



MATC Portfolio Exam

REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS ESSAY

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Master of Arts in Technical Communication (MATC) program at Texas State University (TXST) has provided me with an all-encompassing curriculum that provides theoretical knowledge and practical experience to develop the skills I need for effective communication in technical fields. In addition to traditional technical writing, the MATC program covers various subjects such as UX/UI design, instructional design, web development, rhetoric, behavioral psychology, social psychology, graphic design, and digital media.

My program began with ENG 5311: Foundations in Technical Communication, a course that introduced me to theoretical approaches and rhetorical principles that apply to various writing activities in technical fields. It explores the role of technology in enhancing communication while addressing practical writing expectations of professional communicators. My potential career paths as a graduate student include roles such as instructional designer, experience designer, technical writer, contract negotiator, information developer, data analyst, content editor, testing technician, and copywriter.

My courses within the MATC curriculum focused on several broad areas of scholarship:

- Rhetorical Theory
- Technical Communication and Culture
- Visual Rhetoric, New Media, and User-Centered Design.

The MATC program prepared me for industry positions in technical writing, editing, and management and served as a solid foundation for my consideration of further graduate studies. The MATC program's interdisciplinary approach and emphasis on diverse communication made it an ideal choice for me to seek to excel in the field of technical communication. The projects I will be demonstrating my development in the MATC program include:

- [Short Essay: Analysis of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* by George Campbell](#)
- [Short Essay: Development of Non-Verbal Communication](#)
- [Presentation: Continual Innovation: The Evolving Field of Technical Communication](#)
- [Digital Video Content: Exploration of Software Technology](#)
- [Document Design Project](#)

Application of Rhetorical and Technical Communication Theory in Various Projects

During my experience in the MATC program, I have studied and worked on many kinds of projects. These projects have included learning how technical communicators use words to persuade, making writing clear and accurate, understanding digital media theories, and practicing editing videos. Combining rhetorical theory with hands-on projects taught me how technical communication helps us understand and create different media.

II. UNDERSTANDING RHETORICAL THEORY IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

I have gained a solid foundation in rhetorical theory and mastered effective research strategies. These skills have enabled me to blend theoretical knowledge with practical experience, improving my skills in technical communication.

Exploring ENG: 5383: Rhetorical Theory in Technical Communication

Rhetorical theory is the tool I developed for crafting clear, persuasive, and engaging messages in technical communication. The core elements of rhetorical theory are ethos, pathos, and logos, which are practical for applying to technical writing.

- **Ethos** establishes credibility when technical writers need to convey trustworthiness.
- **Pathos** appeals to emotions and recognizes that human readers need a connection to content.
- **Logos** emphasizes logical reasoning so that information is convincing.

Effective technical communication requires researching your audience to understand their needs, level of knowledge, and expectations. In addition, technical communicators need to be familiar with the audience's technical proficiency and cognitive biases. In the MATC program, I have learned to create academic essays, digital video productions, presentations, user manuals, technical documentation, and proposals with an audience-centric approach by tailoring messages to the audience's needs.

George Campbell's 18th-century perspectives opened my eyes to crafting language to fit different situations. His book *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* showed me that even though technical writing is not often as emotionally charged as poetry or art, presenting information can still be powerful and memorable. Campbell's insights have influenced me to strive for clarity and impact in my writing, even when the topics are complex.

This understanding of rhetorical principles has also enhanced my approach to the visual aspects of technical documents. I have seen the communication strategy's importance of design, layout, and user-friendliness. Recognizing these elements helps me make documents that communicate clearly and engage the reader. The age-old concepts of rhetoric have given me a valuable lens through which I view the balance of art and science in effective technical communication, ensuring that the materials I produce resonate with the audience and meet their needs.

Rhetoric recognizes the importance of the audience. Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* highlights the importance of sympathy. "Sympathy is that quality for the soul which renders it susceptible of almost any passion by communication from the bosom of another. Sympathy is one main engine by which the orator operates on the passions, and whatever weakens sympathy must do the speaker unutterable prejudice in respect of his power over the passions of his

audience" (Burks, 1983). In technical communication, sympathy can persuade the audience to connect emotionally and build trust with the communicator. However, using sympathy needs to be balanced with researched evidence in technical communication. Invoking sympathy, a form of pathos, is a tool to connect with the audience emotionally and make the context more relatable.

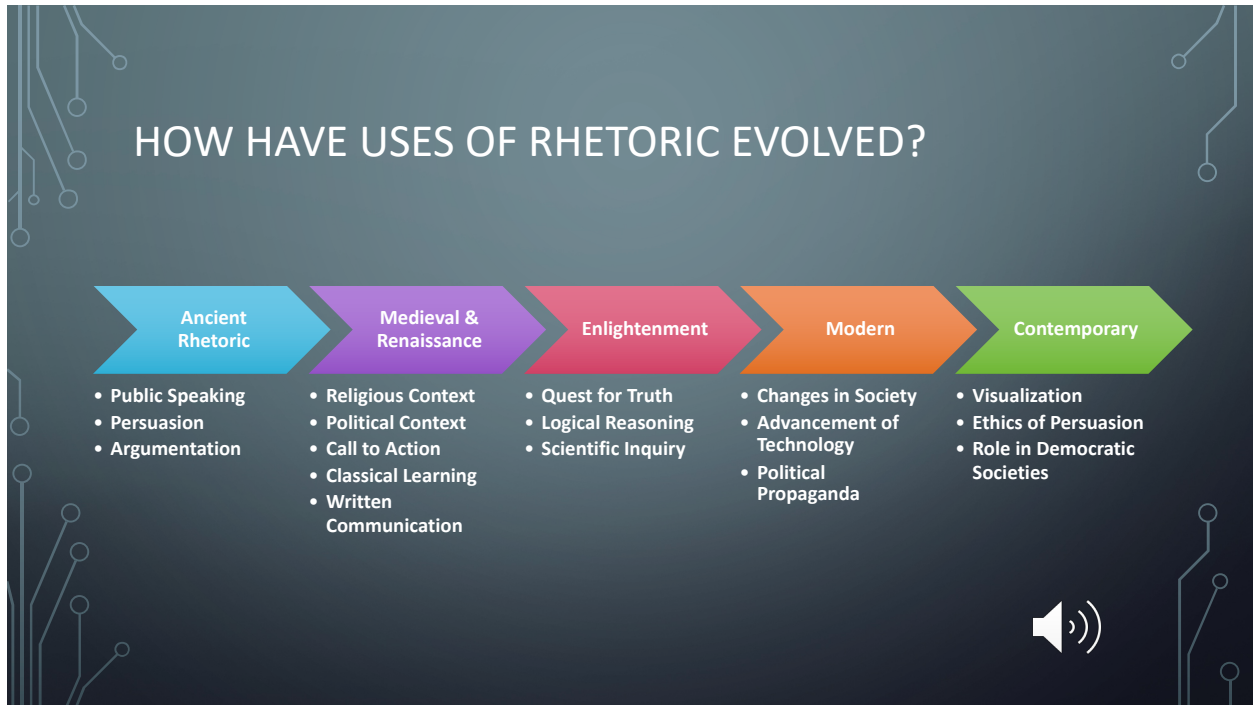
III. History, Current Issues, Scholarship, Research, and Cultural Concerns

Technical communication is a purely functional discipline focused on conveying information clearly and accurately. However, like all forms of communication, it is shaped by historical and cultural aspects. As a technical communicator, I must be aware of these larger contexts.

Exploration of Historical and Cultural Aspects of Technical Communication

My studies within the MATC program focused on the evolution of technical communication, tracing its roots and cultural impact. This study shed light on how language works within society and its connection to power dynamics. Through rhetorical theory, I gained a framework for dissecting the methods and ideas behind technical communication. Learning about its historical journey and cultural ties helped me understand rhetoric's significant influence on the field's past and its potential to shape its future.

Rhetoric evolution in technical communication has transformed immensely from its classical origins in ancient Greece to modern-day applications. As part of my coursework in ENG 5383, I created a presentation on Walter Jackson Ong, highlighting the progression of rhetoric. This presentation included a detailed chart showcasing the transformation from ancient techniques to the sophisticated approaches used in today's diverse fields of study.



This overview of rhetoric's historical and cultural evolution illustrates how the field has adapted to changing societal contexts and technological advances. From its ancient Greek roots in public speaking and persuasion through the religious and political emphases of the Middle Ages, the renewed classical learning of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment's focus on reason and truth, and the modern era's emphasis on mass media and digital communication, rhetoric has continually evolved. My ability to adapt to different contexts is essential as a modern technical communicator. As I evolve as a technical communicator, I will be able to create communication in response to emerging technologies and changing user needs with the insights from my study of rhetoric in both theory and practice.

In my graduate studies, I have noticed limitations in applying the philosophy of rhetoric to technical communications. Our issues, such as cultural and language differences, make complex jargon ineffective in getting information to an audience. Good communication establishes trust and gives the communicator credibility. I have also learned that emotions,

personal beliefs, and cultural values influence communication. The challenge has been to balance rational communication with emotional intelligence.

How Research Methods Were Applied to Understand Current Issues in the Field

In ENG 5340, Discourse Analysis, I was introduced to theories and methodologies for studying human discourse or language in action. In this course, I developed skills to analyze the meanings of both verbal and nonverbal communication in shaping interactions between the technical writer and the intended audience. Discourse analysis has helped me understand how language reflects and shapes our audience.

In ENG 5340, my team used advertisements for technical communication graduate programs as a structure to break down the language and visual rhetoric to reveal the ads' underlying meaning, assumptions, and intended impact. We used discourse analysis to help identify any deceptive practices within the advertisements that could undermine the effectiveness and ethical standing. This in-depth analysis taught me to scrutinize language and use critical thinking to analyze the advertisement and the broader cultural message. Discourse analysis has taught me to use communication with empathy and the ability to consider multiple angles, which have led me to a greater sense of ethical responsibility.

Through discourse analysis, I also developed skills in qualitative research. We had diverse groups of technical communicators and users to explore the experiences and perspectives of the advertisements we studied. I spent time observing best practices in technical writing to gather insight into the real-world setting of technical communication graduate program settings. Our group used each other's documentation to compare qualitative data and notes to identify recurring themes related to the advertisements. Our comparisons revealed patterns and deeper insights into the potential for new approaches to writing and designing future advertisements.

IV. Reflective Analysis on Internship for ENG 5312: Editing the Professional Publication

My coursework in ENG 5312: Editing for the Professional Publication and ENG 5335: Technical Editing gave me the experience of processing, editing, designing, layout, and proofreading a publication's quality and impact. I took these two courses in my first semester in the MATC program at Texas State University.

The essence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) became a cornerstone of my growth throughout these courses. My journey in enhancing critical thinking was steeped in the DEI perspective, allowing for a distinct understanding and application in all my scholarly endeavors. My team's research was about depth and breadth, ensuring representation and voice to diverse narratives. Moving forward in my future in technical communication, I will purposefully advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion principles to support and reflect our shared human experiences.

Cuentos and Testimonies, a journal published to demonstrate diversity and inclusion at Texas State University, serves as a vibrant platform that speaks to the ethos of DEI by inspiring others to foster deep intercultural understanding. Dr. Pimentel and Dr. Williams of the MATC program in the Texas State University English Department have prioritized a publication that centers on the narrations and stories of underrepresented groups, and their journal serves as a model for other publications and promotes understanding and empathy within the academic publishing community. This publication has been pivotal in breaking down barriers and cultivating an environment where diversity of thought is accepted and celebrated. My communication skills, thus enriched by DEI, underscore an unwavering commitment to inclusivity, a steadfast dedication to equity, and a profound recognition of the myriad of

individuals and situations that enrich our discourse. These lessons are deeply ingrained in me, and I will carry them forward after graduation.

Complementing this immersive experience are my pursuits in ENG 5314: Technical Editing and ENG 5383: Rhetorical History. The technical editing course has been crucial in helping me refine punctuation and grammar intricacies, while the rhetorical history course has enriched my work with eloquence and perspective. These academic pursuits, enriched by DEI principles, equipped me with the tools to communicate and advocate for a tapestry of voices effectively, thus further embedding inclusivity and equity into every aspect of my work.

Personal Demonstration of Skills

Throughout my ENG 5312: Editing for the Professional Publication internship, I demonstrated proper syntax in my sentences and paragraphs to present material as a professional communicator. I followed the punctuation rules and committed to including sources to support my work. As a team member who has collaborated on several projects, I demonstrated my ability to review and proofread our assignments so that errors can be corrected.

In my ENG 5312 and ENG 5335 coursework, I demonstrated writing with purpose, audience, topic, and context. These components of rhetorical theory have been enforced to work with my team to make better choices for our projects. Our team was in constant communication with each other, and together, we worked to understand that, in this course, rhetoric meant that we were working with a journal that helped people identify with one another.

The foundational principles of DEI were not isolated but were intricately linked with and enhanced by the technical skills and historical insights gained from these courses. This holistic educational experience empowered me to contribute to an academic and societal dialogue that

honors the full spectrum of human experience, fostering an environment of understanding and equality that I am committed to advancing in all my future work as a technical communicator.

Implications of Ethical Issues for Technical Communicators

As an intern involved in technical editing, I have understood how crucial the cultural context is in technical communication. I learned the importance of recognizing how cultural differences affect communication and the ethical implications of striving for honest, cross-cultural communication. Being a technical editing intern taught me that technical communicators must carefully present information accurately, making it accessible and sensitive to different cultures. We should always aim to be truthful and meet high ethical standards, ensuring our work is easy for everyone to understand.

Working with *Cuentos & Testimonies*, a journal focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), was a big part of my experience in the MATC program. Our project in this course showed me the value of making the academic community more inclusive. My team and I worked hard to set and follow ethical guidelines for our research and publication process, which helped build trust in our academic circles. Our work highlighted the need for diversity in editorial boards, fair review processes, and training to recognize our biases. I have seen firsthand the benefits of promoting DEI in journals, like fairness, inclusivity, and bringing in various perspectives.

My experiences as an intern and a graduate student have shaped me into a writer who understands the importance of DEI. This mix of learning and doing has driven home the value of DEI principles, making me a writer committed to using my skills to support these values.

The MATC program has highlighted how essential it is for me as a technical communicator to embrace and apply DEI principles in my work. Being part of *Cuentos &*

Testimonies was a clear example of how scholarly journals can help push these ideas forward in the academic world and beyond. As I move forward in my career, the lessons I have learned will guide me in creating content that's not only informative and accessible but also inclusive and reflective of diverse audiences.

IV. ENG 5314: VIDEO PRODUCTION FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

ENG 5314: Technical Video Editing taught me to create professional-quality digital videos. Specifically, this course covered the following phases of video writing and production:

- Planning informative and instructional videos.
- Scriptwriting and storyboarding.
- Directing, shooting, and filming
- Video editing and distribution (focusing on sharing the video on the Web)

I recognize the power of video production in simplifying complex information for an audience. Through various projects, I have developed video techniques to help the audience comprehend information through visual demonstrations, writing narratives, and including interactive elements that create an immersive experience to teach information to viewers.

Modalities of Accessibility in Online Technical Documentation

In ENG 5314: Technical Video Editing, I acquired the skills to produce technical videos. With a deep commitment to accessibility as a foundation of effective communication, I set out to create a video that explained and exemplified the modalities of accessibility in our field. I chose a foundational and forward-thinking topic: the modalities of accessibility in technical communication. This subject is important because it covers how information can be understandable and usable for all audiences, regardless of ability. My video demonstrates the

best practices in communicating through new media—a response to evolving technology and the nature of media consumption.

To accomplish this, I began by scriptwriting, making sure the language was inclusive and the message was clear. I included closed captions and selected imagery representing different abilities and universal design principles. I also inserted voiceovers and on-screen text to cater to different learning preferences and help with comprehension.

I edited the video to include various visual aids, such as diagrams and bullet points, that would support the viewer's understanding of the technical concepts. Additionally, I incorporated closed captioning to underscore the importance of making content accessible to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

Throughout the video, I utilized new genre frameworks suitable for multimedia learning. This involved creating interactive elements within the video that allowed for user engagement and a better grasp of the content. By including these elements, I created a multi-modal resource that can be a practical guide for technical communicators to make their work accessible to a broader audience.

These techniques demonstrated not just the theory behind accessibility in technical communication but also delivered a practical example of how to implement these practices effectively in video format. This project was a learning experience demonstrating how technical information can be made engaging and accessible through thoughtful video production.

Digital Media Theory

My portfolio is a component of my graduation requirements for the MATC program, scheduled for completion in May 2024. My online platform demonstrates my technical communication skills and previous work, targeting future employers and peers within the

technical communication field. As I continue to evolve and gain experience, I will update the portfolio to reflect my growing skills. I highlight my digital content work from past experiences and graduate school projects as I seek employment opportunities.

I created my portfolio through my coursework in ENG 5314: Digital Media Theory. My experience in this course shaped my approach to developing my website and gave me a foundation for understanding digital content creation and design strategies. ENG 5314 equipped me with the technical know-how for my evolving passion for digital media content creation.

V. THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

My readings and online lessons taught me to prioritize user-centered content to excel in technical communication. To create an impactful portfolio, I applied best practices by crafting user-centric content that resonates with my target audience. I emphasized good writing practices in my blog posts, such as maintaining correct grammar and punctuation, to ensure clarity and professionalism in my work.

Continuous Education With External Resources

To help me master technical communication genres, I have utilized various resources like The Society for Technical Communication, Coursera, Adobe Cloud, and LinkedIn Learning to enhance my skills. Outside resources have provided structured online courses, insightful books, and engaging online communities that have been instrumental in developing my technical communication abilities.

An example of a course that helped me develop my portfolio was the LinkedIn Learning lesson on Creative Cloud Express (Cuevas, 2022), the perfect lesson on creating graphic designs with a purpose. I learned that things like color, font, and shapes are a form of communication. The audience has a psychological response to seeing content on a website. While using

WordPress, I worked with many different themes. Exploring these themes helped me get a great perspective on how different layouts made a distinct impression.

Ethical Issues and Implications for Technical Communication

In my technical communication master's program, I have understood that writing for a digital audience is not just about crafting clear and compelling content; it is about paying close attention to the ethical practices accompanying it. Ethics in technical communication should demonstrate a commitment to honesty, transparency, and respect for the audience.

Honesty is the bedrock of building trust with your audience. This means I will always focus on presenting accurate information and verifying facts before publication. Misinformation can have far-reaching consequences, so I must double-check sources and confirm that the content is reliability.

Transparency involves being open about any biases, the source of the information, and any interests that might influence the content. If I am discussing a product or service, I need to be upfront about the relationship with the entity that provides it, if any. Maintaining this level of clarity is essential in technical communication, where the line between information and persuasion can sometimes blur.

Respecting the audience encompasses considering their needs, wants, privacy, and data. In an era where personal information can be easily captured and misused, I must be vigilant about the data collected through my communications and how it is used. It is about asking for consent where necessary, being transparent about using cookies or tracking on a website, and safeguarding any personal information entrusted to me by users.

These principles guided me as I developed useful, engaging, and ethically sound content. By adhering to these ethical standards, I am committed to creating a space where my audience

can rely on the integrity of the information and engage with my content safely. It is about fostering a relationship of mutual respect and trust, ultimately the true mark of success in technical communication.

VII. CONCLUSION

Considering my educational experience through the master's program in Technical Communication at Texas State University, I have undergone significant growth in both theoretical understanding and practical skill set. The program has served as a personal and professional development workshop, improving my proficiency in diverse disciplines, including user experience and interface design, technical editing, website creation, and multimedia production. This development is deeply rooted in my grasp of rhetorical strategies. I am equipped and enthusiastic to implement this skillset, striving for innovation in technical communication. I will develop new approaches in this field, emphasizing inclusivity, exactness, and clarity to navigate the future terrain of both my academic goals and my professional trajectory.

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