

## English 314 ~ Technical Communication

Instructor: Dev Bose, Ph.D.

Office: 453 Ross Hall

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Office hours: 8:00a-9:15a / 3:30p-4:45p TTh and by appointment

### Class schedule

Section 13	12:40pm-2:00pm	Tu: Ross 115 / Th: Heady 0274
Section 14	2:10pm-3:30pm	Tu: Ross 115 / Th: Ross 0127

Unless stated otherwise, this course meets most Tuesdays in the computer lab.

### Text and Materials

- *Technical Communication Today*, Johnson-Sheehan, 4th edition
- USB for storing electronic files
- Approximately 100 sheets of paper for printing additional readings and work for this course
- \$6 for binding three documents

### Course website

<http://courses.isucomm.iastate.edu>

### Overview

This course is designed to introduce you to the most common forms of professional communication. To the extent possible, we will seek real audiences for your communication and try to integrate the concerns of your various majors in completing the assignments. The aims of the course are to help you analyze and navigate various communication situations and the contexts in which they take place.

### Objectives

Through readings, class discussions and assignments, you will learn to:

- Apply rhetorical principles to technical communication
- Implement principles of effective document design

### English 314 FAQ

#### **How should I contact my instructor?**

The best way to contact me is by email ([dbose@iastate.edu](mailto:dbose@iastate.edu)). I do my best to respond within 24 hours of receiving email. To meet with me in person, come to my office hours or email me to set up an appointment.

#### **What should I do if I can't make it to class?**

There are no excused absences (see my attendance policy), so you don't need to bring a doctor's note if you cannot be in class due to illness. It is your responsibility to contact one of your classmates or me *outside of class hours* to find out what you missed.

#### **What is my course grade so far?**

I believe you should always know where you stand with respect to your grades. All grades are entered on the course website, and you can monitor your progress at any time by signing into your account and looking at the grade book. Translation of percentages to course grades is discussed below.

#### **Will spelling, grammar and punctuation affect my grade?**

This is an English class, so you will be expected to adhere to the conventions of standard English. However, I hope you will come to see that little things like spelling and punctuation can have a big impact in the workplace, not just in the classroom. Such errors are considered "noise" that interfere with professional communication.

#### **Do you have a stapler?**

No. You should get one if you need one.

- Understand the influences of organizational settings in the composition of technical documents
- Understand the conventions of your discipline and be aware of the variety of conventions across disciplines
- Participate in the collaborative planning and executing of a project
- Understand how ethical issues influence research and application in your discipline

### Specific Objectives

In addition to the university's general objectives, I have established specific goals for this section of English 314. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Distinguish between effective and ineffective technical documents
- Employ thinking and composing strategies that produce successful documents and presentation slides
- Understand the role of visual rhetoric in technical communication
- Apply successful communication techniques across all modes (written, oral, visual, and electronic).
- Use various software programs to enhance your written and electronic documents.

### Class Attendance and Participation

You will complete some of your work for this course in teams and you are expected to fulfill your fair share of team work and to interact courteously with your peers at all times; therefore, regular attendance and active participation are important. Daily assignments cannot be made up if you miss class. My attendance policy is simple: You may miss four classes (for any reason) without penalty. Each additional absence will lower your course grade by a letter grade (from B to C).

Because our time in class is limited, promptness is important. Coming to class after the official start time will count as tardy. **Two tardies of more than 5 minutes will be counted as one absence.**

### Five Simple Things You Can Do to Succeed in This Course

1. **Read.** We won't have time to discuss every aspect of the readings in class, but that doesn't mean they're not important. Your ability to succeed on the major assignments will be greatly improved if you take the time to thoroughly review and comprehend the assigned readings.

2. **Raise your hand.** Participating in class discussions is a quick way to clear up confusion, not to mention the fact that lively class discussions make class more enjoyable for everyone.

3. **Find a friend.** When you miss a class and need to find out what we did, your classmates should be your first resource (unless you want to contact me outside of class). Find someone you can trust and exchange contact information, so you can reach each other when the need arises.

4. **Play nice.** A significant portion of your grade in this course will be determined by your work on collaborative assignments. You don't need to be best friends with the students on your teams, but your success (and your grade) will be enhanced if you treat your classmates with kindness and respect.

5. **Come see me.** I am available for individual meetings every Tuesday and Thursday during my office hours, and I can meet at other times as needed. When a minor issue arises, see me *before* it becomes a major problem. Can't see me? Talk to me before or after class. Or email me to start a conversation.

**Conferences.** I'll schedule one conference with each of you during the semester. Feel free to schedule additional conferences with me or to drop by my office or e-mail me if you want feedback on any of your assignments.

### **Software and Technology**

One aim of this course is to increase your electronic literacy. Hence, many of your assignments will be submitted electronically, via the course website. In addition, the major assignments will require you to use, at minimum, word processing, spreadsheet, presentation and photo-editing tools. Our course will meet regularly in a computer lab, which will provide opportunities to learn from and share with your peers. However, you will not be able to complete all computer work in class, so you will either need your own computer or arrange to use one of the on-campus computer labs.

### **Evaluation**

**Overview.** Participation in this course requires the completion of ENG 150 and ENG 250 or the equivalents. If you have not received a passing grade in these courses, you will be not allowed to continue in ENG 302.

**Group work.** Your peers will evaluate your contributions to the team projects. If the evaluations are unfavorable, your project scores will be docked.

### **Five Things You Can Do to Annoy Your Instructor**

#### **1. Text in class, or let your cell phone ring in class.**

When you come to class, turn your phone off or set it to vibrate. If you are expecting a call or text, let me know in advance and take it outside.

**2. Send me an incomplete email message.** Who is cyclonefan29@iastate.edu? When you email me, make sure to sign your name and put the words "English 314" in the subject line.

**3. Ignore directions.** You will use a great many critical and creative thinking skills in this course, but when I ask you to do something in a certain way, it's for a reason. Ignoring directions, even small ones, signals to me that you don't take your work seriously.

**4. Fail to proofread.** Every modern word-processing program has a built-in spell-check function. Use it. Then check your work for mistakes that software program didn't catch. PRINT your documents when possible and read them aloud. Repeat as needed.

**5. Ask me, "Did we do anything important in class on Tuesday?"** No matter what we did, the answer will be the same: For you to assume we **might not** have done anything important is beyond annoying to any instructor who has expended time and energy to create useful class activities, lectures and discussions.

When you must miss class, send me an email and ask, "What can I do to catch up?" or something similar that projects your awareness of your audience, values and attitudes.

**Late work.** Late work will not be accepted unless you obtain prior approval. Your chances for such approval will be significantly improved by submitting a neat, professional memo to me stating the reasons why the assignment will be late. Late assignments will be reduced one letter grade for every business day the assignment is late.

**Course failure**, regardless of grade average, will result if:

- Any written assignment is guilty of plagiarism (this includes failure to properly cite sources)
- More than 10 absences or tardies (2 tardies = 1 absence) are recorded
- Any graded out-of-class assignment is not completed

Occasionally students will unintentionally plagiarize material because they have failed to keep track of their sources as they acquire and use them. This is not a reason that excuses the offense. I am not in a position to judge your intentions; I am only able to judge the result of your actions.

**Quizzes & Participation.** Quizzes, if assigned, will cover the lectures, assigned readings and examples from the course website. These quizzes will generally be short answer and may occur without notice. Quizzes count towards your participation grade. Participation grades, including quizzes, cannot be made up.

In addition to the readings posted on the calendar, do the homework assigned in class and on the course website. Readings and homework must be proofread and submitted before class starts.

**Revisions.** Revision means a *thorough reworking* of the paper; it does not mean merely fixing mechanical and diction errors. Group proposals or in-class work may not be revised. Submit the revision with the original within five calendar days after receiving the graded assignment back. The new grade will be average of the revised grade and original grade. Allow 24 hours after the assignment has been graded and no more than 7 days after receiving the grade to discuss a revision. Talk to me in person if you want to revise a grade.

### How much is what worth?

Task/Assignment	Point Value
Technical definition & description	125
Instructions	150
Methodology	75
Activity report	75
Analytical report	150
Proposal & presentation (group)	250
Career portfolio	125
Participation	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>

**Grading Scale.** All major assignments will be evaluated using the following percentage-based scale:

<b>A</b> 94 – 100	<b>B+</b> 87 – 89.99	<b>C+</b> 77 – 79.99	<b>D+</b> 67 – 69.99
<b>A-</b> 90 – 93.99	<b>B</b> 84 – 86.99	<b>C</b> 74 – 76.99	<b>D</b> 64 – 66.99
	<b>B-</b> 80 – 83.99	<b>C-</b> 70 – 73.99	<b>D-</b> 60 – 63.99

### Evaluation Criteria

For every assignment, the goal is a professional product. Assignments will be evaluated on adherence to genre's conventions, organization (arrangement), expression (style), mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage) and document design (formatting). All major assignment grades will derive from the following criteria:

**A: Superior accomplishment.** Shows excellent analysis of the assignment and provides response that exhibits a critical consideration of the communication problem. Successfully adapts to the audience, context and purpose of the assignment. Contains only minor, isolated or no major mechanical errors and requires no revision. The assignment is ready to be presented to the intended audience.

**B: Commendable.** Shows judgment and tact in the presentation of material and responds appropriately to the requirements of the assignment. Has an interesting, precise and clear style. Contains one or two major mechanical errors (e.g., *asses* instead of *assess*) on more than one page and requires revision before the assignment can be sent to the intended audience.

**C: Competent.** Meets all the basic criteria of the assignment, and provides a satisfactory response to the rhetorical situation. There is nothing remarkably good or bad about the work, and equivalent work could be sent out in the professional world following some revisions to the organization, style or formatting of the assignment in addition to corrections in mechanics.

**D: Needs improvement.** Responds to the assignment, but contains significant defects in one of these major areas: Recognition of readers' needs, content development, organization, expression or style, and format or delivery/mechanics. The assignment could not be presented to the intended audience without *significant* revision.

**F: Unacceptable.** Provides an inadequate response to the assignment or shows a misunderstanding of the rhetorical situation. Contains glaring defects in one or more of the major areas as itemized in D (above). The assignment cannot be presented to the intended audience.

### Disability Accommodation

Please address any special needs or special accommodations to me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities should obtain a Student Academic Accommodation Request (SAAR) form from the Disability Resources office, located in the Student Services Building, Room 1076. Phone (515) 294-7220 to set an appointment.

### **Reporting Grievances**

If you become concerned about your instructor's class management, please communicate your concerns to him. Examples of such concerns relate to grading methods, paper turnaround time and course policies.

If you feel uncomfortable speaking to your instructor, contact the Co-Director of Advanced Communication, Dr. David Russell (drrussel@iastate.edu) or the Department of English Associate Chair Person, Dr. David Roberts (droberts@iastate.edu).

### **Calendar**

The course calendar is tentative, and due dates may be adjusted to reflect the pace that students set up for the class. It is the students' responsibility to download and/or print revisions as the instructor posts them to the website. In addition to the readings posted on the calendar, do the homework assigned in class and on the course website. Readings and homework must be proofread and submitted before class starts.

### **Snow Days**

Your instructor and several of your classmates commute to campus from distant localities. While ISU administrators rarely cancel classes, icy highways sometimes make it impossible to safely arrive in Ames.

When the weather is especially bad, tune in to any Ames radio station: If Ames Public Schools are closed and/or travel is not recommended on I-35, check your email. If class is to be cancelled, you will receive an email announcement at least 40 minutes before class begins.

## Engl. 314 Schedule Technical Communication

In addition to the readings posted on the calendar, do the homework assigned in class and on the course website. Readings and homework must be proofread and submitted before class starts. Tuesday = T; Thursday = R

	<b>In Class</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments</b>
January 14–18	Introduction to Technical Communication Writing Technical Definitions Quiz over Ch. 1 on R	Reading: Chapters 1 & 6 Assign: Technical Definition Register on course website
January 21–25	Writing Process Designing Documents Quiz over Ch. 18 on T	Reading: Ch. 18 <b>Due R: Technical Definition</b> Assign: Technical Description
January 28–Feb 1	Analyzing Readers and Contexts of Use Writing Technical Descriptions	Reading: Ch. 2 <b>Due R: Technical Description</b> Assign: Instructions Create Instructables account
February 4–8	Instructions and Procedures Teaming in the Workplace Quiz over Ch. 7 on T	Reading: Ch. 3, 7 & 12
February 11–15	Researching and Managing Information Writing Analytical Reports Ethics in the Technical Workplace Quiz over Ch. 4 on T	Reading: Ch. 4, 10 & 14 <b>Due R: Instructions</b> Assign: Analytical Report Assign: Methodology
February 18–22	Organizing Drafting Writing Activity Reports	Reading: Ch. 9 & 16 <b>Due R: Methodology</b> Assign: Activity Report
Feb 25– March 1	Using Visuals and Graphics	Reading: Ch. 19 <b>Due R: Activity Report</b>
March 4– 8	Using Plain and Persuasive Style Revising and Editing for Usability	Reading: Ch. 17 & 20
March 11–15	Writing Proposals Describing the Current Situation Quiz over Ch. 8 on T	Reading: Ch. 8 <b>Due T: Analytical Report</b> Assign: Proposal Assign: Description of a Problem
March 25–29	Describing a Work Plan Using E-Mail and Instant Messaging Quiz over Ch. 5 on T	Reading: Ch. 5 <b>Due T: Description of a Problem</b> Assign: Description of Plan
April 1–5	Conferences Preparing and Giving Presentations	Reading: Ch. 21
April 8–12	Starting Your Career	Reading: Ch. 20
April 15–19	Components of the Career Portfolio Review Document Design Presentations of Proposals	Reading: Ch. 11 & 18 <b>Due: Proposal/presentation</b> Assign: Career Portfolio
April 22–26	Writing an Application Letter Writing Letters and Memos	Reading: Ch. 5 <b>Due: Letter of Application</b>
April 29– May 3	Dead Week Workshop Final exam review (Job Talk)	<b>Due: Follow-up Letters</b>
May 6–10	Job Talks Due This Week (to be orally presented during final exam block)	