ENGL 414 Sect. 001 Fall 2014

**Instructor: Dr. Joseph Bartolotta Office Hours:** MW 4:00-5:00

**Email:** jbartolotta@unm.edu **Office:** Humanities 246

**Class Time:** MW 5:00-6:15

**Classroom:** Dane Smith Hall 143

**Textbooks and Materials**

Katz, Joel. *Designing Information: Human factors and common sense in information design.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Rubin, Jeffrey and Dana Chisnell. *Handbook of Usability Testing: How to Plan, Design, and Conduct Effective Tests, 2nd Ed*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

 

###### Description

#### This course is designed to expose students to the theory and practices of technical documentation. Students will explore document design principles, different forms of documentation, and standards in usability testing. By the end of this course, students should be comfortable researching for procedures and instructions, composing professional-level documents, testing how users interact with such documents, and making revisions to enhance document usability.

#### All course assignments and class activities will be directed toward achieving the aforementioned four outcomes.

* *Researching for procedures and instructions*: You will research and document a procedure. In doing so, you will need to learn and create strategies for how to research topics that may be outside your subject matter expertise.
* *Composing professional-level documents*: You will learn strategies and standards for elegant professional documents by studying principles of design. You will analyze a professional document, and later, with a group, compose an instruction set.
* T*esting how users interact with such documents*: With a group, you will develop a procedure for usability testing based on best practices. You and your group will execute usability testing on your instruction set and document the results of that testing.
* *Making revisions to enhance document usability*: You and your group will synthesize the results of the usability test to make thoughtful revisions to your instructions and compose a report that would go to a client describing your testing procedures and results.

###### Assignments

In addition to major assignments, there will be shorter assignments. Shorter assignments serve different purposes: to plan or revise a major assignment, to practice strategies important to a major assignment, to examine issues relevant to a major assignment, or to explore communication. Therefore, failure to complete the smaller assignments on time may result in a failing grade for a major assignment. Shorter responses may not be graded if turned in late.

**All Major Assignments are due as PDFs to our course LEARN site at 9:00 PM local (Albuquerque) time on the due date. Anything submitted past this time is considered late. Late work will be assessed a penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e., from B+ to B) for every 12 hours past the due date it is late.** For example, if an assignment is due on Tuesday at 9:00 PM and turned in on Wednesday at 11:00 PM, the grade will would go down a full letter grade (i.e., from B+ to C). Do not let this happen to you! **All major essays must be completed for you to receive a passing grade at the end of the semester.**

###### Save everything

I cannot stress this point enough: consider uploading all drafts of your work to GoogleDrive, the Apple iCloud, or a service such as Dropbox (<https://www.dropbox.com/>). Losing work due to computer malfunction or leaving something on a computer desktop and not having it available for class will be your responsibility.

###### Class Attendance and Participation

Much of our work will be in groups. You are expected to fulfill your share of group work and to interact courteously with your peers at all times. Classes are run in a discussion/workshop format; therefore, regular attendance and active participation are important. One of the strongest components of any democracy is an informed citizenry that is ready to participate civically. Not being prepared for class preempts your ability to participate and may impede the inquiry of others, and I may excuse students who I discover to not be adequately prepared. Attendance to me is more than simply filling a seat—it is a demonstration of a willingness to engage in the day’s topics. Missing more than one week’s worth of class may result in a lower grade. **Missing six or more class sessions may result in an automatic failing grade.**

**Grading and Evaluation**

***Units and Grade Distribution***

The course work is divided by 1000 points. All assignments are not necessarily equal, although at the very least any major assignment will account for at least 20% of your final grade. I also include a +/- 25 points for participation which I will issue at my discretion based on a student’s participation in class. While the attendance policy covers excessive absences, the participation points offer a punitive measure for those who are on the cusp of excessive absences

Major Assignment 1: Procedure Writeup **200 Points**

Major Assignment 2: Analysis of Instructions **200 Points**

Major Assignment 3: Usability Testing Project

 Instruction Set 200 Points

 Usability Report with Recommendations 200 Points

 Presentation 100 Points

 **Total 500 Points**

Shorter Assignment/Learn Activities **100 Points**

Participation **+/- 25 Points**

***Grade Descriptions for Writing Assignments***

A Exemplary work; the qualities of a B paper, plus imagination and effective expression.

B Mature work; thorough analysis of the writing problem, appropriate and effective substance, good organization, and solid expression (style). Few problems in correctness.

C Competent, developing work; satisfactory analysis of the problem, organization, and expression, but nothing remarkably good or bad. Acceptable sentence structure; other problems in mechanics or usage may occur.

D Beginning-level work; presence of a defect in context, substance, organization, style, or delivery; inadequate treatment of the assignment. Possible sentence structure and other correctness errors.

F Basic-level work; lack of context, inadequate coverage of essential points, poor organization,

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **A+** 97-100+% | **B+** 87-89.9% | **C+**  77-79.9% | **D+** 67-69.9% | **F** 0-59.9% |
| **A**  93-96.9% | **B** 84-86.9% | **C** 74-76.9% | **D** 64.66.9% |  |
| **A-** 90-92.9% | **B-** 80-83.9% | **C-** 70-73.9% | **D-** 60-63.9% |  |

**What Do You Believe, Dr. Bartolotta?**
I believe that the classroom is a sort of sacred space where we come together to ponder and discuss our world and our place in it. I believe that one of the most important parts of what we do in the classroom is pondering how and why we communicate. Through this inquiry, we can come to realize our own strengths and weakness, and how messages, no matter how small, are transmitted to us. I find this type of inquiry fun, but I also take it seriously. I believe that this line of inquiry, even at its most confusing and discouraging points, is still a celebration of the faculties of the human mind, and ultimately helps people appreciate themselves and others in a new dimension. By taking this class with me, you are agreeing to engage yourself and your world fully and critically.

I believe this class is for a mature audience and language may represent that. I believe academic work should not be divorced from the rest of our lives, and in this class, we will examine materials from advertisements, film and other media that may include language or themes some find offensive. When examining these materials, please think about how the material works rhetorically, and how the vocabulary or presentation of the subject moves audiences to react to it.

I believe in a democratic classroom where discussion is encouraged and everyone feels comfortable participating. Racism, misogyny, misandry, homophobia, and other ideologies that are fueled by gross generalizations do not contribute harmoniously to my idea of a truly democratic classroom and will not be tolerated. I believe that labels we are assigned seldom touch the essence of our being, and that each individual, no matter what he or she has been labeled, is more complex than a single word can represent. Therefore, in our classroom, we will respect each other’s individual uniqueness and complexity by abstaining from generalizations.

I have identified myself variously as a student of Rhetoric, Literacy, Composition, Technical Communication, Usability Testing, Philosophy, and several other related fields. Above all, however, I consider myself a student of Writing in its myriad forms. In my life, I have seen both beautiful and terrible writing, but in my approach to teaching I am not interested in making aesthetic judgments about writing. In my classroom, I strive to make sure no writing is ever a source of ridicule, nor any writer is an object of scorn for his or her prose. I find questions such as, “why was this text composed in this way?” or, “what was the author trying to achieve, and did it work?” to be more productive and engaging and more helpful to understanding writing. In this course, we will all be students of writing, and our inquiry will seek to understand writing, not chastise it.

###### Disability Accommodation

If you have a qualified disability that requires some form of accommodation to ensure your equal access to learning in this class, please see or contact me as soon as possible so that we can work together to address your needs.

A qualified disability is one that has been diagnosed and documented through UNM's Accessibility Resource Center. See http://as2.unm.edu/ for more information.

**Academic Dishonesty**

The University of New Mexico Student Handbook describes Academic Dishonesty as follows:

# Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course.

# Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records.

 (<http://www.unm.edu/~pathfind/common/policies/academic-dishonesty.html>)

“Plagiarism” is a type of academic dishonesty. It occurs when writers deliberately use another person’s language, ideas, or materials and present them as their own without acknowledging the source. Every first-year writing class covers plagiarism in great detail, so there is little excuse for failing to understand what constitutes plagiarism or the consequences that will result.

*Types of plagiarism.* Plagiarism can include any of the following:

* Failing to quote material taken from another source.
* Failing to cite material taken from another source.
* Submitting writing that was written by another person or for another class.
* Submitting writing that was substantially edited by another person.

*Possible consequences.* The instructor decides the academic consequence to be imposed, depending on the seriousness of the violation. Sanctions include the following:

* Adequately redo or revise the assignment in question;
* Fail the assignment in question;
* Be dropped from the class with a W; or
* Fail the class.
* Be subject to more severe sanctions imposed by the Dean of Students.

My policy is to give students the benefit of the doubt until you turn in an assignment for evaluation. If you have any question as to whether or not a passage of your writing qualifies as plagiarism, please ask me before you turn in your assignment.

**Let me be clear: once an assignment has been turned in for evaluation all cases involving plagiarism become actionable and the consequences of plagiarizing are serious.**

All students who plagiarize will be reported to the Dean of Students, who maintains a file of past plagiarism cases. The instructor may use the Dean of Students Adjudication form or simply direct a memo to Rob Burford (rburford@unm.edu), Judicial Affairs Specialist, Dean of Students Office. The UNM Student Code of Conduct also addresses Academic Dishonesty at <http://pathfinder.unm.edu/policies.htm#studentcode>.

Understanding what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty will help prevent you from committing these acts inadvertently and will strengthen your communication. Plagiarism is a serious legal and ethical breach, and it is treated as such by the university. If you have any questions about documentation, see me before you turn in an assignment.

### **Respectful Campus Policy**

The English Department affirms its commitment to the joint responsibility of instructors and students to foster and maintain a positive learning environment.

### **Classroom Conduct**

UNM students and instructors are bound by the terms of the Student Code of Conduct, which is published in the UNM Pathfinder ([[http://pathfinder.unm.edu/policies.htm#studentcode](https://webmail.unm.edu/Redirect/Anchor/studentcode/pathfinder.unm.edu/policies.htm)](http://pathfinder.unm.edu/policies.htm#studentcode)). I expect you to enter class ready to learn and participate and with a positive and respectful attitude. If you disagree with someone or something, I expect you to handle the disagreement in a mature manner. And, of course, do not text/listen to your iPod/read a magazine/etc. when class is in session. If you need to take a break or deal with an important issue, go out in the hallway. I will ask you to leave the classroom (and take an absence) if you are disruptive, unprepared, or disrespectful.

###### Computer Ethics

All workshop and revised drafts of major assignments must be done on a word-processor. Because word-processors are powerful writing tools that can save time and greatly aid the processes of revising and editing, preliminary drafts are best done on a word-processor as well.

See the University Policy on Acceptable Computer Use here: http://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2500.html

### **The CAPS Writing Center for Additional Writing Assistance**

You can get additional help from trained tutors on campus (CAPS: third floor of Zimmerman library) and online at [www.unm.edu/~caps](http://www.unm.edu/~caps). See pages 13–14 of the UNM section in *Writing Today* for more information.

**ENGL 414 Tentative Schedule**

NOTE: The syllabus is subject to change and may not list all readings and shorter assignments.

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| Date | Come Prepared With: |

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| M 8/18 | Welcome to Class |
| W 8/20 | Examples and Discussion of “Documentation” – What is it? |
| M 8/25 | Have read: Chapter 2 of Gleick *The Information* (on Learn) |
| W 8/27 | Continue with discussion of Gleick |
| M 9/1 | No Class: Labor Day |
| W 9/3 | Have read: Katz Chapter 1 and Redish (on Learn) |
| M 9/8 | Have read: Katz Chapter 2 |
| W 9/10 | Have read: Kostelnik (on Learn)**Due: Assignment 1 Procedure Writeup** |
| M 9/15 | Have read: Katz Chapter 3 |
| W 9/17 | Have read: St. Germaine-Madison (on Learn) |
| M 9/22 | Have read: Katz Chapter 4 |
| W 9/24 | Have read: Wang & Wang (on Learn)**Due: Assignment 2 Analysis of Instructions** |
| M 9/29 | Have read: Katz Chapter 5 |
| W 10/1 | Continue with Katz Chapter 5 |
| M 10/6 | Functional Mapping Activity Day #1 |
| W 10/8 | Functional Mapping Activity Day #2 |
| M 10/13 | Introduction to Usability Testing |
| W 10/15 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 1 |
| M 10/20 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 2 |
| W 10/22 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 3 |
| M 10/27 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 4 |
| W 10/29 | Final Project Assigned – Group time to start up the project |
| M 11/3 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 5 |
| W 11/5 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 6 |
| M 11/10 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 7 |
| W 11/12 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 8 |
| M 11/17 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 9 &10 |
| W 11/19 | Have read: Rubin & Chisnell Chapter 11 & 12 |
| M 11/24 | Group/Class time |
| W 11/26 | No Class – Thanksgiving Break |
| M 12/1 | Group/class time |
| W 12/3 | Group/class time |
| M 12/8 | **Due: Usability Test Report/Materials** |
| W 12/10 | Presentations |