VIDEO 5: Writing Test PREVIEW

In order to avoid promote equality, the exact prompt of your Timed Writing test cannot be revealed here. However, I am here to give you a sort of preview of what the writing test will be.

Most importantly: Please remember that you must log in to CSNS March 1st at 8AM to take the quiz. You will have one hour to complete the assignment, unless you are registered with the office for students with disabilities, in which case you will have two hours. The test will close at 9AM for most students. And while I can't reveal the contents of the test, I can reveal the following:

The timed writing will ask you to write about your real project. The one you are doing with your team Therefore, being knowledgeable about your project, will be an asset, and to some degree, ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. Presumably, you all have knowledge about your project, but you might also be trying to perform a very specific aspect of the project, and may be losing your grasp on what your project is all about. Try to remember the broad picture. The problem that your project is trying to solve, and the way you are trying to solve it.

The timed writing will provide the opportunity to address a particular audience and use your skills of a writer. These skills include

Audience Awareness: In your life and in your career, you will have to address different people in different stations. These different writing situations require the ability to create the ideal piece of text based on your knowledge of what that person expects to see and needs to know. The timed writing will ask you to write to a specific (fictional) person.

Purpose: You should be able to develop writing that is geared towards pursuing its specific goals. A piece of writing that is meant to persuade somebody to adopt a particular policy, for example, should clearly lay out the benefits of said policy. A piece of writing that is meant to warn people not to adopt a particular policy, should warn people of the dangers of said policy. While technical documentation should be even-handed and ethical in its use of data, you can still apply it to achieve your goals. The timed writing will ask you to write to achieve a specific purpose.

Clarity: When it comes to clarity, we understand that this is a timed writing assignment and therefore, you will have limited time. However, for the purposes of the assignment, you should have enough time to spend 5-10 minutes reading over your own words to make sure that you catch as many errors as you can, especially where those errors can lead to confusion.

Conciseness: We are not just asking you to write as much as possible, but also be economical with your words. Remember, there are ethics involved in how much you expect others to spend time looking for meaning in your words. Time is valuable, and you should save your reader time by avoiding redundancies.

Accessibility: To be honest, for this assignment, I think that accessibility is going to be an easy category to deal with. That is because it should be pretty clear how to format the assignment to make the information easy to retrieve, under the correct conditions. However, I am implementing this rubric because it will become pertinent on future assignments. Following the directions in the way that most people would, will likely lead to a perfect score in this category.

When taking the quiz, be mindful of the clock. Divide your time between reading the assignment, planning, drafting your response, and editing based on your understanding of how much YOU will need for each of these components.
If you would like to see the script for this preview it is available in CSNS under the Writing Resources Module.

Please let me know if you have any questions by emailing me, or coming to my office hour. You may also view the rubric for the upcoming assignment.

Episode 4: APPLYING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Episode 3: ETHICS OF TECHNICAL WRITING

Introduction to Ethics

Ethics is the struggle to understand what the right thing to do is.
Ethics minimizes damage to society
Ethics maximizes the good to society

(DO THE VIDEO HERE)

By creating ethically minded documents you will
1. Maximize the use of resources
   a. Time
   b. Energy
2. Promote equity and opportunity by removing cultural barriers to understanding
3. Represent you as a person who can represent the values of your corporation
   a. Attractiveness
   b. Interest in equity and opportunity
   c. Dilligence

So, first, let's ask: WHAT ARE ETHICS? Let's go to our correspondent, ME.

(I'm here down the street from my house to show you an example of an ethical dillemma. As you know with Covid-19 it is considered dangerous to promote large gatherings of people, and even small gatherings of people can lead to problems. It would be great if we could lock everybody in their homes, and send everybody enough food to survive in the confines of their home. SO WHY DIDNT WE DO THAT? There are problems with that solution. For example, we would have to create a class of people that is responsible for delivering the food to everybody. What would incentivize them to take on this job? But another issue is just the issue of destroying the economy. If money didn't WORK for that period of time because you could only get the absolute essentials, would the concept of money survive that? The disruptions to society were considered too great, and so we took this slow burn approach, where we keep making what we need to, YOU KNOW LIKE TV SHOWS. Entertainment is not strictly necessary, but to forbid its creation would be destructive to the people whose lives depend on it. And unless we give away enough money for free, we have to continue to make entertainment. This negotiation between trying to do the minimal amount of damage to a society in the midst of a global pandemic is an ethical dilemma).

The previous example was an ethical dilemma because there was a question about how to minimize the amount of damage to society as a whole. While we agree that any life is precious, the worry is that in order to save as many lives as possible, we would have to sacrifice the economy to the point where money may lose its meaning. if money loses its meaning and new forces seek to take the place of those currently in power.

This is an example of using ethics to try to MINIMIZE THE AMOUNT OF DAMAGE DONE.

We generally believe that people should not harm each other. This is based on the concept that "all men are created equal" and have a right to "pursue happiness"

But when we think about documents, they don't have the power to hurt do they?

Well, things don't need to be hard like a club, fast like a bullet, or combustible as a bomb to be destructive. As computer programmers, you are probably coming to the realization that computer programmers have incredible hidden powers, and sometimes they manifest in our world in destructive ways. Social Media algorithms may contribute to depression by creating constant comparisons between people. They may incentivize disinformation somehow, by routing those most susceptible to conspiracy theories to the most delicious conspiracy theories possible.

Our American ethics will tell us that adults should have the freedom to use whatever program they want, regardless of the negative impact they have on society. But even if you think that, you may still think that we have a protected class in our society: children. You may worry about addictive computer games, or Youtube videos that lack educational value. You might still believe

that any damage done to future generations through computer programming, is damage done to us all.

Applying ethics to the algorithms that controls social media might help to mitigate some of the harm that it causes, whether or not it can actually do away with all of them.

In video 2, we talked about some engineers, like civil engineers can actually create physically destructive documents. They may provide incomplete information about how to build something, or their design may be straight-up dangerous. Let's stop thinking so NEGATIVELY. Ethics is not jsut about not hurting others. It is also about promoting equity and making sure that you are not recreating systems of oppression unconsciously. It is also about making sure that you are contributing your best to society by putting your best foot forward. And if you aren't doing it for society, do it for your family, and yourself. A technical document that doesn't demonstrate your work to the best of its ability can hold YOU back from achieving your own selfish and evil goals.

So, let's take a look at how technical documentation can be seen through the lens of ethics.

How can a document be designed in such a way as to promote equity and reduce oppression? Is there a possibility that you are writing your document in a way that the barriers to understanding it are too high?

First let's imagine that everybody's time and energy are valuable. By creating a document that is difficult to understand, you are removing a resource from others… the time and energy that it will take to understand your document. At some point, your document may become completely opaque, which will lead whoever wants to use your document to recreate your process on their own, or contact you for clarification. This is a further waste of time. AND MONEY. The ability to create clear documents can show that you have the ability to positively contribute to a corporate enterprise without requiring more of their resources.

Computer Scientists make good money. It is true. Because they learn to speak and manipulate a rare and powerful language, they are hired for their ability to code and make dreams a reality. At least a virtual one. But think about the people who make the most money, and evneutally end up being allowed to guide the trajectory of a business. The Elon Musks, the James Dorseys, and yes even the Mark Zuckerburgs. These people may seem like insane idiots, but at the same time, they are generally pretty careful with the way they present themselves. They are aware that their actions are reflections of the companies that they work for. Every document that exists within these firms are also a reflection of the companies they work for. Therefore, if you can't produce a document that demonstrates diligence, an interest in clarity and equity, design that doesn't waste people's energy wondering why things are laid out in the way that they are, you will be limited in your ability to represent your company.

So make positive decisions in your documents so that the people who have the power to see your project through can use your document, thereby allowing you to represent your company as an attractive enterprise.

You may be able to go even farther and make it so that your document pulls others up. accommodating people's reading styles, editing your content for clarify, avoiding culturally specific language where possible, and of course using gender-neutral pronouns. REMEMBER HOW MEN USED TO RULE THE WORLD? WELL, ACCORDING TO THAT BEYONCE SONG WE WERE WRONG.

FINALLY, it should go without saying that the documents you create are a reflection of your diligence. Your ability to present a document that actually accounts for everything is a sign that you will be able to handle other projects You should make that your diligence shows within the document by showing what works, and what didn't. Giving credit where credit is due. AND EDITING THE DOCUMENT.

BUT THAT'S JUST ME: Let's read some of Mike Markel's Practical Strategies for Technical Documentation.

Episode 2:
Welcome back to the writing portion of this class. After watching this lecture, consider taking the quiz, or watch it again before venturing forth. This quiz should be a bit tougher than the last one, since the last one mainly dealt with procedural issues.

Today we are goin got talk about what technical documents are, and how our knowledge of them can help us to create a strong project report, but first some announcements.

I do have an announcement. In the last video, I wrongly stated in the video that the writing test would occur March 3rd. The correct date is March first. That is a MONDAY. Write it down, because you do not want to miss it (and I don't want to get it wrong)

In order to make things go smoothly, I will be available at the Zoom link every monday morning from 8-10. If something is not working for you, please do not hesitate to pop in and let me know. Also feel free to ask me any questions you have about the class. Don't worry, as far as I know, there are no stupid questions. Also, if you are watching this video the morning of February the 1st, there is a quiz due tonight, which you have probably already done, but maybe not. Additionally, there will be a quiz on the information covered in THIS video that

Today we are going to talk about what a technical document is, and how that knowledge can help you with the report of this class. I will be using the text Practical Strategies for Technical Communication 3rd edition for help as I go through some of its principles.

But let me use this opportunity to talk a little bit about myself again. I am an English major. That means that I like BOOKS. Long books, old books, books about gods, magic, and books about human suffering and joy. So when I was given the opportunity to teach technical writing, I was not super excited. When I thought about technical writing, I thought about all of the unimaginitive pieces of text like product manuals, copyright information, and the dreaded ITUNES AGREEMENT, and prepared to teach a dry and boring class about grammar… or something like that. But when I finally started teaching the class, I discovered that technical writing is not really the most boring way to write, but it actually creates a whole new way of seeing the world.

For a look at what I'm talking about let's take a trip to just outside of Mexico city to the Pyramid of the Moon at Teotihuacan. This pyramid was completed in around the year 0, but its construction began a century before that. That means that somehow, the information about how to build the pyramid was transmitted across generations, and yet no such documentation exists. Whatever the method of teaching future generations about the nature of the project, and how to complete it, would be considered technical documentation according to our book.

Technical documentation is actually everywhere, defining the way that you engage with your world. Take for example, a door. There are plenty of ways of opening a door, and the appearance of that door communicates how to engage with it. The door may have a knob, its features appear to correlate with your own hand, which communicates that you can manipulate it in some way. If a door doesn't have a knob, there may be a way to indicate how it does open. At the same time, the makers of a door expect certain information to have already been transmitted to you culturally, so that you will not be shocked to see a door that opens automatically. In this video, you can see how you can abuse that cultural knowledge to create confusion. They have placed an automatic door warning on a door with no automatic opener. Also they have removed the https://youtu.be/Jrs84a2N4xQ handle. This goes to show how much technical information is absorbed quickly by an individual to form conclusions about how to engage the world. What an exciting video.

Technical Documentation is everywhere, and it is not just about what words are on they page. The person to whom the message is going to be delivered is a big factor in the equation of how your document will appear.
Before we move forward, let's open our conception of what a technical document is. In Mike Markel's Practical Strategies for Technical Communication, the author decides to refer to all kinds of things

(READ THROUGH GRAPH).

Let's take a look at this from Mike Markel's Practical Strategies for Technical Communication. According to this graph, these are some of the ELEMENTS of technical documents.

Episode 1:
CS 4962

Dear class,

Welcome to the writing component of CS 4962. Your performance in this section of the class will be worth a total of 20% of your grade, which will be broken down in the following assignments that I will describe in a few minutes, but first, I will tell you a little bit about myself and why I'm here.

I am from the English Department. That's right, remember those really fun essays you used to write when you were a freshman here? Remember thesis statements? Remember topic sentences? Well, I am not here to torture you with essay assignments (well, maybe just one)

Rather, I am here mainly to draw your awareness to some elements of the documentation process, as well as give you an increased awareness about the way that technical documents are composed, edited, and used in a professional environment. The program that you are creating with your sponsors are going to be impressive feats of ingenuity, skill, and intelligence, but if your report doesn't describe what it does, and how you achieved it, then who is going to speak on its behalf?

A piece of technical writing doesn't have to be a work of literary genius, but it should be written with an understanding of who its audience is, and how they will be using the document.

But I am already getting a little ahead of myself. This week, I just want to talk about how this class is going to function.

There are a few things you should know about the writing portion of this class. Like previously mentioned, it is worth 20% of your grade in this class, but it doesn't all come in one lump. You might want to think about this class as being divided into three components.

In the first 4 weeks of this class, I will be giving video lectures, which you can watch throughout the week. A quiz will appear on Monday morning, which you can take during classtime. These videos are about different principles of technical writing, and the quizzes cover topics covered in the video. Each quiz will consist of 5 to 20 questions and be worth 1% of your grade. You will earn a portion of that 1% depending on how well you do on the quiz.

In week 5, there will be another video, however, this video will explain an assignment which will be given to you at the beginning of week 6, so there won't be a quiz to go along with that video. Instead, you will be required to come to class on Monday, March 3rd to take a writing test. While the video will give you some information about the writing test, it will be timed to take place between 8 and 10 AM, and there will be additional information given the day of the test. This

writing test will be worth 5 percent of your total grade, and you will earn a portion of that 5 percent depending on your performance.

At this point, our class will change course somewhat. A schedule will be distributed, in which you and your group can find a time to meet with me. In our meeting we will discuss your performance on the writing test, and you can ask me any questions about your project report.

Besides your scheduled meeting with me (which is worth one point), you will not be asked to engage with the writing portion of the class until April 12th, when there will be another writing test, worth 10 percent of your grade.

After April 12th, there will be no more assignments designed by me, however, you may visit me in my office hours from 8-10, in this Zoom room

(Show zoom meeting link)

I will leave this on the screen so that you can write this down. I will be available to help any of you with your project report at that time.

The first assignment will be due next week on midnight, which means you have a whole week to watch this video and remember its details before taking the quiz. All of the answer to the quiz are in this video, so if you didn't take notes, consider watching it again. The quiz will be timed, so make sure you are ready before beginning the quiz. I look forward to working with all of you, and I will see you soon.