Writing For The Workplace

The National Commission on Writing, in a recent report titled "Writing: A Ticket to Work" (2007), indicates a direct correlation between the quality of writing in the workplace and employee compensation. The role of technical communication in the workplace has become a "core competency" due both the technological revolution and to increasing job competition in the global economy. Employees with advanced writing skills, particularly those with a background in technical communications, have an advantage in the corporate world, the report suggests. Moreover, the NCW study stresses that writing is considered a value-added skill set; employers indicate that writing is a necessary condition for "high-wage work," and writing competency becomes a "gatekeeper" for job seekers. Over eighty percent of Fortune 400 companies place writing in the workplace as their highest job skill (Markel 3).

Writing for the Workplace is a course designed to help students gain a competitive edge in the core competencies of workplace and technical writing. Students will be introduced to a variety of document applications in use today by technical communicators. We address the considerations of document planning, design, and organization within the context of an increasingly multicultural and collaborative workplace. Today, workplace culture seeks writers attuned to ethics and excellence, and writers who can communicate effectively across cultures. Our emphasis on workplace writing strategies for content development supports the tasks of project knowledge management and document design. Our overarching concern is towards an understanding of our audience and purpose within the scope of the technical communications field. Through case studies, research, and media, we will explore rhetorical issues as they arise in persuasive situations involving corporate culture and globalism. We also address the practical matters of writing clear definitions and descriptions, writing for global readers, considerations of coherence and style, and the implementation of visual design elements in documentation and media. Our emphasis on design focuses on document usability. Moreover, the course will cover ethical issues of online intellectual property, documentation, and cultural issues of collaboration in the global marketplace. We will cover software tools, generic applications from letters, memos, and email, to the writing of proposals and reports, instructional manuals, and websites. Students will also gain experience in service-learning and proposal writing, as well as in giving presentations using various media.

Texts:
Blake, Gary and Robert W. Bly. *The Elements of Business Writing.* New York: Longman, 1991. Print.
Friedman, Thomas L. *Hot, Flat, and Crowded.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. Print.
Markel, Mike. *Technical Communication.* 9th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010. Print.
Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well.* 3Oth Anniversary Edition. NY, NY: HarperCollins. 2006. Print.