Course Syllabus

**Graduate Technical Writing Section 04 CS 200W**

**Course Overview**

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| **Your instructor:** Inna Aivazova [inna.aivazova@sjsu.edu](mailto:inna.aivazova@sjsu.edu) |
| **Four major writing projects:**  a resume, a cover letter, a project proposal, and a literature review.  You'll submit two drafts of each assignment. |
| **One presentation:** a Grad Slam-style PowerPoint presentation at the end of the  semester. |
| **Class meetings during Fall 2025:**Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30 pm to  2:45 pm |
| **Office hours: Fridays 12:00-1:00 PM** (please text me at 650 906 4779 if you want to see me) and by appointment **on**[**Zoom Links to an external site.**](https://fhda-edu.zoom.us/j/81545300701?pwd=JMukGiLLR7Fsbqoex13u2fsV5vczEJ.1#success). |

**Course Description and Requisites**

Graduate technical writing workshop to develop advanced communication skills that will meet the professional needs of computer scientists, along with research methodologies and proper documentation for the master's thesis project.

Prerequisite(s): Graduate standing. Allowed Declared Major: Bioinformatics, Computer Science, Data Science, Mathematics, or Statistics. Or instructor consent.

Note(s): This course satisfies graduate-level GWAR in this master's program. This course does NOT satisfy the undergraduate GE Area Z requirement.

**Course Format**

You will attend two weekly class meetings, on Tuesday and Thursday at the scheduled class time, and will complete assignments in class and online. Please note that the course has been designed with the assumption that all students will regularly attend class meetings.

Course materials are organized on Canvas in a series of weekly modules. You can find all content on Canvas: readings, videos, quizzes, detailed assignment instructions, assignment drop boxes, general course information, and links to useful information.  Canvas modules usually open two weeks before we discuss their associated topic in class so that you can complete readings and review any other information before coming to class.

**Classroom Policies**

* I begin each class at its scheduled start time.  Please arrive before class begins! Late entrances and early exits are highly distracting to your classmates and to me.
* Some activities, like in-class assignments and quizzes, cannot be made up and if you arrive late or miss class that day you will not earn points for those tasks. In general, you’ll know in advance when we’ll be working on an assignment in class.  Quizzes are given at random but I will drop two quiz scores to allow for occasional absences.
* If you know that you will be absent on a certain day, please let me know via email.
* I may make changes to assignments and the course schedule but will notify you of this in advance.
* While in class please do not check your phone, read unrelated materials, or do homework for another class. Unless we are working on an in-class assignment or activity, I will expect your laptop to be closed and your cell phone put away out of sight.  If you need to use your laptop to take notes, or need to check your cellphone because you are a caregiver, please notify me via email or see me during my office hours.
* It is important to me that all students feel welcome and comfortable in my classroom. If you have a problem with the classroom environment, or the behavior of one of your classmates, please speak to me privately about the issue so that it may be resolved.

**Textbook and Technology Requirements**

There is no course textbook; all readings and other materials will be found on Canvas or will be distributed to you in class.  However, you will need to have access to the following: a working laptop/tablet, PowerPoint or Google Slides, reliable internet access, a webcam and a microphone (can be integrated into your computer or external), and a printer.   **Technology issues will not be accepted as an excuse for late work - so have backup)!** For help with technology problems, visit the IT Service Desk page here: [SJSU IT Service DeskLinks to an external site.](https://www.sjsu.edu/it/).

* We may also use *Technical Writing Essentials* by Susan Last

https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/technicalwriting/

* Not Required but highly recommended *Rules for Writers* by Diana Hacker

[https://www.amazon.com/Rules-Writers-5th-Diana-Hacker/dp/0312406851Links to an external site.](https://www.amazon.com/Rules-Writers-5th-Diana-Hacker/dp/0312406851)

To prepare for the course you should do the following:

* Visit[SJSU IT Software Installation PageLinks to an external site.](https://www.sjsu.edu/it/services/collaboration/software/instructions.php) and download Microsoft Word (for PC and Mac) and PowerPoint (available at NO CHARGE to SJSU students)
* Locate a couple of printing stations on campus (one is outside the CS office on the 2nd floor of MacQuarrie Hall)

**Canvas Website**

[Go to one.sjsu.eduLinks to an external site.](https://one.sjsu.edu/) to begin your Canvas login.

I send group communications to my students through Canvas Announcements, so I suggest that you adjust your Canvas Notifications settings so announcements are forwarded to the device you check most frequently. To do this:

* Go to Canvas
* Click on your Account tab, and then on the Notifications tab
* Navigate to the Announcements bar and make the appropriate selections.

You may also use this procedure to have Canvas notify you of approaching assignment due dates. For Canvas help, call eCampus at (408) 924-2337 or[go to the eCampus Canvas help page.Links to an external site.](https://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/software-tools/teaching-tools/canvas/student-resources/index.php)

**Submitting Assignments to Canvas**

* Assignments are submitted when they are fully uploaded to Canvas.  Do not wait until the last minute to submit an assignment, because uploads may take some time and miss the submission deadline.
* A deadline of of 11:59 pm means 11:59:00: an assignment submitted after that time will be marked late by Canvas.
* DO NOT email an assignment to me or submit it as an attachment to a comment if the dropbox is locked.  I cannot offer feedback on assignments submitted in this way or use any associated grading rubric, and thus the assignment WILL NOT be graded.
* Assignments are graded as uploaded to Canvas; incorrect, blank, or unreadable files will receive no points.  Avoid this by clicking on the "View Submission" option after uploading your work to ensure you have submitted a correct and readable file.  **Do this every time you upload an assignment!**
* Assignments can be submitted unlimited times before a deadline; I will grade the final submission.  If you submit an assignment by the due date and then decide to re-submit it for grading during the late period, a late penalty will be assessed.

**Formatting Writing Assignments**

 Major writing assignments except for the resume must be written using Google Docs.

* You'll use the same file for the first and the final draft of the writing project; do not create separate files for each draft.
* When you submit your assignment, you'll upload it from Google Drive and also submit a direct link to the doc as a submission comment.
* Sign into Google Drive using your SJSU email address, so that I can view your editing history and track changes between your first and final draft.
* Any writing assignments submitted in an alternate format will not be graded.

**Late Policy**

* Late work is accepted up to 48 hours after a due date, except where otherwise indicated.
* **Work** **submitted up to 24 hours late will receive a 10% penalty**, and **work submitted from 24 to 48 hours late will receive a 20% penalty**.  These penalties are based on the total points possible and are automatically assessed by Canvas.
* **After 48 hours, no late assignments are accepted;**the assignment dropbox will close and you will NOT be able to submit assignments or access quizzes/exams.  Ungraded course content, like videos and readings, remains available throughout the semester.

Exceptions are made to this policy only in rare circumstances; for example, for a long illness.

**Getting Help with Writing and Research**

All of the writing you do in this class will be developed according to the process model of writing which has four steps: planning, drafting, revising, and editing.  You will submit two drafts of each writing assignment and will receive feedback on the first drafts from me and from your peers.  You will also be asked to participate in at least one conference with me during which we will discuss your final project of the semester, the literature review.  Of course, you can receive additional writing help by attending my office hours or working with a writing tutor.

If you find writing a challenge, I encourage you to work with the SJSU Writing Center, which offers one-on-one tutoring services and workshops on a variety of writing topics. For more information, visit the Writing Center website: [Visit the SJSU Writing CenterLinks to an external site.](https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/).  You can also find a link to the Writing Center on the course Home Page on Canvas. Note that the services provided by the Writing Center are **free** to all SJSU students.

To obtain help with the library research you will be conducting for this class, please contact the SJSU Computer Science Subject Librarian Anamika Megwalu via email:  anamika.megwalu@sjsu.edu.

**Plagiarism and Cheating**

I place a high value on the honest pursuit of knowledge and have zero tolerance for plagiarism and cheating.  Submitting a writing assignment that contains text that is **not your original written work** is a violation of the SJSU policy on cheating and plagiarism, which reads as follows:

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University and the[University’s Academic Integrity Policy (Academic Senate Policy S07-2Links to an external site.](https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/SJSU-Academic-Integrity-Policy-F15-7.pdf)), requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all alleged violations of the Academic Integrity Policy to Student Conduct and Ethical Development.

Plagiarism or cheating on a written assignment will result in a score of zero and administrative sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have previously submitted or plan to submit for another class, please speak with me before doing so. Should you be tempted to cheat because you find an assignment challenging, the better course of action is to contact me for help.

**Using the Turnitin.com Dropbox**

You will submit all of your major writing assignments to Turnitin.com, an application that checks assignments for plagiarism and for AI use.

This course includes a zero-value Turnitin.com dropbox assignment that you can use to check any writing assignment for plagiarism before you submit it for a grade.  You can use this dropbox as many times as you would like throughout the semester; any submission that you make to this dropbox will not be added to the Turnitin student submission database.

The Turnitin dropbox is for the use of students in this class only; please do not submit the papers of other students to the dropbox.

**Program Information**

Diversity Statement - At SJSU, it is important to create a safe learning environment where we can explore, learn, and grow together. We strive to build a diverse, equitable, inclusive culture that values, encourages, and supports students from all backgrounds and experiences.

**Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. **Compose** with a clear focus on purpose, scope, and audience.
2. **Critically observe and discuss** the composing processes of self and peers.
3. **Write** using a variety of technical writing formats.
4. **Organize and produce** papers and documents according to discipline-based editorial and citation standards, using IEEE style.
5. **Create** appropriate graphics to accompany a report.
6. **Effectively use** library resources and electronic databases pertaining to their discipline to carry out research.
7. **Distinguish** between scholarly and non-scholarly published literature as well as **define** the characteristics of good scholarly writing in terms of content, format, and style.
8. **Organize, analyze and synthesize** information from various sources to **develop** a literature review.
9. **Determine** the difference between plagiarized and non-plagiarized text.
10. **Organize and deliver** an effective oral presentation for a professional audience.

**Course Requirements and Assignments**

**Job-related correspondence**: You will prepare a targeted résumé highlighting your education, accomplishments and relevant job experience, and will also practice writing job application materials (e.g. a cover letter or email) using the established conventions and protocol of professional communication.

**Project proposal:**At the beginning of the semester, you will select a research topic of interest and later will write a project proposal that includes a description of the project's importance, how the project will be implemented, a work plan for carrying out the project, and a description of possible challenges presented by the project.  This assignment has two parts: first, you will write a one-page description of your topic and then you will write the full project proposal. You will submit one draft of the topic worksheet and two drafts of the proposal.

**Literature review:**Using the topic you selected for your proposal, you will write a literature review of scholarly sources (books, peer-reviewed journal articles, refereed professional conference proceedings) that describe work already completed in your research area. The review will be written following IEEE editorial standards and will include at a minimum a title page, an abstract, a table of contents, the review itself, and a list of references in IEEE format. You will submit two drafts of the literature review.

**Oral presentation:**At the end of the semester you will present the topic of your project proposal/literature review in a TED/Grad Slam-type, 3-minute long presentation that uses a maximum of three PowerPoint slides (plus a title slide).

**Writing exercises**: You will complete brief exercises throughout the semester focusing on various aspects of academic writing, including grammar, editorial style, and formatting.

**Schedule of Assignments/Points Possible**

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| --- | --- |
| **Assignment/Learning Outcomes** | **Points** |
| Orientation Assignment | 20 |
| Pop Quizzes (CLO 1-10) | 50 |
| Knowledge Checks (CLO 1-10) | 90 |
| Resume (CLO 1-3) |  |
| - First Draft (5 pts. peer review/40 pts. first draft) | 45 |
| - Final Draft | 75 |
| Cover Letter (CLO 1-3) |  |
| - First Draft (5 pts. peer review/40 pts. first draft) | 45 |
| - Final Draft | 75 |
| Project Proposal (CLO 1-4, 6) |  |
| - Topic Worksheet | 25 |
| - First Draft (10 pts. peer review, 40 pts. first draft) | 50 |
| - Final Draft | 75 |
| Literature Review (CLO 1-6, 8) |  |
| - First Draft (10 pts. peer review/90 pts. first draft) | 100 |
| - Final Draft | 250 |
| Grad Slam Presentation (CLO 5,10) | 100 |
| **Total** | 1,000 |

**Grading Information**

 Here are some facts about how your grades will be determined in this course:

**Grade Calculation**: Points are awarded based on how well an assignment fulfills the requirements outlined in the assignment prompt and the grading rubric.  To earn as many points as possible on your submissions, read every assignment prompt carefully, review the grading rubric, and talk to me if you have questions BEFORE you submit the assignment.

**Grading Turnaround:** I aim to return your assignments within two weeks of submission or sooner.

**Grading Issues:**My evaluations are informed by years of experience as a writing instructor and extensive reading of student writing. I know your grades are important to you and I grade your work carefully.  Thus, unless a technical error has been made, your grades are not negotiable or debatable and will not change after they are posted. If you make an appointment to see me during my office hours I will assume that you want to discuss how you might improve your writing and not argue about a grade.  I will not discuss grades in the classroom.

**Feedback:**While I offer extensive feedback on first drafts of writing assignments, simply correcting the errors I point out does not guarantee a perfect score. My feedback highlights the most substantial gaps in a submission, and is not meant to be a comprehensive edit.

Also, I do not review assignments*before* I grade them, as that requires me to act as an editor and not as an evaluator.  However, during office hours I will answer specific questions that you have about your work and whether or not it meets an assignment's requirements.

**Final Course Grade:** Your final course grade will be the letter grade equivalent of the percentage that is shown on Canvas after the final assignment of the semester is completed and graded (see the chart below).  I do not round grades or offer grade bumps, and there will be no extra credit or extra work offered after the semester ends.

**Grade Chart:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 97%+ = A+ | 93%<97% = A | 90%<93% = A- | 87%<90% = B+ | 83%<87% = B | 80%<83% = B- |
| 77%<80% = C+ | 73%<77% = C | 70%<73% = C- | 67%<70% = D+ | 63%<67% = D | 60%<63% = D- |
| Below 60% = F | | | | | |

**CS200W Grading Rubrics**

My goal is to assign grades in as fair a manner as possible and I use detailed grading rubrics for all assignments. The grading levels on these rubrics are based on how well your submission fulfills the requirements of the assignment prompt and the needs of the readers of your documents.

In general, the CS200W rubric rating levels correspond to the following grades:

**Exceeds Expectations = A+ (100%)**

**Exceeds/Meets Expectations = A (95%)**

**Meets Expectations = B (85%)**

**Approaching Expectations = C (75%)**

**Below Expectations = D or below (65% or >)**

**University Policies**

Per[University Policy S16-9 (PDF)Links to an external site.](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the[Syllabus InformationLinks to an external site.](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.