—Fall 2016—
Professional Writing Theories and Practices

Code: ENGL 715/815   Professor: Dr. Daniel Richards
Site: ptwodu.wordpress.com   Office: BAL 5032
Time: M 7:10p-9:50p   Hours: M + W 6p-7p, F 10a-11a (Skype)
Modes: F2F + Synchronous Online   Email: dprichar@odu.edu
Locations: BAL 2019 + WebEx   Skype: drdprichards

"Professional writing"[1] operates as an umbrella term to refer to the field of study that researches and practices writing—broadly construed to include textual, digital, and visual communication—in a variety of business, governmental, technological, scientific, and public contexts. From the mundane paperwork of a banking institution to the technical literature used to communicate severe environmental risks to families in a community, this writing affects all of our lives in profound but oftentimes unassuming ways. This course provides an overview of the interdisciplinary field by way of historical context and major case studies and gives students an opportunity to engage meaningfully in one of the many content areas constituting this diverse and always-emerging field of study.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the semester students will: (i) have a working definition of professional writing and an understanding of the scope and nature of the field; (ii) be familiar with the major theoretical positions and research methodologies and the scholarship they produce; (iii) participate meaningfully in group discussions of significant literature in the field; (iv) critically engage with and reflect upon the scholarship of the field generally and a single content area specifically; and (v) possess enough background and operational knowledge of the field to begin developing an individualized research project.

Course Delivery and Technology
This course is an online synchronous course and will meet every Monday evening from 7:10pm-9:50pm in BAL 2019 with distance students attending via Adobe Connect—an online meeting space with full audio/visual capabilities. Distance students need not download Connect; rather, the meeting link will be accessible via the course website. Students will click the link and will be taken to the meeting. If you receive a security warning from your browser, be sure to select "Trust"; otherwise, you won't be able to join. If you are having problems joining the meeting, try switching web browsers. Most issues with joining the online meeting space have to do with outdated plugins or security warnings. Try and use Safari, Firefox, or Chrome. Each student is responsible for having reliable, standard-quality cameras and microphones. Poor audio and visual can affect class flow and your own participation.

---

[1] Our phraseology is not unique, as it exists at many other institutions to indicate an area of study that might include: technical or professional communication, technical writing, and/or business writing.

Attendance
Students enrolled in the M.A. program, a certificate program, or in the Ph.D. program as an on-campus student must attend class in BAL 2019. Doctoral students enrolled in the program with a distance designation can attend online via WebEx. Regardless of attending in class or at a distance, students who miss more than one class without prior approval by the instructor will have their grade negatively affected. Chronic lateness will also impact a student's final grade. The class begins at 7:10p, but students should be logged in to WebEx by 7:00p

Weighting Scales and Late Work
This course uses only letter grades, which are enumerated as such:

A	92.5-100	B+	87.5-89.9	B-	80-82.4	C 72.5-77.4
A-	90-92.4	B	82.5–87.4	C+	77.5-79.9	C- 70-72.4

Work will be penalized a full letter grade for each day late.

Plagiarism Policy
Plagiarism is the act of claiming ownership over work that is not your own or willfully resubmitting for credit your own work from previous courses or contexts. If students in this course attempt to plagiarize they will be subjected to a lecture on intellectual property and will also more than likely fail the course.

Accommodations
Old Dominion University is committed to ensuring equal access to all qualified students with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Office of Educational Accessibility (OEA) is the campus office that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If students experience a disability which will impact their ability to access any aspect of the course, they must present the professor with an accommodation letter from OEA to ensure that appropriate accommodations are available to the student. If a student feels that they will experience barriers to their ability to learn and/or test in the course but do not have an accommodation letter, please consider scheduling an appointment with OEA to determine if academic accommodations are necessary. The Office of Educational Accessibility is located at 1021 Student Success Center and their phone number is (757) 683-4655. Additional information is available at the OEA website.

Withdrawal
A syllabus constitutes a contract between the student and instructor. Participation in this course indicates a student's acceptance of its content, requirements, and policies. Students should review the syllabus and the course requirements as soon as possible. If a student believes that the nature of this course does not meet their interests, needs, or expectations (amount of work involved, class meetings, assignment deadlines, course policies, etc.), they should drop the class by the drop/add deadline, given in the Old Dominion University Schedule of Classes.

Course Texts
The following texts must be purchased:
—Johnson-Eilola, J., & Selber, S., eds. (2013). *Solving problems in technical communication*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
—Potts, L. (2014). *Social media in disaster response: How experience architects can build for participation*. ATTW Book Series in Technical and Professional Communication. New York: Routledge.
—Simmons, W. M. (2007). *Participation and power: Civic discourse in environmental policy decisions*. SUNY Series, Studies in Scientific and Technical Communication. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
—Spinuzzi, C. (2003). *Tracing genres through organizations: A sociocultural approach to information design*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
The remaining texts covered will be shared on the course website.

Assignments
There are different expectations for students enrolled in the course as M.A. or certificate students and those enrolled in the course as Ph.D. students for two reasons: (i) the nature of the programs are distinctly different, and (ii) the goals of students at these levels vary.

M.A. and Certificate Level		*Ph.D. Level*	
Class Participation	50%	Class Participation	40%
Research Proposal	50%	Research Proposal	30%
		Book Review	30%

Class Participation
The classes will generally be open discussions of the readings driven by your questions and interests and by my own sense of what is disciplinarily important for our purposes. And while there are higher expectations for doctoral-level students in terms of leading discussion, I do not assign A-level grades in this category to any student who does not participate substantially and regularly. In all there are *three* components to this portion of the class. (1) It is expected that students complete the assigned weekly readings before class, as a significant portion of our time together will be spent engaged in critical discussion of the readings or topics informed by the assigned readings. (2) Students will keep one-page, single space weekly reading logs that combine their own notes on each reading as well as responses to guiding questions given by the professor. This log will be submitted intermittently throughout the semester for professor review via email as word processor documents. (3) Each student will be responsible for presenting an article in their area of research not covered on the syllabus. When you do this, you should do some background work on the author or the topic/issue of the article so you can put the reading in a professional context, and then direct our discussion toward the key points of the article and how it articulates with other things we have read. I'd like you to circulate a succinct (maximum of two pages, single space) handout that captures your analysis and links the reading to other readings or criticism. Think of this as providing your colleagues

materials they can use on an oral or qualifying exam should they write about the article, author, or chapter. Plan to present your materials and lead the discussion of this reading for 30 to 45 minutes so we have time to discuss the other readings scheduled for that class. Finally, if you can connect the reading you are presenting to the other readings scheduled for that day so as to facilitate a coherent class discussion, that would be good.

Research Proposal
This course values sustained inquiry into an area of exploration as a method to embed a student into a scholarly field, but we also must be realistic about what can be accomplished in 15 weeks. As such, all students will submit a research proposal that outlines a prospective project in the field of professional writing that is feasible in scope, relevant to the subject areas covered in class, and befitting of the student's abilities and academic or nonacademic trajectories. Ph.D. students might wish to craft a proposal that works as first step towards developing a dissertation prospectus or journal article. M.A. students might wish to craft a proposal that serves as the outline for their thesis. Certificate students might wish to craft a proposal that serves as the genesis of a white paper[2] that could be submitted in their workplace industry. Regardless of the end goal, all research proposals must have the following elements:
    —Abstract: Condensed description of the proposed research.
    —Introduction: Contextual statement or vignette of proposed research.
    —Literature Review: In-depth exploration of relevant theories and prior work.
    —Artifacts: Statement or list of the things to be studied.
    —Methodologies/Methods: Specified articulation of how you will study those things.
    —Statement of Importance: Prescient argument for what research might contribute.
    —Timeline: Feasible, appropriate timeline for when the research will be completed.
All elements of the research proposal will be covered and workshopped in class to varying extents.

Book Review
Ph.D. students will write a review of a book in their related area of research for the semester. Suggested books can be found in the respective area lists. Book reviews will be between 1500 and 2000 words in length and will be submitted for publication by the end of the semester at a relevant and appropriate journal. Reviews are the best way to get your publishing feet wet and are important genres for building credibility in the field.

_____

[2] Students enrolled in this course without any interest in staying in academia or pursuing an academic career might wish to compose a document more amendable to workplace audiences: a white paper, which is an authoritative document explaining—and even sometimes advocating for a specific approach to—a complex topic to a given stakeholder or audience for the purpose of informing future decision-making. Students selecting this option will need to select what kind of problem is in need of solving and which audience will be reading this report. The overall challenge of composing a white paper is anticipating the informational needs of the given audience and presenting the information in the most appropriate and engaging way.

Schedule

All students can expect to read an average of approximately 80-100 pages of scholarship per week for class and should plan accordingly. In return, I promise to cover and integrate each reading on the syllabus so you are not reading material that will not be covered in class or that is an outlier to critical class discussion.

August 29 | Week I
Beginning *In Situ*: Three Problems to Be Solved

Before class begins, I want all students to read through the first chapters of the three monographs we'll be covering this semester. There are many ways to introduce students to a field of study and I think that starting with professional and technical writing research *in situ* is as good as any:

> —Simmons, *Participation and power*, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-24).
> —Spinuzzi, *Tracing genres through organizations*, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-24).
> —Potts, *Social media in disaster response*, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-17).

Beginning the course this way also sets the tone for the type of research students will be doing throughout the semester: sustained, critical inquiry into a site, case, or event. Also, don't forget to read the opening introduction to the *Solving Problems* collection, as it helps give some framing to the nature of the field as one concerned with, well, you guessed it, solving problems:

> —Johnson-Eilola, J., & Selber, S. A. (2013). Introduction. In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. A. Selber (Eds.), *Solving problems in technical communication* (1-14). Chicago: Chicago UP.

September 5 | Week II (No Meeting)
Origin Stories and the Insistence of Humanism

Having been introduced to three distinct research studies by key scholars in the field, let's take some time and understand the historicity of the field and how that historicity informs the boundaries, artifacts, and identities of technical communication today:

> —Miller, C. R. (1979). A humanistic rationale for technical writing. *College English, 40*(6): 610-617.
> —Connors, R. (1982). The rise of technical writing instruction in America. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 12*(4): 329-52.
> —Rutter, R. (1991). History, rhetoric, and humanism: Toward a more comprehensive definition of technical communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 21*(2): 133-53.
> —Longo, B., & Fountain, T. K. (2013). What can history teach us about technical communication? In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. Selber (Eds.), *Solving problems in technical communication* (165-86). Chicago: Chicago UP.

During this week, we'll seek to answer the question: Why is it vital to understand the history of the field in order to participate meaningfully within it?

September 12 | Week III
Toward a More Comprehensive Lay of the Land
Now, we'll engage with the following four pieces to get a sense of where the field locates itself now (or, at least in the twenty-first century); all pieces try and capture the field in distinctly different ways. Be attentive to how the histories and discussions above inform the works below:

—Sullivan, P., & Porter, J. (1993). Remapping curricular geography: Professional writing in/and English. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 7*(4): 389-422.
—Selfe, R. J., & Selfe, C. L. (2013). What are the boundaries, artifacts, and identities of technical communication? In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. Selber (Eds.), *Solving problems in technical communication* (15-49). Chicago: Chicago UP.
—Rude, C. (2009). Mapping the research questions in technical communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 23*(2): 174-215.
—Hart-Davidson, W. (2001). The core competencies of technical communication. *Technical Communication, 48*(2): 145-155.

In all, weeks II and III of the semester will be spent having you acquaint yourself with the historical narratives of the field as a way to better understand the field's current state today.

September 19 | Week IV
From Audience to User: Rhetoric(al) Theory and Ethics
It should be apparent by now that professional writing is an inherently rhetorical enterprise, not only because most influential players in the field have academic backgrounds in rhetoric but also because the field emerged out of writing classrooms, the study of human-computer/technology interaction, workplace communication, and risk/uncertainty communication. This week we will explore the more explicit connections that exist between rhetoric and professional writing and will do so by exploring topics most relevant to rhetoric, with a particular focus on audience.

—Johnson, R. R. (1998). *User-centered technology: A rhetorical theory for computers and other mundane artifacts*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (pp. 17-42).
—Porter, J. E. (2013). How can rhetoric theory inform the practice of technical communication? In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. Selber (Eds.), *Solving problems in technical communication* (125-45). Chicago: Chicago UP.
—Slack, J. D., Miller, D. J., & Doak, J. (1993). The technical communicator as author: Meaning, power, authority. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 7*(1), 12-36.
—Katz, S. B. (1992). The ethic of expediency: Classical rhetoric, technology, and the Holocaust. *College English, 54*(3), 255-275.

September 26 | Week V
The Invisibility of Ideology and Institutions
There is a common trope that pervades a considerable amount of literature in professional writing: invisibility. This is because communication in technical and

scientific contexts, as we discussed in Slack et al., is often seen merely as a neutral conduit. Much theoretical work in professional writing then is aimed at uncovering, at making more explicit the ideological power frameworks embedded within our seemingly invisible material-discursive infrastructures.

—Barton, B. F., & Barton, M. S. (1993). Ideology and the map: Toward a postmodern visual design practice. In *Central works in technical communication*, Ed. J. Johnson-Eilola and S. Selber, 232-253.

—Selfe, C. L., & Selfe, R. J. (1994). The politics of the interface: Power in its exercise in electronic contact zones. *College Composition and Communication, 45*(4), 480-504.

—Bazerman, C. (1988). *Shaping written knowledge: The genre and activity of the experimental article in science*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. pp. 3-17.

Below is a fascinating article similar to Katz's other work listed above that is not required reading but might serve as an interesting example—indeed a more contemporary example—at the invisible ideological forces of our writing technologies:

—Moses, M. G. & Katz, S. B. (2006). The phantom machine: The invisible ideology of email (a cultural critique). In *Critical power tools: Technical communication and cultural studies*, Eds. J. B. Scott, B. Longo, & K. V. Wills. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (pp. 71-105)

The final piece in the required readings above, Bazerman's chapter from his book, articulates an understanding of writing that acknowledges the socially-conditioned nature of language but takes it not in the direction of nihilism but rather in the direction of opportunity. He writes, "the writer is always looking with delight and surprise at what can be done with this fallen state" (p. 13). This symbolizes the turn we now make in the semester: not just how to critique but then also what can we *do* with critique to make practicable, positive changes.

October 3 | Week VI
Participation and Power
This week we will carry over what we learned about the connections between rhetoric and technical communication and focus solely on W. Michele Simmons' monograph, *Participation and Power: Civic Discourse in Environmental Policy Decisions*. We will think about publics, discourse, access, power, and the role of technical communicators in public discourse and technology and how her choice of methodology helps "uncover."

— Simmons, W. M. (2007). *Participation and power: Civic discourse in environmental policy decisions*. SUNY Series, Studies in Scientific and Technical Communication. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

This meeting will also have a brief lecture on the methodologies of institutional critique and participatory action research, as discussed and deployed in the following pieces (students are *not required* to read these pieces):

—Porter, J. E., Sullivan, P., Blythe, S., Grabill, J. T., & Miles, L. (2000). Institutional critique: A rhetorical methodology for change. *College Composition and Communication, 51*, 610-642.

—Britt, E. C. (2006). The rhetorical work of institutions. In *Critical power tools: Technical communication and cultural studies*, Eds. J. B. Scott, B. Longo, & K. V. Wills. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (pp. 133-150)

October 10 | Week VII (No Meeting)
Fall Holiday
There are no readings or assignments for this week.

October 17 | Week VIII
Methods v. Methodologies
Thus far we have been briefly exposed to the methodologies and methods involved in institutional critique. This week we will take a more in-depth look into how the field of professional writing conceives of research and how research methods are used as both disciplinary identity markers and tools for social practice (*praxis*).
    —Sullivan, P. A., & Porter, J. E. (1997). *Opening spaces: Writing technologies and critical research practices.* Greenwich, CT: Ablex. Excerpts.
    —Herndl, C., & Nahrwold, C. A. (2000). Research as social practice: A case study of research on technical and professional communication. *Written Communication, 17*(2), 258-296.
    —Blythe, S., Grabill, J. T., & Riley, K. (2008). Action research and wicked environmental problems: Appropriate roles for researchers in professional communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 22*(3), 272-298.
I am also sharing here the short introductions to the two special issues in research methods in *TCQ*. These, while not required reading, will help give signposts in the way the field has evolved methodologically.
    —Goubill-Gambrell, P. (1998). Guest editor's column. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 7*, 5-7.
    —McNely, B., Spinuzzi, C., & Teston, C. (2015). Contemporary research methodologies in technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 24*, 1-13.
And here is one very cool, still-developing research method called visual ethnography (again, *not* required reading):
    —McNely, B., Gestwicki, P., Gelms, B., & Burke, A. (2013). Spaces and surfaces of invention: A visual ethnography of game development. *Enculturation, 15*. Retrieved from enculturation.net/visual-ethnography.
In all, this week will help students understand how to intellectually position their own research project and how to identify their own methodologies and methods best deployed to achieve their intended goal.

October 24 | Week IX
Working Contexts: A Matter of Scope
This week we will become more familiar with the second monograph on our list: Spinuzzi's *Tracing Genres through Organizations*. We will be covering the first part of the

text for this week, not the entire monograph (pay close attention to the page range covered this week, as indicated at the end of the citation below). This text enacts a sociocultural approach to studying organizations (as defined in McNely et al.'s [2015] special issue introduction above) and moves us forward in understanding how users, technologies, and theories are all enmeshed in the same environments and need to be "traced" to be better understood. Before that, however, read through his piece in chapter 11 of our edited collection, *Solving Problems.*

—Spinuzzi, C. (2013). How can technical communicators study work contexts? In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. Selber (Eds.), *Solving problems in technical communication* (262-284). Chicago: Chicago UP.

— Spinuzzi, C. (2003). *Tracing genres through organizations: A sociocultural approach to information design.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 25-58, 113-158.

October 31 | Week X
Information Design and UX: Becoming a User
Students can breathe easier now; we will be taking a break from Spinuzzi for a week to focus instead on information design and UX—both critical components to but not the cruxes of Spinuzzi's work. We will specifically be exploring information design through the lens of user experience (UX), more specifically via a research project I currently have ongoing. First, read the following chapters in our collection.

—Schriver, K. (2013). What do technical communicators need to know about information design? In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. Selber (Eds.), *Solving problems in technical communication.* (386-427). Chicago: Chicago UP.

—Mirel, B. (2013). How can technical communicators evaluate the usability of artifacts? In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. Selber (Eds.), *Solving problems in technical communication.* (285-309). Chicago: Chicago UP.

Then, listen to the *99% Invisible* podcast titled "Butterfly Effects." Perhaps peruse Whitney Quesenbery's "Civic Design" website while you do so. (Both of these links are available on the course website reading list.) Then, complete the UX test accessible by clicking on the link to this week's post on the course website. Our goal here is to make connections to Simmons' work on risk communication and the literature from week IV on better understanding the positionality of the user in the design of interactive technologies.

November 7 | Week XI
Constructing and Comprehending Complexity
Now back to Spinuzzi. This week we will finish off his monograph, paying very close attention to the larger implications his findings more than how we can potentially replicate this in our own research. I am also having you read Dorothy Winsor's work on the Challenger disaster not only because it adds another layer of complexity to Spinuzzi's work but because next week we will be moving from the mundane to the massive.

—Spinuzzi, C. (2003). *Tracing genres through organizations: A sociocultural approach to information design.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 159-224.

—Winsor, D. (1990). The construction of knowledge in organizations: Asking the right questions about the Challenger. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 4,* 7-20.

November 14 | Week XII
From the Mundane to the Massive: On the Value of Disasters
The thing about complex systems is that they have an inherent quality of malfunction. Accidents are, according to theorist Charles Perrow, "normal" in the sense that they are inevitably concomitant with our everyday technologies. For the field of professional writing, analyzing the precipitation and aftermath of disasters has provided seminal literature that provides insight into the black boxes of organizations and systems.

—Dombrowski, P. M. (1992). Challenger and the social contingency of meaning: Two lessons for the technical communication classroom. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 1,* 73-86.

—Gross, A. G., Walzer, A. (1997). The Challenger disaster and the revival of rhetoric in organizational life. *Argumentation 11,* 75-93.

—Herndl, C. G., Fennell, B. A., & Miller, C R. (1991). Understanding failures in organizational discourse: The accident at Three Mile Island and the shuttle Challenger disaster. In C. Bazerman & J. Paradis (Eds.), *Textual dynamics of the professions.* (279-305). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

While not required reading, here are two pieces—one from yours truly—that examine the communication of disaster to public audiences using the "accident report" genre of technical writing, one piece on the genre of apology in the Toyota crisis, and one piece on translating these ideas into classroom projects.

—Dragga, S. & Voss, D. (2003). Hiding humanity: Verbal and visual ethics in accident reports. *Technical Communication, 50*(1), 61-82.

—Richards, D. (Forthcoming). Reconstituting causality: Accident reports as posthuman documentations. Chapter 7. In D. Ross (Ed.), *Hot topics: Common topics of environmental rhetoric*. (N.p.). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Series: Studies in Technical Communication, Rhetoric, and Culture.

—Choi, J. & Chung, W. (2013). Analysis of the interactive relationship between apology and product involvement in crisis communication: An experimental study on the Toyota recall crisis. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 27*(1), 3-31.

November 21 | Week XIII
On Rhetorical Agency
Ultimately disasters prove to be such fertile research areas for professional writing because they afford the field the opportunity to discuss one of the most complex, elusive, urgent, and germane topics in rhetoric and professional writing: agency. While agency has been a contentious rhetorical topic since Gorgias delivered his *Encomium of*

Helen in ancient Athens, the influx of computer technologies in our increasingly networked world have challenged how we understand how we make meaning in complex human-nonhuman networks. This week explores the contentious, elusive notion of agency from a variety of perspectives and through several examples.

—Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant mater: A political ecology of things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Excerpts.

—Geisler, C. (2004). How ought we to understand the concept of rhetorical agency? Report from ARS. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly, 34*(3), 9-17.

—Wolford, R. (2016). When a woman owns the farm: A case for diachronic and synchronic rhetorical agency. *Enculturation, 22*. Retrieved from enculturation.net/when-a-woman-owns-the-farm.

In addition to these pieces, I am also going to ask that you listen to Malcolm Gladwell's podcast episode titled "Blame Game," part of his new podcast *Revisionist History*. This is accessible from the reading list under "Revisionist History." The non-required readings for this week are as follows:

—Miller, C. R. (2007). What can automation tell us about agency? *Rhetoric Society Quarterly, 37*(2), 137-157.

—Herndl, C., & Licona, A. C. (2007). Shifting agency: Agency, *kairos*, and the possibilities of social action. In Zachary, M. & Thralls, C. (Eds.), *Communicative practices in workplaces and the professions: Cultural perspectives on the regulation of discourse and organizations,* (133-154). Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing Company, Inc.

—Walsh, L. (2016). The great chain of being: Manifesto on the problem of agency in science communication. *POROI, 12*(1).

November 28 | Week XIV
Experience Architects and the Act of (Re)Building

In the spirit of the Bazerman quote from week V, those in professional writing not only concern themselves with critique but with action—again, *praxis*. Lest we get caught up in a fruitless dead end of arguments about agency, we will read through the entirety of Potts' monograph *Social Media in Disaster Response*. Using methodologies we have covered thus far, such as Actor-network Theory (ANT), and principles of UX discussed earlier in the course, Potts articulates how despite our ruined circumstances we can still (re)build and help those in need operating from a critical foundation in the field.

—Potts, L. (2014). *Social media in disaster response: How experience architects can build for participation*. ATTW Book Series in Technical and Professional Communication. New York: Routledge.

This work culminates much of what we have talked about this semester; discussion will then be aimed at synthesis of these topics.

December 5 | Week XV
Origin Stories and the Insistence of Posthumanism
We began this semester with professional writing's insistence that it is and indeed always has been a humanistic enterprise. This helped justify its place in the English department, as Carolyn Miller argued, and helped build a core expertise in applied rhetoric that helped demarcate its institutional emplacement and define its research questions. Now, given the complicated questions of rhetorical agency made even more so by infusions of posthuman and sociocultural theories in the field of professional writing, we begin to see a new insistence emerge, one that will frame the future of scholarship in the field for the foreseeable future: the insistence of posthumanism. The readings for this week entertain such a future and introduce ideas that already have had an effect on the field moving in this direction. (Do note that Latour is not a scholar in the field of professional writing but has quickly become one of the most pervasive interdisciplinary theorists informing our theories and practices.)

—Mehlenbacher, B. (2013). What is the future of technical communication? In J. Johnson-Eilola & S. Selber (Eds.), *Solving problems in technical communication.* (187-208). Chicago: Chicago UP.

—Latour, B. (2004). Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern. *Critical Inquiry, 30*, 225-248.

—Johnson, Eilola, J. (1996). Relocating the value of work: Technical communication in a post-industrial age. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 5*(3), 245-70.

With most of your research proposals complete or nearing completion, these readings are not necessarily aimed at adding more sources to your literature review but rather to motivate and inspire you about the directions—and the social value of those directions—of professional writing moving forward and your potential place within it.