Course Reflection

This course has greatly changed my understanding of writing. I am a second-year English and math major, and I took this class to help me decide if I wanted to keep pursuing Professional Writing as my emphasis. Before this course, I would have struggled to define technical writing or explain its importance. Embarrassingly enough, I knew a little about the field, and I only chose it as my emphasis because it is among the most economical career options for English majors. Within the first week, I learned that “technical writing is the rhetoric of the world of work,” and the five theoretical topics are politics (ideology), audience (user), style (design), form (genre), and choices (curatorship). I learned that I need to consider all of these topics whenever I write. Each assignment contributed to the change in my perception and practice.

Our first assignment focused on ideology, and I was tasked with writing an email and rationale. I found this the most interesting and eye-open assignment of the semester. I learned that emails are a form of technical writing and an ideological product. This has completely changed my approach to email writing. For example, I want to consider my audience and pay more attention to formatting conventions. The assignment has also made me more aware of the innocuous ideology of other forms of communication, such as YouTube.

The second assignment focused on the user, and I was tasked with writing an instruction manual and rationale. I learned about the ethical nature of technical writing. For example, some instructions can help people learn new skills or increase their safety, while other teacher users how to make DIY explosives. I also gained practical document design skills. Before the assignment, I rarely paid attention to how my writing appeared on the page. Now I understand that contrast, alignment, repetition, and proximation can affect a user’s experience viewing a piece of writing.

The third assignment focused on design, and I was tasked with redesigning technical illustrations, creating an infographic, and writing a rational. I learned that the form of communication can be just as important as writing. In my literature class, I learned about the relationship between form and content. Now I understand that it also an important concept in technical writing. For example, an infographic is a form of technical writing that blends words and images. While this can be more effective than a dry, dense instruction manual, the limited amount of space does not allow for as many details.

The fourth assignment focused on genre, and I was tasked with designing visuals and writing a report based on primary and secondary research. This was the most difficult assignment, but it helped me become a better writer and researcher. I learned many things about writing. For example, creating surveys are a form of technical writing. As I wrote my survey, I had to consider effective quantitative and qualitative questions. In addition, I did not want my survey-takers to experience survey fatigue, so I tried to keep my short response questions to a minimum. I also tried to include all possible responses in my multiple-choice questions since I did not want my survey-responders to feel manipulated. During my research, I also learned about games as a form of technical communication. This is an interesting topic that I hope to keep exploring.

I conclude with one of the most significant ways this course has changed my understanding and practice. The two major categories of writing are technical writing and creative writing. After learning about the Deepwater Horizon incident, I realized that the line between the categories is blurry. Nearly unperceivable details such as the title, cover design, and table of contents created a narrative arc. Technical writing can be subtle and manipulative. This challenges me to write convincing yet ethically. I want to keep pursuing the Professional Writing emphasis. I think it is an exciting field because this style of writing takes logic and creativity. Since I am also an applied mathematics major, I am interested to see how technical writing interests with mathematics. Obviously, written communication skills are necessary for any scientific field, but I am also sure that there are exciting interactions at play when one analyzes the tiny details.

Here is a link to my WordPress Site: <https://sites.wp.odu.edu/engl334wlilyportfolio/about-me/>