

NEWS/NOUVELLES**TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL WRITING COURSES AT YORK UNIVERSITY***

Last year York University began to offer courses in technical and professional writing in the evening at its Glendon campus. Two half courses are offered for the moment. Both count as credits toward a Bachelor of Arts programme, and both can be taken on a part-time basis. The courses are listed at the third- and fourth-year university levels, indicating that they are intended for people with experience. That experience can be academic--a concentration of courses in English, in translation, or in computer science--or practical. Applicants with no previous university studies who do have work experience writing can ask to enrol in a Bachelor of Arts degree or can apply to take these courses under a new streamlined procedure for people who are not interested in working towards a degree.

By mixing full-time students with working professionals in the same classes we hoped to be able to draw on the every-day experiences of the group to prepare students for the realities of the workplace. We also wanted to serve the needs of technical and business writers who have not been able to study the elements of their profession at a university level. Last year sixteen of the twenty students enrolled in the course were employed full time as technical writers or editors or were involved in public relations. They came for different reasons: poor evaluations of their written communication at work; the need to be able to explain writing to subordinates; an interest in specific skills like procedure writing; and even simple intellectual curiosity.

For there to be any sharing, the class has to be relatively informal. Students also have to accept the fact that there are people interested in corporate communication, in communication in the public service, in public relations, and in technical writing together in these courses. We hope to be able to offer an expanded programme in the future with specialization very early on. There is even now the possibility of working in either the administrative or the technical field in the extended project of the second course.

The existing courses begin with the use of language rather than with the application of technology to the writing process. The first course, "Problems in Professional Writing" (GL/TRAN 3310A.04), deals with writing conventions, institutional writing, register, writing for an audience, in-group vocabulary in government, business, and technology, and problem solving. Assignments are short and frequent.

The second course, "Techniques in Business and Technical Writing" (GL/TRAN 4310A.04), looks at the formats and particular problems of report writing, procedures, and software documentation. It builds up

the ability to revise through the study of sources of ambiguity and vagueness and factors which affect readability. It also introduces basic principles of graphics and design. Students are expected to complete and revise a major writing project.

Because there is a need, we have accepted a few bilingual Franco-phones into the courses, but we hope to be able to offer these kinds of courses in French in the future. For more information about the courses, contact the School of Translation at Glendon College (phone: (416) 487-6742).

- Candace Séguinot

* An earlier version of this note appeared in Communication Times, the newsletter of the Toronto Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, volume 14 (June 1986), p. 5.

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NEW JOURNAL IN TECHNICAL WRITING

A new journal, the Iowa State Journal of Business and Technical Communication, is scheduled to appear this year. Its two issues per year will publish articles concerning business, professional, scientific, and government writing.

For more information, contact: Charlotte Thralls and Nancy Roundy
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