

# EN 3313.501, online: **Writing for the Workplace**

Fall 2014 - Peter Olson, Ph.D. Lecturer

A recent report by The National Commission on Writing, "Writing: A Ticket to Work" (2007) indicates a direct correlation between the quality of writing in the workplace and compensation.

The role of technical communication in workplace writing has become a "core competency" due to increasing job competition in the global economy. During the job interview process, the report indicates, applicants frequently undergo a writing assessment. Over eighty percent of corporations in the financial sector alone require writing samples; forty percent of corporations interviewed in the study stress continual writing

training in the workplace to overcome the estimated \$3.1 billion deficit incurred annually due to the writing deficiencies of employees ("Writing: A Ticket to Work" 2007).

Clearly, employees with more advanced writing skills, particularly with a background in technical communications, have an advantage in landing corporate positions expecting value-added skill sets. Indeed, the study stresses that writing is a necessary condition for "high-wage work" and is a "gatekeeper" within the corporate world. Over eighty percent of Fortune 400 companies place writing in the workplace as their highest job skill (Markel 3).

In *Writing for the Workplace*, you will be introduced to the core competencies of workplace and technical writing through writing assignments, reading and discussion of the issues presented in documented cases and narratives, exposure to current issues in global economics and workplace ethics, and in writing for specific applications, purposes, and audiences. Within the scope of the course, you will be introduced to the concepts of information design operative in a technical communication culture that is increasingly multicultural and collaborative. We regard communication strategies as a base of support for project knowledge management and content strategies, demanding commitments to emerging technology and convergence, ethics and excellence.

In view of writing as a core technology in the workplace, we will consider document design issues, and the attendant concerns of audience, planning, research, and document organization and structure. Moreover, the course will cover issues of online intellectual property and solutions endorsed by the Alliance for Computers and Writing. We will also cover rhetorical issues, addressing persuasive situations, considerations for global readers, coherence and style, and the implementation of visual design elements in documentation. The emphasis on design will be in document usability. We will cover generic applications from letters, memos, and email to the writing of proposals and reports, instructional manuals, and websites. Students will also gain experience in presentation.

Richard Florida, *The Flight of the Creative Class*. HarperCollins, 2005. (ebook).

Thomas Friedman, *Hot, Flat, & Crowded*, 2.0 (2009 edition). Picador, 2009. (ebook).

Mike Markel, *Practical Strategies for Technical Communication*. Bedford - St. Martin's, 2013. (ebook).

