LMC 3403: Technical Communication

Writing and Communication Program
School of Literature, Media, and Communication
Georgia Institute of Technology
Fall 2015

Class Meeting

TR 8:05 am - 9:25 am (K), Skiles 302
TR 9:35 am - 10:55 am (F), Skiles 302
TR 12:05 pm - 1:25 pm (N), Skiles 302

Instructor Contact Information

Dr. Rebekah Fitzsimmons, PhD
Location: Skiles 304
Office Hours: 1:00-3:00 pm Wednesdays,
 or by appointment
Phone: 404-894-8923
Email: rebekah.fitzsimmons@lmc.gatech.edu
Website: rebekahfitzsimmons.wordpress.com
Twitter: @DrFitzPhD
Email is my preferred method of communication.
Subject Line: Please begin every subject line for
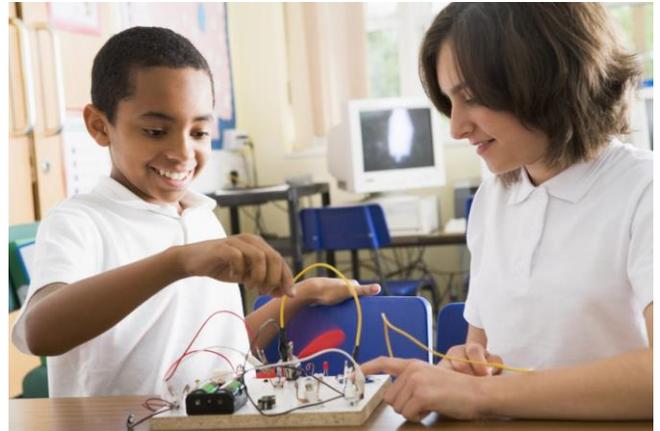every email message with "LMC3403."

Figure 1: These students are engaged in applied learning in STEM fields as a part of Georgia's Innovation Fund program. Photo Credit: Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement

Course Description

In this course, students will study the strategies, practices, and artifacts of technical communication in a variety of professional settings. This course is set up as a mock consulting agency that works with K-12 schools in Georgia to increase interest and participation in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math fields (STEM) through the creation of new programs, products, and services. Through this mock professional environment, students will learn the rhetorical strategies and principles of professional communication by designing their own professional websites. Students will analyze the current attitudes surrounding the push for STEM education as well as their own ideas on the topic and formulate a possible solution to one of the many issues facing K-12 schools in the greater Atlanta area.

Based on documents produced in the first unit, students will be assigned to working groups. Within these groups, students will engage in collaborative brainstorming, creative problem-solving, and research-based persuasive writing. Each group will engage in problem-solving techniques and collaborative learning which is essential to productive, successful, and well-functioning work and learning environments as they work to propose a tangible method to stimulate STEM education in a specific school district. Each group will examine and employ the rhetorical principles of audience, evidence, argument, design, and language in order to apply for an Innovation Fund grant on behalf of that school district, which is designed to help plan

and implement innovative STEM programs into schools. Finally, students will learn the value of interdisciplinary communication as they develop a wide-range of multimodal technical communication artifacts in order to recruit potential (corporate, higher education, or other institutional) partners; each group will work to persuade a chosen audience to participate in their proposed project.

Approach to the Course
This course is designed to imitate a professional environment; therefore, about half of the course time will be allotted to teaching the principles, best practices, and mechanics of technical writing, while the rest of the course will involve putting those lessons into practice. The students who are present and who actively pursue the application of these lessons through enthusiastic participation in discussion, activities, collaborative work, and the steps of the writing process are the students who will learn the most and will see the largest improvement in their communication skills.

Class time will often include a mix of discussion, in-class activities, exercises, quizzes, workshops, oral presentations, lectures, videos, podcasts, and explanations of upcoming assignments. Each class you will be asked to engage and participate using a variety of skills and mediums: oral, visual, and written, individual, collaborative, exploratory, imaginative, reflective, speculative, and concrete. Simply put, active, productive participation is worth a percentage of your grade, but it will also make the class more interesting and more enjoyable, and, most important, you'll learn more. The assignments in this course are designed to give you opportunities to learn multiple approaches to technical communication with real world application. Students should aim to shape the assignments to fit their own research or professional interests as much as possible.

Expected Student Outcomes
In addition to the course outcomes for all LMC 3403 courses listed in the Common Policies section on T-Square, students who have completed this course will be able to:
- Understand the use and value for the different modes of communication and effectively choose the appropriate mode for the message, audience, purpose, and rhetorical context
- Negotiate successfully the process of completing technical documents, including steps like planning, drafting, editing, while recognizing that this process may be different depending on the student, the deliverable, the rhetorical context, and the collaborators
- Incorporate research, usability testing, citation of sources, and other standard forms of augmenting professional documents into technical documents
- Use good document design and visual elements, such as charts, graphs, images, photographs, drawings, blueprints, flowcharts, in order to communicate vital information clearly and effectively
- Collaborate with a group to solve problems, divide workload, and create coherent documents and create effective standardized style and format guides for use in collaborative document construction

Required Materials
- *Technical Communication: A Reader Centered Approach* by Paul V. Anderson. Eighth Edition. ISBN: 978-1-133-30981-9
- Other required readings, videos and materials available through TSquare

Required Software Applications
- word processing (e.g., MSWord)
- basic web design and social media appllications (e.g. Wordpress, Wix, MediaWiki)
- document design (e.g. InDesign)
- presentation (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi)

Required Special Printing
- EITHER printing budget OR laptop/tablet computer that the student can bring to class in order to read and discuss materials available on TSquare
- Color printing of final proposal document (cost to be split among group members)
- Possible additional printing costs for final artifact

Summary of Major Units/Projects/Assignments

Major Assignments	Points out of 1000
Unit 1: Developing Professional Style (15% of grade)	
1. Personal Statement about STEM education	50
2. Online professional presence	100
a. Professional Web Site	
b. Usability Report	
Unit 2: Proposing Solutions (35% of grade)	
3. Research Report – School District for Grant Proposal Assistance	100
4. Group Project: Formal Proposal of Grant Proposal	100
5. Group Project: Presentation of Grant Proposal	100
6. Progress Report Memo on Group Work	50
Unit 3: Persuading Project Partners (40% of grade)	
7. Planning Work for Group Project	
a. Action Plan	25
b. Project Standards Guideline Wiki	50
c. Personal Reflection	25
8. Artifact	150
9. Query Letter	50
10. Group: Project Pitch to Potential Grant Partners	100
11. Attendance and Participation (5% of grade)	50
12. Homework, Quizzes, In-Class Activities (5% of grade)	50

Description of Major Projects and Assignments

This course is structured around a fictional consulting agency that helps K-12 school systems improve STEM education. Each student will develop professional documents in order to better represent him or herself in an online environment. Then, each student will identify and research a school district in need of our services. Each group will then choose a school district and brainstorm projects, services, or products that could improve STEM education in that district. Using the Georgia Governor's Innovation Fund Grant CFP as a model, each group will create a proposal for a two-year grant program for this school district. Finally, each group will create a series of coherent artifacts that can be used to recruit participants into the program they are proposing.

Unit 1: Presenting Professional Materials

Personal Statement: 1-2 page personal statement. Students describe how they would approach solving this problem.

Online professional website: Website. Students will design a public-facing professional online persona that hosts relevant professional materials such as an interactive resume, photos, relevant links, and a user-friendly interface.

Usability Report: 2-3 page report. After creating a professional website, each student will develop and conduct a usability test both inside and outside our class setting. Students will reflect on the results of this test and formulate a usability report that describes how the student will revise, update or change the website.

Unit 2: Proposing Solutions

Research Report: 3-5 page research report. Each student will select and research a different Georgia school district. Research should focus on the needs of the district and the ways in which a grant to improve STEM education might benefit the students, staff, parents, and surrounding community. Students should also suggest the type of solution they believe would be most effective for this district.

Formal Proposal: 20-25 page formal proposal in response to a modified CFP to be submitted as a group. Each group must select one of the districts researched by one of its members, then work towards creating a formal grant proposal on behalf of the school. Each proposal should include a formal problem statement, a solution, a methods section, a feasibility report, a schedule, a budget, and a statement on the groups' qualifications.

Progress Report Memo: 1-2 page memo. Approximately 2/3 of the way through Unit 2, each individual will submit a brief progress report, in the form of an agency-wide memo, that gives an update on the group's progress to date, the work that each individual group member has completed, and a schedule for completing the remaining elements of the project.

Proposal Presentation: <u>10-15 minute formal presentation to the class</u>. This presentation will give a thorough overview of the complete proposal and will be persuasive, visually appealing, well rehearsed, and professional.

Unit 3: Persuading Project Partners

Action Plan: <u>4-5 page document submitted as a group</u>. At the start of the unit, each group will collaboratively compose an action plan. This plan will describe the approach the group will use, a brief analysis of the audience they have chosen to approach, the artifacts they will create in order to persuade the chosen audience, and a timeline for work completion. This action plan will also describe the responsibilities of each team member.

Project Standards Guideline Wiki: <u>Wiki document with group guidelines</u>. The group will create and maintain style guidelines within a wiki page. Each member of the group will follow the style guidelines established on the wiki for font, color scheme, logos, document templates, and writing style for each individually produced artifact. The group may begin working on the style guidelines as early as the start of Unit 2, but the guideline must be finalized and locked by the due date (both for evaluation purposes and to ensure that the guidelines have been finalized in time for each group member to revise their documents). The wiki should include sets of instructions; for example, on how to set up a subheading page, how to create visual effects, how to print and bind the final document, or how to set up the presentation space.

Personal Reflection: <u>300-500 word reflection essay</u>. At the conclusion of the group project, each student will write a brief reflection on the process of project development, revision, group collaboration, and peer-review.

Project Pitch: <u>5-10 minute "pitch"</u> with time for questions and answers. Each group will behave as if they are presenting to their target audience and will present a persuasive, appealing, dynamic argument for why their project will be a successful way to increase interest in STEM with the children they serve and how the target audience would benefit from being involved.

Query Letter: <u>1-2 page letter.</u> As the final element of the project, each group member will identify one individual from within the target audience who could help the group set up a presentation for a target audience. The communication will be a 1-2 page formal letter with the express purpose of setting up a pitch meeting and will summarize the overall purpose of our consulting agency, the goals of the group's project, the materials the group can make available, and the key elements of the pitch (why this project is good for the person reading the letter).

Artifact: <u>1 artifact (variable formats):</u> must be approved as a part of the action plan assignment. Each group member will be responsible for an artifact as part of the persuasive recruitment campaign. An artifact might include written elements, like an

executive summary, informative pamphlet, or poster. An artifact might also include digital elements like a website or a proposed social media campaign. Each group might also choose to put together a sample lesson, activity, or example of the kind of work they will be doing with the grant money. The goal of all the artifacts is to persuade potential partners (corporate, institutional, higher education etc.) to support the group's grant proposal; remember, participation can extend beyond simply financial or product donations.

Assignment Requirements

Overall, each assignment will require you to think creatively, rhetorically, editorially, and strategically. You will work both individually and collaboratively to produce new, thoughtful, sophisticated, and professional documents.

- Document your work (text and images) as well as ensure its syntactic, mechanical, and grammatical correctness. If you quote or paraphrase, please use MLA citations (author, date, page for direct quotations) as well as an end-of- document works cited list. Not providing appropriate citations constitutes a kind of plagiarism. Demonstrate scrupulous care in your citations.
- All documents will be computer generated and professional in appearance. The details of each assignment and project will be discussed in class and a detailed assignment sheet will be provided via TSquare. All documents turned in electronically should be submitted in MS Word or PDF format unless otherwise discussed with the instructor.
- Maintain a cumulative file of all of your documents (both hard copy and digital) that includes all your pre-writing work, drafts, final versions, and instructor comments. This will give you an opportunity to reflect and look back on your improvement over the semester.
- Keep your drafts on your hard drive with a backup DVD or thumb drive (or both). Prepare for electronic disasters by **always** having backups. Number the drafts as you revise (e.g., task.1, task.2, and so on). **Do not delete assignment files** after you submit the assignment. Keep your course files as demonstrable evidence that you are a skillful communicator, but if—against my advice—you decide to delete your course files, please keep them at least until you have received your final, official grade for the course.

WOVEN Communication

Use this course to improve your professional communication skills. This course will help you to develop the skills required to adapt to a wide variety of professional situations as well as different audiences and multiple modalities. In each situation, you will learn to consider the rhetorical situation, context, design opportunities, genre conventions, and audience expectations. In the workplace, these modalities usually operate synergistically, coming together with persuasive techniques and research in order to be persuasive, logical and successful. In this course, expect to work on the following things.

> *Written communication*. You need to write well, so in this course expect to refine (1) your professional tone and syntax (2) your ability to adapt to professional genres (3) your ability to incorporate research and support to persuade your audience

Oral communication. You will need to speak well, so in this course expect to refine (1) your presentation style to address multiple audiences in various contexts (2) your speaking tone, pitch, and volume (3) your ability to express your ideas clearly in a variety of group/class discussions and settings.

Visual communication. You will need to design well so in this course expect to refine (1) your approach to layout and design (2) your ability to analyze the visual elements of a professionally produced document (3) your ability to persuade using visual rhetoric

Electronic communication. You will need to use electronic media well, so in this course expect to refine (1) your use social media for a professional context (2) your use of online resources to conduct and share research (3) your ability to communicate professionally in seemingly less formal modes

Nonverbal communication. You will need to use nonverbal communication well, so in this course expect to refine (1) your ability to persuade an audience with enthusiasm and interest (2) your ability to connect with an audience (3) your use of props, gestures and non-verbal signals during presentations

Late Assignments

It is best to avoid late assignments. However, just like in the workplace, a proactive approach to potentially delayed work is viewed as more professional than failing to turn in a deliverable on time. You may receive an extension on a deadline for a good cause if you:

1. Contact me via email at least 24 hours prior to the deadline and explain the cause for the delay.
2. Propose in this email a new, reasonable deadline (less than one week). This new deadline will be considered the final deadline and I will not accept your assignment after this date for any reason.

You may not use this extension policy for oral presentations or for elements of a group project. Absent exceptional circumstances, failure to complete daily work or a project stage by the date it is due will result in the student losing the full point value assigned to such work. You may use this extension policy a maximum of once each semester.

Missing or Missed Assignments

Due to the participatory nature of this course, much of what we practice in class cannot be replicated outside of the classroom. Therefore, except for absences officially exempted by the Institute or exceptional and unanticipated situations, I do not allow students to make up missed quizzes, presentations, or in-class assignments. Missing work is counted as a "zero."

Revisions of Assignments

In this class, the concept of drafting and revision is built into the assignments. However, there are cases in which students might find value in revising an assignment after receiving official feedback. If a student receives a grade of 75% or lower on an individual assignment, he or she may request the opportunity to revise it. Revisions should address major issues with the assignment such as restructuring, reorganization, in-depth copyediting, or a redesign of visual elements. Revision is not merely correcting grammatical mistakes or errors marked by the instructor. **Students may only request ONE rewrite over the course of the semester.**

To request a rewrite, students should follow the following procedure:

1. Contact me no later than 72 hours after I return an assignment (This can include an email or an office hours appointment followed by an email confirmation).
2. Explain the rationale for requesting the rewrite (misunderstood the directions, took a risk and failed, etc.)
3. Detail the plan for the significant revision (this should be specific and should reference the grade rubric/comments on the returned assignment as support)
4. Set a new deadline for turning in the revision (maximum 10 days from the date of the assignment being returned).

Occasionally an artifact will receive an "R" as a grade. "R" indicates that you are required to re-do the assignment or a section of the assignment. If you do not revise an assignment that receives an R, you will receive a "0" (zero) for the assignment—as if you had not done it. An R grade does not take the place of a student requested revision.

Appointments for Individual or Collaborative Conferences

My office hours are held in Skiles 304 from 9:00-11:00am on Wednesdays, or by appointment. Please try to let me know via email when you plan to come to office hours, of if you would like to set up a separate appointment. You can always make an appointment to see me. If an emergency arises and you are unable to meet during a scheduled appointment, please email or call as soon as possible prior to the appointment.

When you make an appointment to meet with me, please include an agenda of the items you would like for us to discuss in the email. This will ensure that we are both properly prepared and that you get all of the feedback and guidance that you need.

Please allow me 24 hours to respond to an email (a little longer on weekends), especially if it is a question about an assignment or a request to schedule a meeting.

Assessments

For every assignment, I will provide a detailed assignment sheet that will include the expectations for the assignment, the required elements and format for the assignment, and the rubric that I will use to grade the assignment. In this course, you will be working on individual and collaborative projects both in and out of the classroom. Each assignment will contain a detailed breakdown that explains how much of your grade is based on individual work and how much is based on the final group project.

Common Policies

Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program has common, program-wide policies regarding these areas:

1. Georgia Tech General Education Outcomes for English 1101 and English 1102
2. Learning Outcomes for English 1101 and English 1102
3. Evaluation Equivalencies
4. Evaluation Rubric
5. Course Completion
6. Attendance
7. Dean of Students and Counseling Center
8. Participation in Class
9. Non–Discrimination
10. Communication Center
11. Accommodations
12. Academic Misconduct
13. Syllabus Modifications
14. Dead Week for English 1101/English 1102
15. Multimodal Reflection Portfolio and Mahara

You can access these common Writing and Communication Program policies on T-Square: http://b.gatech.edu/1KOeoF7.

You are required to acknowledge that you have read, understood, and intend to comply with these policies: please see the final page of this syllabus.
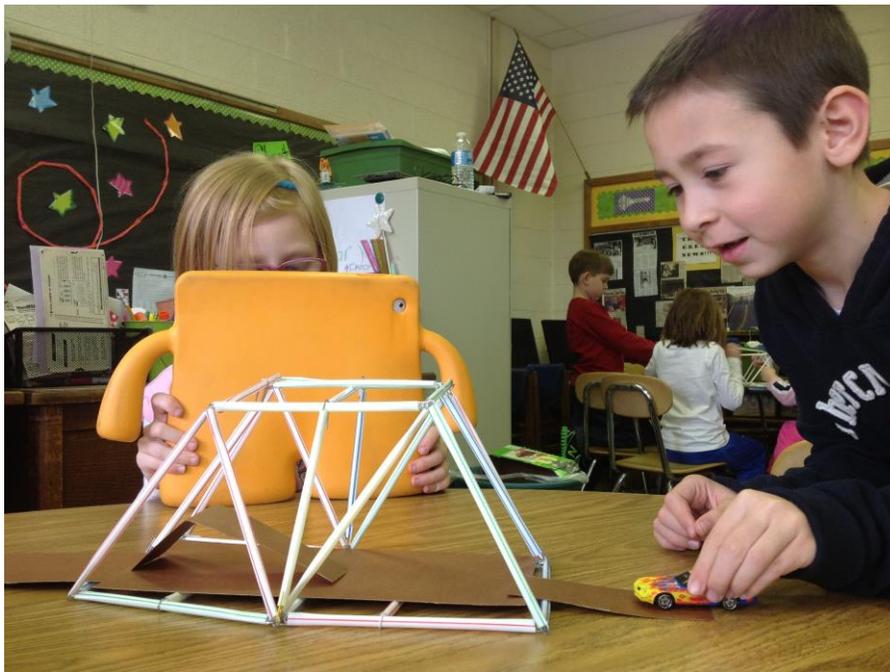

Figure 2: These K-12 students are engaged in collaborative learning using electronic, verbal, and visual communication. Photo Credit: Corwin Connect

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COURSE CALENDAR

Due In-Class: Readings/Discussion	Assignments Due
Week 1	
Tuesday, August 18	First Day of Class: Welcome to Technical Communication Ice Breakers Syllabus Discussion	
Thursday, August 20:	TSquare: Selection from *Anxious Parents* What's in a Name?	
Week 2	
Tuesday, August 25:	**Unit 1 Introduced** TC Ch.1: Communication, Your Career, and a This Book (1-21); TC Ch. 3: Defining Your Communication's Goals (60-86) TSquare: excerpt *Scientists in the Classroom*	**Syllabus Statement of Understanding**
Thursday, August 27:	TC Ch.10: Developing an Effective, Professional Style (230-252) TSquare: TBA Early Stages of the Writing Process: Brainstorming, Outlining and Overcoming Writer's Block	
Week 3	
Tuesday, Sept 1:	TC Ch.2: Overview of the Reader-Centered Communication Process: Obtaining a Job (22-58); TC Ch. 22: Creating Reader-Centered Websites (448-468) TSquare: TBA	**Personal Statement on STEM Education**
Thursday, Sept 3:	TC Ch. 4: Planning for Usefulness (88-103); TC Ch. 18: Testing Your Drafts for Usefulness and Persuasiveness (378-393)	Draft of professional website. Bring laptops to class for website usability tests
Week 4	
Tuesday, Sept 8:	TC Ch. 17: Revising Your Drafts (360-377); TC Ch. 23: Letters, Memos, E-Mails, and Digital Exchanges (469-482)	
Thursday, Sept 10:	**Unit 2 Introduced** TC Ch. 19: Creating Communications with a Team (393-409); TSquare: TBA	**Professional Website and Usability Reports**
Week 5	
Tuesday, September 15:	TC Ch.6: Conducting Reader-Centered Research: Gathering, Analyzing, and Thinking Critically About Information (132-153); TC Ch. 25: Reader-Centered Empirical Research Reports Groups Assigned TSquare: TBA	
Thursday, September 17:	TC Ch. 5: Planning Your Persuasive Strategies (104-130); TC Ch.7: Using Five Reader-Centered Research Methods (154-178) Style and Grammar Workshop	
Week 6	
Tuesday, September 22:	TC Ch. 24: Writing Reader Centered Proposals (483-506) TC Ch. 26: Writing Reader Centered Feasibility Reports (537-559)	**Research Report**
Thursday, September 24:	TC Ch. 27: Writing Reader Centered Progress Reports (560-571) TSquare: TBA	

Week 7		
Tuesday, September 29:	TC Ch. 8: Drafting Reader-Centered Paragraphs, Sections, and Chapters (179-203) TC Ch. 16: Designing Reader Centered Pages and Documents (334-353);	**Progress Report Memo**
Thursday, October 1:	TC Ch. 20: Creating and Delivering Listener-Centered Oral Presentations (410-433)	
Week 8		
Tuesday, October 6:	TC Ch. 9: Using Nine Reader-Centered Patterns for Organizing Patterns, Sections, and Chapters (204-229); TC Ch. 13: Writing Reader-Centered Front and Back Matter (275-290)	
Thursday, October 8:	Presentation Style, Incorporating Visuals and Props Group rehearsal day TSquare: TBA	**Group Project: Formal Proposal** (1 color, hard copy, bound version per group)
Week 9		
Tuesday, October 13:	FALL BREAK: NO CLASS	
Thursday, October 15:	Presentations	**Group Project: Presentations**
Week 10		
Tuesday, October 20:	**Unit 3 Introduced** TC Ch. 14: Creating Reader-Centered Graphics (292-314); TC Ch. 15: Creating Eleven Types of Reader-Centered Graphics (315-358) Style Workshop: Creating Professional Looking Artifacts	
Thursday, October 22:	TC Ch. 21: Managing Client and Service-Learning Projects (434-447)	
Week 11		
Tuesday, October 27:	How to create a coherent set of artifacts TSquare TBA	**Group Project: Action Plan**
Thursday, October 29:	TC Ch. 28: Writing Reader-Centered Instructions (572-598)	
Week 12		
Tuesday, November 3:	TC Ch. 11: Beginning a Communication (253-267) TC Ch. 12: Ending a Communication (268-290)	**Group Project: Guideline Wiki**
Thursday, November 5:	TSquare: TBA	
Week 13		
Tuesday, November 10:	Style and Grammar Workshop TSquare: TBA	Group Project: Superstructure draft outline due in class
Thursday, November 12:	Peer Review/Group Workshop	Bring drafts/mock-ups of artifacts to class
Week 14		
Tuesday, November 17:	Group workshop day, preparation for final presentations TSquare: TBA	Drafts of artifacts and presentation. Bring laptops to class for group workshops.

Thursday, November 19:	Presentations	**Group Project: Pitch Presentation**
Week 15		
Tuesday, November 24:	Group workshop/rehearsal day for artifacts How to incorporate feedback into projects TSquare: TBA	**Query Letters due**
Thursday, November 26:	THANKSGIVING NO CLASS	
Week 16		
Tuesday, December 1:	Style Workshop	**Personal Reflection due**
Thursday, December 3:	Course Wrap Up and Evaluations Reflection	**Artifact due**
December 7-14: Finals Week		
Dec 15: Grades posted online		

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING
PLEASE READ, SIGN, AND RETURN THESE STATEMENTS TO DR. FITZSIMMONS

I affirm that I have read the entire syllabus and Common Policies site for LMC 3403 and understand the information and the responsibilities specified.

_____

print full name

_____

legible signature

_____

date

DIRECTIONS: Read carefully and check all that apply.

❒ I give my instructor, Rebekah Fitzsimmons, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course, LMC 3403, as examples in presentations and in print and electronic publications.

❒ I do not want my work used as examples in any situations.

_____

If you give permission for your work to be used, please indicate how you want to be acknowledged:

❒ Please acknowledge me by my full name.

❒ Please use my work, but do not acknowledge me by name.

The following information enables me to contact you if your work is used.

_____

_____

print full name

_____

legible signature

_____
_____

print permanent home address

_____
_____

print campus address

_____

cell and home phones

_____

school and home email addresses

_____

date