ENGL 303: Technical Writing
Course Syllabus

Instructor:	Mr. David M. Merchant	**Office**:	GTMH 274
Email:	merchant@latech.edu;	**Phone**:	(318) 257-5250
	merchant.david@gmail.com	**Office Hours:**	See Moodle
Websites:	davidmmerchant.com	moodle.latech.edu	turnitin.com

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Course Description and Objectives

This course emphasizes efficient and effective writing geared toward a targeted audience who need to understand the information by the proper choice of format and writing style.

Prerequisites

American English grammar and persuasive writing skills (Engl. 101 and 102 skills). I also expect that you have mastered time management, one of the top five soft skills companies look for[1].

Objectives

After the successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Communicate using Markel's Eight Measures of Excellence: honesty, clarity, accuracy, comprehensiveness, accessibility, conciseness, professional appearance, and correctness.
- Evaluate the communication situation: audience, purpose, and context.
- Create effective professional memos, reports, and job-application materials.
- Organize complex arguments in writing.
- Understand how to analyze, incorporate, and attribute data from research.

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[1] The top five skills as determined by LinkedIn are creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and time management. You will need all five for this course. The Bulldog Achievement Resource Center (BARC) can help you learn time management: Wyly Tower 202; (318) 257-4730; www.latech.edu/current-students/barc/.

- Continue developing lifelong learning and self-editing skills.
- Continue developing Tech's goal of creating professionals and leaders.
- Use Microsoft Word effectively in document design.

Required Course Materials

- Markel, Mike. *Practical Strategies for Technical Communication*. **3rd ed**.
- *2019-2020 TECHnical Writing Course Manual*. Available from Tech's bookstore (latech.bncollege.com); you *must* have the latest edition.
- *Merchant*'s *Style Guide* and *Merchant's Guide to English Usage for Technical Writers*; both free at davidmmerchant.com.
- You **need** reliable access to Microsoft Word, email, Moodle, and Turnitin.com. You also **need** a separate (not on the same device) back up of your work (cloud, flash drive, etc.).

About Your Instructor

I am Mr. David M. Merchant, Instructor of English for the School of Literature and Language. The following is the extent of my credentials:

2009 Graduate Certificate, Technical Writing (Louisiana Tech University)
2006 MA, English Literature (Louisiana Tech University)
1997 MS, Information Science (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)
1992 BA, English Literature (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)
1984 Certification, Naval Nuclear Power Plant Operator (US Navy)

My experience includes U.S. Navy electrician and nuclear engineering technician, technology specialist, web developer, and systems librarian. My profile is at davidmmerchant.com/profile/.

Attendance Policy

Punctual attendance is a university requirement and a courtesy to me and your classmates. Employers also demand punctuality; you can be fired for being absent or being late. Schedule appointments so they do not conflict with class and show up to class prepared to work.

Absences
For on-campus classes, you can miss *six* class meetings without penalty; *do not* tell me why you were absent. Each absence after reduces your course grade by 1 point. Being late or leaving early three times counts as one absence. If you miss the roll, see me after class to make sure you are not marked absent. Do not ask me what was covered for a missed class: check the course schedule for that. If many absences occur at the end of the quarter, an incomplete may be set up.

For online classes, the roll is taken by your checking the course Moodle page at least twice each week. You can miss three checks without penalty. After that, missing a week reduces your final grade by 2 points. Checking in only once during a week reduces your final grade by 1 point. Technology problems are not acceptable excuses for not checking in twice a week.

Exceptions. A verifiable university-excused absence cleared in advance, giving birth, or a verifiable family emergency gives a grace period (decided case-by-case), otherwise, there are no exceptions. Blame it on bad luck, the psychic manipulations of Cthulhu, or an indifferent universe. It happens to all of us.

Absent Instructor Policy

If we are not able to meet due to my absence or a university emergency, the class will continue through Moodle. *I encourage you to enroll in the **Emergency Notification System*** at boss.latech.edu/ia-bin/ens.htm. You may also refer to ert.latech.edu for updated information.

Expectation of Outside-Class Work

This is a demanding and challenging class that requires high-quality communication: correct formatting is as important as correct grammar. At this point, we expect you to be at Hard-Mode level (to use a video game analogy). To use another analogy, you are not passengers on this trip; you need to be able to figure out some things for yourself given the right information and tools. And, as mentioned above, we also expect that you have mastered time management.

I do not invite you to read the assigned readings before class, I require it. My lectures assume that you have done the readings. (Why should I take class time telling you what you have already read?) Instead, I will use the readings as launching pads for further discussions, further details. Of course, I am open to answering specific questions you may have about the day's readings.

> "Easy reading is damned hard writing."—Nathaniel Hawthorne

Writing, especially professional writing, is an involved process for any writer. It is difficult, but you can do it. However, you cannot write at the last minute and expect to pass. If you are unable to or unwilling to devote the time and effort or to read and comprehend large amounts of information, or you need to be spoon-fed, I urge you to drop this class until you are ready.

Assignments

Assignments reflect the results of a 2014 survey I ran of 171 companies that hired Tech graduates; the top five results are given in the table below.

Table 1. Top Five Technical Writing Tasks

Rank	Tasks	Percent
1	Procedures or process description	64%
2	Customer response letter	62%
3	Interoffice memos	60%
4	Progress or status report	58%
5	Either a recommendation report (technical report) or white paper	52%

Below are brief explanations of course assignments.

- **Article Review—*For Honors Students Only*.** Cite, (using MLA 8) and review one article from Prescott Memorial Library's holdings or databases related to your paper topic. This assignment is graded only as pass/fail.
- **Proposal Memo.** You will first write a proposal giving your topic and plans for your white paper.
- **Technical Definition/Procedure/Process Memo.** You will write a technical definition/procedure/process paper related to your white paper topic.
- **White Paper.** You will first write a white paper as promised in your internal proposal, giving your plans for the paper.
- **Progress Report.** Midpoint to your white paper due date, you will report on your progress.
- **Writing Corrections.** For the proposal and definition assignments, you will fill out a writing corrections sheet where you will write each error and how to correct it. See davidmmerchant.com/engl30/ for details.
- **Career Center Assignment.** All students will attend the one in-class Career Center presentation, *even if you had attended a similar one in another course*. **Online classes** will do an online exercise instead.
- **Style Feedbacks:** Easy points, you will give feedback on some style research I am doing.
- **Feedbacks, Usability Evaluation, and Grammar Quizzes.** These are all online (on Moodle). The lowest two scores are dropped.
- **Reading Exercises/Customer Response.** These are major reading quizzes, all online, one of which will cover correspondence and, thus, customer response letters/memos. The lowest score (just one score) is dropped.

As shown in Figure 1, many of the assignments build on the previous assignment. Thus, for example, appropriate material from your proposal can be reused in your definition/process memo and your white paper. However, you will not be able to just blindly copy and paste: the material must be appropriately reused and must fit in logically, smoothly, and grammatically into the new document.
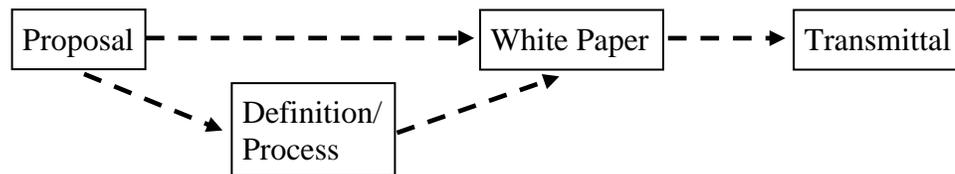

Figure 1. White Paper Writing Process

Grading Policies

Employers take a negative view of poor writing skills; ***thus, my standards are high and are stringently enforced***. Please reread that last sentence.

Scoring

Grades are in the standard ranges (A = 90 to 100%, for example). Be aware that you can earn less than 50% on an assignment. Grading points distribution is shown in the table below.

Table 2. Grading Points Distribution and Course Total

Assignment	Points
Proposal memo	50 points
Technical definition, procedure, process	200 points
The writing process: outline	20 points
Progress report	30 points
White paper	350 points
The writing process: outline	20 points
Career Center assignment	30 points
Writing corrections (proposal and definition: 20 and 30 points, respectively)	50 points
Style feedback	50 points
Feedbacks, usability evaluation, grammar quizzes; lowest two scores dropped	100 points
Reading exercises (includes customer response); lowest score [one score] dropped	100 points
Total	**1,000 points weighted to 100 points**

I do not give bonus points. Bonus points are too often abused ("I can do poorly or skip that quiz because I can do a bonus later") and can inflate grades unfairly; do not ask me for bonus points.

I do not round up (with one exception). Rounding up gives unearned points. For example, a student earns an 80 for the course while another earns a 79. Rounding the 79 to an 80 is unfair to the first student since adding 1 point to a final grade is the same as *adding an unearned letter grade* to a 100-point assignment. Similarly, rounding a 79.5 to an 80 is unfair because adding 0.5 points is the same as *adding an unearned half-letter grade* to a 100-point assignment. However, I will round up an x.90 (*but not lower*) grade (for example, 79.90 rounds up to an 80 while 79.89 will not), *but no more, so do not waste your time or mine by asking for more.*

Rubric

The rubric is based on Markel's Eight Measures of Excellence. ***Most errors are major*** (cost one to two percent of the total score each), a *few* are minor (cost half a percent each), and some are critical (cost a half-letter to a full-letter grade each). Most count off per occurrence (for example, a misspelled word counts each time you misspell it), thus, errors add up quickly. A few errors can fail a paper outright. See the rubric at davidmmerchant.com/engl30/ for details.

> "You might not write well every day, but you can always edit a bad page.
> You can't edit a blank page."—Jodi Picoult

So, What is an "A" Paper?

An "A" paper is ***excellent***. It is difficult to improve. It demonstrates insight, originality, and attention to detail. It adheres to American English grammar and usage. It follows the assignment's formatting requirements *exactly*. It is submitted on time. It understands the target audiences' concerns and needs. Its information is presented in a clear, comprehensive, ethical, and persuasive manner. It is like Mary Poppins: Practically Perfect in Every Way.

Late Work and Make-up Work

Deadlines are often non-negotiable in the professional world. No matter how good your document is, it often needs to be ready by a set time. It is unprofessional as often others need your work before they can meet their deadlines (including instructors). Missing deadlines or submitting the wrong document means losing a contract, customer, grant, promotion, or your job. It is your responsibility to leave time for unplanned interruptions.

A one-day late assignment loses one letter grade; a two-day late assignment loses two letter grades. *No work is accepted after two days*. **Exception:** A verifiable university-excused absence cleared in advance, childbirth, or a verifiable family emergency gives a grace period (decided case-by-case). Missed feedbacks, in-class work, and quizzes *cannot* be made up for *any* reason.

Technical difficulties are no excuse late or missing work. Be professional: save and back up your work often (have at least two synced copies) to the cloud, an external hard drive, or a flash drive. ***This is a course requirement***. I do not accept excuses like "I left my laptop at my friend's house" or "my computer died" since with your work backed up, you would be able to continue working on it by using another device or using the computers at school.

Submitting Wrong Work or to the Wrong Turnitin.com Folder

Some students have used "I sent the wrong paper" as a ploy to buy more time to write. Be professional: pay attention to what you are doing— ***focus and check that you are submitting the correct document to the correct folder.*** Do not wait until the last minute as that is why most of these kinds of errors happen. Do-overs for technical documents in the professional world reflect badly on you and if a client is involved, on your organization as well.

If you submitted your work to the wrong folder, you can resubmit it to the correct one. Do not ask me to do it for you. If it is submitted to the right folder late, even if it was submitted on time to the wrong folder, I will treat the paper as being late as I have 75 to 100 students and do not have time to search—you would not expect your boss, client, or grantor to take the time to locate your misplaced document (most will rightfully refuse to).

If you cannot resubmit your paper to the correct folder because you already submitted a wrong paper and the deadline has passed, there is a "Wrongly Submitted" folder on Turnitin that you can use only ONCE. I always check that folder when I am grading. If for a second time you could not resubmit an assignment to the correct folder, I am sorry, but you are out of luck. Allowing one submission to the "Wrongly Submitted" folder is lenient enough.

No Regrading or Rewriting

- **"I worked really hard, but my grade doesn't reflect my effort."** I grade on results, not effort. A client will judge a bid and a grantor will judge a grant proposal not on how much effort you put into the work but on work itself. A rocket launch is not judged on the effort put into the launch but whether it was a successful launch. I evaluate your work, not your life circumstances or your worth (great people struggle with writing).
- **"I need a grade of X to keep my scholarship/graduate/get into medical school/etc."** You are not entitled to a grade because your financial aid depends upon it, you had a lot

going on in your life, you are graduating, or you never got a poor grade before.

I do know what it is like to be a student and to desire to make an A (I still take classes). But, while an A is possible, not everyone will earn one; they must be earned and not tossed out like Mardi gras beads. To be fair to everyone, I must grade with no partiality.

Final Notes on Grading

The first paper can cause hurt feelings; the grades can be bad because you do not know how high the grading bar is until you run up to it and try to jump over. If you fall on the first paper, use it as a diagnostic to help you improve. Your quarter's fate has not been sealed by the first grade. Even if you do well on the first paper, do not become satisfied with your work: look to improve as assignments increase in difficulty and complexity. ***Learn to draft, review, revise, and edit as a normal part of professional writing: the type of writing your future employers expect***.

Course Policies on Multitasking and Learning Styles/Types

Increasingly, students are coming up with strange misinterpretations of assignments, including mixing instructions from two assignments. This class requires a professional approach: stop multitasking while learning and rethink your perception of your learning style. I will not develop my course to take into account multitasking nor learning styles beyond what has been proven to be effective: new learners benefit from examples while more advanced learners benefit from solving problems. You are both: new learners of technical writing, but advanced learners. So, I will have examples but will also expect you to solve some things on your own (though you will be given all the information and tools to do so). My reasoning is as follows.

Multitasking

Your boss, coworkers, and clients will expect that you are focused on the task you are being paid to do. You can be fired for being distracted by games or social media that are not related to your work. Your distraction can also cause your coworkers to be distracted.

We are not as good at multitasking as we think we are; multitasking lowers efficiency and quality of work. While our subconscious can multitask, our conscious mind cannot. It seems like it can, but the mind is actually switching back and forth rapidly, and that comes with costs. As you will often be working as part of a team, your decreased efficiency and quality of work will affect your coworkers. There are at least five problems with multitasking: distraction, attentional blink, inattentional blindness, misplaced information, and overstimulation.

- **Distraction**: we think we are doing well multitasking when actually our effectiveness has decreased (Chew, 217). Multitasking lowers the efficiency and quality of your work the same way skipping sleep or smoking pot does. Studies show that multitasking is worse for men than for women: men drop up to 15 I.Q. points while women drop up to 10 I.Q. points (Kim). Also, in a classroom or at work, we not only distract ourselves, but we rudely distract our classmates or coworkers as well.
- **Attentional Blink**: what we think is a momentary distraction from our work is not momentary: our brains take at least several minutes to fully refocus (Chew, 217).
- **Inattentional Blindness**: when we focus on a task, even shortly, we miss information

about other tasks even though we believe we have not missed anything (Chew, 217).

- **Misplaced Information**: multitasking can cause new information to go to the wrong part of the brain (Levitin).
- **Overstimulation**: multitasking overstimulates the brain, increasing the production of adrenaline and cortisol creating "brain fog" (confusion, disorientation, and frustration); this also creates a dopamine-addiction feedback loop making it difficult to stop. (Levitin).

Learning Styles

Your boss, client, or grantor will often give you written instructions for you to respond to. Your boss is not going to read the house style guide to you just because you are an auditory learner. Your client is not going to put a bid proposal into a PowerPoint just because you are a visual learner. Plus, up to 71 different styles have been proposed. In your professional life, you will have to adapt to how your boss, client, or grantor presents information to you.

We may believe we are one type of learner, but no one is just one type; this is a myth even some teachers believe. We do not like being wrong or having our self-definition challenged; thus, we tend to discount or dismiss any opposing information. Habits are hard to break, but our minds are more adaptable than most of us realize. While we may have a preferred learning style, we can learn from all styles, and instruction that plays only to strengths but ignores weaknesses will not prepare you for the professional world.

Be Self-Aware and in Control

As one Tech goal is to create professionals and leaders, you need to learn how to correct and compensate for your learning weaknesses: you need to plan for learning. The BARC and the Counseling Center can help with study skills, time management, and coping with technological distractions (social media and video games are designed to draw you in and keep you distracted). I know it is difficult; I have social media accounts and have been playing video games ever since Pong. But I am in charge of me, not my phone, not my social media, not even my video games (though *Mass Effect* and *Skyrim* give it a good try). There is a time and a place for everything.

Academic Honesty

Being a student of a higher standard, I pledge to embody the principles of academic integrity (Section Two of the Louisiana Tech Academic Honor Code).

The University has a* zero-*tolerance policy for plagiarism and other unethical behavior. View college as if you were employed by a professional company: you are ethically bound to work with professionalism and integrity. The first occurrence of plagiarism or contract writing is a grade of *zero* on that assignment. The second occurrence is a grade of *F* for the course and a report to the Department of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, which can lead to suspension or expulsion.

You must complete, sign, and turn in the Plagiarism Statement *for the current quarter* found in the *current TECHnical Writing Course Manual* by the deadline in the course schedule. It cannot be a photocopy. The English Dept. will place a hold on your Tech Account if the statement is not submitted. **Online students**, if you cannot drop off the statement to my office

GTMH 274), send it by certified mail or delivery confirmation to the address below.

Louisiana Tech University
Dept. of English
Attention: Mr. David M. Merchant
GTMH 236 (PO Box 3162), Railroad Ave
Ruston, LA   71272-0001

← The address *must* be exactly like this or your mail may be returned by Tech's post office.

Mail can be slow so do not wait.

Writing Center

The Writing Center (Wyly Tower 325, latech.edu/current-students/barc/writing-center/) is a great resource. Call 257.4477 to schedule an appointment or to ask a quick grammar question during business hours. **Online classes** can communicate via Skype.

Special Accommodations

If you need special accommodations, contact Testing and Disability Services (318 Wyly Tower) at 318.257.4221 (disability services) or 318.257.4882 (testing services).

Office Hours Policy

Office hours are posted on Moodle and on my office door (GTMH 274). If you call during office hours, I may not be available as I may be helping someone or have temporarily stepped out.

Moodle Messaging and Email Policy

Tech email is slow and sometimes a student's email to spam. Gmail and Moodle messenger work better. My email addresses are at the top of the syllabus.

To Post Questions About the Course
Use the *Course Questions Forum* on Moodle to post questions related to the course. Feel free to answer a classmate's question should you know the answer. Often a question you have, others will also have.

To Send Messages Only to Me
Use my Moodle user profile to send a message. If you send an email, *use business etiquette*: have a helpful subject line, and in the body tell me who you are and what class *and* section you are in. If I get an email that does not follow business etiquette, I will respond only with a request that you resend it; I will be happy to reply once I have received your professionally written email. I try to respond within 48 hours during the school week, however, I do not check email or Moodle after 5 p.m. on weekdays, on Saturdays (my social media Sabbath), or during holidays.

Do Not Send the Following Kinds of Messages

- **"What will be/was discussed in class when I will be/was absent?"** The course schedule has due dates and what material is covered or you can ask a classmate; do not ask me. I

am not going to reteach you the entire class.

- **"Please look at an entire draft of my work."** I will not, under any circumstances, read (basically pre-grade) the entire draft. Have *specific* questions in mind.
- **"Please submit my assignment for me because of computer problems."** Back up your work (this is a course *requirement*).
- **"Can you extend the due date?"** See "Late Work" above.
- **"When will you finish grading?"** During regular quarters, the turnover rate is one week. During summer quarters, the turnover rate is four days.
- **"I had a lot going this quarter, but I will do whatever I can to pass, including submitting all the work I failed to submit in the first place."** See "Late Work" above.
- **"I am disappointed with my grade; can you regrade it?"** I am also disappointed. See "Regrading or Rewriting" above.
- **"I need a particular final grade!"** See "Regrading or Rewriting" above.
- **"I worked really hard, and my final grade doesn't reflect my effort."** You are *not* graded on effort: you are graded on results. See "Regrading or Rewriting" above.
- **"Is there any extra credit I can do?"** See "My Philosophy on Bonus Points and Rounding Up" above.
- **"I am so close to the next grade; can you round the grade up?"** See "My Philosophy on Bonus Points and Rounding Up" above.

As the comic below illustrates, this syllabus is packed full of information, answering many of your questions. Be professional (a theme for this syllabus) and read it thoroughly.
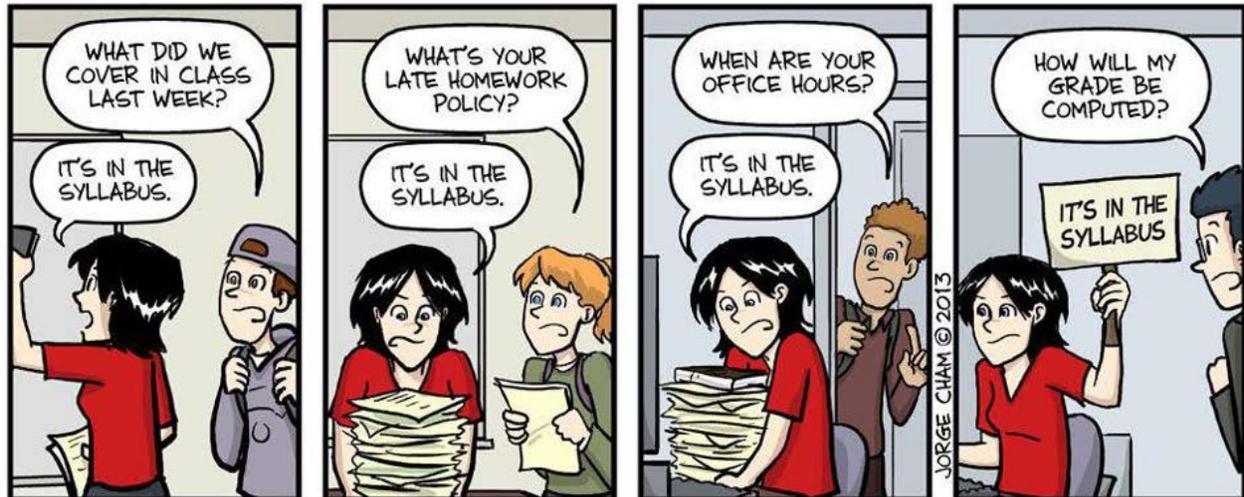
Figure 2. "It's in the syllabus"
Source: Cham, Jorge. "Piled Higher and Deeper." Comic strip. 10 May 2013.
www.phdcomics.com/comics/archive_print.php?comicid=1583

Trends of Student Behavior: "Coulda-Woulda-Shoulda" Scenarios

There is an unfortunate trend in student behavior: self-sabotage. This is often avoidable. Tech has computer labs for use. The Bulldog Achievement Resource Center (BARC[2]) can help with time management and study skills. The Counseling Center[3] can help with emotional or psychological health and responsible decision-making. Things happen, but as adults, we have responsibilities. You should become a prudent planner, anticipating the unexpected to meet deadlines. Your boss will not often accept such excuses for not getting your work done. This section of the syllabus will show how to handle certain self-sabotage situations should they arise with you. Note: while the scenarios are real examples, the names used are fictitious.

1. What You Could Have Done, Did Not Do, but Now Wish You Had (Coulda)

Things can always be done, aside from plagiarism, cheating, and lying, to improve your performance in this course. Below is a scenario that will illustrate this idea.

Mikhail, after receiving feedback on two assignments, was unhappy with his grades. Before the course began, he knew he had a poor command of grammar and in using MLA. He also did not understand the assignments nor communicated that fact to his instructor. Once the course ended, it was obvious that he was not going to pass the class, so he elected to argue that his attempts at completing the assignments and finishing the course deserved him being given a passing grade.

What Mikhail Could Have Done. In this syllabus, the Writing Center is clearly identified as a resource that students *can* take advantage of—to learn how to improve writing ability. Also, since the course instructor is knowledgeable in writing techniques and documentation style, Mikhail *could* have consulted his instructor for help.

What Happened and Will Happen if You Act as Mikhail Did. Tech faculty has an ethical responsibility to grade student work based on the execution of the assignments and not the effort behind it. *Thus, student work is not graded based on effort, merit, or favor*. Mikhail's work was graded based on how well and to what degree the assignment conformed to *his instructor's instruction*. It was his responsibility to generate a final draft of the assignment that conformed as close as possible to what his instructor required, and he *could* have made use of the resources available to him that would have made it possible for him to do so.

2. What You Would Have Done, Did Not Do, but Now Wish You Had (Woulda)

Students should recognize that the final word on an issue comes from the instructor and not the student. Below is a scenario that illustrates this idea.

Nina missed class often due to work. When the course began, she informed her instructor of how demanding her job was and how it could negatively impact her course performance. She was advised that the course requires a lot of work. It was recommended that she consider dropping the class if a balance between her job and coursework could not be made. She chose to stay in the class. Unfortunately, that balance was never achieved. She always waited until the last

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[2] Wyly Tower 202; (318) 257-4730; www.latech.edu/current-students/barc/
[3] Keeny Hall 337; (318) 257-4336; www.latech.edu/current-students/student-advancement-affairs/career-center/

minute, and since she had missed lectures, she would often find herself lost.

What Nina Needed to Have Done. The syllabus explains how challenging this course is. Do not procrastinate. Balance schoolwork, personal life, and employment logically and responsibly: make smart concessions and sacrifices where appropriate.

What Happened and Will Happen If You Act as Nina Did. Nina had options that could have been explored *would* she have just taken advantage of them. Nina's boss offered her more time for school by temporarily forfeiting a shift or two each week. She did not take this deal. Second, she had an advantage many working students do not have: she always had weekends off. She did not make good use of them. Maybe she needed the job to pay for expenses like rent, so losing shifts was not an option, but Nina's situation was neither the instructor's nor Tech's responsibility. She confessed these truths to her instructor and wanted her instructor to make concessions for her by letting her turn in the assignments late. This request *was not* granted. It is your responsibility to come up with a time management system that will allow you to finish your work on time. This course is as important as any other course. Technical writing instructors do recognize that this course is not the only one you are taking, which is why you are told on day one what this class is, what you will have to do, and when you need to do it.
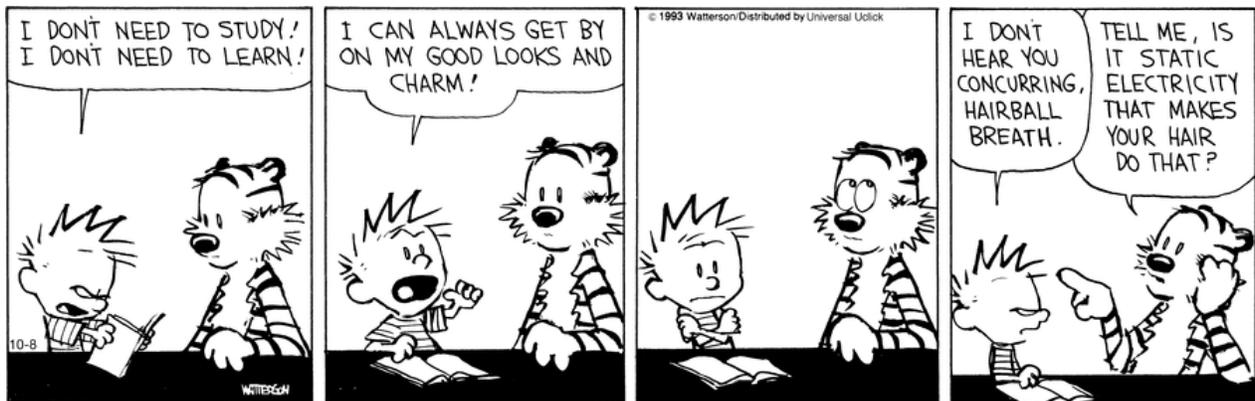

Figure 3. "I Don't Need to Study!"
Source: Bill Watterson. "Calvin and Hobbes." Comic Strip. *GoComics*. 8 Oct. 1993.
www.gocomics.com/calvinandhobbes/2013/10/08

3. What You Should Have Done, Did Not Do, but Now Wish You Had (Shoulda)

To pass your courses, you need to thoroughly review the assigned readings, study the lecture notes, pass the quizzes and tests, and complete the assignments. However, sometimes a student challenges this wisdom, but it does not work. Below is a scenario that will illustrate this idea.

Ben, a graduating senior who had secured a job post-graduation, had been performing decently in the class. All that remained to be completed was the technical report (we were not doing white papers then). On day one, it was made clear that the final report weighs heavily in the final grade. Unfortunately, Ben had been infected with "senioritis" and felt that since he was nearing graduation he did not need to put in the necessary work. When the report came due, he turned it in, but he did not do what was required. Information was missing, formatting was atrocious, and research support was lacking. Thus, his final grade was an F, jeopardizing his graduation.

What Ben Should Have Done. This syllabus thoroughly explains how time-consuming and tedious this course is, including how the course is not graded with any leniency for graduating seniors. Being so close, Ben should have "stayed the course," continuing to do the same, if not better, level of work as he had done before the report assignment. With cockiness, he falsely believed that his exit was assured when other hurdles were left to be crossed. Such thoughts are irresponsible thinking. Assume nothing and finish what you start appropriately.

What Happened and Will Happen If You Act as Ben Did. Realizing that he would not graduate on time, jeopardizing his job, Ben wanted his instructor to make concessions for him by being a good sport and giving him a passing grade. As it states in this syllabus, this class is not graded with any leniency for graduating seniors, there are no bonus points, and grades are not rounded beyond the singles digit. You earn what you earn; grades are not negotiable. If concessions are made for one, they must be made for all, and that is *not* going to happen.

Final Comments

Do not let these scenarios make you think I am unsympathetic with no desire to help. I am happy to help my students when they need it. However, *I am not going to do something that will erode my ethical integrity or the integrity of the class.* What these scenarios should help you to realize is that you are the "captains of your destinies," and the choices you make, situations you create, and the positive or negative consequences that arise because of them are in *your* hands to control and are ultimately your responsibility. Do not call on me to curve those consequences.

References

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Course Schedule

Any schedule changes will be posted in the Announcements & Lectures Forum, so check it often. You are responsible for keeping up with any changes to the schedule.

Week 1	Introduction/Overview; Topics; Grammar	Due
W 3/11	Lecture 1: Course introduction; Technical writing.	
F 3/13	**Assigned:** Topics**;** Chapter 7. Topics discussion (see Proposal assignment instructions).	
Week 2	**Grammar; Conciseness; Style Guides**	**Due**
M 3/16	Lecture 2: Audience, purpose, & context; English usage.	
W 3/18	Lecture 3: Document design, Style guides.	
F 3/20	**Assigned:** Chapter 11; Chpt. 11 exercise; Quiz 1. Lecture 4a: Memos, bad document design. Lecture 4b: prepositions.	
Week 3	**Memos; Proposal**	**Due**
M 3/23	**Assigned:** Proposal; Chapter 5. Lecture 5a: Markel's measures of excellence Lecture 5b: Working with Word part 1.	
W 3/25	Lecture 6: Plain and persuasive style.	

F 3/27	**Assigned:** Quiz 2. Chapter 6; Chapter 6 exercise.
	Lecture 7: How seemingly small mistakes can actually be
	    major ones.
		Chapter 11 exercise
		    (remember: by 7 p.m.).
		Quiz 1 (remember: by 7 p.m.)

Week 4	**Proposal**	**Due**
M 3/30	Lecture 8a: Numbers. Lecture 8b: Conciseness.	Chapter 6 exercise. Quiz 2.
W 4/1	Lecture 9a: Punctuation—commas. Lecture 9b: Punctuation—hyphens and dashes. Lecture 9c: Common spelling and word choice errors.	Plagiarism statement.
F 4/3	**Assigned:** Quiz 3. Chapter 14; Chapter 14 exercise. **Workshop**. Remember: backup your work.	Proposal (remember: by 7 p.m.).
Week 5	**Definition; Graphics**	**Due**
M 4/6	**Assigned:** Definition. Lecture 10: Why Definition?	Chpt.14 exercise by 11:59 p.m. Quiz 3 by 11:59 p.m.
W 4/8	**Assigned:** Chapter 8; Chapter 8 exercise; Quiz 4. Lecture 11a: Creating and Using Graphics Lecture 11b: How to Design for Color Blindness.	Definition Outline by 11:59 p.m.
F 4/10	Easter Holiday	
Week 6	**Definition; White Paper; Transmittal Memo**	**Due**
M 4/13	Easter Holiday	
W 4/15	Lecture 12: More on grammar.	Chpt. 8 exercise by 11:59 p.m. Quiz 4 by 11:59 p.m.

F 4/17	**Assigned:** White paper; Chpt. 13; Chpt. 13 exercise; Quiz 5.
	Lecture 13: What is a white paper? (Instructions for the
	    white paper are in the assignment instructions;
	    formatting instructions are in the *Style Guide*.)	

Week 7	White Paper & Transmittal Workshops	Due
M 4/20	Lecture 14: "Importance of Writing Skills in Tech-Related Fields" article.	Chpt.13 ex.by 11:59 p.m. Quiz 5 by 11:59 p.m. Definition by 11:59 p.m. Proposal corrections by 11:59
W 4/22	Lecture 15: Working with Word part 2.	
F 4/24	**Assigned:** Quiz 6; Chapter 12; Chapter 12 exercise.	
Week 8	**Progress Report**	**Due**
M 4/27	**Assigned:** Just read over progress report assignment *but do not do* the assignment. Just familiarize yourself with it. Lecture 16: White paper document design. Lecture 17: Yet another English usage discussion.	Chpt.12 ex.by 11:59 p.m. Paper outline by 11:59 p.m. Quiz 6 by 11:59 p.m.
W 4/29	**Workshop**. Remember: backup your work.	
F 5/1	**Assigned:** Quiz 7. **Workshop**. (white paper; corrections)	
Week 9	**Customer Letter; Job Search; Workshops**	**Due**
M 5/4	**Workshop**. Remember: backup your work.	Quiz 7 by 11:59 p.m.
W 5/6	**Workshop**. Remember: backup your work.	Definition corrections by 11:59 p.m.
F 5/8	**Workshop**. **Assigned:** Quiz 8.	
Week 10	**Workshops**	**Due**
M 5/11	**Workshop**. **Assigned:** Chapter 9; Chapter 9 exercise.	Quiz 8 by 11:59 p.m.
W 5/13	Lecture 18: "Your Company is Only as Good as Your Writing" article.	
F 5/15	Lecture 19: Job search discussion.	White Paper (remember: by 11:59 p.m.). *NO late papers accepted for any reason—no exceptions.* Chapter 9 Ex. by 11:59 p.m.
Week 11	**Career Center I**	**Due**
M 5/18	**Career Center Presentation:** The Career Center ex. took the place of this.	Finish all feedbacks, the Usability evaluation, and the Career Center exercise (by 11:59 p.m.—*NO later, no exceptions.*
W 5/20	**Nothing planned at the moment.**	
F 5/22	**Nothing planned at the moment.**	