The final point allocation looks like this:

Assignment	Points
Blogging/Discussion Participation on Ning	450 (30 pts per wk x 15 weeks)
Wiki Writing & Research	300 points
Project Planning Participation	120
Discretionary Points	130

A	940 – 1000	A manager would be very impressed with your work and remember it when a promotion is discussed. In our course, this means your final product has excellent content, clean text, and excellent document design. Additionally, your work is thorough, coherent, well-supported, and organized in a useful fashion. It demonstrates a superior understanding of audience, purpose, and rationale.
A-	900 - 939	
B+	880 – 899	A manager would be satisfied, but not particularly impressed. This means that your product meets the basic standards of writing and overall production, as well as demonstrates a step forward in your learning process. It is sufficiently developed, organized, and supported, and you have demonstrated a solid understanding of audience, purpose, and rationale.
B	840 – 879	
B-	800 - 839	
C+	780 – 799	A manager would be disappointed, and would require you to revise the document before a client sees it. Your work may have clear but undeveloped ideas, or it may not engage or affect the reader. It likely contains some errors in logic, mechanics, or grammar.
C	740 – 779	
C-	700 - 739	
D	600 - 699	A manager would be troubled by the poor quality of your work and likely note it in your annual review. The level of writing skill forces the reader to work too hard to understand your ideas. The text may have incomplete information, lack clear organization and design, and have serious grammar or mechanical issues.
F	599 and below	A manager would start looking into replacing you. In this case, your work does not fit the assignment parameters, is so underdeveloped as to demonstrate incompetence, or is mechanically and grammatically incomprehensible. The most likely root cause is a pronounced lack of concern about audience perceptions of the writer as a professional.

I do not give incompletes. If you are in the D or F range at midterm, you and I will schedule a conference. This may be a time for you to withdraw from the class or sign a contract with me stating that we've discussed the matter and you intend to continue the class.

Attendance and Online Participation: You should be participating fully and consistently each week. **Let me be very frank: if you are taking this class because a hybrid course seems like less work, you may want to reconsider now.** Since this class relies so heavily on collaboration, it is not possible for you to make up missed work or to work ahead.

This course also requires you to do more writing than many of your other classes, since much of the participation is written. Because we only see each other once each week, you need to be blogging and otherwise contributing consistently in order to make sure the rest of us know you're there and pulling your weight. That means keeping up with Twitter as well. If you only participate on lab day, you are only fulfilling half of the requirements for this course.

Because this is so important, online participation points make up nearly half of your total grade. You should plan on writing at least one substantive blog post each week. There are several requirements here:

- It should have a good title. “Good” means descriptive and original. “Week One Post” is not a good title.
- It should be insightful, articulate, on-topic, and clearly demonstrate an understanding of the readings and/or work of the week, depending on what we’re up to.
- It should substantiate assertions and contain citations as appropriate. Parenthetical citation is fine. Ex: (Brady, 2006, p. 2).
- It should be at least 250 words long if you are an undergraduate and 400 words long if you are a graduate student.
- **It should be posted by midnight on Saturday.** Late posts will lose two points for every day they are late.

Additionally, you should plan on making thoughtful comments to at least two of your colleagues’ posts. “Thoughtful” means articulate and helpful; comments like “Absolutely!” and “Woo-hoo!” do not count. If your contributions meet these basic requirements, you’ll receive up to 30 points each week. (These points apply only to comments on Ning, unless we have moved our discussion elsewhere that week.) **Comments should be completed by midnight on Tuesday.**

You can feel free to post more, of course. Extra work (either in posts or comments) means up to three additional points per week. If you see something interesting and pertinent to the course in the news, on YouTube, or elsewhere, post a link and let us know about it!

Do not flame each other. Even if you’re working at home in your bunny slippers, you’re still at work when you’re dealing with this class. Remain professional at all times. Disagreements will inevitably pop up as we talk through our topics, but they should be handled respectfully -- don’t ever vent your frustration by ripping someone apart. If your behavior does not meet these guidelines, you and I will have a discussion and your grade will be affected. See the Collaboration Policy further on down the syllabus for more information regarding expected behavior.

Respect works both ways. I do my best to be courteous and fair in all situations and at all costs. If you ever feel that you’ve been treated otherwise, please come and talk to me about it.

Criteria	Points
Post meets or exceeds length requirements	5
Post substantiates assertions and contains appropriate citations	5
Post is insightful, articulate, on-topic, and demonstrates understanding of the readings	10
Comments on at least two other posts are helpful and appropriate	10

Technology and Privacy: All course materials will be posted on or linked from Ning. All of our discussions will be on the external blog. The bulk of our writing will be done on the wiki. Your identity will be shielded there through the use of pseudonyms, but you should remember that the wiki is a public document, and the social applications we will use are also public. Never forget that *anyone* can read them.

If you have any concerns about the role of technology in this course, you should contact me within the first week of the semester. You should also plan to take advantage of email, IM, and face-to-face appointments for questions that come up along the way.

Grade Disputes: If you have a question about your grade, please wait 24 hours before you discuss it with me. Take some time to think about the situation and carefully formulate your argument. When we talk, you should have a specific rationale for why you deserve a higher grade. Then schedule a time to talk with me and we'll discuss it.

Collaboration Disputes: This is perhaps the most collaborative course you will ever take, since we will all be working on one central text. While the course is set up to allow you responsibility for contributing individual texts and work, you will also interact with and develop projects together. As in the workplace, this sort of work means that you will have to find ways to get along. I expect for you to be able to use your social skills to resolve your basic differences on your own. However, if you find a particular collaborative situation to be unreasonable or unresolvable, please notify me so that I can help you resolve it. If you find yourself considering taking this step, use this test: in a real job, would this be an issue worth taking to your boss and soliciting managerial intervention? If so, then it's time to let me know. If not, then find ways to work it out yourselves.

Late work: Written assignments are due by the beginning of class. Late assignments are reduced by one point per day; after the third day, it will be reduced by a whole letter grade. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

Academic Dishonesty: If you have a question about documentation and/or plagiarism as you complete your work, just ask me. I'll be more than happy to discuss it with you. That said, all students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own will result in disciplinary action.

Special Needs and Accommodations: Students who need special consideration because of any sort of documented disability should make an appointment to discuss it with me right away. The information you share with me will remain confidential. You should also contact the Office of Disability Service for information and/or assistance.

WRT 427/627: Schedule of Events (subject to change)

Week One (1/20 - 1/23)	Distributed Text, Distributed Teams, Distributed Work	In class: Introductions, syllabus, schedule Online: Read and discuss <i>Connect</i> , xii - 32 (Intro + Towards a Web Working World) and O'Reilly, "What is Web 2.0?" (link)
Week Two (1/24 - 1/30)	Workstreaming App of the Week: Twitter	In class: <i>Read Connect</i> , 141 - 171 (Connect, Communicate & Collaborate) Online: Read and discuss Skellie, "Workstreaming with Microblogs" (link) and tweet.
Week Three (1/31- 2/6)	Mining the Web App of the Week: deli.cio.us	In class: <i>Read Connect</i> , 113-139 (Surf Waves of Info) Online: Excerpts from Smith, <i>Tagging: People-Powered Metadata for the Social Web</i> (PDF). Tag 10 resources on del.icio.us and post reading reflections.
Week Four (2/7 - 2/13)	Information Architecture: Initial Planning App of the Week: WriteMaps Preliminary Research Deadline	In class: <i>Information Architecture</i> , 3-52 Online: Contribute to mapping of site sector details. Post evaluative process notes on the blog.
Week Five (2/14 - 2/20)	Info Arch, Pt 2: Yet More Planning App of the Week: Project Pier General Planning Deadline	In class: <i>Information Architecture</i> , 53-81. Finalize site organization. Online: Read and discuss Brown, et al, "Project Planning & Tracking" (PDF) Develop milestones and tasks on Project Pier.
Week Six (2/21 - 2/27)	Wikis App of the Week: MediaWiki	In class: Cunningham, <i>The Wiki Way</i> , Ch 2 (PDF) Online: Read and discuss <i>Wikinomics</i> , 239-267 (The Wiki Workplace) (PDF)
Week Seven (2/28 - 3/6)	Creating Digital Text	In class: Krug, <i>Don't Make Me Think!</i> Chapter 2, 3, and 5. Online: Begin to draft wiki pages. Tweet your progress and questions.
Week Eight (3/7 - 3/13)	Integrating images and video Apps of the week: Flickr and YouTube 1st Production Deadline	In class: Readings TBA Online: Search for 5 appropriate image elements and tag them on del.icio.us. Post mid-point reflections.

Week Nine (3/14 - 3/20)	Spring Break	
Week Ten (3/21 - 3/27)	Intellectual Property App of the Week: Creative Commons 2nd Production Deadline	In class: Aoki, et al, <i>Bound By Law</i> Online: Write! Tweet your progress and questions.
Week Eleven (3/28 - 4/3)	Thinking ahead to usability	In class: Krug, <i>Don't Make Me Think!</i> 131-168. Online: Post to usability protocol development page, continue to work on wiki pages. Tweet your progress and questions.
Week Twelve (4/4 - 4/10)	Editing / Review 3rd Production Deadline	In class: Krug, <i>Don't Make Me Think!</i> 130-179. Finalize usability protocols. Online: Write! Tweet your progress and questions.
Week Thirteen (4/11- 4/17)	Textual Revisions Deadline	In class: Brown, et al, "Conducting Reviews" (PDF) Online: Conduct reviews and offer comments on assigned site sectors. Blog central considerations about the site development.
Week Fourteen (4/18 - 4/24)	Usability Testing	In class: Make final revisions to usability testing protocols. Begin usability testing execution. Online: Continue testing on external subjects. Post your results.
Week Fifteen (4/25 - 5/1)	Final Site Assessment and Revisions	In class: Discuss usability testing results, begin final revisions. Online: Continue final site sector revisions.
Week Sixteen (5/2 - 5/8)	Final Revisions Deadline	In class: Read <i>Connect</i> , 257-285 (Blend Your Work and Your Personal Life + The Future of Web Work) Online: Post final reflections, complete revisions.