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# Technical and Business Writing

Billy Hill

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## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

ENGL 2311 S 70
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**Course Number:** ENGL 2311 S

**Course Title:** Technical and Business Writing

**Course Description:** Intensive study of and practice in professional settings. Focus on the types of documents necessary to make decisions and take action on the job, such as proposals, reports, instructions, policies and procedures, e-mail messages, letters, and descriptions of products and services. Practice individual and collaborative processes involved in the creation of ethical and efficient documents.

**Course Credit Hours:** 3  
**Lecture Hours:** 3

**Prerequisite:** ENGL 1301

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

- **State Mandated Outcomes:** Upon successful completion of this course, students will:
  1. Recognize, analyze, and accommodate diverse audiences.
  2. Produce documents appropriate to audience, purpose, and genre.
  3. Analyze the ethical responsibilities involved in technical communication.
  4. Locate, evaluate, and incorporate pertinent information.
  5. Develop verbal, visual, and multimedia materials as necessary, in individual and/or collaborative projects, as appropriate.
  6. Edit for appropriate style, including attention to word choice, sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling.
  7. Design and test documents for easy reading and navigation.

**Withdrawal Policy:** See the current *Collin Registration Guide* for last day to withdraw.

**Collin College Academic Policies:** See the current *Collin Student Handbook*

**Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:** Collin College will adhere to all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the ACCESS office, SCC-D140 or 972.881.5898 (V/TTD: 972.881.5950) to arrange for appropriate accommodations. See the current *Collin Student Handbook* for additional information.

6.24 Repeating Courses

Grades of all courses taken will be recorded on the student's transcript. The highest grade earned will be used in computing the grade point average and applied toward degree or program requirements. Beginning fall 2002, a course in which a grade (including W) has been received can be repeated only one (1) time to replace the grade. The grade received does not affect the student's ability to repeat a course. Registration holds will be placed on courses that have **been** attempted twice. When a course is repeated: 1. Only one (1) course/grade will be counted in a student's GPA.

2. The highest grade will be used in GPA calculations. Courses repeated before fall 2008 will have only the last grade and credits (whether higher or lower) earned used in computing the grade point average and applied toward degree or program requirements. Veterans should consult the Director of Financial Aid/Veterans Affairs before repeating any course. Students planning to transfer to another college or university should check with a Collin College academic planning consultant (advisor) or with receiving institutions for their repeat policies. See the Registration Guide for details on specific courses.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:** Collin College will adhere to all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the ACCESS office, SCC-G200 or 972.881.5898 (V/TTD: 972.881.5950) to arrange for appropriate accommodations. See the current *Collin Student Handbook* for additional information.

#### Class Calendar

March 22: Last day to withdraw. March 11-17: Spring Break. April 19-22: Final Exam date: in this class: May 13.

Instructor's Name: Billy Hill, Ph.D.

Office Number: L 215

Office Hours: By appointment only

Phone Number: 972 881 5756

Email: [bhill@collin.edu](mailto:bhill@collin.edu) [Preferred method of contact]

#### Class Information

Meeting Days: Tuesdays

Meeting Time: 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Meeting Location: Spring Creek Campus, Room BB131

Minimum Student Skills: Keyboarding for class work

Materials. Textbooks aren't required. Web access for electronic discussions and email communication are required. Also, bring paper and a pen or other means to take notes.

Attendance Policy: If a student misses more than seven classes, the grade will be lowered one letter grade on the final course grade, no matter what the reason. If a student misses more than ten classes, the course grade will be lowered two letter grades on the final course grade. The official roll is taken in on class each class day. Note: students can also fail because of the policy on make-up work for all assignments. If a student knows attendance will be a problem, drop this class and sign up for English 2311 online.

### Grades Components

Quiz over active and passive voice	5 %
Oral presentations	5 %
Punctuation Quiz	5 %
First Project	5%
Second Project	10 %
Homework	10 %
Third Project	10 %
Fourth Project	25 %
Fifth Project	10 %
Final Exam Over Editing Symbols	15 %

- Absenteeism can directly cause students to fail because of incompletes on quizzes and homework.

Any assignment upon becoming three weeks late is recorded as a zero.

Grading on assignments given in letter grades converted to numbers:

A+ = 100   A = 95   A- = 90   B+ = 89   B = 85   B- = 80

C+ = 79   C = 75   C- = 70   D+ = 69   D = 65   D- = 60

F=59 and below

Final course averages are calculated to the following scale:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 59 and below

Students are expected to

attend classes promptly and regularly.

complete all reading and homework assignments

participate actively in team activities.

bring the textbooks to class.

**COURSE FORMAT:** Lectures, class discussions, group discussions, and personal conferences.

### *Absences:*

Good attendance is a necessity. If you miss too many classes (whether the absences are your fault or not), you should take a W. Taking a W is not a reflection upon your personality or abilities; it simply means that this time you fell too far behind your class.

I do not have a tardiness policy, yet students who habitually come in late never quite understand assignments. I often use the first part of class to explain procedure. Also, leaving a message with the Communication and Humanities Division or emailing or phoning me does not excuse students from assignments.

### *Student Code of Conduct:*

I always welcome a question or a request for clarification. However, students do not have the right to disturb classmates. I reserve the right to report any student to Administration who is disruptive, who repeatedly use an electronic device unrelated to class work, or creates a negative classroom environment. (See Student Handbook).

### *Late Penalty Policy:*

Students may turn in any assignment (except the last project, which is due on the exam date) one class period late without a penalty and with no questions asked. However, if the assignment is turned in two class periods past the due date, the grade will be lowered a letter grade, no matter what the reason. If it is turned in three class periods late, it will be lowered two letter grades. Upon becoming one month late, the assignment will be recorded as a 0.

Students can email me questions about assignments. However, by email or Canvas, I do not accept drafts to look at or any due assignment. This is a lecture course, not a distance learning course. I prefer that students ask questions at the end of class instead of sending email. Students can also request a private conference.

### *Individual Student Presentations over Assigned Material*

Students must make a presentation to the class over assigned sections from the textbooks or on a topic assigned by the professor. The presentation should be done on PowerPoint or a software similar to PowerPoint.

### *Homework:*

Homework is available on Canvas. All homework items must be complete sentences for me to grade them as correct. Homework, as well as all graded assignments, must be wordprocessed. I do not accept handwritten homework.

### *Projects:*

Project 1 is a two and a half page to three page, double-spaced report on the five different English language/ composition and grammar websites. Content of the report must go onto a third page, not counting works cited.

Students should google “English language grammar.” Thousands of entries will pop up. Pick any five of the many websites and write a report over them. Students should organize the report into a minimum of seven paragraphs. Students should include at least two sentences for an introduction and at least two sentences for a conclusion

The body of the report should be a minimum of five paragraphs with each paragraph giving the title of one website. Also in each of the five paragraphs students should describe the main focus of that website (research documentation or grammar workshop, etc.). In each of the five paragraphs, student should write a few sentences about what he or she liked and disliked about each site, giving his or her comments about the effectiveness of that website: for example, was the site hard to navigate? Was the site well organized? Was it difficult to read?

The project should contain a works cited page with the five sites listed using MLA documentation. It should have in-text citations. It should also have an MLA heading and MLA headers.

Unlike in other English classes, students may use first person because “I” and “We” are appropriate with business communications. Also, students can use first person to avoid overusing the passive voice. (Instead of “a memo was sent,” which passive voice, writers can use first person “we sent a memo,” which makes the sentence active voice.) Do not use the constructions “it is” or “it was,” in other words, don’t follow the word “it” with a form of “to be.” As part of his standard, do not use the constructions “there is,” “there are,” “there were,” or “there was,” that is to say don’t follow the word “there” with a form of “to be.”

To receive an A, students should use no more than three of the same form of “to be” on a page or all forms of “to be” no more than five times per page. Business and technical writers should avoid the weak verbs “is” “are” “was” “were” “be” “been,” and “being.” Use active voice sentences instead of passive voice sentences, and your writing style will contain fewer forms of “to be” and therefore, the reader will find your writing style easier to read.

To receive an A, students should start at least one sentence with a dependent clause. Also, for an A, the first project cannot contain a comma splice, fragment, or run-on sentence.

It must contain a works cited page with a MLA heading and header. It must have the required length or it will not be accepted.

Project 2 is a claim letter. It should be single spaced. This claim letter should contain enough words to go onto a second page. The middle paragraph should give evidence that the problem exists. A conclusion should state how the problem could be resolved. A student does not need a works cited page unless he or she includes information from outside himself or herself. This project does not need a heading or a header. For an A, the first project cannot contain comma splice, fragment, or run-on sentence.

Project 3 is a memo. It should be single-spaced. Students do not need a works cited page for Project 3 unless he or she includes information from outside himself or herself. This project does not need a works cited page unless he or she includes information from outside himself or herself. This project does not need an MLA heading or header.

For an A, the second project cannot contain comma splice, fragment, or run-on sentence.

Project 4 is a proposal.

Students need to include “Summary of Key Points” and “Request for Action” as the two parts of the Conclusion. The project also needs a Letter of Transmittal, Title Page, A Table of Contents, Informative Abstract, and Works Cited. It must contain a minimum of two outside sources in print (outside of yourself, interviews, and the textbook). The two quotes should increase the believability of your proposal. The topic of your proposal must be original. It cannot advocate an action that has already been done. It also cannot advocate an action that only an element of a state or the federal government could accomplish.

The two outside sources in the body of your project must match the entries on your works cited page. Be sure to single space. Use rules that confront with the current edition of *The Handbook of the Modern Language Association* (MLA).

Don’t place the words “References” or “Bibliography” at the top. MLA states that the correct term is “Works Cited” On your works cited page, be sure to alphabetize the entries, indent all lines after the first line, and double space the whole entry.

**Project 5.** This final application of knowledge is a technical manual of a minimum of three full pages of text (not counting graphics). It should be single spaced. This last application of knowledge is a semi-technical manual of a minimum of three full pages of text (not counting graphics) with a minimum of two graphics. It is due on the Final Exam date. I do not require outside sources with the Final Project. However, if you do use an outside source, you must include that information on a works cited page.

This project must contain at least one warning notice. The graphics should be closely related to a step in your manual. The manual must contain a minimum of twelve steps and sub-steps. It must contain a minimum of three hundred words. Each step or sub-step must contain a minimum of three sentences.

Project Five is due on the exam date. Students should hand in Project Five. Do not send it by email.

## Course Calendar

January 22: Syllabus covered in class. For homework, complete Homework Exercise 1. It is due the next class.

January 29: Homework Exercise 1 is due. For homework, study for Quiz over Active and Passive Voice and complete Homework Exercise 2.

February 5: Quiz over Active and Passive Voice. Homework Exercise 2 is due. For homework: complete Project 1 and Homework Exercise 3. For a description of Project 1, see page five of this syllabus.

February 12: Project 1 (website report) is due. Be sure to include a heading and header, as well as the work cited page with your report. Homework 3 is due. For homework, complete Homework Exercise 4.

February 19: Homework Exercise 4 is due. For homework, complete Homework Exercise 5

February 26: Exercise 5 is due. For homework, complete Homework Exercise 6 and Project 2 (The claim letter.)

March 5: Project 2 is due. Homework Exercise 6 is due. For homework for March 19, complete Homework Exercise 7 and Project 3 (the memo).

March 12: No class. Spring Break.

March 19: Project 3 (the memo) is due. Homework Exercise 7 is due. For homework, complete Homework Exercise 8.

March 26: Homework Exercise 8 is due. For homework, complete Homework Exercise 9 and study for the punctuation quiz.

April 2: Punctuation Quiz. Homework Exercise 9 is due. For homework, complete Homework Exercise 10.

April 9: Homework Exercise 10 is due. For homework, complete Homework Exercise 11.

April 16: Homework Exercise 11 is due. For homework, complete Project 4 (the proposal).

April 23: Project 4 (the proposal) is due. For homework, complete Homework Exercise 12.

April 30: Homework Exercise 12 is due. For homework, study for Test over Editing Symbols.

May 7: Test over Editing Symbols. For homework, complete Project 5 (the manual).

May 14: Project 5 is due.

## Plagiarism and other Forms of Intellectual Dishonesty

Of course, you can include information in projects that comes from outside yourself such as quotes from books or the Internet. However, trying to pass off another's thoughts or writing as your own is academic fraud.

Scholastic dishonesty and plagiarism are briefly defined in the "Student Code of Conduct" in the Collin College *Student Handbook*. Every student should read that information, but the English faculty would like for you to know more about plagiarism whether you are beginning the study of the research process and the pitfalls of proper documentation or whether you are preparing a critical essay for a literary studies course.



Plagiarism has disrupted and destroyed political careers as recently as the 1988 presidential election. It has cost professional writers thousands and, in some cases, millions of dollars in court awards or settlements resulting from lengthy lawsuits. In some businesses, plagiarism can result in a loss of respect or can be the grounds for dismissal. In college courses, plagiarism's penalties can range from failure on a particular assignment to failure in a course to expulsion from college.

According to the *MLA Style Manual*, the origin of the word plagiarism is the Latin for "kidnapper"; thus, a plagiarist kidnaps another writer's sentences, words, ideas, or organization and presents the material as his own. When the plagiarist uses his stolen material, he may do so knowing that the work is not his own. This is the most blatant form of plagiarism. **MANY CASES OF PLAGIARISM, HOWEVER, ARE THE RESULT OF CARELESS DOCUMENTATION OR FAULTY NOTETAKING.** Unfortunately, the reader who finds the error, not knowing the writer's intent, can only assume the plagiarism is intentional. Intentional or not, plagiarism in any paper will still carry serious penalties.

You can avoid plagiarizing if you remember that when you quote, use quotation marks; when you paraphrase, use only your own words. **IN EITHER CASE, YOU MUST DOCUMENT.** Proper paraphrasing does not mean changing a few words here and there, nor does it mean omitting a few sentences or scrambling their order.

Many students overreact when they learn what plagiarism means. They either assume that they should not use any sources (thus avoiding the problem entirely), or they assume they should document every word they have written. Both reactions are in error, for good writing involves the synthesis of your own ideas with the ideas of others. Documentation serves the purpose of clearly indicating which ideas are yours and which are those of other writers. If you are in doubt about that dividing line, ask your instructor or the Writing Center tutors for guidance.