**IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENT: Online Writing Centers and the Writing Process (part 1)**  
  
Your class has been approached by the director of your college or university's Writing Center. In addition to providing face-to-face consulting, the Writing Center also provides online services. The director explains, "An online writing center is a Web site, usually maintained by a college or university, that students and professionals visit for advice about writing—from tips on grammar, punctuation, usage, and style to suggestions on how to write particular kinds of documents, such as essays, letters, and reports."  
  
The director continues, "Most online writing centers focus on general writing, the kind that is done in first-year composition courses. However, we know that more and more students are coming to us for help with their technical communication assignments. I would like your help. I am interested in knowing what information on the writing process other online writing centers offer and what technical-communication topics we should include on our site."  
  
In this assignment, you will quickly examine information on the writing process presented by an online writing center. Then you will write a memo suggesting additional topics that might be included to make the site more useful for students of technical communication.  
  
To complete this case, perform the following tasks:

1. Browse through one of the following online writing centers (just take about 10 min):
   * Writing Center at Colorado State University
   * Ferris State University Writing Center
   * Paradigm Online Writing Assistant
   * Purdue University's Online Writing Lab
2. With the other members of your group, discuss how well the information given about the writing process applies to the writing you might do in a technical communication course. In what ways would you change the focus of the information to make it more applicable to students in a technical-communication course? What other topics might be added to make the discussion of the writing process more useful for students like yourselves?

**If you’re stuck:** you might also re-examine the characteristics of technical documents to see if if there is any advice given there. Is there anything about how to design documents to incorporate graphics? Or about working collaboratively to produce a document?

1. Present your findings in a short memo to your instructor, using a template from MSWord—actually opening and using a template is part of the assignment! In the first paragraph, state what online writing center your group examined and the general kinds of information it provides. In another section, give two to three examples of additional materials you would add to make it more applicable to students in a technical-communication course OR how you would change the focus of the material to make it more applicable to students in a technical-communication course.
2. Turn in your memo through d2l Assignments. Only one member of your group needs to hand this in, but that person should write all the group members’ names in the description box so I can give proper credit.

**Online Writing Centers and the Writing Process (part 2)**

Hey, check it out: you’ve learned a lot more about memos this week! For part 2 of this assignment, get back with your groups and revisit your Writing Center Memo from last week and revamp it, based on what you learned. Pay attention to the following:

* Headers
* First line or Purpose statement
* Design
* Internal headings: did you have any before? What does the book recommend they be?
* How the book’s recommendations fits (or not) with the MS template you used. How useful is that template anyway?

I recommend looking at my Grading Guidelines for Memos to see what I’ll be looking for this semester.