

# ENC 4260.521: ADVANCED TECHNICAL WRITING (All-Online Course)

University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM) • Spring 2012

Instructor: T. E. Roberts (thorsdag@comcast.net) • Website: [http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260\\_welcome.htm](http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260_welcome.htm)

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## WELCOME

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This syllabus is a contract. It sets forth expectations, responsibilities, instructions, and policies that obligate both instructor and students. Read and consult it throughout the semester. Every student is expected to submit via email to me a statement indicating that he or she has read this syllabus and agrees to abide by its terms. *If you find an error or inconsistency in the syllabus, please accept my apology and notify me immediately. As I adapt this document to new circumstances each semester, errors do sometimes escape my notice.*

## I. COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE

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ENC 4260, Advanced Technical Writing, Spring 2012, Section 521, CRN 19357, **ONLINE COURSE**. There will be no meetings on campus at all. However, this is not a "correspondence course" in which you merely write assignments. You will also need to hear lectures, read text, communicate via email regularly, and take a 45-minute final exam via Blackboard. Your first task will be to send me a brief background statement (posted on Blackboard and the course website, [http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260\\_welcome.htm](http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260_welcome.htm)) by 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 14, 2012. **IMPORTANT: If I do not receive this by 6:00 p.m. on that day, you will be reported to the registrar as "not attending," dropped from the class, and allowed to re-enroll only by paying a late fee.**

## II. INSTRUCTOR CONTACT AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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**Instructor:** Thorold (Tod) Roberts. (Please refer to me as "Mr. Roberts.") To contact me, send email to thorsdag@comcast.net. (Spell my email address accurately!) Most of our communications will be via email, but if necessary, please phone me at 941-927-2898 (Sarasota residence) between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. I prefer email because it creates a written record of our communications, allows me to provide useful links in response to questions, and gives students practice in writing, the main purpose of the course. **I am rarely on campus, so do not leave a message in my campus mailbox or on my campus voicemail.** You have no restrictions on the length or number of emails you may exchange with me, but please use good judgment in this matter so that our work is productive. Because of the large volume of email I handle, every message you send must bear your last name and the course number in the SUBJECT line (for example: "Jones, Question on ENC 4260, Assignment 2"). If I believe a student question or comment appears of general value or relevance, I will send it and my response to all students in the course. For my background, see <http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/academics/CAS/faculty/TRoberts.php> or <http://www.todroberts.com>. For numeric summaries and full-text comments of student evaluations of my USF courses dating back to 2003, see [http://www.todroberts.com/USF/Roberts\\_Evaluations.htm](http://www.todroberts.com/USF/Roberts_Evaluations.htm).

For help with Blackboard, USF email, OASIS, or other technology tools see <http://it.usf.edu/>, send an email ([help@usf.edu](mailto:help@usf.edu)), or call 866-974-1222.

## III. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

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From the USF Catalog: (*Prerequisites: ENC 2210, or ENC 3310, or Consent of Instructor*) *Advanced Technical Writing is designed to develop writing skills of a high order: technical exposition; technical narration, description, and argumentation; graphics; proposals; progress reports; physical research reports; and feasibility reports.* This course satisfies certain requirements for the English major with Concentration in Professional and Technical Writing (check with your academic advisor about specifics for your individual circumstances).

## IV. COURSE GOAL

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To help the student advance in knowledge and practice of skills, tools, and work ethic needed for using effective written and spoken technical English in business, industry, organizations, and technical occupations.

## V. COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

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The objectives of ENC 4260 are as follows:

### A: Discipline-Specific Knowledge and Skills

**OUTCOME A1:** Demonstrate competence in planning, drafting, and revising text to produce clear, concise, and complete professional and technical documents that meet the stated needs of specific users and readers.

**OUTCOME A2:** Demonstrate proficiency in creating messages on time, on budget, and on target for the person(s) or organization for which the student will be working.

**OUTCOME A3:** Demonstrate familiarity with the nature and application of the media and types of publications or projects which a graduate in this program will be expected to understand and use effectively upon graduation.

### B: Critical Thinking Skills

**OUTCOME B1:** Demonstrate competence and efficiency in understanding the intellectual dimensions of emerging concepts, media, and vocabulary and applying those discoveries to technical and professional communications projects.

## C: Communication Skills

**OUTCOME C1:** Demonstrate an ability to read, interview, interpret, and apply the forms of expression and knowledge required to serve as a bridge between advanced business and technical professionals and non-specialist users of those professionals' communications.

The assignments draw on the instructor's experience as a technical writer and editor serving clients and employers in diverse business settings and as a university teacher of writing. In addition to written assignments, the course involves textbook study, online lectures, and email exchanges, as detailed in the Schedule of Weekly Assignments below. It also requires the use of computerized word processing, electronic communications, internet-based research, and the creation and posting of a simple website. Each student must have access to a reliable computer and knowledge of how to use it for word processing, email, internet search, and access to the password-controlled USF Blackboard online learning system (my.usf.edu).

The following quotation from the Society for Technical Communication may help you understand the importance of this field of study:

### **THE VALUE OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (<http://www.stc.org/story/>)**

With increasing demand for technical products, the technical communication field has grown. What used to be the strict discipline of creating and editing policies and manuals has now exploded into a rich field of communicating in many media as well as performing user analysis, applying usability methods, creating e-learning, and much more.

Technical communicators have become an asset to many companies with their understanding of technical processes, as well as their ability to communicate information in a clear and usable way to different groups, from consumers to end users. Technical communicators have the crucial job to plan, design, organize, write, edit, and test information. That information may be safety-critical, keeping consumers and employees from harming themselves and others by unintentionally misusing products. That information may also be what makes consumers and employees productive and happy by showing them how to perform their tasks quickly and easily.

Some examples of people within the technical communication field are: content developers, documentation specialists, indexers, information architects, information designers, instructional designers, researchers, teachers, technical illustrators, technical writers and editors, translators, usability and human factors professionals, visual designers, and Web designers and developers.

## VI. COURSE CONTENT AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

**Course Content:** Each of the first three writing assignments will be 500-700 words long; Assignment 4 will consist of a 2,000- to 2,500-word prose document. Selected readings from a free online textbook (<http://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/>) and other web-based resources will supplement web-posted lectures. All students must submit an online evaluation of the course at the end of the semester.

**Method of Presentation:** Students will perform in a distance-learning environment, with guidance from the instructor. Course objectives and procedures will be presented in the first lecture to be posted on the course website ([http://www.todroberts.com/USF4260\\_welcome.htm](http://www.todroberts.com/USF4260_welcome.htm)) before the semester begins on Jan. 10, 2012. Your official USF email address will be used for most communications; if you forward mail from there to another email address, test this to be sure you are receiving all messages. An individual student's questions and my emailed responses will be sent to all students if the questions and answers appear to be generally relevant and helpful. I welcome student emails about assignments, lectures, or other aspects of the course as long as they are focused and relevant. I try to answer all email promptly.

**Blackboard and Other USF Technology Tools:** For help with Blackboard, USF email, OASIS, or other USF technology, see <http://it.usf.edu/>, send an email ([help@usf.edu](mailto:help@usf.edu)), or call 866-974-1222. For live online help, see [http://usfsupport.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat\\_launch](http://usfsupport.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch). For an overview of USFSM resources for students, see [http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/CampusComputing/Documents/CC\\_Student\\_Resources.php](http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/CampusComputing/Documents/CC_Student_Resources.php).

**Lectures:** As noted on the course website, you will download two lecture files (MP4 audio and PowerPoint slides) each week. Display the slides on your monitor, and then open and listen to the audio file. You can hear the MP4 files on your computer using either Apple QuickTime or VLC Media Player (see links for these free downloads on course website). **Do not try to hear the lecture audio as a streaming file over the internet -- you may find it interrupted.** Just download and listen to it on your computer while viewing the PowerPoint slides. The lectures provide important information relevant to written assignments. To simulate in an online environment the required tracking of student attendance expected in an on-campus class, each spoken lecture will contain embedded audio code words which you must send to me via email by deadlines noted in the Weekly Schedule below. This will ensure that you are listening to the lectures soon after they are posted, and not letting them accumulate for later listening. Regular listening to -- and note-taking on -- lectures is vital to your success in the course. Failure to send the audio codes by deadline may result in two unpleasant consequences: (1) ignorance about assignment instructions leading to weak performance and (2) a penalty to your final grade in the course.

**Email Messages:** Send me all assignments attached to email messages as MS Word files with the .doc (**NOT .DOCX**) file extension. I will evaluate and grade your work electronically and, as explained below, return it to you by email upon request. Be sure to indicate your preferred email address if it is not obvious from your message. I will acknowledge, via email, the receipt of your email message and attachment. All of your written work must bear a filename in this format: **Lastname\_4260\_X.doc** (no spaces), where X refers to the assignment number (1, 2, 3 or 4). Do not send your work with a generic name such as "Assignment2.doc" or "TechReport.doc." The first time you do this, I will ask you to fix it. If this happens again, your submission will simply be counted as missing and will be penalized accordingly. Orderly procedures are essential because I serve scores of students who submit hundreds of thousands of words of gradable work to me. I process on average 200 student emails per week and evaluate around 400,000 words of student work every semester.

**Email Problems:** Occasionally a student or instructor or both may experience problems with email. If this happens, notify me by phone (941-927-2898). If you do not receive my response to an emailed assignment or a question within a few hours, contact me via phone as soon as

possible. As noted above, each email requires a subject line with your name, the course number (4260), and a brief phrase such as “Assignment 2 question.” Test your USF email account to ensure it is working properly, especially if you have messages forwarded from there to a different address.

**VERY IMPORTANT: Make sure you receive my acknowledgment of your assignment submission.** If you do not receive such a message by 9 p.m. on the deadline day, send the document to me again. Otherwise, your work will be penalized for being late or missing. I will normally use the email header time-stamp to determine whether you have met the deadline or not. (See Section VIII, Grading and Evaluation, regarding penalty for late submissions; to understand email headers, see <http://www.todroberts.com/USF/Email-Headers.pdf>.) Be sure that the clock in your computer is accurate. **I am too busy to acknowledge all submissions as they arrive, so please do not call or email me about your submission if you send it before the 6 p.m. deadline. I will usually acknowledge submissions AFTER the 6 p.m. deadline, not before.**

**Last Day to Withdraw from a Spring 2012 Course Without Academic Penalty (and Without Refund of Fees): Saturday, Mar. 24, 2012.** Confer with instructor and/or your academic advisor **before** this date if you have a question.

**Format for Written Assignments:** See the Formatting Instructions included with this syllabus. Formatting is an important element of technical writing and as such will play a role in your learning experience and grade. All written assignments must be prepared on a computer (Macintosh or PC) using Microsoft Word or equivalent software. You must save your documents using the older .doc extension (not .docx) or the .rtf extension. (See instructions on the course website for this.) You will not receive credit for work that I cannot read using MS Office 2004 on the Macintosh. If you lack MS Office for your personal use, you may also use a shareware program called OpenOffice ([www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org)), but you may find it limited compared to the Microsoft version.

**Computer Use:** All professional writing today requires use of a computer and the internet for document preparation and revision, research, and communications. Put all work for the course (audio and PPT lectures, assignments, drafts, email messages, syllabus, bookmarks, and notes) into a separate folder labeled **4260\_SPR2012**. Back up that folder daily on a USB flash drive, CD-ROM, or online archive. Send a copy of your messages and attachments to your secondary email address for safe-keeping. **An assignment lost as a result of carelessness or ignorance will diminish your learning experience and grade.** If an assignment calls for the use of unfamiliar tools such as PowerPoint for slides, or advanced application of MS Word or Excel, budget the time and effort required for you to learn them. For help with Microsoft Office, see <http://www.uwec.edu/help/>. **For the final assignment, you will need to create a small website; if you are not familiar with web page composition and posting, see relevant links on the course website and seek help from others who know how to do this.** Those seeking a career in any professional field simply cannot survive in today’s job market without such knowledge.

**Course Website:** [http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260\\_welcome.htm](http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260_welcome.htm). Links to syllabus, assignments, lectures, and helpful resources are available on this site. Visit this page **at least daily**. Read the material on all links on this page before the final exam. Specific links of most relevance to the final exam will be highlighted a short time before the exam.

**Student Conduct:** To succeed in ENC 4260, **think and act like a professional, not like a student**. Put learning ahead of grades and challenge yourself to think and work beyond your comfort zone. Submit work on time, read all assigned text material, listen to and take notes on lectures on schedule, and ask questions. If you are like most USFSM students, you are probably not only studying for a degree but also earning a living and perhaps caring for a family. Thus, to succeed in ENC 4260, prioritize your time and effort wisely. **Your investment in improved writing and thinking skills will pay off significantly over the course of your career.** If you doubt this, talk to students who have already taken ENC 4260 and other writing courses from me and are now working as successful professionals. As the instructor, I am eager for you to experience an excellent return on your investment of time, money, and energy.

**Attendance, Absences, Making Up Work, Extra Credit:** Because this course is delivered as a 100 percent online experience, conventional attendance records are irrelevant. However, the required submission of audio codes for online lectures functions to some degree as a means of checking “attendance.” The specific rules regarding audio codes are explained above (see “Lectures”). **There is no provision for re-doing an assignment already submitted, grade forgiveness, grade rounding, extra credit, or makeup work.** Penalties for late submission of student work are specified below in Section IX, “Grade Penalty for Missing an Assignment Deadline.”

**USF Academic Calendar, Spring 2012** (for details, see <http://www.registrar.usf.edu/enroll/regist/calendt.php>)

Mon Jan 10: Spring, first day of classes	Fri Apr 29: last day of classes
Mon Jan 17: Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday	Sat Apr 30 - Thu May 5: Final Exams
Mon Mar 14 - Fri Mar 19: Spring Break	May 8: Spring Commencement, Sarasota
<b>Sat Mar 24 - Last day to drop without academic penalty</b>	May 10 - Deadline for posting grades to registrar

## VII. SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS: ENC 4260, SPRING 2012

Detailed directions for all written assignments are included with this syllabus. Assigned readings from the textbook or other sources are announced below. Note that assignments are due to me on Mondays by 6:00 p.m. Lectures discussing assignments and course content will be posted on the course website as both PowerPoint slides and as audio recordings in MP4 format usually by Wednesday. You must send lecture audio codes via email as noted below. Reading assignments in the free textbook (*Online Technical Writing*, abbreviated **OTW**) will be announced via email and in the lectures. **This schedule is subject to change. Check your email regularly for announcements.**

DATE	EVENT OR TASK	ASSIGNMENTS & LECTURE CONTENT
Jan 9 (Mon)	WEEK 1 LECTURE	Course objectives and procedures; <b>send background information via email by Jan 14, 6 pm, or you will be reported as "not attending" and thus dropped from enrollment</b>
Jan 18 (Wed)	WEEK 2 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
<b>Jan 23 (Mon)</b>	<b>Assignment 1</b>	<b>Assignment 1 - send codes for Weeks 1 + 2 (20% of grade)</b>
Jan 25 (Wed)	WEEK 3 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
Feb 1 (Wed)	WEEK 4 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
Feb 8 (Wed)	WEEK 5 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
<b>Feb 13 (Mon)</b>	<b>Assignment 2</b>	<b>Assignment 2 - send codes for Weeks 3, 4, 5 (20% of grade)</b>
Feb 15 (Wed)	WEEK 6 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
Feb 22 (Wed)	WEEK 7 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
Feb 29 (Wed)	WEEK 8 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
<b>Mar 5 (Mon)</b>	<b>Assignment 3</b>	<b>Assignment 3 - send codes for Weeks 6, 7, 8 (20% of grade)</b>
Mar 7 (Wed)	WEEK 9 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
<b>Mar 14 (Wed)</b>	<b>WEEK 10 Spring Break</b>	<b>No lecture - Spring Break.</b>
Mar 21 (Wed)	WEEK 11 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
<b>Mar 24 (Sat)</b>	<b>WITHDRAWAL</b>	<b>Last day to drop course without academic penalty</b>
<b>Mar 26 (Mon)</b>	<b>Assign 4 outline, 6 pm</b>	<b>Assign 4 outline; send audio codes for Weeks 9 &amp; 11 (required but not graded)</b>
Mar 28 (Wed)	WEEK 12 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
Apr 4 (Wed)	WEEK 13 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
Apr 11 (Wed)	WEEK 14 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
Apr 18 (Wed)	WEEK 15 LECTURE	Lecture topic relevant to current assignments; readings will be assigned via email
<b>Apr 23 (Mon)</b>	<b>Assignment 4, 6 pm</b>	<b>Assignment 4 - send codes for Weeks 12, 13, 14, 15 (30% of overall grade)</b>
Apr 25 (Wed)	WEEK 16 LECTURE	Final lecture, summary of course in preparation for final exam
<b>TBA</b>	<b>Course evaluation</b>	<b>Students send online evaluation (required)</b>
<b>Apr 30 (Mon)</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>45-minute exam via Blackboard over all course content</b>
<b>May 8 (Tue)</b>	Final grades	<b>Final grades posted on Blackboard and sent to registrar by May 8</b>

## VIII. TEXTS AND OTHER RESOURCES

- Textbook: *Online Technical Writing* by David A. McMurrey (<http://www.prismnet.com/~hexres/textbook/props.html>). Free online resource. (See recommended resources at [http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260\\_welcome.htm](http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260_welcome.htm))
- Computer (Mac or PC), Microsoft Office or equivalent software, Internet access, and email account
- Senior-level competence in English grammar, vocabulary, spelling, sentence structure, thesis formation and supporting evidence
- Competence in the design, composition, editing, and posting of a basic website (tips will be provided for those new to this task)
- Free handbook of English usage at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>; also, memorize the USAGE TIPS at the end of this syllabus; dictionary: <http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/>
- Miscellaneous information provided by instructor via email and course website ([http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260\\_welcome.htm](http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260_welcome.htm))

## IX. GRADING AND EVALUATION

The grade you earn on an assignment will be a numerical score. For assignments in this course and for the semester total score, numerical values are equated with letter grades as shown below:

A = 100-95	B = 85.999-84	C = 75.999-74	D = 65.999-64
A- = 94.999-90	B- = 83.999-80	C- = 73.999-70	D- = 63.999-60
B+ = 89.999-86	C+ = 79.999-76	D+ = 69.999-66	F = 59.999-0

No assignment submitted = zero points; note that this scale differs from the "standard" scale on Blackboard, just as students and instructors differ from their generic counterparts.

### Definitions of Grades

*A = exceeds objectives of the assignment; three or fewer major errors in language usage, sentence structure, or organization; clear, logical thought; originality, creativity, and maturity*

*B = meets objectives of assignment; no more than four major errors in language usage, sentence structure, or organization; logical but uninspired thought; no major surprises*

*C = meets objectives but just barely; five or more major errors in language usage, sentence structure, or organization; some lapses in logic; often, a cautious effort to "give the instructor what he wants"*

*D = tries but fails to meet objectives; six or more major errors in language usage, sentence structure, or organization; jumbled, weak flow of ideas; confused understanding of the assignment*

*F = complete failure to meet objectives of the assignment*

**NOTE:** A “major error” is defined as one that creates confusion or an impression of unprofessional practices; this includes, but is not limited to, comma splices, sentence fragments, fused or run-on sentences, pronoun misuse, punctuation mistakes, spelling errors, and misused words (for instance, using “service” as a verb when the correct word is “serve”). Note also that an accumulation of several “minor” errors may cause as much harm as a few “major” errors. A misspelling of “moral” for “morale” (or vice versa) may appear minor, but your reader may find it grounds for doubting your knowledge, skill, and credibility. Such errors may even cause you to lose a job. Although students born after 1980 may believe that strict standards of correctness in speech and writing are passé, they may be in for a major surprise when a boss or customer explodes in a fury over a simple misspelling or grammar mistake. Use old-fashioned flash cards for learning the Usage Tips at the end of the syllabus.

**Final Grade in Course:** Your final grade in the course will be computed on Blackboard using the following weighted categories:

60%: Assignments 1, 2, and 3 (20% each, combined total of around 1,500 to 2,100 words)

30%: Assignment 4 (2,000 to 2,500 words).

10%: Final Exam

The final grade, as noted below, will be reduced by penalty points (if any) for failing to send lecture audio codes on time. As noted above, there is no allowance in this course for extra credit, do-overs, makeup work, or grade forgiveness, so please do not request such considerations. The grade you earn, not the grade that I “give,” is what I report to the registrar using the following plus-and-minus scale:

A+ or A = 4.00	B = 3.00	C = 2.00	D = 1.00
A- = 3.67	B- = 2.67	C- = 1.67	D- = 0.67
B+ = 3.33	C+ = 2.33	D+ = 1.33	F = 0.00

**Student Evaluation of Instructor and Course:** All students are required to submit a fair and complete online evaluation of the course by the end of the semester (instructions and deadline will be announced via email). You will be expected to send me an email message confirming that you have completed this task.

**Grade Penalty for Missing an Assignment Deadline:** Because deadlines for on-the-job technical writing are taken seriously by clients and employers, deadlines in this course will be treated the same way. An assignment loses one entire grade -- for example, from a “B” (85) to a “C” (75) -- for each 24-hour period (or portion thereof) it is late (including weekends and holidays). A penalty for late submission begins at the hour when the assignment is due (Monday at 6:00 p.m., via email). Set the clock in your computer accurately -- this will determine whether you have sent the submission by the deadline. **\*\* IMPORTANT: IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE MY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF YOUR SUBMITTED ASSIGNMENT BY 9 P.M., SEND IT AGAIN. OTHERWISE YOU RISK A PENALTY FOR LATENESS. \*\*** As noted earlier, I am too busy to acknowledge all submissions as they arrive, so please do not call or email me about your submission if you send it before the 6 p.m. deadline. I will usually acknowledge submissions AFTER the 6 p.m. deadline, not before.

To extend a deadline without penalty, you must present compelling evidence of need as defined by the instructor. This varies in individual circumstances, but such leniency is more likely for a student who has demonstrated a desire to work hard and succeed in the course by, for example, submitting revised work. **NOTE: you are always better off turning in a late assignment than none at all.** The mark of “F,” at 59 points, will be far less damaging to one’s final course grade than a score of zero (0) points for a missing assignment. If you’re inclined to regard this as an excessive penalty, here’s a thought to ponder: *Lateness in meeting a deadline on the job may result in your being demoted or even fired.*

**Grade Penalty for Failing to Hear Lectures On Time:** The codes embedded in the lecture audio files must be sent to me via email along with your written assignments, as shown in the weekly schedule noted above. For example, your email transmission of Assignment 1 will not only include your attached submission with .doc file extension, but also in the body of your email you will note the audio codes for the Week 2 lecture by matching a specific code to a specific slide (*EXAMPLE: Slide 3: document, Slide 7: edit, Slide 11: submit*). You will lose two points from your final semester grade calculation for each missing set of codes and one point for each set sent late. This will be computed manually at the end of the semester. *EXAMPLE: your total points earned on assignments are 86 (B+), but you sent three lecture code sets late and failed to send two sets at all. This means you would lose seven points from your total, resulting in a final grade reported to the registrar of 79 (C+).*

**REALITY CHECK:** Any student who rushes through a lecture’s audio file merely to grab the audio codes and thus ignores the content of the lecture would be wise not to take this course at all. If you have no more interest in learning than this, drop out of school and do something else. **You are not ethically or intellectually suited for earning a college degree.**

**Inability to Complete Course Requirements On Time:** A mark of “Incomplete” is allowed only in rare cases such as a documented health crisis or family emergency. You may be required to submit a Medical Form to the Academic Regulations Committee (available at [http://www.registrar.usf.edu/data\\_display.php?link\\_type=Forms](http://www.registrar.usf.edu/data_display.php?link_type=Forms)). Work to remove the “Incomplete” must be finished under these conditions: Work to remove the “Incomplete” must be finished under these conditions: (1) you must be passing the course at the time you request the “Incomplete” and must have only “a small amount of work” yet unfinished; (2) all required assignments must usually be finished within six weeks after the end of the semester or session in which the “Incomplete” occurred; (3) you must meet the terms of a contract signed by the instructor and the student; and (4) you must meet all USF academic and procedural requirements.

If these conditions are not met, the “Incomplete” will, after two semesters or by graduation (whichever comes first), be converted into the grade earned by the work actually completed during the course (this is, of course, often a failing grade). Allowing an “I” grade is up to the instructor’s discretion; it must be requested in writing. The policy is stated on page 43 of the 2011-2012 USFSM undergraduate catalog ([http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/JG/USFSM\\_UG\\_11\\_12.pdf](http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/JG/USFSM_UG_11_12.pdf)):

**"I" Grade Policy**

An "I" grade indicates incomplete coursework and may be awarded to graduate and undergraduate students. (Undergraduate rules apply to non-degree-seeking students.) It may be awarded to an undergraduate student only when a small portion of the student's work is incomplete and only when the student is otherwise earning a passing grade. Until removed, the "I" is not computed in the GPA for either undergraduate or graduate students. The time limit for removing the "I" is to be set by the instructor of the course. For undergraduate students, this time limit may not exceed two academic semesters, whether or not the student is in residence, and/or graduation, whichever comes first. "I" grades not removed by the end of the time limit will be changed to "IF" or "IU," whichever is appropriate. If an instructor is willing, he or she may accept work from a student after an "I" grade has changed to an IF or IU grade, and assign the student a final grade in the course, unless the student has graduated. Whether or not the student is in residence, any change to "IF" grades will be calculated in the cumulative GPA and, if applicable; the student will be placed on appropriate probation or academically dismissed. Students are not required to re-register for courses in which they are only completing previous course requirements to change an "I" grade. However, if a student wants to audit a course for review in order to complete course requirements, full fees must be paid.

**Grading Process.** I do not return your graded submission to you except upon your request. You have two options in this process:

**Option 1.** If you want the submission returned with detailed marks and comments, **you must agree to revise the entire paper** in response to those comments and marks. The revision is due to me no later than one week after you receive the marked paper from me. If you choose this option, the submission you send must be labeled **Lastname\_4260\_X\_markup.doc**, where "X" refers to the assignment number. You will receive from me a document labeled **Lastname\_4260\_X\_graded.doc**. You will then rewrite/revise this and return it to me labeled **Lastname\_4260\_X\_revised.doc**. Omit spaces and insert underscores in filenames exactly as shown. Leave all of my original marks and comments in place and insert your revisions nearby in **blue boldface text** so that I can quickly compare the original and the revision. (See detailed revision instructions and sample revision on course website, [http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260\\_welcome.htm](http://www.todroberts.com/USF/4260_welcome.htm).)

**Option 2.** If you want your grade simply posted on Blackboard with no marks, comments, or returned submission, just name your file **Lastname\_4260\_X.doc**.

The rewriting/revision process is entirely your option, not a requirement. You may choose to revise one or more of Assignments 1 through 4. (Assignment 5 occurs too late in the term to allow revision; however, I will provide an optional comment on it upon request. Use this filename: Lastname\_4260\_5\_comment.) I do not evaluate your work carefully, but I provide detailed comments only for those papers on which students are willing to perform the extra work needed for revising the submission. **IMPORTANT: Submitting the revised/rewritten submission will NOT result in a change in your grade except under this condition: If you request the detailed mark-up, you must submit the revised/rewritten work within one week of receiving it graded from me. If you do not, your grade will be dropped by one grade (10 points) -- for example, from a B+ to a C+ -- for each day or portion of a day you miss the deadline.**

Please note that grading a student paper is considerably more demanding than simply reading it; the intensity of this process, combined with other faculty duties, permits me to evaluate only about 10 to 15 submissions per day; given my typical workload of 80 to 90 students per semester, you should not expect a grade to be posted sooner than a week after you submit your work.

**Reason for This Grading Process:** Because of my heavy teaching load (around 450,000 words of graded student writing per semester), I lack the time needed for marking all student work in sufficient detail as a regular procedure. My grading process therefore offers a compromise. It recognizes that some students are content merely to pass the course in order to satisfy a graduation requirement. This usually means they are willing to settle for an "acceptable" grade. A student's definition of "acceptable" varies, but based on my experience, many students are satisfied with anything from a "C" to an "A." Students who are enrolled just to satisfy a graduation requirement will likely have personal reasons for not wanting to submit a complete revision. They may be too busy with other courses, jobs, or other responsibilities, or they may simply regard the revision process as not worth the required work. However, this opportunity is open to every student.

The amount of effort for me as instructor to prepare a detailed mark-up (typically requiring 30 to 40 minutes per individual submission) is commensurate with the extra effort required by the student to revise it. This effort is understandably beyond what some students prefer to do or have time to do. However, I do not discriminate in any way against those who do not want to perform this extra work. I merely offer an opportunity for this expanded learning experience to those who see value in such an approach.

**IMPORTANT:** Students have no obligation to take advantage of the rewriting process and will suffer no direct penalty for not participating in this additional work. **It should be obvious to you, however, that optimal learning is more likely with, than without, the extra work.**

**Special Note for Students Concentrating in Business and Technical Writing:** Students in this discipline should not enroll in ENC 4260 merely to satisfy a graduation requirement. They should be serious about honing their writing and editing skills to the level required of a professional who can earn a living using the knowledge and experience gained in this field of study at USF. They are therefore expected (but not required) to request detailed markup and to submit revisions of their work. **Word to the wise:** any BTW student who fails to request detailed markup should be aware that this fact will be noted as negative feedback on future Letters of Reference prepared by the instructor.

**Grievance Procedure for USF Students:** The 2011-2012 USF-SM Undergraduate Catalog, pages 48-51 (USF Policy 10-002, "Student Academic Grievance Procedure": [http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/UG/USFSM\\_UG\\_11\\_12.pdf](http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/UG/USFSM_UG_11_12.pdf)), emphasizes that a student must first contact the course instructor before filing a grievance:

**III. Statement of Policy**

**A. Resolution at the Department Level.** 1. The student shall first make a reasonable effort to resolve his or her grievance with the instructor concerned, with the date of the incident triggering the start of the process (i.e. the issuance of a grade; the receipt of an assignment) and the instructor shall accommodate a reasonable request to discuss and attempt to resolve this issue.

If, after conferring with the instructor, the student believes he or she is justified in filing a formal grievance, the procedures outlined in the USF Undergraduate Catalog must be carefully followed. A grievance is an extremely grave matter that requires many hours of attention from the student, the faculty, and USF administration. Therefore, pursue it only when other means of redress have completely failed.

**Advice About Grades:** A grievance will not automatically or necessarily result in a change of grade for an assignment or a course. Over the course of several decades teaching thousands of college students, I have seen only **two** of my students file formal grievances (1974 and 1997), and in both cases my original grade and teaching approach were upheld by a grievance committee of students and faculty.

I take seriously my duty to be not only a competent and effective instructor but also to help you succeed, not fail. If you believe I am not meeting your objectives as a student, talk with me. I will listen to your perspective and seek a mutually satisfying solution to problems. Any student who writes an anonymous negative review of my teaching or course content at the end of a term but who has never communicated with me in person, by phone, or by email about specific issues lacks credibility. Such a person demonstrates immaturity, ignorance, cowardice, and indifference regarding professional and ethical standards of conduct. That person should in turn expect the same treatment from others.

The time to focus on your grade, if you worry about such a thing, is during the term, not at the end after you receive the final grade calculation. Students who complain about final grades but who have made little if any sincere effort to excel on each assignment and to confer individually with me can count on little response from the instructor. You have four written assignments (for three of which you are invited to receive detailed markups and to prepare revisions) and a final exam to build a satisfactory final grade, and you are urged to communicate with me at any time regarding your work.

**Contrary to many students' view, a grade is earned by you, not given by me.** Your job is to perform as well as possible. My job is to evaluate your performance fairly, based on experience, judgment, and workplace expectations. There is nothing personal in this process; it is simply a matter of defining, applying, and meeting professional criteria. I am not judging your appearance, gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, philosophy, politics, religion, personal values, or social status. (*In fact, because my contact with and knowledge of students occurs only in an online environment, I am not even aware of most of those characteristics!*) I am interested only in your writing performance and your demonstrated improvement thereof.

Please don't ask for a grade to be "rounded" to a higher mark. The grading system is designed to record your achievement accurately to three decimal places, so the effect of rounding has already been considered. Grades are calculated by the Blackboard system based on the instructor's individual scale, but if you believe a mathematical error has occurred, notify me immediately.

Read carefully and repeatedly the definitions of grades in this syllabus so you have a clear understanding of the standards that students are expected to meet. If you are confused, simply ask me for clarification. Education begins with you, not with a university, course, or teacher. I recommend also that you read the following links so that you have a clear understanding of my approach to teaching:

- [Student evaluations of all my USF courses from 2003 through Summer 2011](#)
- [A Perfect Storm in Undergraduate Education, Part 1](#)
- [From Students, A Misplaced Sense of Entitlement](#)
- [Student Evaluations, Grade Inflation, and Declining Student Effort](#)

**Special Note for Students Concentrating in Professional and Technical Writing:** Students in this discipline should not enroll in this course merely to satisfy a graduation requirement. They should be serious about honing their writing skills to the level required of a professional who can earn a living using the knowledge and experience gained in this field of study at USF. They are therefore expected (but not required) to request detailed markup and to submit revisions of their work.

**Grievance Procedure for USF Students:** The 2011-2012 USF-SM Undergraduate Catalog, pages 48-51 (USF Policy 10-002, "Student Academic Grievance Procedure": [http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/UG/USFSM\\_UG\\_11\\_12.pdf](http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/UG/USFSM_UG_11_12.pdf)), emphasizes that a student must first contact the course instructor before filing a grievance:

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If, after conferring with the instructor, the student believes he or she is justified in filing a formal grievance, the procedures outlined in the USF Undergraduate Catalog must be carefully followed. A grievance is an extremely grave matter that requires many hours of attention from the student, the faculty, and USF administration. Therefore, pursue it only when other means of redress have completely failed.

**Advice About Grades:** A grievance will not automatically or necessarily result in a change of grade for an assignment or a course. In more than 40 years of teaching thousands of college students, **two** of my students have filed formal grievances (1974 and 1997), and in both cases my original grade and teaching approach were upheld by a grievance committee of students and faculty.

I take seriously my duty to be not only a competent and effective teacher but also to help you succeed, not fail. If you believe I am not meeting your objectives as a student, tell me immediately -- don't wait until late in the semester. I will weigh your perspective and seek a mutually satisfying solution to problems. Any student who writes an anonymous negative review of my teaching or course content at the end of a term but who has never communicated with me in person, by phone, or by email about specific complaints lacks credibility. Such a person demonstrates immaturity, ignorance, and indifference regarding professional and ethical standards of conduct.

The time to focus on your grade, if you worry about such a thing, is during the semester, not at the end after you receive the final grade calculation. Students who complain about final grades but who have made only minimal effort to excel on each assignment can count on little response from the instructor. You have four written assignments (for three of which you are invited to receive detailed markups and to prepare revisions) to build a satisfactory final grade, and you are encouraged to communicate with me at any time regarding your work.

Contrary to many students' view, a grade is *earned* by you, not *given* by me. Your job is to perform as well as possible. My job is to evaluate your performance fairly, based on experience, judgment, and workplace expectations. There is nothing personal in this process; it is simply a matter of defining, applying, and meeting professional criteria. I am not judging your appearance, gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, philosophy, politics, religion, personal values, or social status. I am interested only in your writing and editing performance and your demonstrated improvement thereof. The easiest way to avoid what you may perceive as a "conflict of personalities" is to focus on your work and not on personalities. I urge you to drop the course before the academic-penalty deadline if you are unable to benefit from it as intended. If you expect the kind of grade inflation that is often scomed in higher education these days, you will be disappointed in my course. I am proud of my reputation as a demanding instructor who expects only the best effort from students.

Please don't ask for a grade to be "rounded" to a higher mark or to be changed as a result of extra credit or grade forgiveness. The grading system is designed to record your achievement accurately to three decimal places, so the effect of rounding has already been considered. Grades are calculated by the Blackboard system, but if you believe a mathematical error has occurred, notify me immediately.

Read carefully and repeatedly the definitions of grades in this syllabus so you have a clear understanding of the standards that students are expected to meet. If you are confused, ask me for clarification.

## IX. PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

The use of others' words, images, sounds, ideas, or expressive work regardless of medium, without permission and/or without providing proper credit, is **PLAGIARISM**. Taking credit for another person's work, or submitting your own work as that of another person, is **CHEATING**. Both activities constitute a serious breach of ethics that harms other students and society in general. The penalty for such an act may include any or all of the following:

- A score of zero points on an assignment (the same as if no assignment were submitted at all), with no opportunity to resubmit the plagiarized work
- Failure in a course (the student's permanent USF transcript may bear the grade of "FF" to indicate academic dishonesty),
- Dismissal from school, and/or
- Formal prosecution for theft of intellectual property.

USF's Policy 3.027 on Academic Integrity of Students is stated at [http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/UG/USFSM\\_UG\\_11\\_12.pdf](http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/UG/USFSM_UG_11_12.pdf) (pages 54-59) and in the printed catalog. Every student must read and follow this policy. Before you stoop to stealing someone else's words, images, or ideas, ask yourself: "Would I accept this behavior in other students if it helped them and harmed me?" The student code of conduct and related documents are also available here: <http://sarasota.usf.edu/students/SRR/>.

**WARNING:** Plagiarism from online and other sources is easy for me to detect using the USF-supplied *SafeAssign*® software and other means of analysis. Students who violate the rules will tell you that the experience of being caught by me in an act of plagiarism is something they regret now and probably for the rest of their lives. Potentially exemplary careers can be and indeed have been ruined by such short-sighted, unethical behavior.

I take plagiarism and cheating seriously because I have a duty to protect the rights and expectations of honest students who work hard to earn a grade based on ethical practices in research and writing. If your work appears unusually better than I might reasonably expect it to be based on your academic or workplace experience, I may suspect plagiarism and will investigate. You may be required to submit complete citations and copies of all source material consulted for a given assignment.

Note that in addition to listing all references used in your work under the heading "Sources Consulted" at the end of a submission, you must also provide **parenthetical citations** within the text to any direct or indirect quote, idea, or words derived from a work other than your own. The Modern Language Association (MLA) format for parenthetical citations and listing of references is explained through a link on the course website (<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/research/mlaparen.html>).

**USF Official Statement regarding use of SafeAssign®:** *The University of South Florida has an account with an automated plagiarism detection service which allows instructors to submit student assignments to be checked for plagiarism. I reserve the right to submit assignments to this detection system. Assignments are compared automatically with a huge database of journal articles, web articles, and previously submitted papers. The instructor receives a report showing exactly how the student's paper was plagiarized.*

## X. OFFICIAL USFSM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**Religious Observances:** The University recognizes the right of students and faculty to observe major religious holidays. Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class for a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second week of classes. See <http://generalcounsel.usf.edu/policies-and-procedures/pdfs/policy-10-045.pdf> for information. In this online course, where no in-person attendance is expected, this policy may apply to the due dates for assignments; contact the instructor regarding individual circumstances.

**Disabilities Accommodation:** Students are responsible for registering with the Office of Students with Disabilities Services (SDS) in order to receive academic accommodations. Reasonable notice must be given to the SDS office (typically five working days) for accommodations to be arranged. It is the responsibility of the student to provide each instructor with a copy of the official Memo of Accommodation (for online courses, send this Memo via email to the instructor). See <http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Students/Disability/> for information. Contact: Pat Lakey, Coordinator, 941-359-4714, [plakey@sar.usf.edu](mailto:plakey@sar.usf.edu)

**Academic Dishonesty:** The University considers any form of plagiarism or cheating on exams, projects, or papers to be unacceptable behavior. Please review the university's policy in the USFSM Undergraduate Catalog or USFSM Graduate Catalog and the USF Student Code of Conduct.

Undergraduate: <http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/>

Graduate: <http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/>

USF Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.sa.usf.edu/srr/page.asp?id=88>

**Academic Disruption:** The University does not tolerate behavior that disrupts the learning process. The policy for addressing academic disruption is included with Academic Dishonesty in the USFSM Undergraduate Catalog or USFSM Graduate Catalog and the USF Student Code of Conduct.

Undergraduate: <http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/>

Graduate: <http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/>

USF Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.sa.usf.edu/srr/page.asp?id=88>

**Contingency Plans:** In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USFSM to suspend normal operations. During this time, USFSM may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Blackboard, Elluminate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It's the responsibility of the student to monitor the Blackboard site for each class for course-specific communication, and the main USFSM and College websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information. The USF hotline at 1 (800) 992-4231 is updated with pre-recorded information during an emergency.

**Emergency Preparedness:** It is strongly recommended that you become familiar with the USF Sarasota-Manatee Emergency Action Plan on the Safety Preparedness site: <http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/facilities/SafetyPreparedness.php>

**Fire Alarm Instructions:** At the beginning of each semester please note the emergency exit maps posted in each classroom. These signs are marked with the primary evacuation route (red) and secondary evacuation route (orange) in case the building needs to be evacuated.

## ENC 4260 (Spring 2012) ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS

### ASSIGNMENT 1: TECHNICAL TOPIC FOR NON-TECHNICAL AUDIENCE (DUE 23 JANUARY 2012)

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#### INTRODUCTION

See web links for this assignment on the course website. Do a brief Google search for "business plan" and "business prospectus" to find examples of the type of presentation you will be preparing for this assignment.

#### DIRECTIONS

A major challenge in almost every profession is to explain a complex topic in language that an educated but non-specialist audience can understand. This is the kind of communication required when, for instance, (a) an accountant explains a financial report, (b) a scientist or engineer outlines a taxpayer-funded project to a citizen group, or (c) a medical doctor discusses the reasons and procedures behind a complex surgical operation. In each case, the message must be structured and worded in a way that is technically accurate, complete, concise, and yet understandable by the non-specialist reader or listener. It is the kind of report we see frequently when government bureaucrats or senior military officials try to explain to members of congress and the taxpaying public complex issues in health care, national defense, and similar topics.

#### BUSINESS SCENARIO

In this assignment you may choose the role of any specialist who is trained at the master's degree level or equivalent (or above) and then write a concise presentation in two formats: (1) a brief PowerPoint presentation and (2) a 500- to 700-word prose document (Executive Summary). The audience for your message will be lay-persons (that is, people who may be generally educated but are not familiar with the special knowledge that you possess from your training and experience).

Described below is a scenario that may serve as an example of what you will develop. You may choose any topic, scenario, and audience as long as it helps you learn how to adjust your message to the specific audience that you are addressing. **You must consult with me by email if you choose a scenario different from the one below.**

#### EXAMPLE

Assume that you are a freelance technical writer who has been hired to assist Dr. Margaret Brown, an internist, in presenting a new business investment opportunity to a group of 20 venture capitalists. These investors have narrowed their list of possible investment ventures to three, including Dr. Brown's. She proposes to develop and market a new line of health care aids aimed at retired and soon-to-retire Baby Boomers (around 75 million individuals in the United States, born from 1946 to 1964). Margaret Brown holds an M.D. degree from Johns Hopkins

University, and is board-certified in internal medicine. She has been in her own private medical practice for over 15 years but now wants to branch out into business. She is a good scientist but has limited experience as a business communicator.

Dr. Brown needs to develop a prose **Investment Prospectus** and slide presentation in which she can achieve the following:

1. Describe the “health care aids” in terms that make clear sense to the investors, all of whom are smart and educated people but not specialists in the health care field. (You may use imagination and humor in the choice of health care aids as long as what you present is plausible in the context of the assignment.) Help Margaret choose an attention-grabbing name for her new company.
2. Explain what steps are required to go from the existing prototypes of these products into efficient mass production. Indicate the cost, length of time, staffing, technical know-how, and legal actions needed for this process.
3. Estimate the market (both in dollars and length of time) for Dr. Brown’s health care products and explain the basis for your projections.
4. Discuss the potential risks and benefits to the investors in terms of profit/loss expectations, publicity issues, and any legal liabilities that may be incurred.
5. Conclude with a persuasive sales pitch that will convince the investors to provide Dr. Brown the funds she needs to get her company started.

The specifics you provide in the prose document and slide presentation will be drawn from your own creative imagination and from what you can glean from the instructor, the internet, articles, interviews, and other sources. I will be happy to answer questions on this assignment via email.

**NOTE:** This is just one example of how you might approach the assignment. If you want to use a scenario different from the one outlined above, **contact me before you start to ensure that your choice presents similar challenges to you as a technical communicator.** I will be happy to help you create your own scenario. Just ask for help via email.

### FORMAT AND STYLE

For the prose Prospectus, use Microsoft Word. Choose 12- point type, 8-1/2” x 11” paper, with default margins. Use double spacing, and 12- point boldface caps for headings. (See format sample at end of syllabus.) Your prose document should not exceed four double-spaced pages. For the slide presentation, use Microsoft PowerPoint. In both the prose document and the slides, you should use graphic elements such as charts, tables, and illustrations where these will help get your points across more clearly than words alone.

### REVIEWING AND PROOFREADING

Ask a neutral observer to critique your draft to see whether it transmits your message clearly and concisely. Read it aloud into an audio or video recorder and play it back for yourself later to hear how it flows. Proofread carefully to eliminate errors in spelling, grammar, and sentence structure. (Consult the USAGE TIPS at the end of the syllabus.) Send the two documents to me as email attachments with one of the following sets of filenames:

(1) **Lastname\_4260\_1.doc & Lastname\_4260\_1.ppt** (grade only, no marks or comments)

(2) **Lastname\_4260\_1\_markup.doc and Lastname\_4260\_1\_markup.ppt** (detailed markup and comments; student must revise and return graded work within one week)

## ASSIGNMENT 2: FEASIBILITY REPORT (DUE 13 FEBRUARY 2012)

### DIRECTIONS

Lucky corporate technical writer that you are, you have been chosen to help Martha Sterling, the head of engineering at Monolith Projects, Inc., prepare a feasibility report. Before starting, read carefully this information: <http://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/feas.html>. A feasibility report may be defined as a document presenting the following content about a product or service (your specific section titles may vary from what you see here):

1. **Introduction:** defines and describes the problem as it relates to the values of the audience. Describe each possible solution briefly, tell the reader what the report will do, and summarize the conclusion.
2. **Technical and non-technical factors to consider**
3. **Requirements and criteria**
4. **Discussion of options and results**
5. **Recommendation and conclusion:** Unlike the results section, this advises readers to choose a particular solution. The conclusion reiterates the key points in the report and shows logically how the recommendation was reached using the available data and analysis.

You may choose one of the following three projects as the subject of your report, or **(after consulting with me)** choose a project of your own:

- **PROJECT 1:** Development of new software for a career-planning and job-hunting agency that will respond to a recessionary economy
- **PROJECT 2:** Construction of a project called “Hope Village,” designed to house 2,000 homeless people, in the middle of Longboat Key
- **PROJECT 3:** Creation of the “VeriSci” program that will infallibly detect errors in scientific research surrounding major public issues such as climate change and fiscal policy and thus end the debates over who is right and wrong on such issues

Your job in this assignment is to research (via internet, printed sources, and/or expert interviews) the background and critical factors that are important for determining the project’s feasibility, and then to incorporate your findings in a concise feasibility report that will help senior managers decide on the best course of action.

## FORMAT AND STYLE FOR ASSIGNMENT 2

Use Microsoft Word. Choose 12-point type, 8-1/2" x 11" paper, with 1" margins on all four sides. Use double spacing, and 12-point boldface caps for headings. Insert a footer according to the instructions in the formatting guide. The feasibility report itself should not exceed 700 words. Follow formatting guidelines shown in the syllabus, page 12. Send the document to me as an email attachment with one of the following filenames:

(1) **Lastname\_4260\_2.doc** (grade only, no marks or comments)

(2) **Lastname\_4260\_2\_markup.doc** (detailed markup and comments; student must revise and return graded paper within one week of receiving it from me)

## ASSIGNMENT 3, [OPTION 1](#): TECHNICAL WRITING OR PROPAGANDA? (DUE 5 MARCH 2012)

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### BACKGROUND

As you will learn in your first two assignments in this course, technical communications do not happen in a vacuum. They are subject to whims, ideological preferences, and irrational impulses based on an individual's or group's objectives.

Your job in this assignment is to find and analyze an example of technical writing that is heavily influenced by a political or ideological agenda. You may draw your example from any field such as climate research (the current controversy over global warming is an obvious example), environmental impact studies of agricultural practices (the so-called green revolution), research on medical treatments for hard-to-define illnesses such as Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome, or the search for solutions to problems such as the Gulf of Mexico "red tide" algae blooms which may have a major impact on the economy and human health in southwest Florida.

### DIRECTIONS

Provide a thoughtful analysis of how communication in various media can be used or abused in support of one or more persons' agendas, and discuss how a technical communicator can maintain his or her own ethical standards despite pressures to bend the truth.

Your analysis should be organized this way:

#### 1. Introduction

- Description of the controversy
- History and background (how and when did it come about?)
- Brief profiles of the main participants or players

#### 2. Main Body of the Report

- Analysis of specific technical language related to the controversy
- How and why the "experts" differ
- Political or ideological motivations for disagreement

#### 3. Conclusion

- Suggested solutions for replacing ideology or politics with responsible, truthful science and technology
- Warning signs — how to detect and deal with distortions of truth in science and technology
- Key lessons for technical communicators

### RELEVANT WEB LINKS

Use Google to explore the following search terms. Invent similar terms of your own devising. Be creative and imaginative in analyzing the relationship between "truth" and "propaganda."

bending truth in technical writing	politics and technology
science writing and truth	technical writing and
fraudulent science communications	propaganda
technical experts and propaganda	science for hire

### FORMAT AND STYLE

Use Microsoft Word. Choose 12-point type, 8-1/2" x 11" paper, with 1" margins on all four sides. Use double spacing, and 12-point boldface caps for headings. Provide a thought-provoking title for your assignment in 14-point, boldface, centered type. Add a footer according to directions in the syllabus. Your prose document should not exceed 1,000 words (see TOOLS menu => WORD COUNT).

As usual, ask a neutral observer to critique your paper to see whether it transmits your message clearly and concisely. Read it aloud into a tape recorder and play it back for yourself later to hear how it flows. Work at making your prose lively and provocative by varying your vocabulary and sentence type. Use strong active verbs and try to avoid the passive voice. Proofread carefully to eliminate errors in spelling, grammar, and sentence structure. (Consult the online handbook at <http://ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>.)

## ASSIGNMENT 3, [OPTION 2](#): TECHNICAL PROPOSAL (DUE 5 MARCH 2012)

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### BACKGROUND

You have been working for Mammoth Enterprises, Inc. for about six months. Your growing reputation as an efficient, smart, and effective technical communicator has given you a nice salary boost and your boss ever-higher expectations for your work.

Your boss, Mrs. Saltmarsh, is the head of New Business Development. She has named you the lead writer and editor on an important technical proposal. This document will help determine whether Mammoth will win the competition for a new \$15 billion contract to build a new nuclear power plant near San Francisco. (Even the rumors of such a facility have already caused rioting along the California coast.)

### DIRECTIONS

Create a concise, 1,000-word proposal for the project, code-named *NukeNow*. (NOTE: You may invent a different scenario for your technical proposal, but you must consult with me about it first.) Read this first: <http://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/props.html>. Obviously, a thousand words would probably not be sufficient for such a major proposal in real life, so you are permitted to adjust your document accordingly. The proposal should be organized as suggested in the online text and should be a persuasive, compelling, and accurate document which wins the contract for Mammoth Enterprises, Inc.

### RELEVANT WEB LINKS

For information and examples, see the following links (include no spaces in the links):

- European Space Agency: Writing a Good Technical Proposal (training course): [http://esamultimedia.esa.int/docs/industry/SME/Writing/Technical\\_Part.pdf](http://esamultimedia.esa.int/docs/industry/SME/Writing/Technical_Part.pdf)
- Rutgers University, Sample Student Technical Proposals (longer than what is called for in the ENC 4260 assignment, but useful guidance in terms of organization and content): [http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/%7Erneedsu/student\\_proposals.html](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/%7Erneedsu/student_proposals.html)
- University of Minnesota, Roles and Responsibilities in a Technical Proposal: [http://www.research.umn.edu/spp/roles/tech\\_prop.html](http://www.research.umn.edu/spp/roles/tech_prop.html)
- Univ of Toronto Engineering Communication Centre, information for engineers writing technical proposals: <http://www.ecf.toronto.edu:80/~writing/handbook-proposals.html>
- Online Technical Writing Guide (<http://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/props.html>) = how to write a technical proposal

### FORMAT AND STYLE

Use Microsoft Word. Choose 12-point type, 8-1/2" x 11" paper, with 1" margins on all four sides. Use double spacing, and 12-point boldface caps for headings. Provide a thought-provoking title for your assignment in 14-point, boldface, centered type. Add a footer according to directions in the syllabus. Your prose document should not exceed 1,000 words (see TOOLS menu => WORD COUNT).

As usual, ask a neutral observer to critique your paper to see whether it transmits your message clearly and concisely. Read it aloud into a recorder and play it back for yourself later to hear how it flows. Work at making your prose lively and provocative by varying your vocabulary and sentence type. Use descriptive active verbs and try to avoid the passive voice. Proofread carefully to eliminate errors in spelling, grammar, and sentence structure. (Consult the online handbook and the USAGE TIPS.)

### SUBMISSION

Send the document to me as an email attachment with one of the following filenames:

(1) **Lastname\_4260\_3.doc** (grade only, no marks or comments)

(2) **Lastname\_4260\_3\_markup.doc** (detailed markup and comments; student must revise and return paper in one week after it is graded)

### ASSIGNMENT 4 OUTLINE (DUE 26 MARCH 2012 / TWO OPTIONS)

Whether you choose Option 1 or Option 2 for Assignment 4, you must submit a statement of your (1) topic, (2) thesis, and (3) expected information sources. Send this IN THE BODY OF AN EMAIL (not as an attachment) by March 23. This statement should be around 150 words. The email subject line should read Lastname 4260 Assign 4 Outline. Take care in what you choose to write -- you will be required to stick with this topic through the completion of Assignment 4 on Apr. 25. No last-minute changes will be permitted. I will respond to your outline promptly by email.

**IMPORTANT:** I will not accept any Assignment 4 submission for which I have not approved an outline ahead of time. If you fail to observe these instructions, your #4 submission will earn a grade of minus 10 points.

### ASSIGNMENT 4, [OPTION 1](#): TECHNICAL WRITING PROJECT (DUE 23 APR 2012)

#### PURPOSE

Option 1 will give you experience in researching, writing, editing, and preparing a slide presentation for a technical communications project. The ideal would be for you to use this opportunity to work on an actual paid assignment for a client or employer, but since this is difficult to arrange, you will attempt to simulate such an assignment. You are welcome to modify any of these topics or to create an entirely new topic as long it meets the ENC 4260 objectives and my approval ([explain the details in your outline, due on 26 March 2012](#)).

#### DELIVERABLES

The assignment will require completion of one of the following three suggested projects:

- User manual or instruction manual
- Scientific or technical research report
- Two-hour workshop on a technical topic

**4.1-A. User or Instruction Manual.** If you choose this for Option 1, you should first identify a subject for the manual. This could be a software package, a mechanical or chemical process, a medical procedure, operation of a weapon, or anything else resembling those examples. Your

objective will be to write and test this manual. The test will require you to find a user who is willing to follow the manual in achieving success with the results your manual tries to deliver. For example, if you wrote a user manual on a specific aspect of MS Word (such as creating a website using that software), you would ask a user unfamiliar with the subject to read and apply your manual to the creation of an actual website. Explain in your outline (due on March 28) these important elements: (a) the subject of your manual, (b) its basic content, and (c) how you plan to test it in the real world with an actual user, and (d) how you will report the results of the test in objective, accurate language. You will also prepare a brief slide presentation and brief website (three to four pages) to sum up your work on the user manual project.

**4.1-B. Research Report.** Choose a subject which interests you and which is suitable for a technical communications assignment of this kind (I will be available to discuss possibilities with you). Topic examples include hardware, software, scientific research, military tactics, and pharmaceutical developments. Prepare research based on the internet, books, articles, interviews, and direct observation. Write and edit a report of around 2,000 words. Prepare a brief slide presentation and a small website (three to four pages) to explain the process you used to create the report.

**4.1-C. Workshop on a Technical Topic.** Choose an expert to work with (or become an expert yourself on a suitable subject). Prepare a 2,000-word section of a prose script for a presentation requiring approximately two hours before a live audience, including handouts of key information for listeners. Prepare a 20-minute PowerPoint slide summary of the workshop and a small website (three to four pages) on the topic.

#### **ASSIGNMENT 4, OPTION 2: PROFESSIONAL CAREER PORTFOLIO (DUE 23 APR 2012)**

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##### **PURPOSE**

Option 2 is aimed at helping students concentrating in professional and technical writing analyze, research, understand, and succeed in the marketplace. The assignment comprises several parts described in detail below.

##### **4.2 PORTFOLIO CONTENT**

Your career portfolio will consist of the following elements:

- Research into the nature of the job market, using such sources as books, articles, websites, campus resources, and interviews.
- Customizable cover letter in which you emphasize a strong fit between your qualifications and the reader's needs.
- Customizable professional resume which presents your qualifications in a concise, positive, and persuasive way.
- Portfolio of writing/editing samples.
- Professional website promoting your services as a writer, editor, and researcher
- Business accessories: letterhead stationery, envelopes, and business cards.

In addition to these elements you will prepare a brief prose report (200 to 300 words) and slide presentation that tells what you learned through this assignment and how you can use this knowledge to reach the next stage of your professional career, whether that be a job, a freelance practice, continued formal education, or some combination thereof.

##### **4.2 RESOURCES**

See <http://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/lettov.html> and [http://www.todroberts.com/USF/Roberts\\_JobHuntingAdvice\\_Apr10.pdf](http://www.todroberts.com/USF/Roberts_JobHuntingAdvice_Apr10.pdf) for examples of cover letters and resumes and for valuable information on career preparation.

Thousands of books, articles, brochures, websites, and other resources purport to help you create strong cover letters and resumes. However, the primary source must be your own understanding of what these documents can and cannot do, and how they, along with a focused research effort, can help you find a job or other professional opportunity.

A helpful career search tool is the informational interview. The objective of this activity is not to win a job but to gain valuable knowledge, experience, and contacts that will help you find a job. This is an informal but planned meeting (preferably in person, but may also be by phone, internet chat, or email) arranged to explore ideas and opportunities with a person who has experience and knowledge in one or more of the following areas:

**Professional discipline** such as journalism, teaching, translating, freelance writing/editing, technical writing/editing, commercial writing/editing, or communications management

**Specific industry** such as publishing, professional services, manufacturing, retailing, tourism, health care, hospitality, government service, agriculture, or education

**Career-planning background** such as human resources administration, corporate recruiting, career coaching, or mentoring of women and minorities

**Internet Research.** Sites such as the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)), Monster ([www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)), and USFSM Career Center (<http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/CareerCenter/>), along with dozens of similar sites, offer you valuable tips and information that will help you refine your search to save time, money, and frustration. Sites devoted to trade and professional associations may also offer valuable information.

**News Media and Trade Press.** A search through various news-oriented websites or paper-based reference sources can reveal valuable facts about current and predicted career opportunities. This can also be a good source of learning what skills (technical, professional, or personal) you may want to improve or acquire to make yourself more attractive to employers, now and in the future.

I will provide, upon your request, additional specific interview suggestions, web addresses, and publication titles as you progress in your work on the assignment.

#### **FORMAT AND STYLE FOR BOTH OPTIONS**

For the prose component of your assignment, use Microsoft Word. Choose 12-point type, 8-1/2" x 11" paper, with 1" margins on all four sides. Use double spacing, and 12-point boldface caps for headings, 14-point bold for centered titles. Your document should not exceed four double-spaced pages. For the slides, use PowerPoint. Your presentation should last around 20 minutes. For the website component, use any preferred web editing software, or just plain HTML if you are skilled in its use. Your language should be professional, factual, and fair-minded. Strive to demonstrate the "four C's" discussed this semester — *clear, concise, complete, and creative*.

#### **SUBMISSION OF YOUR WORK**

Name your work as **Lastname\_4260\_4.doc**, **Lastname\_4260\_4.ppt**, and **Lastname\_4260\_4.htm** (choose one or more as needed for your option). **There will not be time at the end of the semester to provide detailed marks on your work. However, if you would like a brief comment via email, include the word "comment" in your submission file name (Lastname\_4260\_4\_comment.doc).**

## ENC 4260: STANDARD SUBMISSION FORMAT

**IMPORTANT:** unless indicated otherwise, text is colored and highlighted here for emphasis in the formatting instructions. DO NOT USE COLORED TYPE OR HIGHLIGHTING IN YOUR OWN WORK UNLESS TOLD TO DO SO.

**SPECIFICATIONS.** 12-point Arial or Times New Roman, double-spaced type, aligned left with ragged right margin (do not use right/left justified style); insert blank line (ENTER key) between paragraphs); main title of submission and Sources Consulted = 14-point bold centered; insert name and related information in upper right corner, aligned right, 10-point, single-spaced. The right-alignment command can be found in the toolbar at the top of your Word document. It is the one circled in blue below:



Firstname Lastname  
ENC 4260 / T. Roberts, Instructor  
Assignment [number] / Day Month Year  
LINES ABOVE ARE SINGLE-SPACED, 10-POINT, ALIGNED RIGHT, AND  
APPEAR ONLY ON FIRST PAGE (not in a header or footer)

**Title** <= 14 point bold centered, upper/lower case, no underscore, no italics

Title should be enticing, funny, captivating, descriptive, controversial -- whatever you need to catch your reader's attention!

Margins = 1.25" on left and right sides and 1" on top and bottom (MS Word default)  
Do not indent for new paragraph -- just add blank line (use ENTER key) between paragraphs.

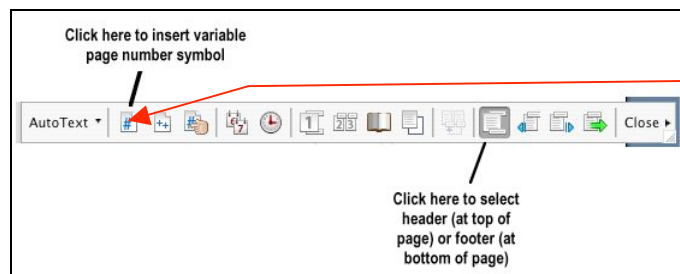
### MAIN HEADING

Main headings are 12-point, boldface, all caps, flush left. Text begins flush left following the heading (no blank line between heading and text).

**Subheading.** A subheading should be upper/lower case, bold, 12-point, with period at end. Text after subheading begins immediately on same line.

Headings/subheadings, bullet points, call-outs (boxed quotes in large type), and other typographic tools are important because they help your reader scan quickly for key points in your message and to understand how the sections of your essay relate to one another. Although a technical writer is of course expected to write, he or she must also understand the basics of typography, graphics, document design, correct use of citations and references, and online publishing. If you work for a small company or for yourself as an independent contractor, you will need to know all of these facets of how to create and communicate an effective message. Even if you hire a specialist in graphic design, you must understand how to judge that person's work.

Go to **VIEW** menu and choose **HEADER and FOOTER**. Follow directions shown below.



Footer appears automatically on each page and consists of the following information, in 10-point type, aligned right: First initial period space Lastname space hyphen space ENC [xxxx] space hyphen space Assignment [number] space hyphen space Day Month Year space hyphen space Page <#>

This is how it looks when you've done it right (of course, the page number symbol becomes the actual page number without brackets when completed):

A. Lastname - ENC 4260 - Assignment 1 - 25 Jan 2012 - Page <#>

## ENGLISH USAGE TIPS

Listed here are common errors found on ENC 4260 submissions. While some errors result simply from writing in a hurry or careless proofreading, others may represent a deeper misunderstanding. **Prepare flash cards for these tips and commit them to memory.**

### PUNCTUATION

- **Comma splice:** this means joining two independent clauses together with a comma; this often happens when the word “however” is used. An easy fix is to begin a new sentence with “However” and separate this word from the other words with a comma. “However, he missed the plane.”
- **Apostrophe:** this seemingly unimportant punctuation mark can create confusion if not used correctly. If used in “it’s,” it means “it is.” When referring to possession, “its” **never** has an apostrophe.
- **Hyphen:** this is needed in compound modifiers such as “end-of-century art movement” or “Bush-influenced domestic policy.”
- **Dash:** a space plus two hyphens and a space ( -- ). This can be used to introduce an amplifying phrase, or to join two clauses. Example: “The student saw a major opportunity in graduating early -- he could begin his career immediately.”

**WORDINESS:** Writing concisely takes perception to see alternative ways to express a thought, and practice to eliminate unnecessary words. In addition to passive-voice verbs, common phrases that contribute to wordiness are these:

- due to the fact that	- there (is) (are)
- in light of the fact that	- under these circumstances
- being that	- the reason is because

**PRONOUN REFERENCES:** A common error in student writing is the use of *they*, *their*, *them* when a singular pronoun (*he*, *his*, *him*) is needed. This often occurs after indefinite pronouns such as *anyone*, *someone*, *no one*, *each one*. Each of these is singular and requires a singular reference. Modern teachers and editors, recognizing concerns about “sexist language,” may insist on the awkward *he/she*, *his/her*, *him/her* combination in such cases, but I find these forced pairs awkward and bureaucratic-sounding. Use either the masculine or feminine, but not both. Contrary to some feminists’ claims, the masculine *he/him/his* historically has nothing to do with male biological identity; it simply refers to “a person.” It appears “masculine,” but only in an archaic sense of grammatical gender. This is still evident in languages such as German, which assigns a masculine gender to “moon” (*der Mond*); the French do just the opposite, calling the moon feminine (*la lune*). Considering these “genders” in the same way a person is male or female is absurdly ignorant.

Better yet, convert the reference into a plural to eliminate the problem. Instead of “Any person who goes into business for himself/herself ...” write “People who go into business for themselves ...” Another pronoun reminder: in formal professional writing, use *that* or *which* to refer to ideas and objects and *who* or *whom* to refer to persons.

**SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT:** In U.S. English, a collective noun such as “group” or “band” takes a singular, not plural, verb. It also takes a singular, not plural, pronoun. Other collective nouns treated as singular include *company*, *organization*, and *management*. Example: “The management of ABC Corporation has ensured its survival by use of the golden-parachute tactic.”

**PARALLELISM:** When listing items using bullet points or as a series in a sentence or paragraph, put these items in parallel grammatical form. See <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/parallelism.htm> for advice and examples. Don’t mix verbs and nouns in such a list.

### GENERAL USAGE TIPS

- In prose, spell out as words all numbers ten or smaller; use the word *percent*, not the percent sign (%). An exception to this practice is allowed in a table or chart.
- Use *either/or*, *neither/nor*, and *between* only with two items of comparison, never three or more. Use the word *among* for three or more.
- Differentiate *ensure*, *insure*, and *assure*. We *ensure* a result, we *insure* an auto against damage, and we *assure* a person of his safety.

- Distinguish between the verbs *serve* and *service*. The latter refers to the process of having the oil changed in your car ... or to bringing a bull and cow together in unholy matrimony. If you say your company *services* customers, you may lose business.
- Learn how the verbs *affect* and *effect* differ. To *effect* means to bring about: “The dean *effected* an important change in the way office space was allocated.” To *affect* means to influence: “The actor’s performance in *Hamlet* deeply *affected* me.” Don’t confuse the noun forms of these words! (See dictionary.)
- Spell out an acronym the first time it is mentioned in your submission so the reader knows what it refers to.
- Alot vs. a lot: The first is a common misspelling of the second; it’s too informal for professional writing.
- Between you and I vs. between you and me: The pronoun “me” is required because it is the object of a preposition; using “I” in writing or speaking will brand you as ignorant.
- Lay vs. lie: These verbs are confused even by supposedly educated speakers and writers, so those who understand their proper use will be a step ahead; “lay” is normally used as a transitive verb (one that takes a direct object); for instance, “If you lay your head on the pillow, you’ll fall asleep”; “lie” is an intransitive verb and thus cannot have a direct object (“If you lie down on the bed, you’ll fall asleep”). More confusion: “lay” is the past tense of “lie”: *today he lies in a ditch -- yesterday he lay in bed*.
- Hopefully vs. it is hoped or I hope: This confusion is commonplace but still a sign of ignorance; “hopefully” means “full of hope,” as in “She looked hopefully upon the teacher as a source of forgiveness for her goofing off all semester.”
- Who’s vs. whose: The first one is a contraction of “who is” or “who has”; the second is a possessive relative pronoun.
- There vs. their vs. they’re: these homophones are commonly confused; the first is an expletive or adverb; the second is a third-person plural possessive adjective; the third is a contraction of “they are.”
- Your vs. you’re: The first is a second-person possessive adjective; the second is a contraction of “you are.”
- Number vs. amount: The first is used as a collective noun referring to countable items (as in “the number of hours in a day”); the second is a collective noun referring to uncountable items (as in “the amount of lust generated by excessive testosterone”).
- Different from vs. different than: The first is standard in U.S. English; the second is preferred by the British. (And don’t spell “than” as “then”!)
- Verbal vs. oral: The first refers to any communication expressed in words, whether written or spoken; the second refers only to communication expressed in speech. “Verbal agreement” in reference to a spoken agreement is simply wrong.
- Imply vs. infer: Only a speaker or writer can “imply”; only a reader or listener can “infer.”
- Use a colon (:) to introduce a list or amplifying statement; use a semicolon (;) as if it were grammatically a period (full stop).
- Avoid misplaced modifiers: distinguish “He was only in the room a short time” from “He was in the room only for a short time.”
- Don’t misuse “like” as a discourse particle in writing or speaking. RIGHT: “He wrote like an angel and talked like a sailor.” WRONG: “The prof was, like, weirded out, dude, when I, like, turned in my stuff late.”

For additional tips, see these links:

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

<http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.html>