Douglas College

COURSE INFORMATION

A: Division: INSTRUCTIONAL

Date: NOVEMBER, 1997

B: Faculty: LANGUAGE, LITERATURE & PERFORMING ARTS

New Course:

Revision of Course JANUARY, 1991
Information Form: X

C: PRFU 310	D: WRITING TECHNICAL MANUALS	E: 3
Subject and Course Number	Descriptive Title	Semester Credit

F: Calendar Description: This course provides students with an understanding of how technical manuals (such as computer end-user manuals, policy and procedure manuals) and training manuals are planned, written and produced. Beginning with an analysis of objectives and audience, the course traces the sequence of steps used in preparing an effective and professionally produced technical manual, and examines standard writing and formatting conventions.

Summary of Revisions: (date & section)   97.11 - A,B,C,H,J,M,N,P

G: Type of instruction: Hrs per week

Lecture:	1	hrs
Laboratory:	3	hrs
Seminar:		hrs
Clinical Experience:		hrs
Field Experience:		hrs
Practicum:		hrs
Shop:		hrs
Studio:		hrs
Student Directed Learning:		hrs
Other (specify)		hrs
Total:	4	hrs

H: Course Prerequisites
ACCEPTANCE TO PROGRAM OR PERMISSION OF COORDINATOR

I: Course Corequisites
NONE

J: Course for which this Course is a Prerequisite
NONE

K: Maximum Class Size:
30

M: Transfer Credit   Requested

Granted: x

L:	College Credit Transfer	x
	College Credit Non-Transfer	
	Non-Credit	

Specify Course Equivalents or Unassigned Credit as appropriate:

UBC: ARTS 2ND (3)
SFU:
U Vic:
Other: SEE B.C. TRANSFER GUIDE

Course Designer(s)

Faculty Dean

Vice-President

Registrar

N: Textbooks and materials to be Purchased by Students

Texts may include:

Barnum, C. & Carliner, S. Techniques for Technical Communicators,
        MacMillan, 1993.

O.   COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will learn the methodology for preparing reader-based technical manuals. They will understand, and know when and how to use, the special writing and formatting conventions of technical manuals.

P.   COURSE CONTENT

1.   Introduction to Writing Technical Manuals

The student will:

a)   become familiar with the various types of technical materials produced by technical writers in the local marketplace
b)   become familiar with the various companies employing technical writers, the types of products and services they provide, and the types of manuals they produce
c)   understand the differences between user, reference and training materials

2.   Planning and Organizing Manuals

The student will:

a)   understand the differences between content-based and reader-based manuals
b)   analyse the range of manuals required to support a product, such as a software program
c)   conduct a needs analysis, including defining objectives and identifying and understanding the reader's information needs
d)   review and understand the common structures of technical manuals (linear, tree, matrix, and web)
e)   identify the different ways of organizing technical manuals (e.g., alphabetically, chronologically, top down, bottom up) and the specific uses and applications of each method
f)   understand the organizational distinctions between user, reference and training materials

g)   examine the use of page and section numbering systems and heading hierarchies

P.   **COURSE CONTENT - cont'd**

   h)   evaluate how page-replacement manuals (modular manuals) are structured and formatted

3.   Technical Writing Process

   The student will:

   a)   understand the role of the technical writer in the product development lifecycle
   b)   interview a subject-matter expert to obtain the information necessary to prepare a simple technical instruction
   c)   understand the role of outlines
   d)   evaluate and prepare an outline for a project style guide
   e)   examine the means of ensuring the technical accuracy of manuals, including review and approval cycles
   f)   examine the need for manual testing and the relationship with product testing

4.   Manual Writing Style

   The student will:

   a)   become familiar with the modes of discourse typically employed in technical manuals (e.g., writing to learn, writing to do, writing to establish policy, writing to persuade) and practise each
   b)   evaluate the different means of communicating technical information (e.g., flow charts, decisions, trees, illustrations) and understand the uses and applications of each
   c)   understand the concept of readability and apply a readability formula to samples of the student's own writing
   d)   examine the changes in technical writing style over the past several decades
   e)   examine the characteristics of conversational writing and practise writing technical materials in a conversational style
   f)   understand the uses of metaphors, examples and case studies
   g)   understand the different levels of edits and the role of editing in the preparation of technical manuals

P.   COURSE CONTENT - cont'd

5.   Page Design and Production

The student will:

a)   understand the role of page design in communicating technical information
b)   review the page designs used in professionally prepared technical manuals
c)   review the features and functions of word processing and desktop publishing programs which have special relevance to the preparation of manuals
d)   review the different methods of binding and their uses and applications

6.   Writing On-line Documentation

The student will:

a)   review the different types and uses of on-line documentation (information which is meant to be read from the computer screen), such as help screens, text databases, and hypertext systems
b)   understand the limitations imposed by the computer screen and the resulting differences from paper manuals
c)   evaluate and report back on the structure and effectiveness of a computer text database or reference source

7.   Project Management

The student will:

a)   understand the elements of project management (quality, scope, cost, and schedule)
b)   estimate the time required to prepare a defined manual
c)   prepare a detailed schedule of activities to produce a technical manual
d)   become familiar with the professional aspects of technical writing, such as writing proposals, and the standard terms and conditions of contracts

Q.   METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

This course will use a combination of teaching methods, including lecture, group discussion, analysis of samples, and in-class and home exercises and projects. The emphasis will be on learning by analysis reinforced with hands-on practice wherever possible. Students will be required to prepare, write and produce all, or portions of, a technical manual during the course.

R.   COURSE EVALUATIONS

Evaluation will be based on this general outline:

In-class projects	10%
In-class participation	10%
Evaluation of writing samples	20%
Final examination	30%
Manual project	<u>30%</u>
	100%