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RPW

SURVIVAL

GUIDE



Tips
Tricks
Battle Plans
Bandages

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RPW Survival Guide

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A production of the Rhetoric and Professional Writing
Department at Saginaw Valley State University

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Enlistment



Welcome to the Department of Rhetoric and Professional Writing (RPW). This survival guide is designed to assist you through your Professional and Technical Writing major, minor, or even the lone class chosen to better your writing skills.

Within this document you will find the answers to all of your questions. If one question is missed, directories are included to guide you to the right person and the correct office.

If you are wondering about:

- what RPW and PTW are
- the benefits of the program

- what you will learn
- what you can do with this degree
- pairing a PTW major/minor with other disciplines
- course expectations
- resources available
- the faculty
- degree pathways
- university organizations
- internships
- what graduates have to say about the program

look no further – your survival is *guaranteed* with this customized battle guide.

Keep this guide with you at all times – you never know when you'll need a quick tip to get out of a sticky situation.

RPW & PTW

SURVIVAL TIP!

Pay close attention to the following information and know the difference between the two acronyms before trying to use them in sentences

RPW

Rhetoric and Professional Writing is the department in which you will earn a Bachelor of Arts degree or minor in Professional and Technical Writing (PTW). In RPW courses you will learn cultural, rhetorical, and professional ranges of writing and design in a number of genres, publications, and contexts.

PTW

PTW taps into four areas of knowledge and skill; writing, design, communication, and theoretical perspectives. PTW utilizes a wide variety of software to create projects which incorporate writing and design. Tools include Adobe's *InDesign* and *Photoshop*; Microsoft's *PowerPoint* and *Word*.

There are misconceptions that the RPW program is only about writing. While you will further develop your writing skills, you will also learn about theoretical perspectives, document design and project management. You will most likely know all of the faculty members and interact with many of your peers as this program has an emphasis on collaboration with other PTW students. Your peers are a useful resource for the development of your rhetorical skills. Faculty members can offer expert advice and guidance.

If you utilize your resources and make connections with faculty members and your peers, your time in the RPW department will be an enjoyable one.

Benefits

The RPW program helps students with more than just writing - students will develop skills that can be applied to multiple areas. In addition, graduates of the program are able to enter a variety of fields or attend graduate school for different disciplines.



PTW provides students with the opportunity to take a variety of skills and transform them beyond what other disciplines offer.

- Expand writing skills
- Write freelance assignments
- Apply communication skills internationally
- Write grants and proposals for non-profit organizations
- Conduct research
- Present at conferences
- Improve oral presentation skills
- Travel abroad

Throughout your time in PTW, you will be presented with information from **four** key areas.

1. Adaptability: the program prepares students to enter a variety of contexts, assess the situation, and move toward whatever goal they seek to achieve.

That adaptability grows from our emphasis on professional knowledge over technical skills.

2. Technical skills: allow students to complete tasks, but *knowledge* grants professionals the ability to adapt their skills and experiences from one problem or context to another.

3. Blending theory and practice: offers thinking strategies that help professionals consider why a particular communication practice works or does not work in a given context. As technical writers, we must also be able to *explain* why something works in a certain situation but not others.

4. Professionalism and responsibility: we want PTW students to develop into effective professionals, as well as respectful and responsible members of the communities they join throughout their lifetimes.

“Professional knowledge is defined as the historical, economic, sociological, philosophical, and psychological understandings of school and education. It includes knowledge about learning, diversity, technology, professional ethics, legal and policy issues, pedagogy, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession of teaching. The term is also referred to as Pedagogical Content Knowledge.”

-The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

Four areas of professional knowledge

1. Writing: The writing students do in PTW courses represents a range that emphasizes audience-appropriate, purpose-driven, and context-aware projects of both professional and scholarly nature.

2. Design: In PTW, we combine elements of several definitions of design. Professional and technical writers think about the appearance and appeal of pages or screens. They also design information so that the organization is visible, so the content is accessible to readers, and so the document itself can function effectively in the context for which it is intended.

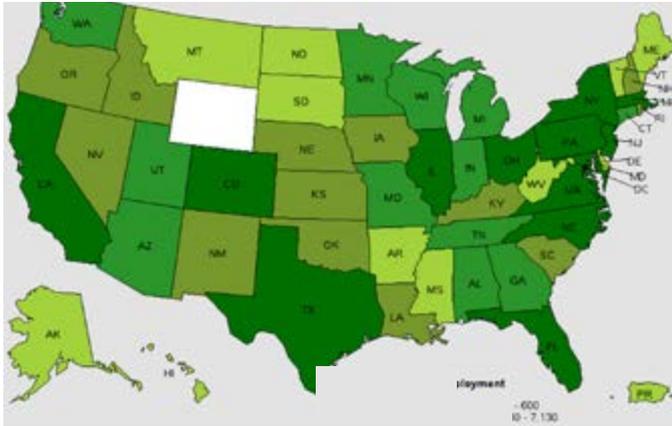
3. Communication Tools and Technologies: Professional and technical writers use a variety of tools to accomplish their work. Software for print and web design include: Adobe *InDesign*, *Photoshop*, *Dreamweaver*, *Illustrator*, and *Acrobat Pro*. Presentation software includes Microsoft *PowerPoint*, *Prezi*, and

Apple *Keynote*. TechSmith’s *Jing* and *Snagit* are often used for capturing and recording screens for building multimedia tutorials and other interactive documents. Apple *iMovie* and Windows *Moviemaker* are also common tools used to create project videos and documentaries.

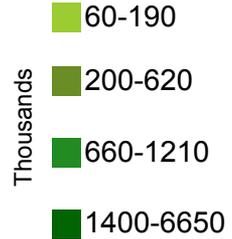
4. Theoretical Perspectives: Theory is a strong component of the PTW program. Thinking theoretically requires students to not only know how to do something, such as write and design a document, but also to consider why they make the choices they must make to create an effective document. Theory allows technical writers to examine communication elements such as audience, purpose, and context, to explore the role cultural and social forces play in the work they do, and to properly and appropriately analyze and anticipate the impact their work might have on others.

Career Paths

Employment of Technical Writers by State - May 2014



Source: www.bls.gov



*White indicates no data available

While in college, students typically think that they know everything about the choices that they make. While this may be true about what careers our degrees can open up for us, many are unaware of all the possibilities that a degree in Professional & Technical Writing has to offer.

PTW is a degree that can be adapted to fit almost any situation from marketing to graphic design, grant & proposal writing to publication manager.

Technical Writers are:

- Editors
- Instructional Designers
- Environmental Communicators
- Grant Writers
- International Communicators
- Journalists
- Project Managers
- Usability Specialists
- Web Designers
- Marketing Specialists
- Graphic Designers
- Scholars/Researchers

College students generally think they know everything about everything.

SURVIVAL TIP!

You don't.

Battle Buddies

PTW is one of those special degrees that you cannot go wrong in choosing. Any minor can be paired with a PTW major just as any major can be paired with a PTW minor.

You may think that your chosen career won't demand that you know how to write well - but you're wrong. "But I'm doing Criminal Justice, all I'm going to do is bring some justice to those criminals," you may say. But I say, "And you'll have to write about it. One mistake and you could be fired."

(This is where the bandages come in - I just saved you.)

Major/Minor

Career Options

Communications	Interpreter/Translator Announcer Public relations Reporter
Marketing	Advertising Manager Promotional Manager
Criminal Justice	Corrections Officer Social and Human Services Assistants Correctional Treatment Specialists
Graphic Design	Art Directors Desktop Publishers Web Developer
Psychology	Forensic Psychologists School Psychologists Social Psychologists
Political Science	Speech Writer Researcher
Sociology	Policy Analysts Statisticians

And many others if you put your mind to it!

Expectations

While all RPW courses will provide you with individual course expectations on the syllabus, there are a few expectations that will be present throughout all of your technical writing projects.

The RPW department has designed goals that you will learn throughout your course work:

- Audience, Purpose, Genre, Context
- Collaboration
- Audience Centered Document Design
- Language and Conventions
- Project Management
- Theory
- Tools and Technologies

You will first be introduced to the software, the Adobe Creative Suite, in RPW 260, but the “how to use” portion of the course will be brief (based on the fact that every student will be using different features of each program) – it will be expected that you learn the majority of the software outside of the classroom and be prepared to use that knowledge to create quality works acceptable for the classroom and the work place.

InDesign

Throughout all of your RPW courses, InDesign will be used the most. Magazines, posters, flyers, eBooks, and more can all

be created through the program and each can be specified to be print, web, or interactive documents to be viewed on almost any device.

Photoshop

Taking images off the web and using them in your documents is a bad habit – there is nothing worse than having the creator of the photograph seeing their work inside your portfolio (you would very likely be blacklisted within the professional community). Take your own photos and manipulate them with *Photoshop*. All of the photo-editing tools you could ever want are housed within.

Dreamweaver

Primarily used for the creation of websites using CSS and HTML, Dreamweaver is a powerful program which assists you in creating quality webpages. You don't need to be an expert programmer - Dreamweaver features ‘code completion’ that guides you along to reaching your desired goal within an HTML or CSS document.



Acrobat Pro

Many instructors will not accept your work unless submitted in the proper format (PDF), making Acrobat one of the most useful programs within the Creative Suite. Interactivity, file attachments, comments, page design edits and much more are available to make your works easier to manipulate.

The RPW department understands that learning these new programs can be overwhelming at times and that not all students will have access to the programs at home. To solve this issue, the department has a lab is set aside in the **RPW Suite (Z217-Z221)** specifically for those involved in PTW and is a hub for all your design and technical needs.

The usability lab is a fun environment to share with like-minded, stressed out folks who are also working on projects. Make sure to utilize this resource;

it will be incredibly beneficial to both you and your work.

You will also be expected to **network.**

Networking is one of the most important aspects of gaining notoriety within any given career field. Saginaw Valley recognizes this importance and also realizes that many of your contacts will come from experiences you had at the university. Our V-Mail accounts will never expire allowing students, alumni, and potential employers to always have means of staying in contact.

V-Mail has always had this capability, but it has just recently come to the attention of the faculty that students have not been aware of this – leaving a great resource to sit useless.

Networking is the key to success! Remember to periodically check your e-mail for updates – you never know who might be trying to contact you.

SURVIVAL TIP!

Always back up your documents. Keep your documents stored on a minimum of two other devices. Flash drives, V-Space Resources, M-Drive, external hard drives, etc. Make sure than you can access *at least one* of these mediums during all classes!



Captains

SURVIVAL TIP!

Getting to know the faculty members is a key component in reaching your graduation goal - they are available to help you choose the right courses and guide you in your path through the RPW/PTW programs. The faculty is there to aid and help with any problems that any students may encounter.

• *Department Chair*

Elections are held every two years to determine Chair

• *Professors*

Dr. Fenobia Dallas
Zahnow 219
fidallas@svsu.edu

Dr. Bradley Herzog
Zahnow 220
bherzog@svsu.edu

Dr. Beth Jorgensen
Zahnow 217
ejorgens@svsu.edu

Dr. Scott Kowalewski
Zahnow 218
sjkowale@svsu.edu

Dr. Bill Williamson
Zahnow 221
wwilliam@svsu.edu

• *Internship Coordinator*

Dr. Scott Kowalewski
Zahnow 218
sjkowale@svsu.edu

• *Adjunct Faculty*

Nancy Collison
989-964-4050
njcollin@svsu.edu

fac·ul·ty

/ˈfakəltē/

noun

1. an inherent mental or physical power.
"her critical faculties"
synonyms: power, capability, capacity, facility, wherewithal, means. [More](#)
2. the teaching staff of a university or college, or of one of its departments or divisions, viewed as a body.
"there were then no tenured women on the faculty"
synonyms: staff, teachers, professors, instructors
"conflict between students and faculty"

Source: Google Image Search, Faculty

More like teaching staff with inherent mental and physical power.

Commander in Chief

The largest bandage of them all.

The department chair monitors students, faculty, and the PTW program as a whole. The RPW department chair shall preside over department meetings and coordinate departmental activities, including the activities of departmental clerical, laboratory and teaching assistants as mandated by the department.

The department chair is in place to help you.

Holding much authority, the department chair has a major influence on the students, faculty, and university. Here is a description of circumstances where the department chair can be of great help:

- **A class won't transfer**

No waiver or course substitution shall occur without the approval of the department chair, as mandated by the department, and the dean. In case of disagreement, the matter shall be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs

whose decision shall be subject to the grievance procedure. If such a case occurs, the department chair will be willing to assist you. Course substitutions and waivers are not a guarantee.

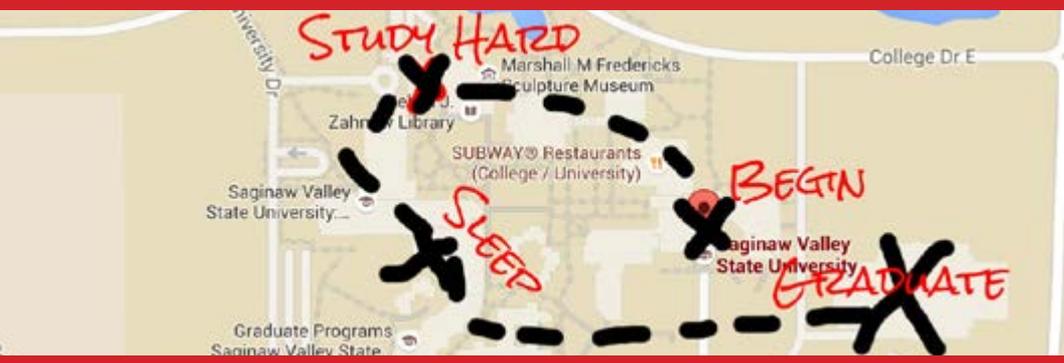
- **Grade disputes**

Chairs can intervene if there are procedural irregularities in the grading of a course. If a professor doesn't follow the grading procedures outlined on the syllabus or doesn't apply the same grading policies or standards to all students in the same class, the chair will take the matter up with the relevant faculty. Chairs may also step in if a professor has unreasonable grading policies.

- **Major/Minor decisions**

The chair will be more than happy to talk to you about your choice of major/minor. The chair can be a great academic advisor if you are willing to put in the time and effort to talk to them about what you would like to accomplish with your degree and time spent in the RPW department.

Battle Plans



Freshman:

Semester 1

- GenEd, Cat 1-9

Semester 2

- GenEd, Cat 1-9
- GenEd, Cat 1-9
- GenEd, Cat 1-9
- GenEd, Cat 1-9
- RPW 210, Cat 10

(Select the following courses in each GenEd category as appropriate.)

Sophomore:

Semester 1

- RPW 260
- RPW 300 or 304
- RPW 320
- 1-2 courses in minor

Semester 2

- RPW 262
- RPW 285
- RPW 324
- 1-2 courses in minor

Junior:

Semester 1

- RPW 322
- 2 courses in minor
- RPW 386
- RPW 340

Semester 2

- RPW 400
- 3 courses in minor
- RPW 324

Senior:

Semester 1

- RPW 480
- RPW 486
- 3 Courses in minor

Semester 2

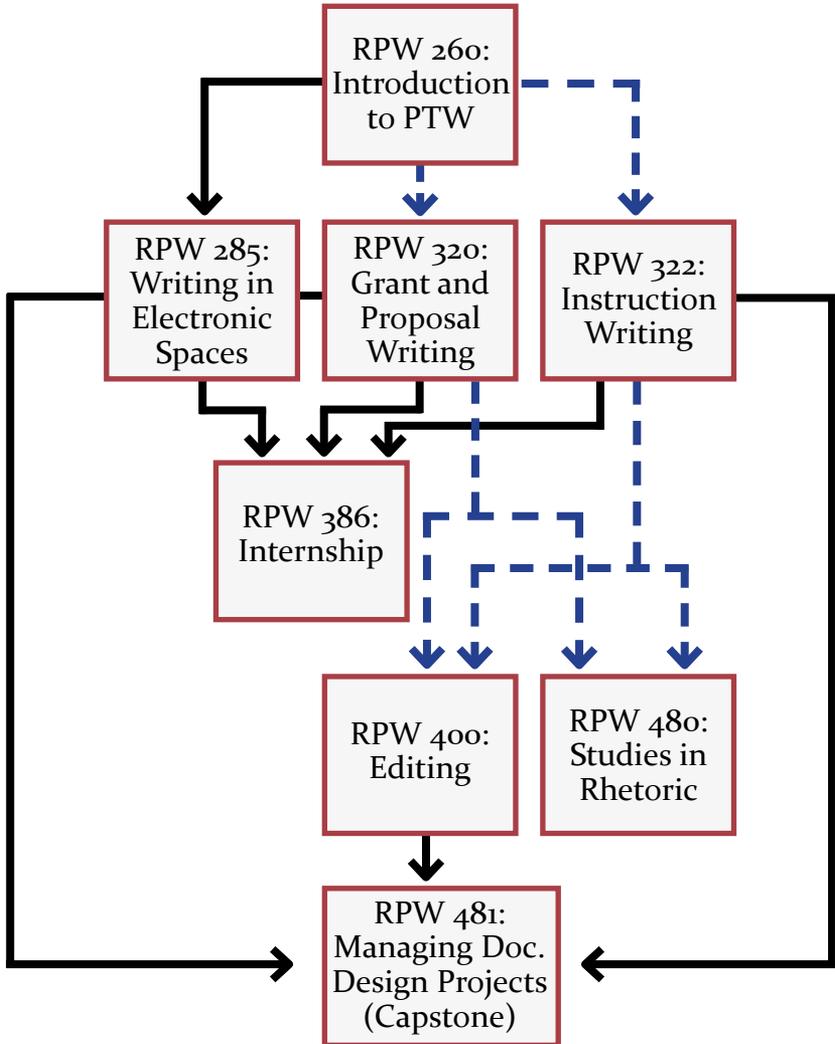
- RPW 481
- 4 Courses in minor

Major: Course Map

Required Courses

39 credits = 24 required + 15 electives
All courses are 3 credit hours

Legend
prerequisites ———
options - - - - -

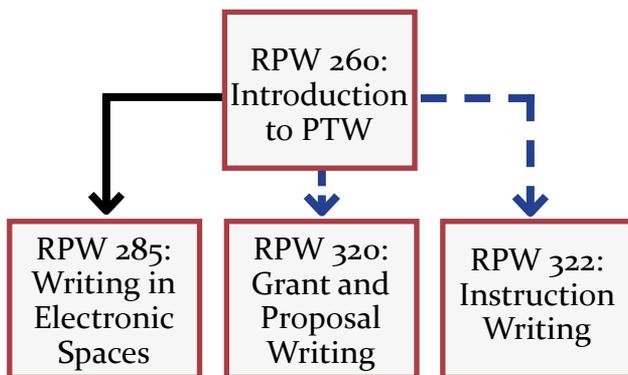
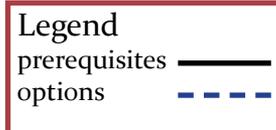


Minor: Course Map

Required Courses

21 credits = 12 required + 9 electives

All courses are 3 credit hours



SURVIVAL TIP!

Choose electives that correspond to your future career path.

The required courses will provide you with the basic knowledge needed to do well in technical writing; you can customize the rest of your degree to match your exact needs.

Take advantage of the possibilities provided to you.

Required Training

RPW 260: Intro to PTW

Provides an overview of common document genres and technologies that writers use to produce them.

RPW 285: Writing in Electronic Spaces

Teaches web design, electronic correspondence, and practices associated with other established emerging media.

RPW 320: Grant and Proposal Writing

Examines, researches, and writes grants and proposals for businesses, corporations, or non-profit organizations.

RPW 322: Instruction Writing

Examines and develops instructional documents (e.g. procedures, specifications, manuals, help systems).

RPW 386: Internship in PTW

Provides an overview of common document genres and technologies that writers use to produce them.

RPW 400: Editing

Develops and applies principles of editing.

RPW 480: Studies in Rhetoric

Explores historical and contemporary theories of rhetoric as they apply to written, verbal and visual communication.

RPW 481: Managing Document Design Projects

Includes planning projects, managing resources, conducting usability studies, working with clients and other professionals, and preparing documents for implementation.

SURVIVAL TIP!

Make sure you meet with Academic Advising as well as the Chair of the RPW department to regularly check your degree audit. This will ensure that you are on the right track to graduate.

Elective Training

ENGL 261: Intro to Creative Writing

Introduces fiction and poetry writing. A workshop-based class with frequent writing assignments and small group work.

RPW 262: Intro to Journalism

Introduces news reporting and writing.

RPW 300: Writing in the Professions**

Focuses on purpose, audience, analysis, and writing as problem solving, but also includes work in organization and editing.

OR

RPW 304: Technical Report Writing**

Emphasizes report writing for scientists and engineers, theory and practice of audience analysis, report, organization, revision, editing, oral, presentations, and visual aids.

RPW 324: Topics in RPW Writing

Studies significant and emerging scholarly and workplace issues in professional and technical writing (e.g. Visual Rhetoric, Rhetoric and PTW, Science Writing).

RPW 340: Writing in Community Organizations

Teaches students to understand non-profit agencies and use that knowledge to write for various situations and purposes.

ENGL 355: Language in Society

Explores the structure and functions of language in speech communities around the world.

ENGL 360: Grammar of Contemporary English

Presents a descriptive, comprehensive approach to analyzing the sentence structure of standard written English and the rhetorical effects of grammatical choices.

ENGL 383: Tutoring Writing

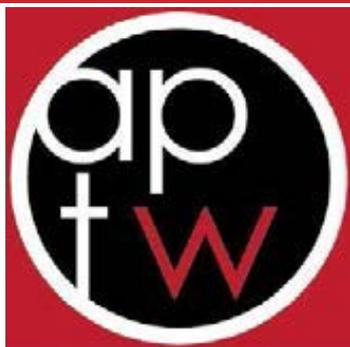
Studies principles for effective tutoring in writing, models of the writing process, the underlying assumptions of an academic discourse, community, and approaches to error analysis.

RPW 486: Internship

Secures student internship work on writing projects under supervision of RPW faculty and a sponsoring organization for 10 to 14 hours a week for a minimum of 10 weeks.

**Only one of these courses will count for an elective

RPW Militia



Association of Professional and Technical Writers

The Association of Professional and Technical Writers (APTW) is the student-run organization of PTW majors and minors at Saginaw Valley State University. APTW caters to the interests and needs of Professional and Technical Writing majors, minors, and other parties interested in technical communication. The organization brings together students and faculty who want to learn more about technical communication, add to their communication skill sets, explore opportunities in the field, and network with technical communication professionals.

- **Become a Member**

Any SVSU student who shares an interest in technical communication is welcome to join. Interested students should contact Dr. Jorgensen.

Note: To be a member in good standing, a member should attend two meetings a semester.

- **Mission & Goals**

The mission of APTW is to foster community within the Professional and Technical Writing community at SVSU, as well as promote the Rhetoric and Professional Writing (RPW) department throughout the university. Through this, members of APTW will create professional and personal networks that will benefit them in their academic studies, as well as their future professional endeavors.

- Help develop the PTW program by working closely with faculty
- Provide information about the PTW program to the campus community
- Encourage participation in local, regional, and national conversations about technical communication
- Create a conducive environment for networking

Combat

The Internship(s)

Similar to most degree programs, internships are your first step to apply everything you've learned in college for a professional organization. You should consider an internship around your third year. RPW 386 is mandatory for PTW majors; however, minors are *strongly encouraged* to take the internship course as an elective. RPW 486 is a second internship and is encouraged for both majors and minors. When searching for an internship, keep in mind what you plan to pursue after graduation so you can find an internship that will be relevant to your future endeavors.

In order to apply for an internship, you must complete a **portfolio** of your work. The internship coordinator will contact you about due dates and requirements; however, it is wise to begin preparing your portfolio in advance. Six samples of your work are required for RPW 386 and nine samples are required for RPW 486.

As you complete assignments throughout your RPW courses, consider which ones best showcase your writing, graphic and editing abilities. Two or

three paragraphs of rhetorical analysis should be written for each document. The analysis will introduce the document, identify its purpose and audience, and explain the design decisions you made. A binder with hard copies of your work should be submitted along with an electronic copy. Starting your portfolio early will make the task of compiling it more manageable.

Internship Prerequisites

RPW 386: Internship in
Rhetoric/ Professional Writing

- RPW 260
- RPW 285
- RPW 322
- Portfolio review

RPW 486: Internship in
Rhetoric/ Professional Writing

- RPW 386
- Portfolio review

Internships are designed to provide you with real world experience while under the protections of the internship coordinator. Negative aspects of unpaid internships have been making the news lately - the RPW department is here to ensure you a positive experience.

Finding Combat Locales

1. Ask the Internship Coordinator
2. Cardinal Career Network

Go to www.svsu.edu/careerservices/ and click on “Cardinal Career Network” on the far right side of the screen.



3. Check email for job postings
4. Do independent research*



*Internship must be verified by the internship coordinator.

Survivor Stories



Left to right: Megan Major, Trevor Baranek, Christian Dunham, Jessica Rockwell and Katrina Robinson

Megan Major, Class of 2008

- Currently works as a copywriter/customer service representative at CUAdvantage Marketing Solutions
 - Some of her job responsibilities include the development of copyrights, posters, annual reports, and newsletters
- Had a very tight group of peers in the PTW program
- Completed co-op with Dow in Midland, which opened her eyes to the professional working world
 - Gained experience at Dow as she was able to practice her editing skills while working with scientists there.
 - Believes that making yourself marketable is very important
- Believes that the PTW program gives you the skill set needed to prove yourself as a valuable resource in any career

Trevor Baranek, Class of 2009

- Works as an Information Management Specialist at Dow Chemical
- Former President of APTW
 - Allowed him to develop leadership, time management and project management skills
- Suggests working closely with professors to pursue what interests you
- Get involved in RSOs on campus
 - Was the web administrator for Cardinal Sins
- Employers look for internship and co-op experiences
- Utilize the resources at Career Services
- Networking is important
 - Obtained a job through a reference from a classmate

Christian Dunham, Class of 2010

- Works as a technology librarian at a public library doing social media and public relations
- Suggests learning new software
- Internships are a great way to learn skills and meet new people
 - Helps to get ahead in the business world
- A PTW degree is very adaptable to different interests and careers
 - Provides you with a lot of knowledge and different skill sets
- A job posting may not say “tech writers needed,” but your skills can be applied to many jobs
- Include key words such as “grant writing” and “web design” on a resume

Jessica Rockwell, Class of 2012

- Currently working as a Technical Writer at DICE Corporation
 - Writes and markets content for product guides
 - Develops video tutorials and demonstrations of products
- Utilize the usability lab
- Having a professional portfolio is very important for finding a career after graduating
- Enjoyed class workshops and peer reviewing classmate’s work
- Maximized portfolio through the use of internships, co op, and freelancing work
- Stresses the importance of applying for career as an undergraduate

Katrina Robinson, Class of 2013

- Is a Multimedia Designer at the University of Michigan-Flint
- Important to learn programs such as InDesign and Photoshop
- Document design and presentation is important
- PTW allows you to brand yourself as a valuable employee

Finally.

Proof that there is an end to the program with success in careers.

Q&A



Scott Merrow

- Graduated SVSU in May 2013
- Attending graduate school at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, as a Graduate Assistant in the Rhetoric and Scientific and Technical Communication (RSTC) program
- Hopes to earn his Ph.D. in five years and eventually become a tenured professor teaching rhetorical theory and technical writing at a university (perhaps even SVSU)

Q: What were your expectations going into the PTW program?

A: First, to become a better writer; second, to gain knowledge about rhetorical theory and document design.

Q: What do you wish you would have known while taking the required PTW courses?

A: More knowledge about, and experience with, the programs and technologies that technical writers use (i.e. the Adobe Suite, HTML and CSS coding, etc.).

Q: How do you use the skills you learned from the program in the work you are doing now?

A: In my role as the Writing Center Technical Writer at SVSU, I often incorporated the rhetorical theory, audience analysis, and document/page design theory I learned in the program when creating documents or managing the various web pages that I am charged with. As a freelance writer, the interviewing and audience analysis skills I gained while in the program have proved invaluable.

Q: What was your favorite thing about the program?

A: Interaction with my peers and the RPW faculty; it was a very close knit group of brilliant people who were willing to help each other in any way they could.

Q: What advice would you give to current students of the program?

A: Take advantage of every professional development opportunity available: do the 486 internship; submit papers to conferences; partner with faculty on independent study projects; become an active member in APTW; get to know your peers in the program; get to know the faculty; be proactive in learning the software required for the projects and your eventual profession (i.e. Adobe Suites); submit papers/projects to the APTW journal and for the Braun Award; and though technical writers aren't necessarily creative writers, creativity and imagination are still requirements for success.

Q: Are there any misconceptions about the PTW program?

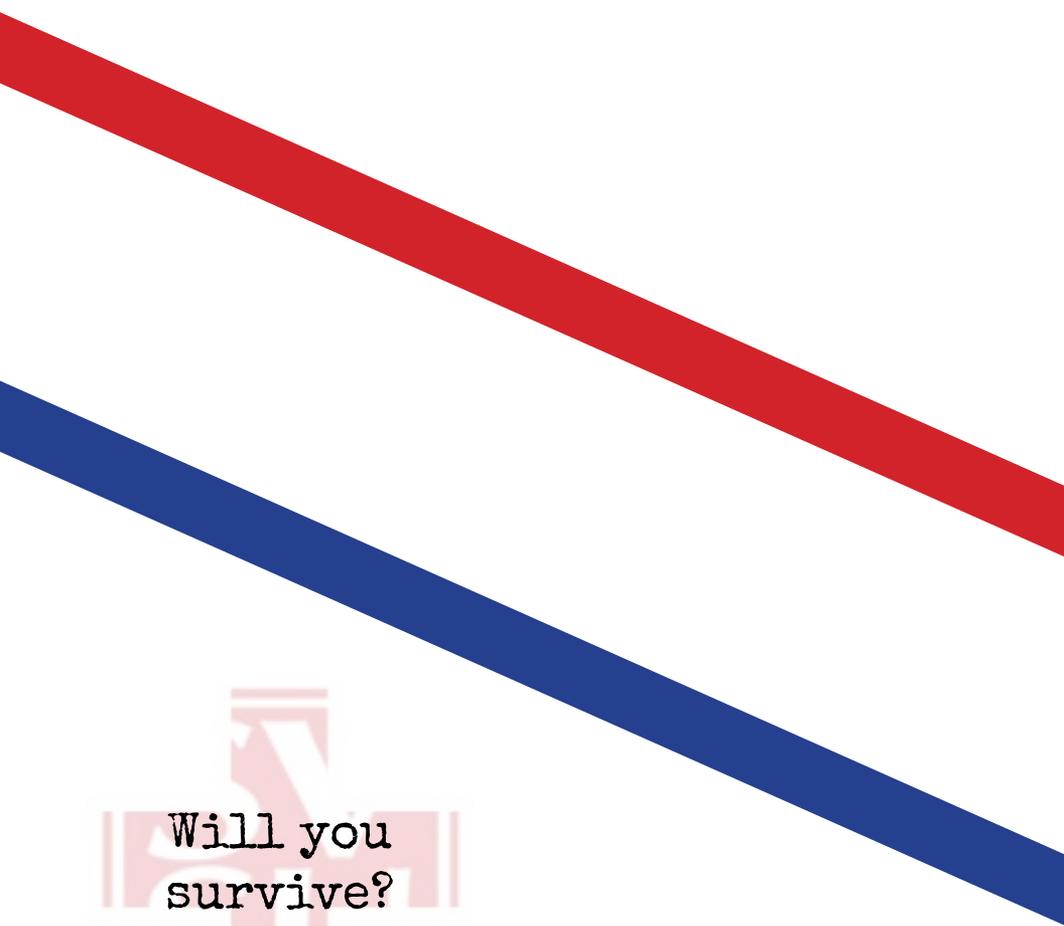
A: That the program is going to focus on grammar skills. The program isn't going to necessarily teach you how to better construct a sentence, rather it will teach you how to recognize audience(s) and how to utilize rhetorical means to effectively communicate to that audience, via both visual cues and text.

Q: Why should students choose PTW as their major?

A: The program provides broad-based knowledge in rhetorical theory, document design, and audience analysis that allows those who complete the program to go into various professions including journalism, editing, marketing, technical writing for tech/engineering firms, and public relations to name several possibilities. Graduate school is also a possibility for program graduates.

SURVIVAL TIP!

Use this guide as a tool for your survival throughout your time spent within the RPW department. The information provided within these pages is invaluable - take advantage of everything placed before you.



Will you
survive?

