
Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication

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[Print Version of Catalog](#) ■

School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication

Mission Statement

The School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication is a community committed to preparing its students — both writers and technical and scientific communicators — for lives of enlightened, global citizenship.

Goals

The goals of WRTC are to help students:

- Develop into accomplished writers and editors.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of communication based upon the principles of rhetoric.
- Develop proficiency in critical thinking, technological and analytical skills.
- Create for themselves an area of expertise applicable to work as professional communicators.

Career Opportunities

In the WRTC major, students learn the kinds of research, analytical and reasoning skills that will allow them to become successful professionals in a wide range of fields. WRTC graduates can expect career opportunities in writing, editing or production positions with a variety of business, educational or industry employers, including the computer hardware and software industry, law firms, journalism, health care providers, pharmaceutical manufacturers, education, engineering companies, publishing houses, environmental organizations, not-for-profit or political organizations and technical translation groups of multinational corporations.

Professional Activities and Organizations

Internships

The WRTC internship is a requirement for all B.A. and B.S. students. It allows students to utilize the preparation that they received from their WRTC coursework to design, write, edit and produce professional documents for internship providers in academia, business, industry and government. Information about internships may be obtained through the [WRTC website](#).

Lexia

Lexia is a student-run, online journal that publishes innovative student work in WRTC. Its mission is to publish a range of quality texts that best represent the work of WRTC students and the disciplines of writing, rhetoric and technical communication. *Lexia* is created and managed by students enrolled in [WRTC 328](#). These practicum students develop the criteria used to evaluate essays, read and discuss each submission, and work individually with winning essayists to polish their work for publication online.

Pre-Law

Pre-law at JMU is not a major, minor or concentration, but a number of WRTC students elect to pursue law school after graduation. The director of WRTC serves the College of Arts and Letters as a pre-law adviser and can assist students in selecting courses that will best provide the intellectual challenge and skills necessary for success in law school.

STC Student Chapter

The Society for Technical Communication offers a unique opportunity for members to seek recognition for their work and obtain professional contacts. STC is comprised of over 23,000 individual members throughout the world, making it the largest organization of its kind. The James Madison University STC Student Chapter was established in the fall of 1999, offering students a venue for exploring networking and applied skills.

Service to the University

English as a Second Language

[WRTC 100](#) is available for English as a second language (ESL) students and others who wish to enhance their writing preparation prior to taking [WRTC 103](#).

Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies

WRTC faculty are active participants in creating and sustaining the interdisciplinary liberal studies (IDLS) major for teacher education students, K-8.

Honors Program

WRTC faculty regularly offer honors sections of [WRTC 103](#).

Madison Writing Awards

The Madison Writing Awards (MWA) is a university-wide competition that celebrates writing across the curriculum in all undergraduate academic programs. These awards reflect the commitment of James Madison University, the College of Arts and Letters, and the School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication to prepare students for educated and enlightened global citizenship through the outlets of writing and rhetoric. The MWA biennial awards ceremony features a showcase of winning pieces as well as the presentation of cash prizes.

Degree and Major Requirements

The study of writing, rhetoric and technical communication includes two concentrations in the undergraduate major: technical and scientific communication and writing and rhetoric. The WRTC major emphasizes scholarly, humanistic and social scientific perspectives on the function and application of communication technologies, with instruction in areas such as:

- literacy studies
- rhetorical traditions
- writing pedagogy
- editing
- website theory and design
- publications management
- knowledge and information management
- writing for professional communities such as government, medical, scientific and academic

In addition to offering students the rhetorical tools with which to excel as professional communicators, the B.A. and B.S. programs also prepare graduates for academic studies in writing, rhetoric and technical communication at the master's level as well as for professional programs such as law school.

The B.A. and B.S. programs in WRTC unite three disciplines into a flexible yet historically and theoretically grounded degree program. The WRTC degree teaches students to think in ways that cross disciplinary lines and to demonstrate accomplishment in multiple genres of writing, rhetoric and technical communication.

Students work with their WRTC advisers to design a program that fits their unique educational needs and career aspirations.

Course requirements differ between the B.A. and B.S. programs and students are advised to maintain regular contact with their WRTC adviser to ensure timely graduation. Requirements and eligible courses for the B.A. and B.S. in each of the two concentrations are outlined below.

Bachelor of Arts in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication

Degree Requirements

| Required Courses | Credit Hours |
|---|--------------|
| General Education ¹ | 41 |
| Foreign language classes (intermediate level required) ² | 0-14 |
| Philosophy course (in addition to General Education courses) | 3 |
| University electives | 25-39 |
| Major requirements | 37 |
| | <hr/> 120 |

1 The [General Education program](#) contains a set of requirements each student must fulfill. The number of credit hours necessary to fulfill these requirements may vary.

2 The foreign language requirement may be satisfied by successful completion of the second semester of the intermediate level (typically 232) of the student's chosen language or by placing out of that language through the [Department of Foreign Language, Literature and Cultures' placement test](#).

Bachelor of Science in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication

Degree Requirements

| Required Courses | Credit Hours |
|--|--------------|
| General Education ¹ | 41 |
| Quantitative requirement ² | 3 |
| Scientific literacy requirement ² | 3-4 |

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|----------------------|-------|
| University electives | 35-36 |
| Major requirements | 37 |
| | 120 |

1 The [General Education program](#) contains a set of requirements each student must fulfill. The number of credit hours necessary to fulfill these requirements may vary.

2 In addition to course work taken to fulfill General Education requirement.

Major Requirements

B.A. and B.S. students must complete 16 hours of core requirements.

| Major Requirements | Credit Hours |
|--|--------------|
| Core requirements | 16 |
| Concentration requirements | 12 |
| Students must choose a concentration in either technical and scientific communication or writing and rhetoric. | |
| WRTC electives | 9 |
| | 37 |

| Core Requirements | Credit Hours |
|---|--------------|
| WRTC 200 . Introduction to Studies in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 3 |
| WRTC 201 . Theory and Methods in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 3 |
| WRTC 300 . Professional Editing | 3 |
| WRTC 301 . Language, Law and Ethics | 3 |
| WRTC 495 . Internship in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 3 |
| WRTC 496 . Capstone in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 1 |
| | 16 |

Prerequisites

Prerequisites for most [WRTC 200](#) and above level courses require completion of [WRTC 200](#) and [WRTC 201](#). Students may enroll in some courses for which they have not taken the prerequisite courses with permission of the instructor.

Concentrations

All students must choose a concentration in either technical and scientific communication (TSC) or writing and rhetoric (WR). In addition to the 16 credit hours of core requirements, students must take an additional 21 credit hours of WRTC electives, 12 of which are concentration-specific.

Technical and Scientific Communication

All TSC concentrators must take [WRTC 350](#) and choose three additional WRTC courses from the following list of TSC electives. In addition, TSC concentrators must take one WR elective, one crossover elective and one community-based learning elective.

| TSC Concentration | Credit Hours |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
|--------------------------|---------------------|

Courses

| | |
|---|---|
| WRTC 350 . Foundations of Technical Communication | 3 |
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|-------------------------------|---|
| TSC Electives (Choose three): | 9 |
|-------------------------------|---|

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|--|--|
| WRTC 352 . Online Design I | |
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| WRTC 354 . Document Design | |
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| WRTC 356 . Web Theory and Design | |
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| WRTC 358 . Writing About Science and Technology | |
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| WRTC 450 . Digital Rhetoric | |
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| WRTC 452 . Online Design II | |
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| WRTC 454 . Publication Management | |
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| WRTC 456 . Usability Testing | |
|--|--|

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|---|--|
| WRTC 458 . Scientific and Medical Communication | |
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|----------------------------|---|
| WR Electives (Choose one): | 3 |
|----------------------------|---|

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|--|--|
| WRTC 330 . Rhetorical Analysis and Criticism | |
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| WRTC 332 . Computers and Writing | |
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| WRTC 334 . Introduction to Popular Writing | |
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|---|--|
| WRTC 336 . Tutoring Writing | |
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| WRTC 338 . Genre Theory | |
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| WRTC 340 . Writing as Leading | |
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| WRTC 342 . Writing Place | |
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[WRTC 430/SCOM](#)

[343](#). Contemporary Rhetorical Theory and Practice

[WRTC 432](#). Rhetoric of the Personal Narrative

[WRTC 434](#). Advanced Popular Writing

[WRTC 436](#). Teaching Writing

Crossover Electives

3

(Choose one):

[WRTC 310](#). Semiotics

[WRTC 312](#). Studies in Literacy

[WRTC 314](#). Writing in the Public Sphere

[WRTC 316](#). Research Methodologies in WRTC

[WRTC 318](#). Intercultural Professional

Communication

[WRTC 326/SCOM](#)

[354](#). Environmental Communication and Advocacy

[WRTC 328](#). Practicum in WRTC (1-3 credits)

[WRTC](#)

[410](#). Sociolinguistics

[WRTC 412](#). Language and Information

Management

[WRTC 414](#). Major

Theorists in WRTC

[WRTC 416/SCOM](#)

[465](#). Rhetoric of Environmental Science and Technology

[WRTC/SCOM/WGS](#)

[420](#). Feminist Rhetorics

[WRTC 426](#). Special Topics in Writing,

Rhetoric and Technical Communication

Community-Based

3

Learning Electives

(Choose one):

[WRTC 478](#). Writing in the Legal Professions

[WRTC 480](#). Writing for Business and Industry
[WRTC 482](#). Writing for Government
[WRTC 484](#). Writing for Nonprofits
[WRTC 486](#). Writing in the Community
[WRTC 488](#). Writing in the Health Sciences

Writing and Rhetoric Concentration

All writing and rhetoric (WR) concentrators must take [WRTC 330](#) and choose three additional WRTC courses from the following list of WR electives. In addition, WR concentrators must take one TSC elective, one crossover elective and one community-based learning elective.

| WR Concentration Courses | Credit Hours |
|---|---------------------|
| WRTC 330 . Rhetorical Analysis and Criticism | 3 |
| WR Electives (Choose three): | 9 |
| WRTC 332 . Computers and Writing | |
| WRTC 334 . Introduction to Popular Writing | |
| WRTC 336 . Tutoring Writing | |
| WRTC 338 . Genre Theory | |
| WRTC 340 . Writing as Leading | |
| WRTC 342 . Writing Place | |
| WRTC 430/SCOM 343 . Contemporary Rhetorical Theory and Practice | |
| WRTC 432 . Rhetoric of the Personal Narrative | |
| WRTC 434 . Advanced Popular Writing | |
| WRTC 436 . Teaching Writing | |
| TSC Electives (Choose one): | 3 |

[WRTC 350](#). Foundations
of Technical
Communication
[WRTC 352](#). Online
Design I
[WRTC 354](#). Document
Design
[WRTC 356](#). Web Theory
and Design
[WRTC 358](#). Writing
About Science and
Technology
[WRTC 450](#). Digital
Rhetoric
[WRTC 452](#). Online
Design II
[WRTC 454](#). Publication
Management
[WRTC 456](#). Usability
Testing
[WRTC 458](#). Scientific and
Medical Communication
Crossover Electives
(Choose one):
[WRTC 310](#). Semiotics
[WRTC 312](#). Studies in
Literacy
[WRTC 314](#). Writing in the
Public Sphere
[WRTC 316](#). Research
Methodologies in WRTC
[WRTC 318](#). Intercultural
Professional
Communication
[WRTC 326/SCOM
354](#). Environmental
Communication and
Advocacy
[WRTC 328](#). Practicum in
WRTC (Variable Credit
1-3)
[WRTC
410](#). Sociolinguistics
[WRTC 412](#). Language
and Information
Management
[WRTC 414](#). Major
Theorists in WRTC
[WRTC 416/SCOM
465](#). Rhetoric of

3

| | |
|---|----|
| Environmental Science and Technology WRTC/SCOM/WGS 420. Feminist Rhetorics WRTC 426 . Special Topics in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 3 |
| Community-Based Learning Electives (Choose one): WRTC 478 . Writing in the Legal Professions WRTC 480 . Writing for Business and Industry WRTC 482 . Writing for Government WRTC 484 . Writing for Nonprofits WRTC 486 . Writing in the Community WRTC 488 . Writing in the Health Sciences | |
| <hr/> | |
| | 21 |

Recommended Schedule for B.A. Majors

Students are encouraged to begin their WRTC course work as soon as possible in their degree plans. The following sample program of study illustrates how a WRTC major might earn a B.A. degree.

First Year

| First Semester | Credit Hours |
|--|--------------|
| Foreign language course ¹ | 3-4 |
| General | <u>9</u> |
| Education Cluster One General | <u>3</u> |
| Education Cluster Three | |
| <hr/> | |
| | 15-16 |

| Second Semester | Credit Hours |
|--|--------------|
| Foreign language course | 3-4 |
| WRTC 200 . Introduction to Studies in WRTC | 3 |
| General Education Cluster Three course | <u>3</u> |
| General Education courses | 6 |
| <hr/> | |
| | 15-16 |

Second Year

| First Semester | Credit Hours |
|--|--------------|
| Foreign language course | 0-3 |
| WRTC 201 . Theory and Methods in WRTC | 3 |
| B.A. Degree philosophy course | 3 |
| General Education Cluster Three course | <u>4</u> |
| General Education courses | 0-9 |
| <hr/> | |
| | 16 |

| Second Semester | Credit Hours |
|---|--------------|
| Foreign language course | 0-3 |
| WRTC 300 . Professional Editing | 3 |
| WRTC 301 . Language, Law and Ethics | 3 |
| WRTC concentration requirement: | 3 |
| WRTC 330 . Rhetorical Analysis and Criticism (for WR) | |
| WRTC 350 . Foundations of Technical Communication (for TSC) | |
| General Education course | 3 |
| University electives | 3 |
| <hr/> | |
| | 15-18 |

Third Year

| First Semester | Credit Hours |
|---|--------------|
| WRTC concentration-specific electives | 6 |
| General Education courses | 6 |
| University elective | 3 |
| <hr/> | |
| | 15 |

| Second Year | Credit Hours |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| WRTC concentration-specific elective | 3 |

| | |
|--|-------|
| WRTC elective | 3 |
| General Education courses | 3-6 |
| University electives | 6 |
| <hr/> | 15-18 |

Fourth Year

| First Semester | Credit Hours |
|----------------------|--------------|
| WRTC electives | 3-6 |
| University electives | 6-9 |
| <hr/> | 15-18 |

| Second Semester | Credit Hours |
|--|--------------|
| WRTC elective | 0-3 |
| WRTC 495 . Internship in WRTC | 3 |
| WRTC 496 . Capstone in WRTC | 1 |
| University electives | 9 |
| <hr/> | 15-16 |

1 Completion of an intermediate level foreign language is required for the B.A. degree (usually six hours if begun at the intermediate level) unless the language requirement is satisfied by an exemption test. In that case, university electives may be substituted for additional hours indicated as foreign language courses.

Recommended Schedule for B.S. Majors

Students are encouraged to begin their WRTC course work as soon as possible in their degree plans. The following sample program of study illustrates how a WRTC major might earn a B.S. degree.

First Year

| First Semester | Credit Hours |
|---|--------------|
| General Education Cluster One courses | <hr/> 9 |
| General Education Cluster Three courses | <hr/> 3-6 |
| General Education courses | 3 |
| <hr/> | 15-18 |

| Second Semester | Credit Hours |
|--|--------------|
| WRTC 200 . Introduction to Studies in WRTC | 3 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| WRTC 201 . Theory and Methods in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 3 |
| General Education Cluster Three courses | <u>3-4</u> |
| General Education courses | 6 |
| <hr/> | |
| | 15-16 |

Second Year

| First Semester | Credit Hours |
|--|--------------|
| WRTC 300 . Professional Editing | 3 |
| General Education Cluster Three course | <u>0-4</u> |
| General Education courses | 9-12 |
| <hr/> | |
| | 15-16 |

| Second Semester | Credit Hours |
|---|--------------|
| WRTC 301 . Language, Law and Ethics | 3 |
| WRTC concentration requirement: | 3 |
| WRTC 330 . Rhetorical Analysis and Criticism (for WR) | |
| WRTC 350 . Foundations of Technical Communication (for TSC) | |
| B.S. Quantitative requirement | 3 |
| General Education courses | 9 |
| <hr/> | |
| | 15-18 |

Third Year

| First Semester | Credit Hours |
|---|--------------|
| WRTC concentration-specific electives | 6 |
| B.S. Scientific Literacy requirement ¹ | 3 |
| University elective | 3 |
| <hr/> | |
| | 15 |

| Second Semester | Credit Hours |
|-----------------|--------------|
|-----------------|--------------|

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| WRTC concentration-specific elective | 3 |
| WRTC elective | 3 |
| University electives | 9 |
| <hr/> | 15 |

Fourth Year

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| First Semester | Credit Hours |
| WRTC elective | 3-6 |
| University electives | 9 |
| <hr/> | 15 |

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Second Semester | Credit Hours |
| WRTC electives | 3 |
| WRTC 495 . Internship in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 3 |
| WRTC 496 . Capstone in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 1 |
| University electives | 9 |
| <hr/> | 13-16 |

1 Completion of the B.S. degree requires a student to complete either a natural science or a social science course in addition to those required for the [General Education](#) program.

Minor Requirements

Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication Minor

The minimum requirement for a minor in WRTC is 18 credit hours.

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Minor Requirements | Credit Hours |
| WRTC 200 . Introduction to Studies in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 3 |
| WRTC 201 . Theory and Methods in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication | 3 |
| WRTC 300 . Professional Editing | 3 |
| WRTC 301 . Language, Law and Ethics | 3 |
| Choose any two WRTC electives | 6 |
| <hr/> | 18 |