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INVITATIONAL RHETORIC: AN ENGAGED PEDAGOGY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

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INVITATIONAL RHETORIC: AN ENGAGED PEDAGOGY FOR TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

By

Linford Odartey Lamptey

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

In Rhetoric, Theory and Culture

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This thesis has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
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Definitions

Invitational rhetoric, Engaged pedagogy, Critical pedagogy, Technical Communication class, Voice.

Abstract

Many scholars have advocated a breakdown of teachers' authority while agitating for students' voice and freedom in the classroom. They have proposed several theories to this effect. In this paper, I reflect on how principles of invitational rhetoric, engaged pedagogy and critical pedagogy operate in teaching a technical communicating class. It is to find out how these tend to support or otherwise students' voices, engagement and agency. To reflect, I adopted and adapted the principles of invitational rhetoric, engaged, and critical pedagogy to topics in technical communication. My reflections reveal that the successful applications of theories cannot be guaranteed. We should look at theories and principles as a continuum. At best, such applications should be a rhetorical act.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Classroom subjects by design make us relate with the world we live in. Our experiences in class gets tested more after school. But imagine, you go to class and the class recognizes you as some alien with no earthly experiences. It instructs and imposes on you, even on things it has less experiences on. The class recognizes less of your own experiences and presents experiences largely with the vision and voice of the teacher. Imagine your experiences and all the times your education rendered you voiceless by ineffective communicative practices though you have and can have voice. Your right to inquiry and discovery is shuttered. Your own ability to reflect on your world becomes insignificant. I began to wonder about these ideas after reading “When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own” by Jacqueline Jones Royster in a Composition pedagogy class.

Royster’s article “When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own” inspires to me to think more critically about voice and communication in writing pedagogy. Royster questions the structures in which the lived experiences belonging to some others/actors in communication get ignored: a situation where one is compelled to listen to “significant” others while their voices remain silent. We might regard such treatments as less empowering and non-engaging, especially when the conversation or subject concerns those who are condemned to silence. As she says, “When the subject matter is about me and the voice is not mine, my sense of order and uprightness is disrupted” (pp. 31). I believe the subjects we teach and study in our schools in several ways concern and transcend both the teacher and the student. The writing we teach is to make students function well in society. These students are already part of society and have had some lived experiences with it.

But, when there is a breakdown in class communication, it might affect how teachers and students connect their lived experiences with the lessons. This could lead to students' deprivation of first-hand creativity and right application of knowledge. This is why Royster describes the situation as an affront to "the principle of the right to inquiry and discovery" (pp. 31). Good communicative classroom practices can ensure students value expressions of others, while they receive same measure in the course of teaching and learning. A holistic teaching and learning advocates several dimensions and lenses to be brought to anything worth its study. And for us to do this, we might have to transcend the current structure and system of education. Bell hooks (1994) calls this approach, teaching to transgress. It is that teaching which challenges us to look beyond education as imparting knowledge. In teaching to transgress, we challenge students to research, to write, and to express themselves in ways that break down the authoritative structures in academia so they discover knowledge in an environment that is less oppressive yet highly engaging.

The voice of the students and other class members is equally important. In many different settings, the need for each communicator's voice becomes important. For example, in African story-telling, there is the "call and response" from the teller and listener respectively. Once the audience is involved in the story telling, they have the opportunity or license to interrupt the teller along the lines of narration. Similarly, our classroom could enable students to transgress beyond established one-way street system. This is a way of giving them voice and integrating them into the class. Indeed, our students do need a diversified education in which teachers use their authority to employ students' lived experiences for class discussions. It is important we make students' experiences must count and their voices heard. Essentially, students must learn to communicate and

negotiate their ways in the classroom.

To better understand the possibility of giving students voice in the classroom, I reflect on my experiences with invitational rhetoric in teaching a technical communication class (HU 3120). I sought to study and reflect on the principles of invitational rhetoric. Invitational rhetoric, according to Foss and Griffin (1995), is “an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination” (pp. 5). They offer this theory only as an option and do not seek to erase the rhetorical (persuasive) tools. The theory aims to enable communicators to gain an understanding of each other’s perspective. For instance, they agree that the other rhetorical options such as conquest, conversion, benevolent and advisory are legitimate at the right times. Invitational rhetoric challenges the traditional notion of rhetoric as persuasive and advocates communication with the aim of creating a level playing field for all rhetors involved. Further, invitational rhetoric is a request to enter the rhetors’ world and see things as they do. Rhetors in this situation are not interested in changing or influencing others, but in the process of transformation which may happen during communication. Invitational rhetoric thrives on eight (8) assumptions. These are,

- *Understanding is the purpose of communication*
- *Participants listen with openness*
- *Speaker and audience are viewed as equal*
- *It involves power with rather than power over*
- *Participants change only when they want to change*
- *Participants enter invitational rhetoric willing to be changed*

- *It creates a world of appreciation for difference*
- *Invitational rhetoric is one of many options.* (Foss & Foss. 2012, pp. 10-19)

Additionally, I am interested in how invitational rhetoric engages and creates equal opportunities for students' expression to be valued.

From the above assumptions, it becomes clear that communication is critical to the voices and experiences of students in maneuvering classroom procedures. For us to understand the slippery nature of voice and personal experiences (invitational rhetoric principles) in education that create unequal structures and relationships, we need to understand the dynamics of communication to provide practical solutions. If we should understand "education as a system of power" (Fasset & Warren, 2007 p. 91), we can then identify the underlying structures that make it gravitate towards privileged persons to create unequal relations. As Fasset and Warren (2007) note, "communication creates all possible worlds." However, this form of communication is one that has firm foundations in engaged pedagogy, critical pedagogy and critical communication pedagogy. Critical pedagogy seeks to transform the world into a better place. Engaged pedagogy is one that "necessarily values student expression" (hooks, p. 20) and "actively committed to a process of self-actualization and wellbeing...to teach in a manner that empowers students" (hooks, p.15). Likewise, Fasset and Warren's (2007) critical communication pedagogy is about engaging the classroom as a site of social influence, as a space where people shape each other for better and for worse "...to effect a material change around the world..." (p. 8). The change comes from within, from the people's (teachers, students etc.) interactions and involvements. No one can learn or change a community unless they are part of it (Powell,

2006). For such reasons, writing classes should be welcoming and represent each person's interest. This is best done when writing pedagogy is communication and discussion fueled (Giroux, 1978). The classroom communicative structure thus, would not rob students of their voices and human agency.

For this technical communication class, I would want to consider voice beyond the verbal. Technical communication students usually major in disciplines such as Engineering, Chemistry, Physics etc. The practicality of their disciplines orients them towards the use of hands more than sounds from vocal cavities. Thus, voice, here is the collective abilities of the students and teachers expressed or unexpressed during class interactions to emphasize or come to knowledge. Therefore voice, that is, their ways of communication, interaction and engagement might be different.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Invitational Rhetoric

Foss and Griffin (1995) develop invitational rhetoric as a reaction against the traditional notion of rhetoric. Later, Foss and Foss (2012) categorize traditional rhetoric into four main groups of persuasion: conquest, conversion, benevolent and advisory. Conquest rhetoric revolves around the workings of the three arms of government that is characterized by winning and losing events like elections. Conversion has to do with the desire to influence and change another's behavior as in advertising and marketing. Benevolent rhetoric is the assistance one gives to make other better. It mostly involves creating awareness or providing others can benefit from (e.g health campaigns). Finally, advisory rhetoric is a response to requested assistance (Foss & Foss, 2012, pp. 4-6) like a counselling session. All these situations favor persuasion over welcoming of differences. Yet to Foss and Foss (2012), rhetoric understood as a form of persuasion aimed at altering the environment and influencing the lives of others by changing them is unethical. The desire to change others could be a selfish motive geared towards controlling and dominating others. They argue that this eventually gives power to the agent of change. They illustrate this with the example of how many states' laws of abortion exert undue pressure over women and their bodies. Also, a student who succeeds in influencing a colleague's decision regarding courses to be taken do exert influence over that student and by such exertion, increases their self-worth against the influenced. The influence need not be eternal or substantial to be considered significant. It could even be overt. These occurrences necessitates invitational rhetoric. Invitational rhetoric, Foss and Foss (2012) argue, is founded on the three principles of equality, immanent value, and self- determination. First, equality is committed to

elimination of dominance in relationships and creating equal opportunity for all. Second, immanent value maintains that the worth and value of each person be recognized. Third, self-determination is about giving the individual the power to make their own decisions regarding their lives. Of key interest to the survival of invitational rhetoric is the two conditions of *offering* and *external conditions*. They argue that this *offering* is opposed to persuasion as it only presents to others with the aim of giving them opportunity to willingly see other uniqueness/differences outside their world. It is not to force them to take a position (Foss & Griffin, 1995, pp. 7). In addition, invitational rhetoric creates an *external condition* which consists of safety; the provision of security, value; recognition of the self-worth of others, and freedom; the power to choose or not to choose. However, they conclude that this invitational rhetoric is not a replacement of traditional rhetoric but as an option of which traditional rhetoric as equal chance. Nevertheless, it is a means of eliminating oppressive tendencies in communication.

Extending the dialogue on communication and social justice, Pollack et al (1996) make some interesting rebuttal to other studies of invitational rhetoric and the arguments against persuasion. Of interest here are those they directed at both Makau and Foss and Griffin (2005). Although Polack et al (1996) agree to some extent that some communicators use persuasion in ways that sometimes suggest domination over others, they largely disagree with Makau that persuasion is violence. They also disagree with Foss and Griffin (2005) that persuasion to change others is a rush for power, an intent to control and dominate others, control situations, and to gain sense of self-worth at the expense of others. They argue that persuasion is vital to classroom survival. What should be of importance is the urgency, the impact of the persuasion as well as the ethical employment of persuasion and

not persuasion itself. To them, persuasion embodies morality as it espouses love and care. They illustrate this further with a situation in which one persuades a friend not to commit suicide. In this instance, Pollack et al (1996) argue that persuasion itself is an invitation of the other person to what is unique and valuable to them. Persuasion here neither seeks to control others nor is it a rush for power. It rather, they argue, shows love and care. To them persuasion has been misunderstood because we have misunderstood the concept of power. They invoke Arendt's (*positive*) definition of power and clarify that power is not individual but a collective property. They conclude that sometimes, invitational rhetoric does not work, and we need to find alternative models and suggests that the traditional model becomes important in the instruction of students in the classroom. They contest that their stance is not too far from Foss and Griffin's (1995) who had conceded that other alternatives to achieving non-dominating discourse do exist (pp. 150).

It seems here that the rhetorical situation should determine which becomes relevant and if there is the need to merge both approaches.

Engaged Pedagogy

Engaged pedagogy gives priority to students' expression (hooks, 2014). This means it has some connections with critical communication pedagogy. Critical communication pedagogy goes beyond teaching to create an evolving relationship that guides everyday living. The two thus are valuable to this study because they help to understand the classroom as a community where progressive communication is valued and gives room for

understanding. Understanding serves the right purposes of communication. According to hooks (2004), students are used to oppressive ways in class such that they feel uncomfortable wielding power (agency) in class. To get out of oppressive classes, teachers might employ invitational rhetoric as one of effective communicative tools to get students to internalize ideas and be actively engaged in class, feel safer and expressed themselves in empowered ways that maintains their self-value and life-experiences. In view of its oppressive status, hooks (1994) asserts that for education to be a practice of freedom, “students should be able raise critical questions about pedagogical questions” (p.6). Students who do not have voice and merely remain silent, just taking notes and passively storing knowledge only to regurgitate is a depiction of oppression.

Engaged pedagogy is the effort to transgress boundaries that keep students from rote learning. It involves a type of education that takes into consideration the interest of the individual. hooks (2014) emphasizes that engaged pedagogy transcends traditional feminist and critical pedagogies (p. 15) because engaged pedagogy commits teachers to a process of self-actualization that emphasizes their well-being in the course of teaching as well that of their students. Self-actualization means that teachers are not only mentally fit but also socially fit. Thus, they are smart with books as well as socially interactive. Self-actualization demands that teachers successfully employ a united mind, body and spirit. Self-actualization means that any teacher who is intellectually smart but emotionally unstable is not academically fit. Therefore, engaged pedagogy is what is needed to transcend boundaries of domination and less class engagement. It is way of making the classroom therapeutic and therefore an engaged pedagogy. The traditional education

system is entangled in mind/body split. hooks (2014) challenges the mind/body split in education and asserts that it works against engaged pedagogy. The split creates a hierarchy that in turn creates fear in students, the fear that they cannot self-actualize. She says that most students come to class with wounded psyches, and the healing that they need should come from teachers. This healing is a new form of education that addresses their “uninformed, unknowing spirit” (p. 19). In effect, the knowledge they experience in school should be meaningful to their lives. According to her, engaged pedagogy aims at finding a “connection to what they are learning and their overall life experiences” (p.19). This is what engaged pedagogy entails. In short, engaged pedagogy starts from a personal experience from which one is able to engage with the world and achieve self-actualization.

Critical pedagogy

Freire (1995) largely centers his works in education on critical pedagogy. He describes in negative terms the failing educational system. He calls it a banking system of education because it objectifies students as safes where the ‘rich’ teacher deposits wealth of wisdom or knowledge. In this case, students have no voice but the teachers’. Freire (1995) describes the situation as oppressive that puts students in need of liberation. This is where critical pedagogy becomes relevant to him. Critical pedagogy seeks to liberate. In the words of Fasset and Warren (2007), who are influenced by Freire, critical pedagogy is “not only about locating and naming the bad, the incomplete, the oppressive in a given instance but also means considering the possibilities, hoping for and imagining something better” (p.26). Freire (1995) asserts that critical pedagogy is about liberation of students. It liberates students from being objectified and oppressed. The liberation comes about by

stimulating the creative thinking prowess of the students. To him, education should not be about domination where one party wields too much to oppress the other. This situation does not allow students to develop creative thinking abilities. He proposes the use of dialogue (communication) in place of the traditional communicate in education. To him those who engage in dialogue engage in critical thinking which facilitates the natural process of becoming. The teacher must be a partner of the students and must be able humble enough to listen to them and gain their trust. Such partnership is transformative. Education that does not transform the world is no education. He thus sees education as praxis, that is, reflection and action to transform the world.

Fasset and Warren (2007), while building on Freire's work, maintain that critical pedagogy reflects "efforts to reflect and act upon the world in order to transform it, to make it a more just place for more people, to respond to our own collective pains and needs and desires (p. 26). It is one means through which scholars in education can then employ to advocate, create and implement democratic principles of freedom and equality in making the classroom less oppressive. The practice of critical pedagogy may not come easy considering the fact that although power is relevant in accomplishing the goals of schooling, it is "fluidic" and "slippery" (Fasset & Warren p. 65). It appears complicated for teachers applying critical pedagogy since they have to balance the use and non-use of power. In addressing the situation, teachers might still have to take on some form of power.

Other scholars also view the educational system as a hegemonic system that needs to be transformed. For example, Maher (2002) describes the educational system as problematic because there are unequal power relations between teachers and students in the classroom.

This limiting power relation does not inspire students to be well engaged. Students who have become used to the banking system of education may question any attempt at making them question the oppressive system and take some agency. Students accept without question the authority teachers exert and wish to be ordered about.

To Maher (2002), such complexity in the classroom can be handled through dialogue. The absence of dialogue is silence. Silence can be a way some students protest and show resistance, which complicates the situation more. Thus, dialogue enables us to explore and discover the world. She advocates the existence of fruitful interaction that will ultimately lead to liberation as it will reconcile. But to reconcile will mean that teachers have to take the responsibility on themselves and create an invitational and interactive classroom environment. Teachers need to discuss their approach with students. This discussion will involve primarily open-ended questions in which there is no one particular answer and will encourage students get out of the expectation of meeting teachers' expectations of particular answers instead of exploring and discovering. She recounts an instance in class where she invites students to explore a topic. Surprisingly, instead of the students exploring the possibilities of the topic, they rather get stuck as they struggle with it because it challenges them to not give one-sided answer. The students have lost their voices. Secondly, Maher (2002) also calls on teachers to take on the virtue of humility if they are to address the struggle in the classroom, humility in which teachers do not see the expression of students as a challenge to their authority in the classroom. The educational system already defines the hierarchy of the teachers and students. Absence of teachers' humility creates oppositional silence in the students and they begin to resist. By humility, she means teachers should admit their vulnerability to the class. They should view

divergent views and contradictions as not wrong or divergence from correct answers but an invitation to explore. It is not a threat to the teacher's role. It can rather help create the environment in which contradictions can be explored. She says this does not perpetrate the traditional culture of indoctrination and oppression (Maher, 2002, pp. 90), the situation that fails to invite students to interact.

From the above, we see issues of the banking system of education, student agency and engagement as well as teacher authority drive the conversation. Thus for this study, I am interested in also exploring the following questions:

- *How does invitational rhetoric foster student engagement?*
- *In what ways does invitational rhetoric give students of technical communication agency?*
- *What components of invitational rhetoric do students resonate well with?*
- *How do students respond to communication lines that gives them voice?*
- *At what point should authority be made visible?*
- *What are the positives and negatives of invitational rhetoric with this class?*
- *How does invitational rhetoric contribute to learning?*

Chapter 3: Methods

Technical communication classes are usually patriarchal. They deal with writing genres that extremely resist changes to persuasion. Students mostly engage in persuasive writings such as resumes, cover letters, proposals etc. Therefore, it would be of interest to study the uses of invitational rhetoric in such communication classes to better understand the possibilities of their affinity. In this chapter, I present the design of the study, the population, a sample of the questions, and the mode of my reflections.

For this study, I used students in my HU 3120 Professional and Technical Communication class. These were undergraduate students in their junior and senior years with majors in the sciences fields such as engineering, biochemistry etc. It was a class of 25 students with only four (4) females. To create an invitational environment (one with principles of invitational rhetoric), I allowed students to form their own groups and they maintained their group members all through the semester. By invitational environment, I mean the classroom situation, in which the mode of communication places everyone on equal measure, facilitates sharing of personal experiences, encourages a willingness to listen and embrace different views, and the coming to knowledge based on class interaction. It is one that eliminates criticisms and the attempt to change others.

Based on the above, I consider engaged learning to be learning in which students interact in an equal, safe and free environment to come to new knowledge as opposed to rote learning. Voice will then mean the agency students take in the course of interaction/communication.

Study design

I adapted Foss and Foss (2012,) invitational rhetoric principles (pp. 35) to each class day's technical writing class topic. I did this by constructing questions that would allow students to comfortably participate in class discussion, share their personal experiences, connect the topic to the experiences and learn from each other's experiences. The goal of this invitational approach was to give them more agency in class and to discourage rote learning which Freire deems oppressive.

With the exception of the first class meeting, students read pages assigned from the required textbook, and responded to quizzes on Canvas (class online portal for assignments and updates) that met the non-invitational aspect of the course. Next, they came to class for the invitational interactions.

The study started with an invitational question on each slide presented on the projected screen. I did walk around the class and ask the same questions they saw on the screen but gave them time to reflect before they responded.

As the students made their contributions, I summarized key points for later reflections. Also, I made students reflect on the questions, write their thoughts and then called on them to respond to the questions. I walked around each group and recorded in writing a few of those written reflections. To encourage class discussion and student participation, I relied on Foss and Foss's (2012) suggested questions for specific situations which included invitational questions meant to draw out a silent member, to add needed additional information, to prevent a few from monopolizing the discussion, etc. (pp. 35).

Reflections

Immediately after class, I locked myself in the office and reflected on the questions in relation their responses and attitudes and the general conduct during the class vis-à-vis my notes. From the time that class ended until I finished my reflections, I spoke to no one.

The prompts below guided my reflections

- How do students respond to having more agency?
- Did I get everybody participating fully?
- How engaged they engaged?
- How enthusiastic where about sharing personal experiences in relation to the topic?
- Where/when do I assert authority?
- How many expressed themselves?
- Does negotiating give them more agency?

Below is a brief description of each session:

DAY 1

On the first day of class, we took time to explore the syllabus. The objective of the class was to prepare students for the rest of the semester with what is expected of them and what they ought to do. Also, it is to get students to start or get comfortable sharing their experiences with the class.

I invited students to explore the syllabus using the following prompts:

- *What does a syllabus mean to you base on your experiences?*

- *What have been your experiences with the way a syllabus works?*
- *What kind of document would they make for a course?*
- *Is a syllabus a different document for a teacher than for students and why?*
- *How will you design your ideal syllabus?*

While few students responded to these questions, I further engaged them with follow-up questions. I took the position of listener and listened with keen interest to show concern with whatever they had to say with regards to the syllabus. Part of the plan was to ensure each student get the opportunity to talk. Thus, I used expressions like, “Before you continue, may I ask if anyone has a comment to make,” to get others invited to the discussion.

DAY 2

On this day, the topic was, “Technical Communication.” The objective of the class was to identify the main features of technical communication, explain the purposes of technical communication, identify the main features of technical communication, know what technical communicators do, recognize the digital and human sides of technical communication, and appreciate the role of technical communication in most careers.

We explored technical communication on an invitational level aided by the prompts below:

- *What does technical communication mean to you?*
- *Do you have any technical skills?*
- *What are some of the things you have done in the past that you think involve or described technical communication?*
- *How do you anticipate using technical communication after this class?”*

I posed the questions (in the order above) without mentioning or directing it to any student in particular. Again, I used prompts to ensure that students from the other groups honor the invitation. For example, I used the prompt, “Does anybody from this group care to share?” while pointing to a group conspicuously silent for some time.

DAY 3

The topic for the following class was “Rhetorical Situation,” and students were to read and respond to Bitzer’s article Rhetorical Situation online before class. Our class deliberated on these questions:

- *What personal experience can you recount and consider a rhetorical situation?*
- *What makes it a rhetorical situation?*
- *Would you consider this moment in this class a rhetorical situation? Why?*
- *What situations do you think exist to weaken the rhetorical situation or that you may anticipate doing so?*
- *So far, how do you see or define a rhetorical situation in your own language?*

Most students did not get access to the reading materials online through no fault of theirs. As a result, students read in class before attending to the questions in a discussion. The objective of the class was set to help students to identify the three features of a rhetorical situation (Exigence, Rhetorical Audience & Constraints), to differentiate rhetorical situations from non-rhetorical ones, and to understand the complexities that rhetorical situations can take.

DAY 4

Next, we treated the topic, “Persuading Audience.” Once again, I guided the class with questions aimed at engaging them that would relate the topic to their personal experiences.

Some of the questions were,

- *Have you written any type of document before? Eg Resume, cover letter, recommendation, permission etc.*
- *What type of audience did you have? Expert, informed or layperson?*
- *Who else is likely to read it.*
- *What information do you think this type of audience needed?*

DAY 5

The final class for this study handled the topic, “Meeting the Needs of Specific Audience.”

The objectives of the class were for students to ask the right questions to analyze their audience and purpose, assess their audience’s technical and cultural backgrounds, identify the appropriate document qualities for their audience, develop an audience, and use profiles to guide their work. As usual, to keep the voice of student expression high, I engaged the students on the questions are as follows:

- *What does persuasion mean to you?*
- *Have you been persuaded before?*
- *Have persuaded someone before?*
- *What has ethics got to do with such persuasions?*
- *Recall and share your reaction to a persuasion or argument?*

Summary

The main purpose of this study design is to bring the communicative principles of invitational rhetoric to an undergraduate technical communication class.

The purpose of this design is to enable me to assess the teaching practicality of invitational rhetoric principles in the technical communication in relation to how it facilitates class discussion and engagement. Students read topics and took quizzes before class. Next, they come to class to connect their personal experiences with the topics by responding to invitation into their worlds.

I discuss the principles and findings in the chapter five.

Chapter 4: Results

In what follows, I categorize the results of the study in terms of how engaged and unengaged students appeared to be on the different days class.

Not Engaged

In this section, I describe days on which students appeared not to be engaged. On the first day, I could not get everyone to speak. The students expected me to talk and lead them in the discussions. I had to ask same question several times with each time having the question worded/phrased differently. Majority of the class would not participate unless directly called on. Some did not want to talk for no apparent reasons. One student remarked that they are in the class to be led by the teacher, follow the teacher's instruction and not necessarily to talk or express himself or herself. Most students find it difficult sharing personal experiences or connecting it with the lesson for the day. They shared broad experiences that overshadowed personal ones. They are not used to sharing personal experiences especially with the syllabus. They had thought they had no voice with the syllabus, as this was an invitational approach. But students easily drift into some irrelevant topics when sharing/discussing personal experiences within their groups in class.

On the second day, most students still hesitated to talk in the first few minutes of class. There were those who were silent but had so much personal experiences to share and will wait till they are called upon to share. Not everyone of them got to speak. This is because others spoke for far too long consuming most of the class time.

On the third day, students were less engaged at the beginning of class because the class had problems accessing the material on canvas. Even though some of them had had access to it before the material was unpublished, they were less expressive.

A few others on the fourth day were still reticent but expressed themselves when I called them. What I often heard was this, *“just as this person said, that person said, I also wrote on resume and considered my skills”*. It is clear their silence was not because they were not engaged.

On the final day of this study, the engagement waned as the class gathered from the groups to the wider sharing of experience. I had only two (2) students sharing. Some of them were personal and family related. For instance, one person shared the experience of having to convince the mother of the need to change TV subscriptions since it was becoming too expensive. The mom who had got used to the expensive subscription finds it difficult welcoming differences although it would be financially rewarding. At this instant, the class was silent again. I had to use extra invitational cues in getting them to participate.

Engaged

This part concerns moments in class I considered students as more engaged. Students were very friendly as they wore friendly smiles from the beginning of the class. However, when I invited them to the first question, the class went silent. The students always expected me to lead them. They waited for my feedback and were not sure whether they made sense. When I assured them of how valuable their points were, they gained the confidence in talking more. This made them continue to talk. Those who did not explained that it was because others have expressed similar opinions. Perhaps, it is our first meeting. Three

students took over the class and when no one would talk they raised their hands to talk. Surprisingly, another student sitting close by takes it up and expresses their opinion.

At another time, I asked them to reflect on the prompt, write it down before talking. This got almost everyone raising their hands, and ready to engage. It is probably to show that they did the reflection. I asked one student to be the first to speak after the reflection and she did enthusiastically but went silent again until I had to call her another time. The three students always came back strongly with their points after others I picked ahead of them have expressed their comments. Few students expressed their experiences with past syllabi on the first day. The syllabus means so much to them. It prevents any last minute extra and surprising work. It appears students work well when they are made to reflect before responding.

The students related the inability of the class to access canvas and the subsequent collective effort to solve the issue as a rhetorical situation. Some of describe moments in their internships when they were called to duty as rhetorical situations. Students on another occasion were able to share personal experiences when they started the class with brief reflections on their engagement with any persuasive document.

On the second day, I got some students responding to what technical communication is. Few start, and the rest of the class join later. The invitational approach got most of them participating. The invitation for a group to talk encourages some member of a group to start talking. Those who have had some work/internship/job place experiences were eager to share and talk as compared to those who believe they have little or no experience. These latter were less engaging.

At some point students request that they share their personal experiences with their colleagues first. That keeps them engaged. They passionately get to discuss the topic.

Some students shared their personal experiences at the work place and were able to connect to what technical communication means although they were initially silent. With the exception of the first few-minutes tensions, they shared their experiences enthusiastically. This particularly applies with those who have had some form of work experience such as vacation jobs, internships etc. They shared their thoughts on what technical communication mean to them. Some of the examples they gave for technical communication are as follows:

- *Conveying specific (some used technical in place of technical information) for identified purpose.*
- *Communication which is data driven*
- *Communication which is straightforward*
- *It is communication informed by research*
- *It is a form of communication in which you know your audience very well.*

Some shared that they have personally encountered technical communication during their internship. Some actually gave instances they had to take minutes at meetings and respond to emails. This person shares her lessons learnt in doing so. For example, she has to reread emails severally before sending to avoid typos and check abbreviations etc. Here, another student recounts how they have to write and present a report at work. It is obvious they could see the relevance of the class to their career. I felt I was on the right track here as they shared their experiences. Their colleagues also learnt from their sharing. Assuming, I had not invited them to share, they would have kept this to themselves and no one in the

class would have benefitted. As the first person shared hers, it encouraged others who otherwise might not have spoken to share. I presume those might have forgotten these experiences until they heard their share experiences at job.

On the third day, some students did not read the article through no fault of theirs. Over the weekend, I mistakenly unpublished the module section that contained the reading material so those who had not read it before Sunday did not get access to read it. Those who read it also did not do a close reading. So, the class went silent for so a long time after asking them to share their general opinions. It appeared they who read could not recollect anything substantial. I had no idea why it was so.

Interestingly, one student spoke about not getting access to Canvas page. It was then that most of them jumped in and expressed same experience. They had thought something was wrong with their canvas on their phones. Students spent the next few minutes enthusiastically around canvas to diagnose the problem. It is at this point I realized after listening to them that I had turned it off and therefore the reading material went unpublished. I quickly published it again and they all rechecked it from their phones to be sure. The enthusiasm to find solution was amazing on the part of the students. After, the class did the reading of key pages (2, 5-6, 9-10) in class.

The students were able to relate their understanding to personal experiences. On what situation will they describe as rhetorical situation personally, two students described moments during their internships as rhetorical situation. They had to solve problems and the fact that they had to solve a problem alone makes the situation rhetorical. Another student said it is important to assess and know that the solution is fitting as rhetorical

situations can change without notice. They still had short verbal responses. It is as if students do not value the invitational approach. It could also be that there was nothing to liberate them from. Also, the students did not appear powerless to be liberated with passionate teaching or invitational approach. They did not look timid. They just want to get the grades and pass, graduate and get jobs.

Asked whether they see this class as a rhetorical situation, they responded in the affirmative. A student smartly related the class difficulty in accessing canvas as a rhetorical situation; that the situation was one needing attention, they served as audience who later were able to alter it and restore it to normalcy.

This time, I started the class having the students do a reflection on their experience with a document and its audience. The reflection was an invitational approach with the prompt:

Bring to mind a time you engaged with any document (CV/Resume, letter, report etc).

What decisions did you make or did you not regarding audience?

As they write, I went around to look at a few. I realized that most of them wrote briefly. Someone wrote,

Having made them reflect on their own experiences and write before our class discussions, participation was a far better improvement on the fourth day. Students comfortably shared what they have written.

Others wrote extensively bringing in both primary and secondary audiences. But some got stuck not knowing what other decisions they made obviously due to elapse of time. Again, I came in with prompts regarding what mattered most to them and the culture of the

company. However, this time they were highly engaged and shared easily their experiences in relation to the topic without generalizing.

On the final day of this study, I asked students to recall and share instances in which they employed persuasion or got persuaded. I did not get any response initially. Instead, one student quickly asked if they could share it with their peers in their groups first before sharing/talking with me and they were engaged as they shared experiences among themselves. The engagement with the class has become a usual thing that it seems they will like to continue with it.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In some ways, the invitational approach has been meaningful, especially when students are able to relate their experiences with the topic. Students appear to connect their past experiences with current lessons very well. This I believe helped ground the lessons and helped them to learn faster. For instance, students were able to relate the topic “Rhetorical Situation” by identifying that it needed an appropriate or fitting response by the audience just when it mattered.

To some degree, Foss and Foss’s (2012) Invitational rhetoric, gives voice to students or encourages them to have one. When the teacher maintains an openness with the students, they feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Until I invitationaly asked students about their experience with the reading, none of them seemed to be ready to talk. I believe it is the invitational intervention that made them share experiences. Invitational and facilitating prompts like, “what does this topic mean to you? or what is your experience with this document?” opened them up to express the challenges they had online accessing the reading material.

As defined above, learning is engaged and as engaged it comes through interaction that is valued and protected. But as interaction, it means it is communication. This is why Foss and Foss’s (2012) invitational principle of “understanding is the purpose of communication” is relevant. Its practice encourages both communicating parties to “adopt a frame of reference of the other concerning the issue” (Foss & Foss’s, 2012, pp 10). This approach helps both teachers and students to appreciate the others’ perspective. This makes each well-informed and ready to make progressive decisions that will not be patriarchal. Teachers do learn from students and vice versa. In this regard, this principle of invitational

rhetoric makes it possible for teachers to listen to students with an openness that makes them explore more from what they know already. Students will learn to respect the opinions of others if they are to know that even teachers with their authority are willing to listen to their personal experiences. They will respect and value the others' ideas. Invitational rhetoric may open communication lines, but it does not necessarily erase lines of teachers' authority in class. For example, students still acknowledged my authority in class as the instructor in charge. They paid attention to me and to the screen, listened and 'acted in response' to my invitations. Some students desiring to contribute raised their hands to seek permission to talk. There were also those who did not respond to my questions most times. But this I think would not be a non-recognition of authority. It might be that they may not want to interfere with my authority as a teacher and not a recognition of the authority role the institution has given to me as an instructor. Students sought my opinion on some questions also. For instance, on the fifth day of class, a student asked of my opinion on best communication practices to persuade some South Africans on accepting a water rationing option. This is an indication of their recognition of authority in spite the invitational approach. My intervention as an instructor yielded some results. Some students decided to talk after I had called on them. Invitational rhetoric approach creates equal platforms for both teachers and students but does not erase their authority. These could be that students are used to authority. Therefore, teachers can exert authority when necessary; for example, during prolonged silence in class after inviting students to engage. Authority could also mean using the position to devise other means of communicating and engaging students other than verbal expressions.

Invitational rhetoric allows for invention, in teaching and learning. It allows both actors (teachers and students) to come to new knowledge while they engage with old ideas. This is because its other principle, “participants enter invitational rhetoric willing to be changed,” prevents communicators from taking entrenched positions. There is no winning or losing and therefore no tendency for conflict. The only challenge is that we cannot predict if the other is of the same frame of reference or world. On the day we had challenges with Canvas access in class, I was amazed how students kept proposing different solutions spontaneous. I learned something new; engagement takes on different forms. In this situation, we see students engaged. They are happy to freely participate. While I do not assume that other approaches may give similar results, it seems easier with this invitational approach. If students will see from the others’ frame of reference, if they will value the other’s as equals and be in the position of willingness to change, group discussions can be worth more. It is easy to build trust in each other with this approach since the risk of losing is completely absent. This encourages students to take initiative, participate confidently and thus have more agency in the class.

We could connect this to bell hooks’ (2014) definition of engaged pedagogy as one that “necessarily values student expression” (pp. 20). The teachers appreciate students’ opinions, personal experiences shared, and general expressions. But expression, to this particular class, goes beyond verbalization. In a technical communication class, doing things with the hands also constitutes students’ expression. Thus, when the students run their laptops, analyze documents, and turn in assignments, they expect these actions to be valued and counted as part of the engaged learning process. During the course of the semester (in the week of Spring break), a very quiet student walked up to me to asked about

the professional grading. He probably wanted to know if I misconstrue his quietness to mean non-engagement. Students thus respond to communication lines that give them voice differently as they might have their own view of voice and engagement. He wanted to know how his quietness will not be used against him. To him, insofar as he completes assignments, his efforts should be counted or valued. My positive assurance gave him hope. Invitational rhetoric allows teachers to value students' expression and in turn makes students value those of their teachers and colleagues. Thus, it gives credence to hooks' (2014) engaged pedagogy. This is because it allows for power sharing and creates a conducive environment for students to be interactive without any fear of oppression. It allows students to share their personal experiences while connecting with the subject of discussion. This creates some relevance of academic topics to students. It situates the learning in the world of the students with little or no imposition in whatever form. Thus, some core principles of invitational rhetoric, including power with rather than power over, and listening with openness is encouraged or achieved.

In as much as I see more prospects with invitational rhetoric to a technical communication class, there seem to be some critical concerns. One has to do with the possibility of insecurity in putting principles of invitational rhetoric into practice. Throughout the entire class, moments of silence on their part of was very pronounced. Although the principles are intended for open discussion without fear but in safe manner, most students would not like to talk. Aside from students having other forms of engagement, their silence could possibly mean that the invitation is bothersome. What if their experiences are not appropriate or unethical for class discussion although it may fit the topic? In this case, they might feel insecure honoring the invitation. They will then resort to resist the well-intended

invitation. This may relate to what Maher (2002) terms “oppositional silence”, where there is no mutual interaction in the classroom and may give the class a “death sentence” (pp. 86). But as she notes, the moment of silence itself is a complex situation. It defies logic. Some students may be silent simply because they are recollecting their experiences or exploring their memories. Contrarily, it might be lack of interest or that they got lost for the moment. They may need more time to connect and then participate. The teacher may be lost as to how to act. In any case, they need to be assured of their security. This could mean not losing points for failing to talk. Because invitational rhetoric gives them the freedom to do or not to do. But if students see the instructor appearing vulnerable by sharing experiences too, this vulnerability might help to address any possible insecurity issues. During one of those silent moments, I shared my experience with persuasion where I got carried by the persuasive words of a confident trickster. It was then another person shared her experience in persuading the mother to switch to a different television subscription. Instructors who share their experiences will be fulfilling the invitational principle of “power with rather than power over.” The teacher-student relationship can take on equality just for the moment.

Many students may not want to share personal experiences because they might have a sense of insecurity. They might not have bonded well with colleagues in the class to share information about themselves. To ask students to share their experiences in relation to a topic of discussion meant they could be exposed to other students. They are not sure how their colleagues or the instructor might react to their words. Thus, most of them hesitated

to express themselves. As mentioned earlier, one student spoke about her family's experiences which has to do with the family subscribing to a television channel. This disclosure can be problematic as it might veer into family issues that the students felt compelled to recount just to fulfil the "express yourself" part of the class. Some students do not know how to select the appropriate thing to say. Some other students request to be anonymous for various reasons in class.

Another challenge with the approach to this class was the technical orientation of the students. Students of technical writing come to class with different mindset. Students are willing to engage. They are willing to value others' expressions. But they feel comfortable and empowered doing it in different ways. They want to do it more without talking. They want to work on documents. They want to write and do most of the work on paper. They connected their actual experiences with the classroom through writings such as cover letters and resumes.

Most students got concerned about participation grading. They argued that all grading should cover their writings in and outside class. Verbal expressions should not count towards grading since these students mostly prefer to write than to talk. It could be also that their engineering backgrounds may account for this. For instance, most of these engineering major students come to class with a job-search mentality. They purposely opt for the class by assessing first, the benefits they will derive. Therefore, since this class is not an "imposition," they develop affinity for the class before it starts. Thus, they do not care so much about strategies to make them express themselves. This makes it difficult counting what engages or interests them or vice versa. Therefore, anyone who will want to

adopt invitational rhetoric to such a class may do well by contextualizing the principles to the class. For this reason, Pollack et al (1996) will argue against invitational rhetoric. The practice should embrace other factors like urgency, ethics and the impact in employing the principles. Thus, the goals of the class and the benefits it will bring to these students should take precedence. Students of technical communication are more likely to embrace the invitational approach if they can see the social and economic benefits. Therefore, we should consider merging more of critical pedagogy and engaged pedagogy with invitational rhetoric (instead of applying it solely) as it adds the social world reality to it.

Conclusion

This was a short study, spanning only three weeks of class. A lot more could be explored and revealed if the length of time had been more. It is worth putting this to a longitudinal study. My situation as a graduate student would not permit me to extend it further. However, it might have interesting but different results if the study were conducted over the length of an entire semester. A lengthier time could help test and replicate some of the results for greater certainty. Also, there was a gender imbalance in the class. There were more men (21) than there were women (4). Perhaps a different gender dynamic would steer the class in a different direction.

We can make some limited conclusions from this short study, however. What scholars and teachers interested in invitational rhetoric and other classroom equality issues should note is that empowering students goes beyond a cause and effect relationship. Even when we put everything on *ceteris paribus*, the dynamism of human relationship, and the interaction of teacher and students may evolve actions beyond what they might propose. In this situation, our interactions may fail to address any power or voice relations adequately. In any case, students come to class aware of the power dynamics. They recognize the power of teachers in the classes without teachers having to say it. They believe the teachers' power is to help them achieve their dreams. Yet they know that beyond achieving their academic dreams is the step-by-step structures of classroom disciplines such as respecting the authority of the teacher, completing assignments teachers give and taking instructions from the teacher. Even invitational rhetoric gives teachers the power to moderate. Here, it expects teachers to intervene in ways that encourages others to also express themselves while preventing the vociferous from taking over conversations in class communication.

What may look oppressive is not always the case. Teachers do not go to classes with personal egoistic syllabi disengaged from the overall institution's ideals where they are employed. They work according to the established systems for some set goals. Thus, we need to contextualize invariably our use and applications of the theories of critical and engaged pedagogy as well as invitational rhetoric. What may work in one situation may not necessarily work in others. What Blacks for instance may see as oppression may not be for Whites. And even within a certain racial or class of society for example, what one rich individual would value may be of different value to another privileged rich individual. Thus, what a certain group students may see as voice may be different from others. The situation looks complex; thus, it is important we keep engaging with it without generalizing it to all students and teachers.

Schooling is essential to our modern world. Students understand the demands of academic routine and should as well be psyched up for it. In as much as I support teachers being vulnerable, passionate, and inviting in class, invitational rhetoric may not be enough. When students reflected on their past experiences, followed by a short write-up, they were able to share openly. Perhaps, they had always been enthusiastic about sharing personal experiences. It could be that they might have internal challenges in expressing themselves that has nothing to do with the teacher. Some students resist being put on spotlight. Inviting them with questions intrudes on their personal spaces. If we are to attend to the spiritual, mental, and bodily needs of students (hooks, 2014), we must tread cautiously in applying this theory. Perhaps, we do need to employ them at crucial times. This especially applies to teaching assistants who may employ this approach unless they risk accepting bad

evaluations from students. Also, some students are slow on reflecting and may get the core of the topic sometimes days or weeks after the class. Sharing might be problematic to them if they are not used to. While we think of giving them freedom, we may be taking it away from them at the same time. What educators should be concerned with is the degree to which these theories can be employed in class. For instance, to what degree should teachers be vulnerable? In addition, personal experiences can be problematic. Some students bring personal problems relating to other classes they are taking elsewhere and would like the class to discuss which may affect the class program. This may affect the direction of the class. It might drag the class to unnecessary. We cannot read students' minds and know for certain what happens there. For example, you might easily mistake their silence for oppression. It might turn out that they are rather empowered or something else. Communication and to a narrower sense, classroom interactions is not of a dichotomy or either this or that, but rather a continuum we need to keep engaging with. My observations could go either way as well. Over generalization of these theories and their applications could be a danger to classroom observations and practices. We need to tailor their applications to specific contexts.

Students' engagement, voice, and learning resists strict interpretation. There are various ways that these things can present themselves. To a technical communication student, voice and learning might mean working on a project in class or engaging the hand more, but to another student it might have to do verbal expressions.

For a technical communication class, assumptions of invitational rhetoric might not be black and white since there is no linear relationship. The dynamics of a technical

communication class do not fully support the successful application of liberatory theories including invitational rhetoric and engaged pedagogy. In any case, it is problematic to measure the success of applying these theories. Students of science orientations will want to give measure to any experience especially in academia.

The possibilities of applying invitational rhetoric to a technical communication class abound. It is teachable as it has tendencies to engage students. It can be more successful if it is combined with other theories like engaged pedagogy, because its successful application will mean students will have more agency while they engage in class.

For this reason, I advocate that we should employ invitational rhetoric with a double vision. Double vision as Fleckenstein (2001) argues, “is needed so that we can recognize the ways in which we contribute to and are dependent on the status quo we wish to change” (pp.3). By this, we employ invitational rhetoric in a technical communication class with the openness that would enable us stretch the elastic limits to successfully contextualize teaching and learning. Furthermore, this gives us the advantage of the double- faced Roman god, Janus; who sees the past and future, the internal and external or the beginnings and endings simultaneously. Such a situation allows us to paradoxically be controlled while we take control of the teaching situation and to be vulnerable while we do not lose authority. By this we can successfully balance any tensions to support ongoing teaching and learning.

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Appendices

1st class reflections

Immediately after class a student's walks up to me to ask for pardon because the texts book ordered will arrive on the weekend.

Another student walks with me to my office lamenting how this class has been difficult for him because he's not the reading type and so he's retaking the class. I assured him (spending about 2 mins with him) if he puts in the required effort he's going to do fine.

1. What does a syllabus mean to you based on your experiences?

The syllabus is a kind of barometer where I gauge or assess myself.

It gives me what is expected of me.

It gives the first impression of the class whether its going to be exciting, relevant or otherwise.

I am highly interested in the weekly schedule of the class.

2. What have been your experiences with the way a syllabus works?

It breaks the grading system down and helps us to function in the class

I find its details useful

It has never worked as it was planned from the beginning. It gets scrambled up along the line. Thus, I avoid it and listen to the teacher rather.

Grading is very important. It works. It doesn't change.

Teachers sometimes do lower the grading scale to allow students pass but they never raise it to fail students.

3. What kind of document would they make for a course?

One person responded that it simply means a contract to her. The whole class in their responses also emphasized that the main thing that a syllabus is Contract.

I probed further, what does a contract mean to you?

It means it contains the policies of the class.

It spells out the dos and don'ts of the class.

It is a contract because its like a working account. You work wit it and you get paid with a GPA.

It is a schedule of things to apply in the class.

4. Is a syllabus a different document for a teacher than for students and why?

Yes, there is a difference, was the general consensus.

Teachers take syllabus more seriously than their students.

Professors too much

Students do not care about the syllabus.

It doesn't mean anything apart from grading.

Some professors care more than other professors. Eg. Most professors do not follow strictly the phone policy. They stress on it at the beginning but relax towards the middle and I don't like it. I'm not bothered but I think they should be serious with the syllabus. "This is just an example", he added

Teachers feel the need to guide students, so they care more.

Institutions control or put pressure on teachers to care more.

5. How will you design your ideal syllabus?

School Policies are not needed because we see it everywhere.

My syllabus will focus more on grading schedules and office hours. All other details are not important.

I will create Google link so that I can change it as and when the class deems it fit.

I will keep it short.

Policies are important. They keep us informed.

REFLECTIONS

How do students respond to having more power?

Students were very friendly as they wore friendly smiles from the beginning of the class. However, when I posed the 1st question, the class went silent. The students always expected me to lead them. They waited for my feedback and weren't sure whether they made sense. When I assured them of how valuable their points were, they gained the confidence in talking more. This made them continue to talk. Those who did not, explained that it's

because others have expressed similar opinions. Students were still shy. Perhaps, it is our first meeting.

Did I get everybody participating fully?

I could not get everybody to talk. But I got everybody at least each person from around each of the 5 “groups” talking. When I posed **Q1** above, the class was silent for about 3 minutes. I had to pose the questions severally, with slight modifications like “With your experiences in different classes, what does a syllabus mean to you? How do you see it?”. I’m thinking of having the class list before me next time, so I can call out names should the class be silent.

How enthusiastic were they about sharing?

Students shared their experiences at some points, but these experiences were generalized experiences. They initially did not share personal experiences but general observations with the syllabus. I had to prompt them that to relate to themselves severally before their personal experiences got expressed. They are not used to sharing personal experiences especially with the syllabus. They had thought they had no share or voice with the syllabus.

Where do I come in?

Three students took over the class and when no one would talk they raised their hands to talk. I had to come in at this point. I stepped in and said “Abby before you continue, may I ask if anyone has a comment?” Surprisingly, somebody sitting close by takes it up and expresses their opinion. At another time, I asked them to reflect on the prompt, write it down before talking. This got almost everyone raising their hands to speak. It is probably to show that they did the reflection. I asked one student to be the first to speak after the reflection and she did enthusiastically but went silent again until I had to call her another time. The three students always came back strongly with their points after others I picked ahead of them have expressed their comments.

How many expressed themselves?

More than half of the class expressed themselves. Usually, they wait till somebody had gone ahead. It seems that give them a clue or make them relate with it more as they share peer characteristics. Some of them I called to express themselves said their colleagues expressed exactly the same point they wanted to and as such did not see the need. Those who expressed themselves did so to the point of adding emotions. One said, he does not like how some professors do not enforce the phone rule. Another said, the syllabus means so much to him because it lays out all the work preventing last minute surprise or extra work to be done. In effect, they will not work beyond the syllabus.

Does negotiating with them give them more power/voice.

They had power as the class was less imposing but inviting yet they were still unaware of the power. One student remarked that they are in the class to follow what the teacher instructs. However, this approach shows the class gave them power as they brought their personal experiences to it.

Topic: Introduction to Technical communication (Jan 19, 2018)

Reflection 2

How do students respond to having more agency?

As usual students hesitate in talking during the first few seconds beginning of class. When I invited them into the discussion with the prompt “What does technical communication mean to you?”, it took a while for them to open up. Few minutes however, hands were up, and responses started pouring in. One person started, followed by the another, then another. It gives me the impression that other will feel comfortable when they see their peers talking or having their ideas expressed. Also, I’m beginning to appreciate the point that if you want students to participate in class, it is best to get them used to it right from the start. I’m imagining myself how difficult it will be if I had been doing most of the talking and later in the semester trying to get them to talk or share personal experiences. They might struggle to share and that may affect class discussions.

I do still find students having difficulties sharing personal experiences even with this invitational approach. I am beginning to think that it is not because they do not want to. They are just not used to it. And when they talk, it is not a personal experience. It is about the company they were working or the work they do. They take themselves from the world of work. They invariably start answering a personal experience by generalizing it until prompted. And when their speech becomes too long, it drifts into generalizations again though most times they are unaware/unconsciously. Could it be that they are having hard times internalizing and personalizing the knowledge or it simply is an entrenched character from past experiences?

Does the invitational approach enhance participation?

Yes, participation picked up along the lines. Every time, I invited them to the discussion table, a few starts. But others join later. They joined the discussion when I personally directed the questions to their table. One question I asked was, “Does anybody from this group who has not spoken care to share? Although, this was not directed at anybody, the students in question feel the heat of the spotlight and after about a minute or two, they elect themselves to speak. I see that this is a sign of taking responsibility for themselves. Equally, other members of the group who had been silent picked it up after them. I think other members of the class in different groups take a cue. They however do not speak but wait until same or similar invitational prompt. Not everyone got to speak. This is because others spoke for far too long consuming most of the class time. I’m wondering whether giving

them time limit to talk will be invitational or I just need to jump in and summarize their points while they talk as some of what they are repetitive. But this could prevent them from choosing to express themselves next time.

How enthusiastic were they about sharing personal experiences?

With the exception of the first few minutes tensions, they shared their experiences enthusiastically. This particularly applies with those who have had some form of work experience such as vacation jobs, internships etc. They shared their thoughts on what technical communication mean to them. Some of the examples they gave are as follows:

Technical communication mean conveying specific (some used technical in place of technical information) for identified purpose.

- Communication which is data driven
- Communication which is straightforward
- It is communication informed by research
- It is a form of communication in which you know your audience very well

Some shared that they have personally encountered technical communication during their internship. Some actually gave instances they had to take minutes at meetings and respond to emails. This person shares her lessons learnt in doing so. For example, she has to reread emails severally before sending to avoid typos and check abbreviations etc. Here, another student recounts how they have to write and present a report at work. It is obvious they could see the relevance of the class to their career. I felt I was on the right track here as they shared their experiences. Their colleagues also learnt from their sharing. Assuming, I had not invite them to share, they would have kept this to themselves and no one in the class would have benefitted. As the first person shared hers, it encouraged others who otherwise might not have spoken to share. I presume those might have forgotten these experiences until they heard their share experiences at job.

Those who haven't had work experience kept quiet most of the time. It was obvious that it was not because they do not want to talk but they have nothing to say. I am now realizing that in planning the syllabus and preparing for the class I need to take this personal experience of students into account if I am to make the class very lively and meaningful to all. The class should not be dominated by those who have had prior work experiences. It should also cater for those yet to.

Students sometimes do not talk when they do not see any connection of the study/topic to their lives.

When did I have to come in?

Certain circumstances compelled me to modify my invitational approach to get the class talking. I put the spotlight on one student sitting in a corner who avoided eye contact with me and had not spoken. So I asked, "Monica, could you wait for your friend sitting next to

your right to say something before you continue”? This was to me invitational as it he felt compelled to talk. Monica, welcomed the suggestion as well the friend. However, to my surprise, the silent friend had a lot to say on how he anticipates using technical communication after the class. He answered the previous question of “*What are some of the things you have done in the past that you think involve or described technical communication?*” before answering the current question, “*How do you anticipate using technical communication after this class?*”. For him to speak of his past work experience as a team leader who communicated with team members and anticipated leading a group doing research in the hospital lab tells me that engaging students personal experiences in relation to the subject helps them connect well even if they appear to be reticent.

Other times I had to part ways with invitational rhetoric when I sensed the silence was too long on their part. I came in with clarifications, mostly in rephrasing the prompt. For instance, I had to add, “Scan through your life to see if you have exhibited any technical skills” when the original prompt “what technical skills do you think you have “kept the silent. My interruption was not to take over but to guide more. Also, when they drifted into generalizing experiences to third parties such as the company this and that, I had to ask again, so what do you personally see with this. I still think the shifting of the experiences to a general non-personal one could be because they feel being personal in academia is bias, irrelevant or unwanted especially since most of them have their backgrounds rooted in science. It might be useful to ask them at the end of the class.

Invitational rhetoric solely may not augur well in getting class to participate. Sometimes, we must engage other practices. I will then of other practices such as the banking system of teaching not as evil. The problem could be wrong timing.

Does negotiating give them more agency?

I think negotiating with them in terms of the questions I ask them makes them feel more empowered and ready to be part of the class. As stated above, some who hesitated initially, spoke more than I anticipated as the class progressed. When I ask about how they anticipate using technical communication beyond the class, one student spoke about how she is interested in Environmental Engineering and how technical communication as a tool that will help her communicate her environmental research well. She goes on to establish its connections with helping government communication about the environment while emphasizing transparency and ethics even at this early stage of the class. This gives me the joy that students will appreciate the class. I remember bell hooks speak of teaching as or should be a pleasurable activity. I guess it is this invitational approach that guarantees such. More importantly, I see this invitational approach as being very useful to the needs of both teacher and student. I now can tailor with some ease my teachings to the needs of the class. The students will also find it useful as it meets their expectations.

REFLECTIONS

Class reflection Monday Jan 22, 2018 Topic: Rhetorical Situation (Bitzer)

I presume students did not read the article and those who read did not do a close reading. So, the class went silent for so a long time after asking them to share their general opinions.

I do share in the problem. Over the weekend, I mistakenly unpublished the module section which contained the reading material so those who had not read it before Sunday did not get access to read it. It appeared they who read could not recollect anything substantial. I had to come in. I made them read key pages (2, 5-6, 9-10) in class.

At this point, I lead the class in understanding key words such as audience, exigence, constraints, rhetorical situation from the article. I invited them to share their understanding of the terms and explained it more. But only two accepted the invite. This silence on the part of the students even after invitation gets me thinking on the reality of engaged pedagogy which bell hooks says involves valuing student expression which contribute to their self-actualization. Do I consider their silence as expression? How can I or different persons in my position verify such expressions? There was nothing of expression to value. This makes it difficult to come to terms with critical communication as Fasset and Warren describe as engaging the class as a space for shaping each other. But they also make it clear that such shaping can be in the form of good or bad.

From here, we quickly identified a few of the terms with a scenario/case study from the text book. It is after these that we delved into invitational rhetoric. At this point, one person spoke about not getting access to canvas. It was then that most of them jumped in and expressed same experience. I could sense the relief on their smiling faces. They had thought something was wrong with their canvas on their phones. We spent the next few minutes around canvas to diagnose the problem. It is at this point I realized I had turned it off. I quickly published it again and they all rechecked it from their phones to be sure. It was interesting as they at this point they got very enthusiastic about figuring how to solve the canvas problem. Yes, I valued their inputs and we found a solution. If I had taken the authoritative position as the instructor of the class who run the whole show, we would not have made progress. What came to mind was that I need to bring puzzles and problems to class each time, so they solve this. With this I believe I will get them engaged and enthused all the time. This what I think Fasset and Warren mean when they speak of critical pedagogy as being a democratic means through which we reflect and act upon the world. It thus gets to me that only a passionate teacher can do this and that is why bell hooks connects teaching to eros/passion.

Personal experience

Understanding of the course material enhances participation. The students were able to relate their understanding to personal experiences. On what situation will they describe as rhetorical situation personally, two students described moments during their internships as rhetorical situation. They had to solve problems and the fact that they had to solve a

problem alone makes the situation rhetorical. Another student said it is important to assess and know that the solution is fitting as rhetorical situations can change without notice. The responses from students were very short. It as if students do not value the invitational approach. It could also be that there was nothing to liberate them from. bell hooks talks about teaching to transgress. But is there always something to transgress? Also, I do not think the students find themselves powerless most times to be liberated with passionate teaching or invitational approach. They just want to get the grades and pass, graduate and get jobs.

Asked whether they see this class as a rhetorical situation, they responded in the affirmative. A student smartly related the class difficulty in accessing canvas as a rhetorical situation; that the situation was one needing attention, they served as audience who later were able to alter it and restore it to normalcy. This demonstrates that students learn with their personal experience. They are not likely to forget what they learn. But as to self-actualization and wellbeing, I think they really care and it will not matter to them. This is why the structures of control should be in place always. They provide a way to measure invitational rhetoric and when invitational rhetoric breaks down, it again provides the alternative and the reverse too can be true. I will agree with Bizell more that the instructor should always hold on to power and recognize the power imbalance. It is even the power that the instructor holds that gives the platform to do invitational rhetoric; to invite others itself is a form of power that others may find oppressing.

Class reflection Wednesday Jan 24, 2018

Topic: meeting needs of specific audience

This time, I started the class having the students do a **reflection** on their experience with a document and its audience. The reflection was an invitational approach with the prompt:

Bring to mind a time you engaged with any document (CV/Resume, letter, report etc).

What decisions did you make or did you not regarding audience?

As they write, I went around to look at a few. I realized that most of them wrote briefly. Someone wrote,

I created a resume. I designed it to be short and full of information. I considered the most important things skills and experience they are looking for.

I had to “intrude” here. I prompt them verbally with further questions like, who was your audience? , what type of audience (expert, layperson etc). My coming in here made some of the students to consider closely the issues raised in the chapter to their personal experience. This gives me the understanding that students will always need teachers to

guide them. As teachers guide they take position of power yet the students did not feel oppressed.

Others wrote extensively bringing in both primary and secondary audience. But they got stuck not knowing what other decisions they made. Again, I came in with prompts regarding what mattered most to them and the culture of the company. This steered them to think deeply about their own experiences. Indeed, this confirmed that communication creates possible worlds as Fasset and Warren posit. I believe with such invitational approach, I could guide students to explore worlds of their experiences that could impact their learning experiences.

Having made them reflect on their own experiences and write before our class discussions, participation was a bit better than the previous class. Students comfortably shared what they have written. A few others were still reticent but expressed themselves when I called them. What I often heard was this, *“just as this person said, that person said, I also wrote on resume and considered my skills”*.

It is clear that the classroom by now has become a space where people shape each other with their expressions. Thus, if I do not allow students to express themselves, it is more likely that they will be bored and will leave the class not learning as much as they could have. But those who have keep silent, are they less empowered than those who do not? What else can be done to make them talk? Is the instructor to blame? These are some of the questions racing through my mind at this point.

Final Class reflection: Friday Jan 26, 2018

Topic: Meeting Needs of Specific Audience

Sharing Personal Experiences

One of the key arguments of invitational rhetoric is the sharing of personal experiences in the course of teaching and learning. So as usual I open my class inviting personal experiences in relation to the topic. This was after I had briefly gone through the salient points from my slides. I asked students to recall and share instances in which they employed persuasion or got persuaded. I did not get any response. Instead, one student quickly asked if they could share it with their peers in their groups first before sharing/talking with me and they were engaged as they shared experiences among themselves. This, I thought was in line with bell hooks' notion of teaching should bring about passion and joy. The student wants to perhaps passionately engage with it and sharing it out rightly with me inclusive quenches that passion. But passion as hooks proposes, should be fueled more by the teacher. Therefore, I share in making it happen. But the request to share with peers supports hooks idea that the classroom is a communal place. As to the degree communality, I'm still not sure.

However, such sharing, passion and enjoyment whole class. I agreed and so they spent some minutes sharing it with their peers. I thought to my self that this would get everybody engaged and later sharing their experiences. Truly, the engagement waned as the class gathered from the groups to the wider sharing of experience. I had only 2 students sharing. Some of them were personal and family related. For instance, one person (Sarah) shared the experience of having to convince the mother of the need to change TV subscriptions since it was becoming to expensive. The mom also had got used to the expensive subscription she finds it difficult changing even though it is financially burdening. The class was silent again. This makes it difficult to accept the class as a communal place. But I began to think why some of them would not want to bring their personal persuasion experience to class. Perhaps, it could tag or make them vulnerable, expose some connected others who have nothing to do with the class and also digress from subject/topic of the day should student begin to ask follow-up questions. But here, I drew the class to elements of persuasion and we focus on the ethical aspects of it. Not all students, it seems are comfortable with the invitational approach especially with the sharing of personal experience. Maybe the course/subject also matters when one thinks of the invitational approach. Invitational approach itself comes with teaching experience. Nevertheless, it cannot always be tailored to the experience of students as bell hooks argues. At any rate, I think text books can give a generalize experience that all or most students can relate with and not necessarily the class' personal experiences

To me, Technical Communication come to class wishing and willing to work and solve problems than to share experiences. If anything at all, they may want to share with a smaller group they are comfortable with than with the larger class. Also, it may be that they are not familiar with each other. Thus, invitational rhetoric will work more when students have bonded for a while and are comfortable with each other. Those who sat around the same table in groups felt comfortable sharing around those particular tables.

I had to come in and mention names. I used the signed attendance sheet to call out some names. Interestingly, some names I called never responded though they have signed and where in the class. This reinforced the position that they might have personal experiences with persuasion they would not want to share. So, I decided to share my experience about how I was duped by a confidence trickster who was able to persuade me into giving him my money. They seem to have enjoyed the story with occasional flashes of smiles. Immediately, another person shared how some companies kept persuading him to join them after he had submitted an application letter to them.

I had a fair share of the revolutionary experience that education should be. A time when we can explore alternatives. Maybe I will call it self-actualization as hooks will say. The same who ask that they be allowed to discuss experiences first seemed to be an example invitationally empowered "rhetoric" student in the class. Just when the class was about going silent, she motions to ask a question. It turns out not to be a question. She was offering a case study she wanted to understand more. I allowed her. She wanted to understand the best way of communicating and persuading a group of South Africans who would not want to ration the limited supply of water in South Africa which could spell

doom for them. The question was directed at me but again I invited the class into it. This time I got at least a person from each table to react to it. Offering is an aspect of invitational rhetoric that Foss and Griffin (1995) advocate. My authority in the class was not after all lost on the class. But as Maher (2002) has described, invitational rhetoric puts instructors in a vulnerable position and that teachers need to have the virtue of humility where teachers do not see the actions of students as oppositions and as there are no right or wrong answers. In any way, I am happy my students can see the need not to conform to formalized structures through the invitational approach and yet can still work within the class framework. I was vulnerable because for a moment, I thought of not giving in but it just happened. I gave in. This is what it takes to make the class a communal place. So I can say I did not exercise power coercively unlike those who do so when they do not allow themselves to be vulnerable.

Safety, Value & Freedom

One principle of invitational rhetoric is the existence of value. It is to recognize the self worth and importance of others and treat them as such. I believe with the invitational approach; this principle gets to be fulfilled. The students desire to be heard and listened to when they speak is easy to see. It is not that other approaches do not embody values but that with invitational, the teacher becomes conscious of it and might initiate it as well. In times of dilemma, it becomes easy to see what to do when you are conscious of it. Thus, when the student asked to share experience with peers, it became easy for me to allow. I was vulnerable but a good one.

On the other hand, I did not see the other principle, (safety) of invitational rhetoric much in the class. This is especially due to the recurring silence on the part of the student. Foss and Griffin (1995) explains safety as the feeling of security and freedom from danger. But if students are not comfortable in sharing personal experiences, then they do not feel safe within the communal place. However, they may possess the principle of freedom, that is self determination or the power to make choices. Their choosing not to talk or keep silent is an expression of the freedom which invitational rhetoric propounds.

When we got to the last part of the class where they have to analyze the persuasion techniques in suicide preventing article, I saw a renewed enthusiasm. They stayed focused and glued to their laptops and busily started working. Nothing sort of absent mindedness can be seen. This gives me the impression that they are more comfortable working than discussing in class. They wish to be invited not to express verbally but to respond to technical problems.

My class today. But one interesting thing happened.

Can we share our experiences before sharing talking?

I convinced my mum to change from a different tv option because it was expensive.

I did not consider ethics

I have a problem in south Africa and I need communication on how to resolve it

Some companies calling and trying to persuade me join them

They solve suicide problem

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However, such sharing, passion and enjoyment whole class. I agreed and so they spent some minutes sharing it with their peers. I thought to my self that this would get everybody engaged and later sharing their experiences. Truly, the waned as the class gathered from the groups to the wider sharing of experience. I had only 2 students sharing. Some of them were personal and family related. For instance, one person (Sarah) shared the experience of having to convince the mother of the need to change TV subscriptions since it was becoming to expensive. The mom also had got used to the expensive subscription she finds it difficult changing even though it is financially burdening. The class was silent again. This makes it difficult to accept the class as a communal place. But I began to think why some of them would not want to bring their personal persuasion experience to class. Perhaps, it could tag or make them vulnerable, expose some connected others who have nothing to do with the class and also digress from subject/topic of the day should student begin to ask follow-up questions. But here, I drew the class to elements of persuasion and we focus on the ethical aspects of it. Not all students, it seems are comfortable with the

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**Michigan
Technological
University**

“Language is powerful. Language is power: language is a change-creating force and therefore to be feared and used, if at all, with care, not unlike fire” (Lakoff, 1990).

- ***Instructor Information***

Instructor:	Linford
Odartey Lamptey Office Location:	Walker
	311
E-mail:	lolampte@mtu.edu
Office Hours:	MWF 11:00am-12:00 or by appointment

- ***Course Identification***

Course Number:	HU3120
Course Name:	Technical & Professional
Communication Course Location:	Walker 120A
Section:	R01
Class Times:	MWF 09:05 - 09:55 am

- ***Course Description/Overview***

This course will provide you with issues that shape the field of technical and professional communication. Issues about how to compose for targeted audiences; how to compose with technologies; and how to think and reflect on what we communicate and how we communicate. We will pay attention to language as a technology and how we can use language strategically to inform public policy and debates. Assignments are designed in ways that will enable students to not only design documents for real audiences but also to consider the needs of the audiences. For instance, we will design resumes with career fair in mind. This course will put great emphasis on audience, writing processes, genres of scientific and technical discourse, visual communication, collaboration, professional responsibility, clear and correct expression.

The course will also look at how rhetorical theories such as ethos, logos and pathos; context, purpose and audience will shape not only the writings we do at the workplace but also how we can apply them to solve complex engineering problems, software development, poster designs, and user manuals. You will write and revise several documents and give oral report(s). Discussions and assignments will prepare us to become critical thinkers.

REQUIRED TEXT



Lannon . J. M. & Gurak L. J. (2017) Technical Communication (Fourteenth Edition). Columbus: PEARSON

Additional readings (PDF) would be posted on the course page on Canvas

Course Learning Objectives

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- ☐ plan, draft, and revise
- ☐ demonstrate the abilities to write, speak, and design for a range of audiences, representing diverse stakeholders, with competing and sometimes conflicting interests
- ☐ design visually effective texts
- ☐ produce rhetorically sensitive documents
- ☐ apply rhetorical theories to the design of documents as diverse as memos, proposals, reports, and resumes
- ☐ access, evaluate, and use information ethically and legally to accomplish a specific purpose, with a specific audience in mind

Course Resources

Course Website(s)

- Canvas <https://mtu.instructure.com/login>
- [University learning goal 5](#)

Students will be able to communicate effectively in writing and in new media, to a wide variety of audiences. Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Grading Scheme

Grade	Point
A	930-1000
AB	880-929
B	830-879
BC	780-829
C	730-779
CD	680-729
D	600-679
F	599 and below

Your course grade will be determined by the number of points you earn out of 1000 total. The 1000 points are broken down as follows:

Online Short Responses/Discussions (100 pt.)

Participation in in-class/online discussions, readings and peer/self-review assignments, and other individual writing/research assignments is required. They are designed to meet the goals for the course and help facilitate completing your projects. Watch Canvas and listen attentively in class for direction related to weekly projects. I will give ample time for you to complete assignments. I may ask you to revise and resubmit certain assignments or ask for clarification about your project choices. A big component of this class is to learn how to give and receive feedback in a professional communication setting. Thus, I will ask that you learn to use technology and software that may be new to you. Of course, this requires flexibility and communication.

White Paper (150 pt.)

You will be required to do a white paper in which you will research the challenges facing your client. Specifically, you will identify the obstacles that hinder the library in reaching out to elementary schools in Houghton. You will also investigate ways in which the Archival section of the library will reach out.

Career Document (150 pt.)

You will be directed to develop a professional portfolio. This portfolio will allow you to target a specific industry or project that you will then research in order to develop several professional documents that you can use in the future. The portfolio will include a cover letter, CV, resume etc.; however, this career document will also include a research report on a specific interest related to your professional goals.

Client Project Proposal and Elevator Pitch for the Final Project (100 pt.)

Consider the following when you write this plan: an explanation of what your project is, the rationale behind your choice, a timeline showing what you plan to do and when (all within the given time frame), and the resources you plan to use and where to find them.

This document should include the context, scope, and organization of the project. You need to analyze the problem or question and prove to your instructor that the project needs to be carried out. Tie in your research and questions within your introduction. Briefly summarize your project proposal.

Progress Report (25 pt.)

While working with the client, you are required to submit to your client a progress report. This report will indicate the milestone you have reached with the project

Recommendation Report (160 pt.)

Write a recommendation report to your client advocating a course of action based on your research and usability testing.

Participation and professional Grade (100 pt.)

A significant portion of your grade is based on the professionalism you demonstrate toward the course and its content, toward me, and toward your fellow students.

Conduct that influences professionalism includes but is not limited to the following:

- ☐ Your willingness to engage the texts and issues associated with the course in the spirit of learning more about yourself and the world you live in.
- ☐ Your ability to respect a diversity of opinion as demonstrated by conducting yourself in a civil manner and by refraining from interruptions and ridicule of others.
- ☐ Your ability to listen and participate during class.
- ☐ Your ability to offer relevant, on-topic commentary.
- ☐ Your ability to arrive at class or a conference on time and prepared. This requirement includes obtaining the textbook by the first day of class.
- ☐ Your ability to focus on class during class time. Habitual entrances and exits during class sessions will result in a grade penalty, as will holding private discussions or texting during class and disruptions arising from cell phones, watches, pagers, and the like.
 - Your ability to avoid complaining and asking questions whose answers

have already been provided (e.g., “Can I make up the quiz?” and “What is the response for next time?”).

Oral Presentations (50 pt.)

This will be a formal in-class presentation of your Final Project; however, this is not just a platform for you to showcase your project. You may begin by showing the project, but you will also be expected to analyze for the class the decisions you made in the creation of the project and why you made them, addressing your usability tests and how they influenced your product. Everyone within the group must be equally involved in some capacity during the presentation in order to receive full credit. The length of each presentation should be ten minutes.

Grades will be based on the following:

Write 5 responses (5 x 20)	100
White paper	100
Proposal	100
Resume and cover letter	150
Progress report	100
Usability report	100
Recommendation letter	150
Participation and professionalism	100
Presentation	35

With exceptions to the career documents, online short responses and the e-portfolio, everything else is group work.

Late submission of assignments will result in a reduction in grades. Your grade will be reduced by 10% for each calendar day that your assignment is turned in late. If you know that you need an extension, talk to me before the paper is due. If you can explain why you need more time, how your project will benefit from more time, and how you will use the extra time, it is possible to get an extension without impacting your grade. If you are absent, it is your

responsibility to find out what you missed from your peers. I retain the right to lower your grade for missed classes. After 4 missed classes your final grade will be lowered for each absence. If you are absent for more than seven times, it is likely you will fail the class.

Technology Policy

Any assignments involving technology can be completed by using software found on PCs in any computer lab on campus. For a list of labs and seat availability, visit: <https://www.it.mtu.edu/computer-labs.php>

The Van Pelt Library has audio/video recorders that are available for checkout to students. They can be checked out for several hours at a time from the Circulation Desk at the library. Note: HDMZ (120 Walker) equipment is not available for general checkout.

Personal Technology Policy

While I recognize students' need for educational and emergency-related technological devices such as laptops, PDAs, cellular phones, etc., using them unethically is never appropriate. That said, using your electronic device to take notes and do work is encouraged

University Policies

Student work products (exams, essays, projects, etc.) may be used for purposes of university, program, or course assessment. All work used for assessment purposes will not include any individual student identification.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, which Michigan Tech defines as "knowingly copying another's work or ideas and calling them one's own or not giving proper credit or citation," is a violation of the academic integrity policy: <http://www.admin.mtu.edu/usenate/policies/p109-1.htm>

In this class, we will discuss the practical and ethical aspects of source attribution so you can learn how and why to avoid plagiarism in your academic work. It is crucial that you take care to acknowledge the sources of your written, audio, or visual material in this and other classes. Instances of plagiarized work will be handled according to university procedures, which includes a reporting of the incident to the Office of Student Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance the University's policies.

Michigan Tech has standard policies on academic misconduct and complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For more information about reasonable accommodation for or equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at (906) 487-2212 or go to <http://www.mtu.edu/provost/facultyresources/syllabus-policies>

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

Michigan Technological University complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office at 487- 2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, Chair/Dean of your academic unit, or the Affirmative Programs Office at 487-3310

Academic Integrity:

http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

Affirmative Action:

<http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aa/>

Disability Services:

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in any class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact your instructor or Disability Services at 487-1494 or <http://www.mtu.edu/deanofstudents/students/disability/> as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Equal Opportunity Statement:

<http://www.admin.mtu.edu/admin/boc/policy/ch3/ch3p7.htm>

Course Weekly Schedule

Week		Date	Topics	Readings/Assignments
1				
	Mon	01/15/2018	Introduction /MLK Day Recess	
	Wed	01/17/2018	Class /Syllabus/ Course Introduction	Assigned Ch. 1 (Lannon & Gurak)
	Fri	01/19/2018	What is Technical Communication? Features and purposes of Technical Comm	Short response #1 due Assigned “Rhetorical situation” Blitzer;
2			Audience	

	Mon	01/22/2018	Rhetorical Situation	Short response #2 due Ch. 1 (Lannon & Gurak)
	Wed	01/24/2018	Meeting the needs of specific audience	Short response #3 due Ch. 1 (Lannon & Gurak)
	Fri	01/26/2018	Persuading your audience/ Ethics	Short response #4 due Ch. 1 & 4 (Lannon & Gurak)
3			The Research process	
	Mon	01/29/2018	Achieving adequate search	Ch. 8 (Lannon & Gurak)
	Wed	01/31/2018	Evaluating and interpreting info	Ch. 9 (Lannon & Gurak)
	Fri	02/02/2018	Summarizing research findings	Short response #5 due Ch. 16 (Lannon & Gurak)
4			Career document	
	Mon	02/05/2018	Resumes	Bring job ads as advertised by a prospective employer or company

	Wed	02/07/2018	Peer Review	Career document due in class
	Fri	Winter carnival recess		
5			Organization/Design	
	Mon	02/12/2018	Resume and cover letters	

	Wed	02/14/2018	Outlining/Editing	Career document due on Canvas Ch. 12 & 13 (Lannon & Gurak
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	Fri	02/16/2018	Designing	Ch. 14 (Lannon & Gurak)
6			Documentation	
	Mon	02/19/2018	Emails/Letters/Memos	Ch. 14 (Lannon & Gurak)
	Wed	02/21/2018	Career Fair	
	Fri	02/23/2018	Emails/Letters/Memos	Ch. 20 (Lannon & Gurak)
7			Reports (informal)	
	Mon	02/26/2018	Progress, meeting minutes, activity, trip	Ch. 20 (Lannon & Gurak)
	Wed	02/28/2018	Feasibility Reports Recommendation, Justification, Peer review reports	Ch. 4 (Lannon & Gurak)
	Fri	03/02/2018	Ethics Revisited	
8			Proposals	
	Mon	02/05/2018	Types of proposals	Ch. 8 (Lannon & Gurak)
	Wed	03/07/2018	Persuasive proposals	
	Fri	03/09/2018	Proposal outline	
SPRING BREAK				
			Introducing client project	
9	Mon	03/19/2018	Client talks to students	
	Wed	03/21/2018	Research on library /Analyzing library audience	Assigned: library archives research
	Fri	03/23/2018	Designing for archival audience	Library archival research due

10		Annotated Bibliography	
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	Fri	04/06/2018	Progress report	Progress report assigned Proposal due
12			White Paper	
	Mon	03/26/2018	r Introduction	White paper assigned
	Wed	03/28/2018	Class peer review	
	Fri	03/30/2018	Peer review of paper	White paper due
11			Client report	
	Mon	04/02/2018	Proposal for client	Assigned client proposal Ch. 22 (Lannon & Gurak
	Wed	04/04/2018	Proposal for client	

	Mon	04/09/2018	Writing white paper	Progress report due
	Wed	04/06/2018	Design questionnaires & plan for usability testing	
	Fri	04/08/2018	Audience Analysis	
13			Recommendation	
	Mon	04/16/2018	Recommendations and visuals	Recommendatio n report assigned Ch. 21 (Lannon & Gurak
	Wed	04/18/2018	In-class work	
	Fri	04/20/2018	Peer review	Recommendatio n report due
14			Final works	
	Mon	04/23/2016	Oral Presentation Technq	

	Wed	04/25/2016	Oral Presentation	
	Fri	04/27/2016	Course overview	Submit e-portfolio

Lesson Plan: Course Introduction Professional & Technical Communication

(Date: Wed Jan 17, 2018)

Objective:

To prepare students for the rest of the semester with what is expected of them and they ought to do.

To get students to start sharing their experiences with the class.

Total Estimated Time: 50 minutes.

Work Completed Before Class: Read the course syllabus online.

Class Activity	
Self Introduction (instructor)	5mins
Ask students to introduce themselves: Starting from the back, start introducing yourselves.	Asks for any questions and discuss the syllabus:
Review the syllabus on the screen highlighting assignments.	• Draw out a silent member
	a) Does anyone who hasn't spoken care to comment? b) "Jacob", from your previous class' experience would you comment on any aspect of the syllabus?
	• Sharing personal experiences

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Will each of you be thinking about your own experiences with this class schedule so that I can ask of your reaction later? b) Have any of you had experiences with this or similar schedule in another class that you will be willing to share with us? c) What matters to you in this class?

REFLECTIONS

- **How do students respond to having more power and agency over aspects of the classroom?**
 - a) Were they expecting instructor to continue talking?
 - b) Did they feel pressured (probably with long silence) to talk?
 - c) Were they surprised at the agency given to them to contribute to the discussion?
- **Does negotiating with students give them more agency over their work?**
 - a) How empowered did students feel with this approach?
- **Does consciously employing principles of invitational rhetoric in class discussion result in more student participation and in more robust discussions?**
 - b) Did students share personal experiences with this approach as invitational rhetoric assumes?
 - c) Was it spontaneous or grudgingly welcomed?
 - d) How enthusiastic were they about sharing personal experiences?

Lesson Plan: What is Technical Communication?

(Professional & Technical Communication) Date: Fri Jan 19, 2018

Objective: To prepare students to

- Identify the main features of technical communication
- Explain the purposes of technical communication
- Identify the main features of technical communication
- Know what technical communicators do

- Recognize the digital and human sides of technical communication
- Appreciate the role of technical communication in most careers

Work Completed Before Class: For this class, students have read Ch. 1, What is Technical

Communication? (Lannon & Gurak)

Total Estimated Time: 50 mins

There is a PowerPoint presentation that goes along with this lesson plan.

Instructor goes through the slides with students stressing purpose, features and careers in Technical communication. **20 mins**

CLASS ACTIVITY:	Discussion
Asks for any questions and discuss the syllabus:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What were your thoughts on technical communication before reading the chapter? b. How has that changed by reading the chapter? c. In what ways is technical communication part of most careers?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call attention to points not yet considered
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Does anyone have information something you read we've not explored? b) What perspectives aren't represented in our discussion?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing personal experiences
	<p>d) Will each of you be thinking about your own experiences with this class schedule so that I can ask of your reactions later?</p> <p>e) Have any of you had experiences with this or similar schedule in another class that you will be willing to share with</p>
	<p>us?</p> <p>f) What is at the heart of the matter (Technical Communication) to you in this topic?</p> <p>g) What will you do as a technical communicator?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing few from monopolizing the class
	<p>h) Excuse me Kyle, before you continue, may I ask if any one has a comment on the point you've just made.</p> <p>i) Thank you, Anthony. May we hear from someone else who hasn't expressed an opinion?</p>
<p>Students write a short reflection on the above after discussion. 5 mins</p> <p>What major conclusions do you draw from the session? 10 mins</p> <p>Assignments Short response #1</p> <p>Read “Rhetorical situation” by Bitzer;</p>	

REFLECTIONS

- **How do students respond to having more power and agency over aspects of the classroom?**
 - d) Were they expecting instructor to continue talking?
 - e) Did they feel pressured (probably with long silence) to talk?
 - f) Were they surprised at the agency given to them to contribute to the discussion?
- **Does negotiating with students give them more agency over their work?**
 - e) How empowered did students feel with this approach?
- **Does consciously employing principles of invitational rhetoric in class discussion result in more student participation and in more robust discussions?**
 - f) Did students share personal experiences with this approach as invitational rhetoric assumes?
 - g) Was it spontaneous or grudgingly welcomed?
 - h) How enthusiastic were they about sharing personal experiences?
- **How do students respond to their fellow students taking over or monopolizing class discussions in relation to the instructor's?**
- **Did I get everybody to participate in the class discussion? Why?**

Lesson Plan: Rhetorical Situation (Professional & Technical Communication)

Date: Mon Jan 22, 2018

Objective: To prepare students to

- Identify the 3 features of a rhetorical situation (Exigence, Rhetorical Audience & Constraints)
- Differentiate rhetorical situations from non-rhetorical ones
- Understand the complexities that rhetorical situations can take

Work Completed Before Class: For this class, students have read **Rhetorical Situation** by Bitzer.

There is a PowerPoint presentation that goes along with this lesson plan. **10 mins**

CLASS ACTIVITY:	Discussion 10 mins
Discussion: Following you reading, would you consider....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> this class a rhetorical situation? How? Why? (in groups they discuss this). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> how different or similar this is, to having to make a speech at graduation?
Invitational Rhetoric approach / Alternative will make students think about it discuss it with a partner and then write it down before calling on them to talk.	<div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call attention to points not yet considered 10 mins </div> <div> <p>c) Can anybody anticipate complex rhetorical situation we've not explored yet?</p> <p>d) Whose lives are affected by the rhetorical situation and in what ways are they affected?</p> </div>

	e) Whose perspectives aren't represented in our discussion?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing personal experiences 10 mins
	j) How has this topic affected you personally? k) What is at the heart of the matter to you in this topic?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing few from monopolizing the class 10 mins
	l) Excuse me XXX, before you continue, may I ask if anyone has a comment on the point m) you've just made? Thank you, Anthony. may we hear from someone else who hasn't
	expressed and opinion?
Students write a short reflection on the above after discussion. 5 mins Assignments Short response #2 Read "Meeting the needs of specific audience"	

REFLECTION

- **How do students respond to having more power and agency over aspects of the classroom?**
 - g) Were they expecting instructor to continue talking?
 - h) Did they feel pressured (probably with long silence) to talk?
 - i) Were they surprised at the agency given to them to contribute to the discussion?
- **Does negotiating with students give them more agency over their work?**
 - i) How empowered did students feel with this approach?
- **Does consciously employing principles of invitational rhetoric in class discussion result in more student participation and in more robust discussions?**
 - j) Did students share personal experiences with this approach as invitational rhetoric assumes?
 - k) Was it spontaneous or grudgingly welcomed?
 - l) How enthusiastic were they about sharing personal experiences?
- **How do students respond to their fellow students taking over or monopolizing class discussions in relation to the instructor's?**
- **How comfortable are students the opportunity of sharing personal experiences?**
- **Was everyone or the majority of the class able to express themselves in class without being suppressed?**

Lesson Plan: Meeting the needs of specific audience

(Professional & Technical Communication)

Date: Wed Jan 24, 2018

Objective: To prepare students to

- Ask the right questions to analyze your audience and purpose
- Assess your audience's technical and cultural backgrounds
- Identify the appropriate document qualities for your audience
- Develop an audience and use profile to guide your work

Total Estimated Time: 50 minutes.

Work Completed Before Class: For this class, students have read Chapter 2, **Meeting the Needs of Specific Audience**.

There is a PowerPoint presentation that goes along with this lesson plan.

CLASS ACTIVITY:	Discussion 10 mins
POWERPOINT Presentation:	Walks students through the 19 slides with minimal contributions from students
NON-Invitational Rhetoric approach / Instructor calls on selected students to answer questions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a document's primary purpose vs. it's secondary purpose or purposes? • What are the three types of audience in terms of their technical background? • What do the three types of technical audiences want? • What are three areas you need to consider regarding cultural differences? • What are the audience's preferences you should consider when writing a document?
Students write a short reflection on the above after discussion. 5 mins	
Assignment Short response #3 Read "Meeting the needs of specific audience"	

REFLECTION

- How do students respond to assertion of authority or my running of the class solely?

- How students reject or accept power /agency given to them?

Did students object to my authority?

Did they accept it? How? Why?

- What was the classroom atmosphere?
- How does it compare with previous class that had invitational rhetoric?
- Was there the need to adopt other approach other than invitational rhetoric?

Lesson Plan: Persuading Your audience (Professional & Technical Communication)

Date: Fri Jan 26, 2018

Objective: To prepare students to

- Anticipate and appreciate audience may react and resistance
- Choose a strategy to connect with audience
- Respect various limitations when making an argument
- Support argument using evidence and reason
- Understand how cultural factors influence persuasion
- Prepare a convincing argument **Class Time:** 50 minutes.

Work Completed Before Class: For this class, students have read Chapter 3, Persuading the Your Audience

There is a PowerPoint presentation that goes along with this lesson plan. **15 mins**

CLASS ACTIVITY:	
Discussion:	
Students work on different case studies/audiences Invitational Rhetoric approach /	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing personal experiences 10 mins
	a) Have any of you had the experience of having to convince specific audiences? b) How did you get involved with this issue? c) What ethical considerations did, or would you make?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call attention to points not yet considered 10 mins

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) What other types of constraints on an argument beyond the 5 can you envisage? e) What things can you do to ensure you consider the cultural context in an argument? f) In what two ways can you support your claims convincingly? g) What conclusions do you draw so far?
	To keep discussions on track 10 mins
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> h) That's interesting. How does this point fit in with the issue being discussed? i) Would we make more progress if we confine our discussions to the fact of the case rather than the people involved?
	<p>j) Since we do not seem to be able to resolve this issue now, could we move on to the next point? Perhaps further discussion will reveal additional information that will help us resolve the issue.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> k) Excuse me Sandra, before you continue, may I ask if anyone has a comment on the point you've just made? l) Thank you, Anthony. may we hear from someone else who hasn't expressed an opinion?
Students write what they have learnt. 5 mins	

Reflections

- **How do students respond to having more power and agency over aspects of the classroom?**
- Were they expecting instructor to continue talking?
- Did they feel pressured (probably with long silence) to talk?
- Were they surprised at the agency given to them to contribute to the discussion?
- **Does negotiating with students give them more agency over their work?**
- How empowered did students feel with this approach?
- **Does consciously employing principles of invitational rhetoric in class discussion result in more student participation and in more robust discussions?**
- Did students share personal experiences with this approach as invitational rhetoric assumes?
- Was it spontaneous or grudgingly welcomed?
- How enthusiastic were they about sharing personal experiences?
- **What do I lose or gain in using the invitational approach?**