AGCJ 404: Communicating Agricultural Information to the Public

Week #1: Introduction and Course Overview

Activities
- Student information cards
- Ethics in writing
- Photographs of class members

Syllabus
- Course details
- Course outcomes
- Textbook and Web site
- Course outline
- Student assignments

Course Web Site
http://agcj.tamu.edu/404/index.html

Obtaining an E-mail Account
- To access official University email you must use HOWDY to configure your official e-mail environment.
- For more detailed information, visit the Web site and read the help section.
  - http://howdy.tamu.edu/

Objectives
- Understand technical writing as a problem-solving process
- Identify the key elements of technical writing
- Identify the common characteristics of technical writing style
- List the attributes of good technical writers
- List the qualities of good technical writing
- Understand different ways that professionals function as technical writers
### What is Technical Writing?
- A problem-solving process that involves the following elements at one or more stages of the process:
  - Technical subject matter
  - Communication problem
  - Communicator, purpose, and audience
  - Arrangement and presentation of information

### Technical Writing Elements
- Technical subject matter peculiar to or characteristic of a particular
  - Art
  - Science
  - Trade
  - Technology, or
  - Profession
- Communication problem
  - Recognizing and accurately defining the communication problem

### Nature of Technical Writing
- Purpose is spelled out in the opening paragraphs
- Vocabulary tends to be specialized
- Sentences are highly specific and fact-based
- Numbers and dimensions are used
- Signs, symbols, and formulas augment the narrative

### Graphs and tables may substitute, reinforce, or expand on the textual information
- Documentation and credits appear in text and bibliographies

### Technical Writers’ Characteristics
- Methodical
- Organized
- Objective
- Audience centered
- Honest
- Critical
- Informed
- Purposeful
Technical Writers

- Know their readers
- Know their objectives
- Write simply, directly, and concisely

Qualities of Good Technical Writing

- Arrives on or before the due date
- Makes good impression when perused
- Contains necessary introduction (background) to disclose purpose and scope
- Provides essential information that is written clearly and is free of jargon

Qualities of Good Technical Writing

- Uses tables and graphics, as necessary, to present and clarify content
- Contains a summary or conclusions, as necessary, to reveal the results obtained
- Is designed to be read selectively by readers with diverse interests or needs

Qualities of Good Technical Writing

- Uses a rational, readily discernible plan, revealed by the table of contents and by headings
- Reads coherently and cumulatively from beginning to end
- Answers readers’ questions as their questions arise
- Conveys and overall impression of authority, thoroughness, soundness, and honest work

Assignment

- Read your syllabus
- Read the Copyright Primer and take quiz
- Obtain and use a HOWDY e-mail address for all communications in this course
- Practice qualities of good technical writing on all course assignments