

COURSE OUTLINE - Winter 2026

TW1030(A3): Technical Communications and Ethics - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR: Joseph Van Weelden

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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 12:30 pm-2:00 pm or by appointment

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: This course aims to enhance students' technical communication skills, covering topics such as grammar, punctuation, and the preparation of various technical documents with proper citation, as well as critique codes of ethics, professional obligations, and apply sustainability principles to technical projects, while also providing opportunities for students to develop public speaking and presentation skills.

PREREQUISITE(S):

English 30-1 or English 30-2 or equivalent

COREQUISITE(S):

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Note about texts: You do not need to buy any materials for this course. All texts for this course are either open source, publicly available online or will be made available to students on MyClass.

Main Textbooks

- *Technical Writing*, Allison Gross, Annemarie Hamlin, Billy Merck, Chris Rubio, Jodi Naas, Megan Savage, and Michele DeSilva (Open Oregon Educational Resources, 2017).
- *The Primacy of the Public: Ethical Design for Technology Professionals*, Marcus Schultz-Bergin (Open Textbook Library, 2021)



Other Readings

[AIPE Code of Ethics](#)

[ASET Code of Ethics](#)

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After completing this course students will:

- Develop advanced technical communication skills, both written and oral, with an emphasis on professional and ethical conduct.
- Improve understanding of grammar, punctuation, and the preparation of various technical documents.
- Develop the ability to create cover letters, resumes, emails, and technical summaries.
- Critically evaluate the ASET and AIPE Codes of Ethics.
- Identify legal and professional accountabilities in technical contexts.
- Apply sustainability principles to technical projects.
- Gain knowledge in the preparation and delivery of technical procedures and presentations.
- Enhance public speaking skills for effective communication.
- Learn to use visual aids effectively in technical communication.
- Apply technical communication skills in practical scenarios.
- Improve employability and professional competencies through practical application.

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page

<http://www.transferralberta.alberta.ca>

**** For courses with alpha (letter) grading, a grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

EVALUATIONS:

5% - Exercise 1

5% - Ethics Quiz 1

5% - Exercise 2

10% - Presentation 1

5% - Ethics Quiz 2

10% - Presentation 2

5% - Ethics Quiz 3

15% - Final Assignment Presentation

30 % - Final Assignment

10 % - Participation

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most institutions will not accept your course for transfer credit IF your grade is **less than C-**.

Grading Chart

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100	C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94	C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84	C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79	D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76	D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72	F	0.0	00-49

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Topic Title	Week No.	Details	Readings.	Activities	Date (s)
Introduction.	1	Course Outline and Expectations from Students. What is ethics? What is technical communication?	Post-Reading: Gross et. al Introduction Schultz-Bergin Chapter 1	Icebreaker	Wednesday, January 7
Ethics and Professional Responsibility	2	Thinking About Ethics : A Conceptual Toolbox. Thinking Better About Ethics: Common Traps to Avoid Ethics and	Schultz-Bergin Chapter 2		Monday, January 12 Wednesday, January 14

		Professionalism			
Professional Communications, Audience Analysis	3	Guidelines for Electronic Communications, Knowing Your Audience.	Gross et.al Chapters 1 and 2	Email Exercise (January 21)	Monday, January 19 Wednesday, January 21
AIPE and ASET Codes of Ethics	4	Understanding and Evaluating Professional Codes of Ethics.	AIPE Code of Ethics, ASET Code of Ethics (and Guidelines for Interpretation)	Ethics Quiz 1 on January 28.	Monday, January 26 Wednesday, January 28
Engineering & the Environment	5	Environmental Ethics in an Engineering Context	Schultz-Bergin Chapter 6		Monday, February 2 Wednesday, February 4
Proposals, Information Literacy,	6	Writing a Proposal, Writing a Progress Report, Identifying and critically evaluating sources.	Gross et al. Chapters 3, 4, and 6	Proposal Exercise (February 11)	Monday, February 9. Wednesday, February 11.
A Case Study: The Boeing Scandals	7	What went wrong at Boeing? Why did it go wrong?	Robert Prentice. "Engineering Ethics and the Boeing Scandal". Martin Peterson. "The Ethical Failures Behind the Boeing Disasters".	Ethics Quiz 2 (February 25)	Monday, February 23 Wednesday, February 25
Critical Thinking, Citations and Plagiarism	8	Making and evaluating arguments. Showing your sources.	Gross et. al Chapter 5, Supplementary Readings on MyClass	Presentation 1 (March 4)	Monday, March 2 Wednesday,

					March 4
Ethics in Technical Writing, Communicating Across Cultures	9	Ethics and Cultural Sensitivity in Technical Writing	Gross et al. Chapter 9 and Chapter 13, Supplementary Readings on MyClass		Monday, March 9 Wednesday, March 11
Value Sensitive-Design, Technology and The Principles of Engineering Ethics	10	A Deeper Dive into Ethics in Engineering.	Schultz-Bergin Chapters 4 and 5	Ethics Quiz 3 (March 18)	Monday, March 16 Wednesday, March 18
Working from Outlines, Technical Reports	11	More on preparing technical documents.	Gross et. al Chapters 7 and 10		Monday, March 23 Wednesday, March 25
Graphics, Style and Design	12	Making it look good.	Gross et. al Chapters 8 and 11.	Presentation 2 (April 1)	Monday, March 30 Wednesday, April 1
Employment Materials	13	Resume Swap, Mock Interview.	Gross et al. Chapter 12		Wednesday, April 8
Mini Conference	14	Student Presentations	None	Final Assignment Presentation	Monday, April 13

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Maintain an inclusive and respectful classroom environment, where no student is made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. Kindness and civility are not only compatible with spirited intellectual debate about controversial topics, but essential to it. Any student caught violating this policy will be asked to leave the class.

Complete all course readings in advance of the session (s) in which we are to discuss them.
Be an active participant in the course (through contribution to class discussion etc.).

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/polytechnic-leadership/policies-directory>.

****Note:** all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

If you require special accommodations for any reason or have any concerns about the classroom environment, please do not hesitate to raise this with me. I am invested in creating a space where every student can flourish, and if there is anything holding you back from fulfilling your potential in my classroom I want to know about it as soon as possible.