

## CONFERENCE PROGRAM

### BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN WORKPLACE WRITING & PROFESSIONAL WRITING INSTRUCTION: NEW DIRECTIONS IN BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL WRITING PEDAGOGY

FRIDAY, OCT 1, 2021, 10 AM - 5.30 PM.

VENUE: ZOOM <https://bit.ly/3nmslgT>

For more information about the conference, contact organizers  
Donald Dow, Director, Business & Technical Writing, [ddow@english.rutgers.edu](mailto:ddow@english.rutgers.edu)  
Joann Messina, Asst. Director, Business & Technical Writing, [jcmessin@english.rutgers.edu](mailto:jcmessin@english.rutgers.edu)  
Sarbani Sen Vengadasalam, Asst. Professor, Business & Technical Writing  
[sarbani@english.rutgers.edu](mailto:sarbani@english.rutgers.edu)

Plenary session: 10-11.30	
Welcome and About conference: Donald Dow, Director, Business & Technical Writing Program, Rutgers University	10-10.15
Opening remarks: Lynda Dexheimer, Executive Director, Rutgers Writing Program	10.15-10. 30
Keynote Address, Margaret Gurowitz, Chief Historian, Johnson & Johnson	10.30-11
About <i>Writing &amp; Pedagogy</i> Special Issue, and Launch of book of Sarbani Sen Vengadasalam: Miriam Jaffe, Associate Teaching Professor, Rutgers Writing Program Book Details: <i>Vengadasalam, Sen Sarbani. Teaching Business, Technical and Academic Writing Online and Onsite: A Writing Pedagogy Sourcebook, 2021.</i>	11.00-11.15
Break	11.15-11.30

Panel One: 11.30-1 Chair: Joann Messina, Assistant Director of Business & Technical Writing	
Donald Dow, Director, Business & Technical Writing Program, Rutgers University "Business and Technical Writing Pedagogy: Readers, Arguments, Context and Contingency"	11.30-11.45
Sarbani Vengadasalam, Assistant Professor Business & Technical Writing Program, Rutgers University "When Learning Goes Viral: Exploring Social Media Affordances in the Professional Writing Classroom through A Pedagogy 2.0"	11.45-12
Dave Howland, Teaching Instructor, Rutgers Writing Program Claudio Mir, Senior Program Coordinator, Rutgers Collaborative Center for Community-	12-12.15

Based Research and Service & Amy Michael, Associate Director, Rutgers Collaborative Center for Community-Based Research and Service "Bridging the Writing Classroom and Community: A New Approach at Rutgers"	
Anthony Alms, Assistant Teaching Professor, Business and Technical Writing Program "Working with Intertextuality in the Business Writing Classroom"	<b>12.15-12.30</b>
Stacey Abate, Instructor, Business and Technical Writing Program, Rutgers University "Best Practices linking Academe to Nonprofit Careers"	<b>12.30-12.45</b>
Q & A	<b>12.45-1.15</b>

**Lunch Break: 1.15- 1.45 pm**

<b>Panel Two: 1.45-3.30 pm</b>	
<b>Chair: Sarbani Vengadasalam, Assistant Teaching Professor, Business and Technical Writing Program, Rutgers University &amp; Special Issues Editor, <i>Writing and Pedagogy</i></b>	
Katie Rieger, Assistant Professor of English & Writing Center Director, Benedictine College & Sarah Lonelodge, Assistant Professor of English, East Carolina State University "Bridging the Soft Skills Gap: Using the Introduce Practice Apply Reflect (IPAR) Model in Technical and Professional writing Classes"	1.45-2
Lance Cummings, Associate Professor of English University of North Carolina, Wilmington "From Fragile to Agile: Using Ethnomethodology to Teach Systems of Interaction"	<b>2-2.15</b>
Robert Terry, Associate Professor, Professional and Technical Writing, Georgia Southern University - Armstrong Campus "Teaching writing interactive fiction as a way to help technical writing students build foundational literacies"	2.15-2.30
Robert W. McEachern, Professor of English & Assistant Chair, English Department, Southern Connecticut State University & Peter McEachern, Graduate Student in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, George Mason University. "Should We Teach Students How to Bullshit?: Allowing Students to Fit into a Speech Community, Engage in Day-to-day Interaction, and Bolster their Image and Identity"	2.30-2.45
Andrew Cavanaugh, Collegiate Faculty, Writing Across the Curriculum University of Maryland Global Campus "Screencasting for Technical Writing Students: An Opportunity to Improve Feedback and Prepare Students for the Workplace"	2.45- 3
Q & A	3-3.30

**Break: 3.30-3.45 pm**

<b>Panel Three: 3.45- 5.30 pm</b> <b>Chair: Donald Dow, Director, Business &amp; Technical Writing Program, Rutgers University</b>	
Lynn Ludwig, Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, "Teaching Professional Writing Students How to Write for Digital Workplace Audiences"	<b>3.45-4</b>
Ann Marie Francis, Associate Professor, English Department, University of North Georgia "Identifying Gaps in Industry Expectations and Classroom Standards: An Examination of Writing Assessment in Professional & Technical Writing Classes"	<b>4-4.15</b>
Rachael Warmington, Instructor, Business Writing, Seton Hall University & Sheila Farr, Assistant Professor of English, Thiel College, Greenville, Pennsylvania "A Multimodal Approach to Teaching Business Writing: Pandemic Pedagogy and Digital Communication"	<b>4.15-4.30</b>
Erin Jensen, Associate Professor, Belmont Abbey College, North Carolina "Teaching Career and Technical Education courses for Mining Students"	<b>4.30-4.45</b>
Q & A	<b>4.45-5.15 pm</b>

**Vote of Thanks:** Donald Dow: 5.15 pm

**Close:** 5.30 pm

## ABSTRACTS

**Donald Dow**

**Director of Business & Technical Writing, Rutgers Writing Program**

**"Business and Technical Writing Pedagogy Readers, Arguments, Context and Contingency"**

Given the rise in business and technical writing (BTW) courses and their location with writing programs and English departments, there is a need to develop not only a pedagogy for BTW but one that considers BTW's institutional context and location of its faculty. Context is a problematic focus for pedagogy, as we have seen in recent scholarship on student writing, theory of genre, and transferability of skills to other academic disciplines. That scholarship views the uncertain and unclear contexts of academic composition courses and their genres as preventing a full student understanding of genre that would allow students transferable writing skills. The continuation of that scholarship into BTW regards the instruction of BTW as inside academia rather than within the workplace as suffering from similar concerns with context. Rather than viewing BTW as downstream from or supplemental to composition instruction, this article argues that we should examine the genres of BTW as uniquely involved in the contingencies of the writing process and as able to pursue the goals of composition instruction and liberal arts education generally. By focusing especially on the reader of BTW genres as determinant of the contingencies of writing situations and tasks, we can even see BTW as less problematically supportive than conventional composition instruction of key goals such as the creation of original arguments and effective management of supporting materials. The awareness of readership and argumentation allow for a pedagogy supportive of contingent and part-time faculty as well as full-time composition faculty regardless of their respective professional experience.

**Sarbani Sen Vengadasalam**  
**Assistant Professor, Business and Technical Writing Program, Rutgers University**

**“When Learning Goes Viral:  
Exploring Social Media Affordances in the Writing for the Real World Classroom through A  
Pedagogy 2.0”**

Since professional writing classes need to prepare students to shine in their future professional roles, it becomes imperative that they expose students to the participatory culture that characterizes the new workplace. While the use of social media technology projects does offer instructors opportunities to train students to negotiate through social media technology (SMT) spaces, the SMT incorporation necessitates changes and enlargement of the pedagogy that is currently in use. This paper offers the outline of an enhanced pedagogy 2.0 that forwards new approaches to learning and assessment necessitated by SMT integration into the professional writing curriculum. Using the theory of affordances as an underpinning, the paper suggests ways to create and grade SMT tasks within pedagogy 2.0 that involve writing in public spaces and social media platforms like webpages, tweets, or wikis. The paper describes how teachers can move class conversations from conventional learning management systems (LMS) discussion areas into social media spaces. The paper also offers sample tested assignments and rubrics that use cocreation as the scaffold for assessment. The barriers to SMT integration into professional writing instruction are considered and ways to overcome resistance suggested. In fact, the efforts to incorporate Web 2.0 SMT tools can prove to be well worth it, because with the use of pedagogy 2.0., learning and writing gain the power and potential to go viral.

**Dave Howland**  
**Teaching Instructor, Rutgers Writing Program &**  
**Claudio Mir**  
**Senior Program Coordinator, Rutgers Collaborative Center for Community-Based Research &**  
**Service &**  
**Amy Michael**  
**Associate Director, Rutgers Collaborative Center for Community-Based Research and Service**

**“Bridging the Writing Classroom and Community: A New Approach at Rutgers”**

Our presentation describes an academic town-gown collaboration in which small teams of Rutgers undergraduate technical writing students create useful products – such as websites, public service videos, and informational materials – for a variety of community non-profit organizations in the culturally and economically diverse city of New Brunswick, New Jersey. This type of assignment has proved a win-win in some college communities, including the University of New Hampshire and its seacoast surroundings. At Rutgers, in addition to their English-class instruction on writing and collaborative process, students are uniquely prepared for and supported in their work by a required one-credit recitation course run by the university’s Collaborative Center for Community-Based Research and Service. Here, students learn about the work of local non-profit organizations and the history and culture of the city from instructors with deep roots in the New Brunswick community. Writing students are further supported by peers from other subjects working on community projects with the Collaborative. This presentation will describe our technical writing project to date – including its endurance as a remote-learning program through the pandemic – and its potential to cultivate an interest in community nonprofit work while teaching students critical group collaborative and technical writing skills in a real-world environment.

**Anthony Alms**  
**Assistant Teaching Professor, Business and Technical Writing Program**

**“Working with Intertextuality in the Business Writing Classroom”**

A common criticism of college courses in Business Writing is that the performance of knowledge, a standard evaluative approach in the academic world, does not properly prepare students for what they will be required to do on the job, where flexibility and an ability to work thoughtfully with unknowables is

crucial. Part of the problem, in the view of Stephen Bremner and Tracey Costley, is that Business Writing textbooks tend to treat sample communications as stand-alone texts, whereas actual business documents typically function more as nodes in an ongoing chain of correspondence. 75-85% of workplace writing, they contend, is collaborative and intertextual.

If this is so, teachers of Business Writing who are trained in the Humanities (as many of us are) are well-placed to offer effective instruction. The very notion of intertextuality is a product of literary theory, as Martin Warren points out, and the idea that any given text represents an “absorption and transformation of other texts” (and potentially a catalyst to further transformations), has long been accepted in most Humanities disciplines. The difficulty is in the application, since the concept presupposes a polyphony of discourses that, as Adolphe Haberer argues, can lead to no final knowledge.

Yet working constructively with such uncertainty can promote precisely the kinds of skills valued in the business workplace. With proper guidance, students can learn to interrogate intertextual cues in a given business communication as a means of building an evidence-based response that inevitably poses further questions rather than artificially forcing final answers

**Stacey Abate**  
**Instructor, Business and Technical Writing Program, Rutgers University**

**“Best Practices linking Academe to Nonprofit Careers”**

There are over 38,000 nonprofit organizations in New Jersey and about 1.6 million throughout the United States. Every one of these nonprofits needs staff that are able to clearly articulate their message in order to attract and retain funding, achieve their goals, and serve New Jersey’s diverse communities. BTW courses such as Writing Grant Proposals (315) and Writing for Non Profits (355) directly address these professional needs and prepare tomorrow’s nonprofit workforce. This presentation will focus on how these courses prepare students for employment in a sector that is so vital to the country. While these courses have clear long-term value for the nonprofit sector, they have immediate benefits for the students. Integration activities of the nonprofit world directly into the classroom show the students repeatedly that this work matters. This integration is heightened in those sections that partner with the Rutgers Collaborative Center for Community-Based Research and Service, which works to embed students directly in nonprofit organizations for the semester. Business and Technical Writing courses prepare students for success; these nonprofit courses ensure that they are prepared for work in a field that addresses the most challenging issues facing society today.

**Katie Rieger**  
**Assistant Professor of English & Writing Center Director &**  
**Sarah Lonelodge**  
**Assistant Professor of English Oklahoma State University**

**“Bridging the Gap: Implementing Social Justice Partnerships and a Learn-Practice-Apply Model in Technical and Professional communication Classrooms to Develop Students’ Soft Skills”**

Scholars have shared several skills that recruiters and employers expect in graduates (Deepa & Seth, 2013; Stewart et. al, 2016; Stanton, 2017). However, many graduates often overstate their soft skill abilities (Stewart et. al, 2016). The authors of this article have attempted to address this gap in soft skill development for students in TPC classes as well as introduce a scaffolded model that instructors can use to help students develop key soft skills. To achieve this goal, we present a four-year, IRB-approved study and offer an Introduce, Practice, Apply, Reflect (IPAR) model that we suggest can be used by other TPC instructors. This model was used by two different instructors in three different TPC courses. This model was paired with both client and social justice community partner projects. We discuss and explore key findings from this study including soft skills students developed, soft skills that the instructors recognized that students may need to develop further, as well as a difference in engagement in client versus social justice community partner projects.

**Robert W. McEachern,  
Professor of English, Southern Connecticut State University &  
Peter J. McEachern  
Graduate Student in Industrial/Organizational Psychology,  
George Mason University.**

**“Should We Teach Students How to Bullshit?: Allowing Students to Fit into a Speech Community, Engage in Day-to-day Interaction, and Bolster Their Image and Identity”**

Bullshit, as defined by Frankfurt (2005, p. 10), is language that is “disconnected from a concern for the truth.” A number of scholars (e.g., McCarthy, et al., 2020; Penny, 2010) have described how bullshit is a prominent feature in organizations. Culturally, the term “bullshit” has negative connotations, and commentaries on the subject echo this feeling. However, Spicer (2020) codifies bullshit as a social practice, one that can certainly have negative outcomes for both the organization and its employees, but not always. As a social practice, effectively crafted bullshit can benefit its users, allowing them to “fit into a speech community, get things done in day-to-day interaction and bolster their image and identity” (Spicer, 2020, p. 20). Bullshit, by definition and by cultural practice, seems antithetical to business writing orthodoxy. Long-held disciplinary beliefs suggest that, as Thill and Bovée (2020) say in a representative textbook, communication should be clear and ethical. And yet, practice suggests that, to be successful, writers adapt to an organization’s speech act practices, as Spicer (2020) advocates. While ridding organizations of bullshit would be ideal, scholars generally agree that this is more or less impossible (e.g., McCarthy et al., 2020). If this is the case, perhaps the question we should ask is, “Should we teach students how to bullshit?” In this article, we describe bullshit and its uses in organizations, and argue that business writing should incorporate a critically informed approach to bullshit in undergraduate courses, internship preparation courses, and other curricular instances in which students work directly with organizations. While bullshitting should not be outright encouraged, bullshit literacy would foster critical thinking skills, promote more seamless adaptation to organizational cultures and communication practices, and perhaps even improve mental health outcomes.

**Robert Terry  
Associate Professor, Professional and Technical Writing  
Georgia Southern University - Armstrong Campus**

**“Entwining Interactive Fiction with Technical Writing to Develop Structured Authoring Fundamentals”**

Concerns about teaching structured authoring have been part of the debate about the role technologies should play in preparing technical writing students for “real world” needs since the late 1990s (see Albers 2003; Whiteside 2003; Rainey, Turner, and Dayton 2005; Kimball 2015; Brumberger and Laurer 2015; Carnegie and Crane 2018; and Shalamova, Rice-Bailey, and Wikoff 2018). Other scholars, such as Annette Vee (2017), have argued that fundamental aspects of writing software code, many of which parallel structured authoring, are required literacies of “the real world.” As Anne Gentle (2017) demonstrates, the difference between those writing code and those in structured authoring continues to shrink. This article posits that through the teaching of an open-source interactive fiction authoring platform called Twine, technical writing pedagogy can address fundamental aspects of all these issues. Twine provides many of the building blocks of structured authoring but also been used as part of social justice efforts by a variety of groups. However, this approach is not without its perils. Through analyzing the findings of a two-year IRB-approved study, this article identifies potential avenues for success as well as potential pitfalls.

**Lance Cummings**  
**Associate Professor of English**  
**University of North Carolina, Wilmington**

**“From Fragile to Agile: Using Ethnomethodology to Teach Systems of Interaction”**

In the field of workplace writing, scholars have long researched organizational shifts in the workplace and how those shifts have affected writing and the writing process (Gee & Lankshear, 1996; Henry, 2006; Slack Miller, & Doack, 1993). Post-process scholars have also argued that the writing process, whether in the workplace or otherwise, can not truly be codified or taught (Blyler, 1999, Cooper, 1986; McComiskey, 2000). Process emerges out of specific organizational and collaborative contexts, requiring writers to analyze and adapt processes in the midst of their work, not just apply specific process models. These organizational and collaborative shifts in the workplace have created a widening gap between how we teach process in the classroom and how workplace writers actually do process in the workplace. This article will first detail several of the developing approaches to process present in the 21st-century workplace, including Agile and Design Thinking. Instead of trying to apply these models to the writing classroom, this article will use ethnomethodological research, including interviews, observations, and corporate texts, to show how process is a system of interactions. The goal of ethnomethodology is to identify important points of interaction that influence how social systems, like process emerge, so that participants can actively influence how those processes are shaped. Having student participate in this kind of research can help them better understand how process works in today’s workplace, giving them opportunities to participate in that research and reflect on the writing process in new ways.

**Andrew J. Cavanaugh,**  
**Collegiate Faculty, Writing Across the Curriculum**  
**University of Maryland Global Campus**

**“Using Video Feedback in Technical Writing Classes: An Opportunity to Improve Feedback and Prepare Students for the Workplace”**

Significant research has been conducted in the past several decades on best practices in providing feedback to students’ writing. Over the decades, feedback methods have evolved as writing classes have transitioned from face-to-face traditional classrooms to online classrooms and as technology has advanced. Written feedback has moved from handwritten notes in the margins of a paper to typed feedback using commenting tools. Audio feedback has gone from the cassette tape to the MP3 file. One of the most recent trends in feedback to students’ writing is in video form using screencasting technology. Video feedback is especially beneficial in the technical writing classroom, where students often need to see the problems in their document. Students often benefit from seeing why they need more white space, why their graphic is not clear, why their alignment is off, why they are not applying the concept of proximity, why their instructions are not precise for their audience, and why their bulleted list lacks parallelism. Moreover, feedback through screencasting technology is becoming more popular in the workplace. Exposing students in technical writing classes to screencasting feedback has the potential to not only improve their writing but also enhance their readiness for the workplace.

**Lynn Ludwig**  
**Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point**

**“Teaching Professional Writing Students How to Write for Digital Workplace Audiences”**

While some companies require employees to publish on the web, work-experienced students are primarily used to writing to their company’s customer base in a static medium. Additionally, with the Covid 19 pandemic interrupting many customs of the professional workplace, online communication has

required employees to step up their digital writing practices, starting with a clear understanding of their global customer and audience.

This article explains the practical concerns, considerations, and critical changes implemented in college business writing courses, regarding communication with the digital audiences of today. Classroom experiences are critical when endorsing the encouragement, development, and evaluation of students to participate in blogs pertaining to their careers, post to social media websites that focus on current matters in their fields and contribute articles to professional online venues. For an earnest evaluation of these practices, see Daniels & Thistlethwaite (2016). Results and insights are shared as they were gained through personal interviews conducted with former business writing students who are regularly practicing workplace communication in their online work environments.

**Ann Marie Francis**

**Associate Professor, English Department, University of North Georgia**

**“Identifying Gaps in Industry Expectations and Classroom Standards: An Examination of Writing Assessment in Professional & Technical Writing Classes”**

The idea that engineers are graduating without the necessary communication skills, specifically written communication, is not new. In the past 25 years, changes have been made both in accreditation requirements and in engineering program curriculums to work to improve students' writing skills and make their writing better align with the needs of industry, and research is emerging that considers industry standards and how those standards can be applied to the classroom. One challenge is that the characteristics of quality writing is not always the same for the industry and the classroom, which can create problems for new graduates entering the workforce. This article looks at how effective writing is defined by both academics and professional engineers. Drawing on a study by Cunningham & Stewart (2012) which researched the criteria professional engineers consider essential in effective writing, the author surveyed instructors of introductory professional and technical writing classes to determine the characteristics they use when grading writing assignments. The results are then compared to the characteristics of quality writing as identified by the engineers. In addition, the paper reviews assignment rubrics to identify criteria used when evaluating writing and compares these criteria to the qualities of effective writing as determined by the Analytic Writing Continuum. After determining gaps between industry and academics, the article considers ways to bridge those gaps, including working with professional engineers to obtain sample documents, increasing reading and evaluation of engineering documents in professional and technical writing classes, and using interdisciplinary approaches to course design and instruction.

**Rachael Warmington**

**Instructor, Business Writing, Seton Hall University &**

**Sheila Farr**

**Assistant Professor of English, Thiel College, Greenville, Pennsylvania &**

**“A Multimodal Approach to Teaching Business Writing: Pandemic Pedagogy and Digital Communication”**

This article will explore the ways in which business communication has been transformed and elevated through technology, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students in Business Writing classes must move beyond the PowerPoint and static data analysis. For example, it will be demonstrated that there is a necessity for students to utilize digital tools to engage in data analysis and to present their findings and communicate them through various mediums, from formal documents, such as resumes and reports, to dynamic digital spaces, such as promotional webpages and instructional process videos. As will be illustrated, these projects combine 21<sup>st</sup>-century technology with traditional business communication and research. This multimodal approach fosters fresh explorations of business communication and prepares students to navigate the business world. Today, the virtual classroom is preparation for the virtual business meeting, and it is likely that virtual aspects of communication will continue to figure largely in post-pandemic business settings. The explosion of Zoom and similar video communications platforms

have forever changed the way people communicate and maintain human connections. This article will provide an exploration of our approaches and discuss what worked successfully. We will also show how we have adapted our Business Writing courses to meet the challenges of maintaining learning proficiencies when designing courses taught remotely, face-to-face, and in the hybrid mode. Lastly, we will reflect upon the need for today's business students to become more proficient in digital forms of communication with as much of an emphasis on rhetorical design as on the writing situation.

**Erin Jensen**

**Associate Professor of English, Belmont Abbey College, Nevada**

**“Bridging the Gap between Mining Focused Workplace Writing and Professional Writing Course Materials and Instruction”**

Mining is the main economic employer of much of Northern Nevada and hundreds of active mines surround the small towns that exist in this rural setting. Great Basin College is a public college located in one of the small towns. The most popular majors are in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) fields and include certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor degrees in plumbing, electrical systems, diesel, millwright, and instrumentation. All of these are directly connected to positions available in the local mining industry. Almost all students in technical and professional writing classes have either been employed or are currently employed by the surrounding mines. Their workplaces are usually deep underground or take place in the darkness of night. Very little of the research speaks to their workplace reality or their experiences in mining workplaces. The research that does exist about mines is much more focused on white collar mining positions, not on the laborer positions (Ford, 2012; Long, 1997). While there are some training manuals for miners in England and Australia on why having good literacy and communication skills are important (Lukin, 1998; Vaught & Mallett, 2008), there is little that directly address mining laborer writing experiences. A Professional Writing course that includes readings and assignments specific to mining focused students was created to emphasize literacy and communication skills for the laborers in the mines.