

# Teaching Portfolio

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## Instructional Philosophy

The gravity of the opportunity I have to help students empower themselves and improve their lives does not escape me. I see teaching not as merely a professional journey for myself, but a privilege to help students achieve success through effective communication in the multitude of contexts contained in the field of technical writing. Every day I teach, I will make efforts to engage intentionally with each student I have the honor of instructing. This promise will be reflected in any technical communication course that I teach, to help students succeed in the long term, not just academically, but as whole people.

The pedagogical theory that informs my actions is that each student has a unique and valuable writing approach, and the humanity of that perspective is essential, even in the seemingly impersonal world of professional communication. The uniqueness of that voice may not have been previously recognized or appreciated; in fact, students may have been taught to suppress it. I want my teaching to counter that. My grading, assignment design, and feedback emphasize that students' individuality in written expression is refinable but irreplaceable. As recommended by the CCCC's 1974 resolution, "Students' Right to Their Own Language," I design my courses to help students value their voices by "sensitizing them to the options they already exercise to help them gain confidence in a variety of situations."

Because many technical communication tasks carry social and ethical weight, I also help students explore communication as both a skill and a responsibility. I incorporate ethics-based reflection prompts and case studies to discuss the implications of our writing choices, especially in areas like accessibility, usability, and inclusive language. One assignment I use places students in a real-world scenario involving the ethical limitations of plain language and asks them to consider how different wordings would impact users across multiple demographics. These lessons remind students that clarity is always contextual and always human.

To support student growth in genre awareness, I use explicit scaffolding strategies. I begin by modeling genre analysis with shared examples, using annotation tools and discussion to break down how texts work. Then I gradually release responsibility: students try out rhetorical reading on their own, apply it to mentor texts of their choosing, and finally produce their own writing in a similar genre. I also incorporate "genre remix" assignments to help students see how different genres prioritize different reader needs. For instance, a student might turn a long-form white paper into a one-page infographic, learning how to prioritize visual hierarchy, brevity, and accessibility—essential skills in technical communication.

I believe in the power of reading as a writing skill. I apply the theory that any text a student interacts with can be a "mentor" (Culham, 31), encouraging students to analyze communication with a writer's eye and emulate what they admire. Writing, to me, is like breathing out after taking in the world: media, conversation, community, and lived experience. Therefore, I emphasize a flexible but clearly connected balance of consumption and creation. Students choose texts they care about, but we break those texts down in ways that support key course outcomes like clarity, tone, and organization. Nearly every writing prompt I assign also includes elements of student choice, which has been shown to increase engagement (Dennis). For instance, to avoid dictating what topics and

skills are “worthy” of scholarly attention, I ask students to lean into their own interests and regularly poll them about the specific communication challenges they face, whether academic or professional, to keep my teaching adaptive with targeted workshops. This encourages students to interact with technical communication in a way that is not rigid and rule-bound but rather expansive, evolving, and ultimately theirs to shape.

Technology and AI tools are a meaningful part of how I prepare students for modern communication work. I treat them as partners in the writing process—tools that can support brainstorming, drafting, editing, and project planning. These tools are especially helpful for saving time on lower-order thinking tasks (as described in Bloom’s Taxonomy), such as information sorting or sentence-level polishing. However, I also emphasize that AI tools require mediated by a human communicator who understands audience, tone, context, and purpose to produce the most effective and moving communication. To practice this moderation, I assign activities where students use AI to generate a draft and then critically revise it, evaluating its rhetorical strengths and ethical limitations.

To build a responsive and inspiring environment, I use open-ended, real-world writing assignments that ask students to synthesize creativity with rhetorical purpose. Mary Tedrow, author of *Write, Think, Learn*, wrote, “The most effective prompts are nearly invisible” (xii). In that spirit, I write prompts that guide, not restrict. For example, to teach audience awareness, I may ask students to get to know a peer and write a memo or usability guide tailored just to them. To teach genre awareness, I may have students analyze and emulate a workplace document they admire—“reading it like a writer,” as recommended in *The Writing Thief*. These assignments connect personal relevance with professional preparation.

Because no single pedagogy can maximize growth for every learner, I offer flexible supports like one-on-one conferences, differentiated pacing, and collaborative revision options. I also poll students about which writing skills they struggle with most and adapt lessons accordingly. My aim is to help students see communication as a toolkit that can always grow with them; it can be a means not just for workplace success, but for expressing who they are and advocating for what matters to them.

These goals of mine are constant, but I will likely gather more ways to achieve them as I learn from my students, colleagues, and ongoing pedagogical research. I am firm in my belief that I must treat every teaching opportunity as a chance to inspire students in ways beyond the experiences possible in a classroom, and in a manner that encourages them to relate personally to the power of good written communication skills in any situation they may encounter. I am excited to learn, adapt, and apply new concepts to my teaching based on the needs of each learning environment I contribute to, but my core attitudes and commitments toward students, which I have expressed here, will remain the same.

## References

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## Intro to Technical and Professional Writing Syllabus

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Instructor: Rebecca Schallon

Contact: rebecca.schallon@usu.edu (123) 456-7890

Office: Building Name, Room Number.

Hours: Walk-in 8 am to 11 am Tuesday and Thursday, or by appointment ([Zoom](#))

### About the Course

Meets Tuesday and Thursday from 8:20 to 9:30 in Building Name, Rm. #

This course prepares students to become thoughtful, flexible communicators across technical, professional, and digital contexts. Students will explore how writing functions in the real world and learn to adapt their writing to different audiences, genres, and technologies. With an emphasis on practical applications, revision, collaboration, and design, this class will help you build a toolkit of writing strategies to solve communication problems and make ideas usable.

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### Learning Goals

By the end of the course, you will

**Understand theory:** Recognize major concepts and frameworks that shape professional and technical communication, including audience awareness, plain language, visual rhetoric, usability, and ethics.

**Engage inquiry:** Explore a range of technical genres and multimodal forms by conducting research, gathering feedback, and iterating designs.

**Build practice:** Create purposeful and persuasive written, visual, and oral communications that reflect an understanding of context, user needs, and accessibility.

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### Learning Objectives

Throughout the semester, you will:

- Analyze real-world examples of technical and professional communication.
- Practice writing diverse genres such as memos, instructions, proposals, and portfolios.
- Collaborate using professional workflows, revision practices, and usability testing.
- Apply ethics and inclusivity in areas like accessibility and intercultural design.
- Reflect on your growth through portfolio-building and intentional iteration.
- Gain insight into emerging technologies, job expectations, and transferable skills.

This course serves as an entry point into the discipline of technical and professional writing, connecting rhetorical theory with hands-on practice. It is designed to help students gain adaptable communication skills that are in demand across industries and communities.

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## Course Schedule

### Week 1: What Is Technical Communication?

#### Readings:

- Miller, C. R. (1979). *A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing*.
- Kreth, M. L., & Bowen, E. (2022). *A Descriptive Survey of Technical Editors*.

**Keywords:** Technical Communication, Technical Editing, Genre, Audience, Purpose

**Assignment:** Introductory reflection on prior experiences with technical or professional writing.

### Week 2: A Brief History of Tech Comm and its Genres

#### Readings:

- Selected chapters from genre theory in technical communication
- Durak, K. *Gender, Technology, and the History of Technical Communication*

**Keywords:** Genre, Rhetorical Situation, Convention, Medium, Technology, Identity

**Assignment:** Specific Genre Exploration Assignment – choose and find one of the following: repair guide, software documentation, YouTube tutorial, white paper, funding proposal, accessibility guide, LinkedIn post, conference presentation, public health info sheet, maintenance manual, user manual, grant proposal, resume, cover letter, instructional video, damage assessment, crisis communication plan, incident report, technical memo, recipe, lesson

plan, installation guide, blog post, educational zine, FAQ page, safety protocol, troubleshooting flowchart, compliance document, infographic, or Instagram reel.

### **Week 3: Audiences, Accessibility, and Rhetorical Awareness**

#### **Readings:**

- Selection from Longo or Hitt on audience and access
- Haas, A. (2012). Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: A Case Study of Decolonial Technical Communication Theory, Methodology, and Pedagogy. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 26(3), 277-310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651912439539>
- **Keywords:** Audience, Accessibility, Usability, Inclusivity  
**Assignment:** Analyze a document for accessibility and audience awareness.

### **Week 4: Collaboration and Workflow in Tech Comm**

#### **Readings:**

- Article on technical team collaboration and project management (Agile, Scrum, Software, and theories for creating understanding in technical writing teams:  
<https://techwhirl.com/agile-and-tech-comm-writer-challenges-development-teams/>)
- Vocabulary definitions from STC (Society for Technical Communication) resources  
**Keywords:** Workflow, Collaboration, Style Sheet, Version Control, Single Source of Truth, Tracking Changes, Project Management, Granularity  
**Assignment:** Collaboratively revise a poorly designed shared document using agreed-on workflow tools.

### **Week 5: Style, Editing, and Communication Design**

#### **Readings:**

- Excerpt from the Microsoft Manual of Style (style guide)  
Excerpt on visual design from Kimball, M. A., Hawkins, A. R. (2007). *Document Design: A Guide for Technical Communicators*. United States: Bedford/St. Martin's.  
**Keywords:** Style Sheet, Technical Editing, White Space, Typography, Visual Hierarchy  
**Assignment:** Edit and redesign a poorly formatted document for readability.

### **Week 6: Organizational Communication and Structure as Tech Writing Exigence**

#### **Readings:**

- Real-world grant requirements from multiple organizations



- A short article on persuasive proposal writing and internal organizational rhetoric  
**Keywords:** Proposal, Grant, Internal Communication, Exigency, Stakeholders, Funding  
**Assignment:** Draft a short persuasive funding pitch for an imagined organizational need.

### **Week 7: Understanding “Expertise” and the Tech Comm Profession**

#### **Readings:**

- Review technical writing job descriptions & software knowledge expectations on Indeed or similar job site. Discuss and challenge traditional definitions of expertise (e.g., credentialed, institutional) by exploring alternative sites and modes of expertise: lived experience, community knowledge, DIY, etc.
- Student-selected microcredentialing websites (InDesign, MadCap Flare, Adobe FrameMaker, Google Creator, Github Pages, etc.)  
**Keywords:** Microcredential, Industry Expectations, Job Description, Software Proficiency, Transferable Skills,  
**Assignment:** Research and choose a software-related “microcredential” to pursue at a later date; write a justification memo.

### **Week 8: Visuals, Data, and Multimodal Information Design**

#### **Readings:**

- Selections from Tufte or Schriver
- Dan, V., et. al (2021). Visual Mis- and Disinformation, Social Media, and Democracy. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 98(3), 641-664.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990211035395>
- Video: “Copyright Basics with Jim the Librarian” on YouTube  
**Keywords:** Infographic, Data Visualization, Chartjunk, Audience Interpretation, Accessibility, Ethics, Visual Rhetoric  
**Assignment:** Redesign a misleading or ineffective data/information visualization.

### **Week 9: Ethics in Tech Comm: Plain Language and Contextual Clarity**

#### **Readings:**

- Jones, N. N., & Williams, M. F. (2022). *The Social Justice Impact of Plain Language: A Critical Approach to Plain-Language Analysis*
- “The Pros Know: Plain Language Is Just Good Writing.” *Michigan Bar Journal*
- Resources from plainlanguage.gov

- Koeman, L., Akama, Y., et al. *The Invisible Work of Iterative Design in Addressing Design Injustices*
- **Keywords:** Plain Language, Clarity, Context, Ethics, Iteration/Iterative, Design Justice  
**Assignment:** Apply Jones & Williams' framework to evaluate a real-world plain language sample.

## Week 10: Research and Testing in UX and Tech Comm

### Readings:

- Smith, S. (2023). "Usability testing for UX writing: A step-by-step guide." *Medium.com*.  
<https://medium.com/design-bootcamp/usability-testing-for-ux-writing-a-simple-step-by-step-guide-7cf9c6126bfd>
- Selection on methods of moderated usability testing and user journaling  
**Keywords:** UX, Usability Testing, Participant Observation, Eye Tracking, Wireframing, Research Protocol, Feedback Loop, Protocol, UX Research Methods  
**Assignment:** Conduct a brief usability test (UX 20 Questions) and analyze user feedback.

## Week 11: Global and Intercultural Considerations in Tech Comm

### Readings:

- Pennell, M. (2022). *Designing Interculturally: A Social Justice Framework for Seeing Difference*  
**Keywords:** Intercultural Communication, Localization, Translation, Globalization  
**Assignment:** Redesign a small document for a global or multilingual audience.

## Week 12: Technology and Machine Learning in Tech Comm

### Readings:

- Hocutt, D., Ranade, N., & Verhulsdonck, G. (2022). *Localizing Content: Chatbots and Machine Learning*
- "How I'm Using AI as a Tech Writer": <https://passo.uno/ai-tech-writer-examples/>
- Timnit Gebru (TED Talk): *How can we stop AI from marginalizing communities?*  
**Keywords:** Localization, Automation, AI, Hallucinations, Retrieval Augmented Generations, Machine Learning, Chatbots, WYSIWYG, HATs, Markdown, Hypertext, HTML, CMSs, Git, Github, Versioning  
**Assignment:** Analyze how machine learning changes the role of technical communicators.

## Week 13: Technical Communication for Crisis and Risk

### Readings:

- Lambrecht, K. (2024). Risk Revisited: The Role of Technical Communication in Negotiating Barriers to Effective Health Risk Messaging. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472816241262237>

**Keywords:** Risk, Crisis, Stakeholders, Emergency Communication, Protocol, Author-Reader Relationship

**Assignment:** Write or revise a crisis communication plan for a selected scenario.

## Week 14: Capstone Project Workshops and Peer Review

### Readings:

- No readings (Project Writeshop time, poll to determine what we need most help with)

**Activity:** Peer review session; teams revise, test, and finalize collaborative documents.

**Keywords:** Iteration, Feedback, Testing, Editing, Teamwork

**Assignment:** Draft version of final capstone project due.

## Week 15: Finals and Course Reflection

### Readings:

- No readings, work on final project

**Activity:** Final project and course wrap-up.

**Assignment:** Submit final portfolio project and reflective memo.

## Larger Assignments

### iFixit Technical Writing Assignment (Start Weeks 5-8, Due Week 9):

Students will create a step-by-step repair guide following iFixit's standards for instructional writing and visual documentation. Working individually or in pairs, students will disassemble or repair a small device or object, write clear instructions, and include original images for each step. The guide will follow iFixit's structure and formatting requirements.

### Deliverables:

- **A complete iFixit-style repair guide** (submitted as a Google Doc or published on iFixit, if feasible)
- **A 300–500 word reflection memo** explaining design choices, audience considerations, challenges, and takeaways from the writing process

Explore [edu.ifixit.com](https://edu.ifixit.com) for more information about how iFixit partners with students learning technical writing and to see the work other students have done.

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### **Final Portfolio Assignment (Start Weeks 12-14, Due Week 15):**

#### **Portfolio Scope:**

Students will build a **final portfolio** showcasing their key work completed throughout the semester. This portfolio should include the following:

- **3-4 key pieces of work** that you will have completed throughout the course, reviewed and redrafted. This could include a visual redesign, an infographic, a user guide, a brief technical memo, or another assignment from the course that reflects the student's skills in technical writing.

#### **Reflection Statement:**

Students will write a **300-500 word reflection** explaining the choices behind their portfolio selections, their learning process, and how each item demonstrates their technical writing skills and development throughout the course.

#### **Portfolio Platform:**

Students will create and submit their portfolio on **Google Sites**, ensuring it is well-organized and accessible. The final portfolio will be graded based on the quality of the selected work, reflection, and the overall presentation.

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### **Resources**

Adobe Technical Communication Industry Survey 2022: *Current and Future State — Key Findings*. Pdf file.

<https://www.adobe.com/products/technicalcommunicationsuite/whitepaper-technical-communication-survey-findings-2022.html>

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## Syllabus Design Rationale

This course is built to prepare students for the multifaceted demands of technical and professional writing in a variety of real-world contexts. The design of the syllabus aligns with current best practices in the field, blending rhetorical theory with practice-based learning, and emphasizing ethical, user-centered, and inclusive communication. The readings and assignments have been selected and sequenced to guide students through foundational theory, critical reflection, iterative practice, and professional development.

### Understanding Theory

The course begins by grounding students in the key concepts that shape technical communication—such as audience, genre, rhetorical situation, ethics, and plain language. Early readings like Carolyn R. Miller’s (1979) “A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing” emphasize the social and rhetorical nature of technical discourse, laying the foundation for treating technical communication as situated, purposeful, and ethical practice. This theoretical grounding is reinforced with genre theory (Artemeva, 2005), helping students see genres as flexible and evolving forms that respond to user needs and rhetorical contexts.

Students explore how race, identity, and culture shape communication through works like Haas’s (2012) decolonial case study, which challenges dominant assumptions in the field. This intersectional awareness continues in discussions of intercultural design (Pennell, 2022) and the ethics of plain language (Jones & Williams, 2022), encouraging students to reflect on how clarity and accessibility are context-dependent and deeply tied to justice. This theoretical grounding supports the learning goal to “understand theory” and the objectives of analyzing real-world examples, applying ethics, and recognizing rhetorical frameworks.

### Engaging Inquiry

To foster hands-on engagement with genres and multimodal forms, the course incorporates inquiry-driven assignments like the genre exploration project and the usability testing activity. These encourage students to analyze authentic examples from technical settings, investigate stakeholder needs, and iterate based on feedback.

The iFixit assignment allows students to apply rhetorical and visual design concepts to real repair documentation, while also practicing audience-centered design and instructional writing. The emphasis on iteration and feedback aligns with Jones and Williams’ (2022) call for critical plain language approaches and with the feedback loops described in UX testing frameworks (Smith, 2023).

This emphasis on research, testing, and ethical responsiveness also reflects the call for iterative, justice-oriented design approaches seen in Koeman et al.'s (2021) work on invisible design labor and design justice. These choices align with the learning goal to "engage inquiry" and the course objectives around conducting research, applying feedback, and iterating designs.

### **Building Practice**

Assignments are structured to mirror the types of writing and collaborative problem-solving students will encounter in professional settings. This includes genre-based writing (memos, proposals, crisis plans), collaborative revision tasks, and the development of a professional portfolio. Readings on visual rhetoric (Kimball & Hawkins, 2007), accessibility, and workflow tools support students in producing documents that are functional, ethical, and user-centered. Collaboration is emphasized through group-based revision and peer review, simulating real-world technical communication workflows. This collaborative emphasis is supported by Berger and Pigg (2023), who demonstrate how peer-led and experiential learning can foster professional growth and confidence in technical communication workplaces. These collaborative practices promote teamwork, negotiation, and project management skills—vital competencies for technical communicators. This applied structure supports the goal to "build practice" by offering scaffolded practice in genre production, peer collaboration, and tool use. It also fulfills objectives around genre writing, collaboration, iterative revision, and career preparation.

### **Conclusion**

Ultimately, this syllabus reflects a belief that technical writing is not just about mechanics or correctness; it is about communicating effectively, ethically, and contextually. Every assignment, reading, and assessment choice in this course is meant to connect students with real rhetorical, ethical, and technological challenges. The course is structured to meet students where they are, to give them multiple opportunities to develop their voice and to help them see their work as part of larger systems of meaning and impact. By combining theory, practice, and reflection, I hope this course will prepare students to become confident and conscientious technical communicators.

## References

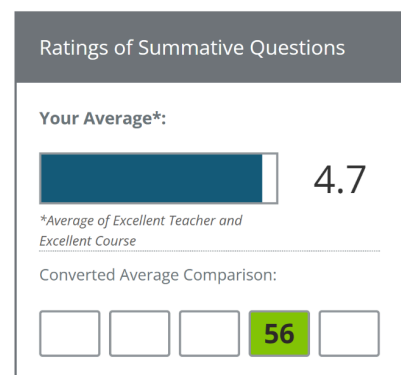
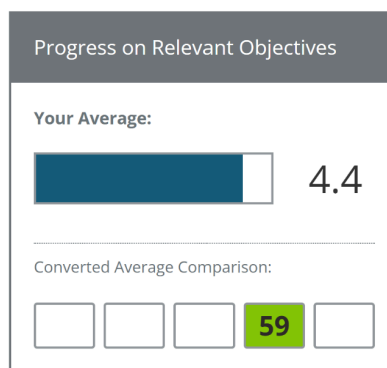
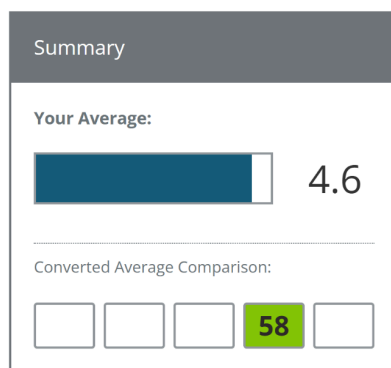
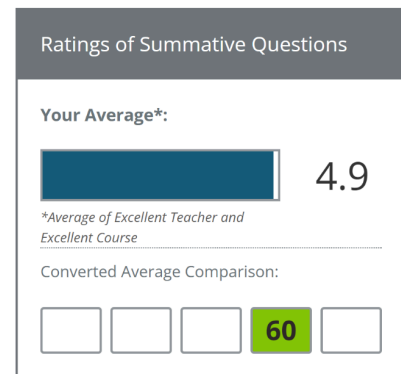
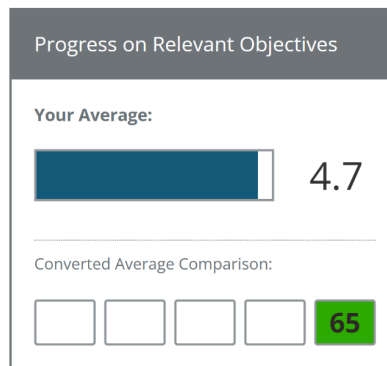
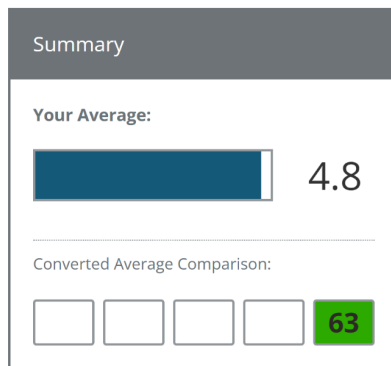
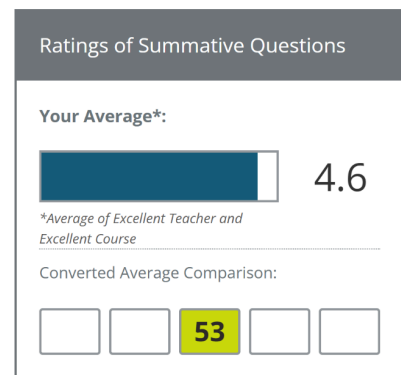
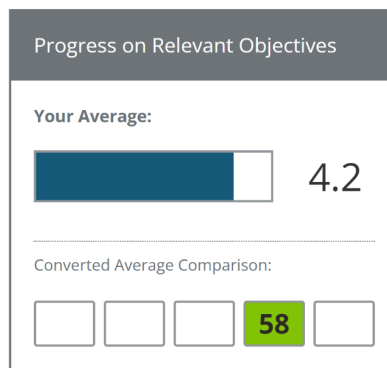
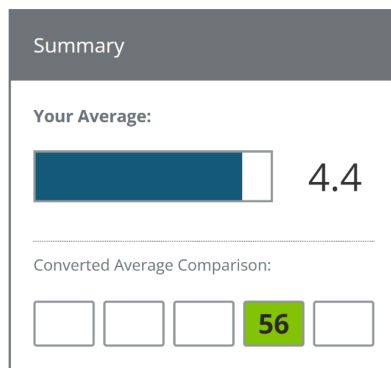
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## Teaching Evaluations

### Quantitative

Here are the IDEA course evaluations from students of my English 1010 courses in the years 2023-24. These graphs show how my courses compared to evaluation data in the IDEA database, with green representing a “very good” average for groups of course-specific and general questions on the survey.



## Qualitative

The following are written comments left by my English 1010 students in the years 2023-34. The students were given the option to leave comments about what they liked and what they thought could be improved.

- ❖ Professor Schallon is such a caring professor! It is very clear that she wants her students to succeed, and is willing to put in the time/effort in order to do so. She encourages students to use their own voice while writing and emphasizes that there is a writer in everyone.
- ❖ Rebecca Schallon is an awesome professor! She is super good at teaching and really cares that each student succeeds.
- ❖ You're a real one
- ❖ I think she is a great English teacher! She always gives valuable feedback for essays/ assignments and is always willing to help you. She wasn't too hard/ strict and made the class fun
- ❖ Thank you for being a wonderful Professor!
- ❖ Great job teaching. You share good examples in writing on how to apply what we learn. I think a lot of people might be afraid to get up and choose different people to work with so don't rule out assigning people to work with others when the class is kind of shy. But I think there were good activities that met the learning objectives.
- ❖ You're awesome and really friendly. You really helped me feel open and comfortable in class.
- ❖ I really like the class flow and the activities we did. sometimes they were uncomfortable, but they helped me grow.
- ❖ We did a lot of group work which i think was helpful, we also went over every assignment before it was due.
- ❖ I found the examples you provided were pretty good, and having other students peer review really helped as well. The meeting after the Discourse Analysis Essay really helped as well.
- ❖ Being relatively quick, all things considered, with answering any questions/concerns through email. Engaging lectures with a lot of creative workshop time and interaction with classmates and with the professor.

- ❖ I felt as though the assignment details were easy to understand which helped me as a student.
- ❖ I teaching of this course was very good! I felt like I learned a lot and it was a style of teaching that I could understand
- ❖ The activities were very helpful in the lesson we had
- ❖ the finding my voice in my writing
- ❖ she was a great teacher
- ❖ Each assignment was unique and helped me learn something new. All the group work was helpful as well as the peer reviews.
- ❖ Overall I felt like the smaller classes made it so that Professor Schallon was able to easily communicate with her students. I also felt that her encouragement of students to use their own voices in their writing inspired students. It allowed them to see writing with a new perspective and made them view academic writing differently.
- ❖ I think that giving students more time in between when their rough draft is due and their final draft is due would be beneficial to this course. Due to the fact that the due dates were always so close together I never felt like I had the time to truly revise my essays or send them to the writing center.
- ❖ Less steps between each essay. There are so many prewrites before actually getting to the essay.
- ❖ nothing, great course
- ❖ i don't think anything i enjoyed it and learned a lot
- ❖ It was great I wouldn't change anything
- ❖ I wish there was more time in class to work and ask questions as we write.
- ❖ I feel more help with what we're supposed to do for the next assignments in class could really help us learn.
- ❖ nothing much i think it was a great class
- ❖ Sometimes the articles/reading responses felt like busy work that didn't matter. Reading 2 articles but only talking about 1 felt overkill
- ❖ Thank you for a fun semester!

- ❖ I loved how the class was structured
- ❖ She does the best job teaching English 1010.
- ❖ Thank you for all the time you put into creating very informative lectures and selecting rich readings.
- ❖ She is a great instructor who exposed the students to many different writing styles and how they impact you as the writer and the reader.
- ❖ First English instructor I've actually liked
- ❖ Professor Schallon was very helpful this semester and was already to help answer questions. As a student who had previously struggled in this class, it felt great to retake this class and feel like I was succeeding.
- ❖ How each assignment led up to the next; the order that the assignments appeared in and the checkpoint assignments (how pieces of an assignment would be due before the whole thing).
- ❖ Great at answering questions.
- ❖ I enjoyed the class lectures and activities we did. They helped me meet and get to know my fellow classmates well.
- ❖ The teachers changed due dates and assignment requirements based on the needs of the students.
- ❖ The lectures were very well put together and the expectations and due dates were always clear.
- ❖ I loved learning about how writing does not have to fit into a box but is creative for a reason. We were given tools to write creatively and effectively.
- ❖ Nothing, great job. The teaching is perfect as it is.
- ❖ Make the pre-class readings more effective. I often only read one of the articles and wrote about it because I lost interest in the article have way through.