Technical Communication
English 314, Sections 12 and 13
Fall 2009 Policy Document

Instructor: Quinn Warnick
Office: 435 Ross Hall, 294–3625
Email: warnick@iastate.edu
Class hours:
    Section 12: T/Th 9:30 – 10:50 a.m.
    Section 13: T/Th 11:00 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.
Class location:
    Tuesday: Section 12 in Ross 126
                  Section 13 in Ross 120
    Thursday: Both sections in Ross 137
Office hours: T/Th 1:30–3:30 p.m., or by appt.
Course website:
    http://courses.isucomm.iastate.edu

Textbooks and Materials

- *Technical Communication Today (3rd ed.),* by Richard Johnson-Sheehan

- A USB drive (preferably 2GB or larger) for storing electronic files.

- Approximately 100 sheets of paper for printing additional readings and your work for this course.

English 314 Overview

English 314 will help you understand the theory, principles, and processes of effective technical communication. Technical communication is changing rapidly to keep up with technological advancements; hence, this course will focus not just on written communication, but will also cover oral, visual, and electronic communication. In today's workplace, your success will depend on more than being able to write well; you will also be expected to deliver persuasive oral presentations, create visually appealing documents, and navigate unfamiliar software programs.

During the next sixteen weeks, you will work individually and with your classmates to address and solve several communication problems typically encountered by professional technical communicators. Some of these assignments will require you to respond to specific scenarios, while others will allow you to tailor your work to your own academic or professional discipline. Whatever the case, you should carry out your work in a professional manner, as you would in a place of business. By the end of the term, you should have developed the communication skills to excel at creating and delivering successful technical documents in your chosen field of employment.

English 314 FAQ

How should I contact my instructor?
The best way to contact me is by email (warnick@iastate.edu). I do my best to respond within twelve 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 explain to me why you won't be in class. It is your responsibility to contact one of your classmates 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 in to your account.

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.

Do you have a stapler?
No.

Five Simple Things You Can Do to Succeed in this Course

1. Do the readings. We won't have time to discus 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 earn some easy points, not to mention the fact that lively 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. Find someone you can trust and exchange contact information so you can contact 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 other students in your group, 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.

English 314 Objectives

General Objectives. Through readings, class discussions, and assignments, you will learn to:
- Apply rhetorical principles to technical communication.
- Employ the generic requirements of important forms of technical communication.
- Implement principles of effective document design and the display of quantitative data.
- 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 technical documents.
- 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 much of your work for this course in small groups, and you are expected to fulfill your fair share of group work and to interact courteously with your peers at all times. Classes are conducted in a discussion/workshop format; therefore, regular attendance and active participation are important. My attendance policy is simple: you may miss three classes (for any reason) without penalty. Each additional absence (for any reason) will lower your course grade

by 1/3 of a letter grade (from B to B-), and six or more absences will result in a failing grade for the course. Because our time in class is limited, promptness is important. Three tardies will be counted as one absence.

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, and presentation, and photo-editing programs. 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.

Grading and Evaluation

Overview. Four major assignments will constitute the bulk of your grade for this course. In addition, a midterm exam, several short quizzes and assignments, and regular participation in class discussions will influence your final grade. Major assignments will be penalized one letter grade (from B to C) for every class period they are late. You must complete all units to receive a passing grade at the end of the semester. Shorter assignments will normally be worth 10 points, and all short assignments will be averaged together. Because these short assignments relate directly to the topic of discussion each day, they will receive no credit if they are turned in late.

Grading Scale. All major assignments will be evaluated using the following scale:

A	94 – 100		**C**	74 – 76.99
A-	90 – 93.99		**C-**	70 – 73.99
B+	87 – 89.99		**D+**	67 – 69.99
B	84 – 86.99		**D**	64 – 66.99
B-	80 – 83.99		**D-**	60 – 63.99
C+	77 – 79.99		**F**	0 – 59.99

Five Things You Can Do to Annoy Your Instructor

1. 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 an emergency call, let me know in advance.

2. Send me an incomplete email message. I have no idea who cyclonefan29@iastate.edu is. 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 have a great deal of leeway on most assignments in this course, but when I ask you to do something 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 the software program didn't catch. Repeat as needed.

5. Ask me "Did we do anything important in class on Tuesday?" No matter what we did, the answer will always be the same: Yes, what we did was important, and yes, you're digging your grave every time you ask me that.

Grading Criteria. All major assignments will be evaluated using the following criteria:

A
Superior Accomplishment. Shows excellent analysis of the assignment and provides an imaginative and original response. Successfully adapts to the audience, context, and purpose of the assignment. Contains no mechanical errors and requires no revisions. 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 minor mechanical errors and requires revision before the assignment could 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 revisions to the organization, style, or delivery of the assignment.

D
Needs Improvement. Responds to the assignment, but contains significant defects in one of the major areas (context, substance, organization, style, or delivery). 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 (context, substance, organization, style, or delivery). The assignment could not be presented to the intended audience.

Weighted Assignments. Major units and shorter assignments will be weighted as follows:

Unit 1: Definitions and Descriptions	10 %
Unit 2: Instructions	20 %
Unit 3: Team Research Proposal	15 %
Unit 4: Electronic Portfolio	20 %
Midterm Test	15 %
Quizzes (approximately ten throughout the semester)	10 %
Short Assignments and Class Participation	10 %
TOTAL	**100 %**

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious legal and ethical breach, and it is treated as such by the university. I do not tolerate plagiarism in any form. **If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive an automatic 0 on the assignment. Depending on the severity of the plagiarism, you may also fail the entire course. In addition, I will report the incident to ISU's Office of Judicial Affairs.**

Plagiarism occurs when a writer, speaker, or designer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, images, or other material without fully acknowledging its source by quotations marks, in footnotes or endnotes, and in lists of works cited. In this course, we will draw heavily upon text, images, video, and other electronic materials found online; the fact that such material is online does not lessen our obligation to give credit where credit is due.

All work you submit in this class is to be 100% your own work (in collaborative contexts, generated 100% by you and your teammates). As is true of all work done at the university, any secondary sources (articles, images, music, interviews, websites or other electronic media—any content beyond a student's own) must be cited. Some cultures allow un-cited borrowing; in American education, each student must cite every source used. For more information, visit: http://instr.iastate.libguides.com/content.php?pid=10314

Occasionally students will unintentionally plagiarize material because they have failed to keep track of their sources as they acquire them and use them. In such cases, students claim they were unaware of university's policies on academic dishonesty, feign ignorance concerning what constitutes plagiarism, or try to convince me that their motives were pure. I am not in a position to judge your intentions; as a result, I am obligated to report all cases of plagiarism (regardless of the circumstances) to the university. If you have any questions about plagiarism and how it relates to your work or the work of your team, please talk to me before you turn in an assignment. Once plagiarized work has been submitted for a grade, I have no choice but to enforce this policy.

Disability Accommodation

Please address any special needs or special accommodations with 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 (515-294-7220).

English 314 Syllabus — Fall 2009

NOTE: This syllabus is only an outline. It will change as the semester progresses and does not list readings and shorter assignments. Every Friday, Quinn will update the online syllabus with details for the following week. The latest version of the syllabus will always be available on the class website: http://courses.isucomm.iastate.edu

Week	Topic	Assignments
1	Introduction to the course and lab; review syllabus and policies; the writing process.	Biographical sketch due.
2	Understanding audiences; technical definitions.	Unit #1 proposal due.
3	Ethics in the technical workplace; technical descriptions.	Unit #1 rough draft due.
4	Instructions and documentation.	Unit #1: Definitions and Descriptions due.
5	Designing documents and interfaces.	Unit #2 proposal due.
6	Creating and using graphics; working with data.	Unit #2 rough draft due; teaming inventory due.
7	Researching and managing information.	Unit #2: Instructions due.
8	Working in teams; proposals.	Midterm test.
9	Letters and memos; activity reports.	Unit #3 memorandum of understanding due.
10	Analytical reports.	Unit #3 progress report due.
11	Preparing for oral presentations.	Unit #3 rough draft due.
12	Oral presentations; assessing collaborative work.	Unit #3: Team Research Proposal due.
13	Introduction to Electronic Portfolio assignment; HTML and CSS coding.	Set up ISU public locker.
14	Thanksgiving Break: NO CLASSES	
15	Writing for the web; web design workshop.	HTML resume due.
16	Web design workshop; individual conferences.	Electronic Portfolio rough draft due.
17	Final: Portfolio Presentations. (Section 12 Final Exam Time: Tuesday, December 15, 9:45 a.m. Section 12 Final Exam Time: Monday, December 14, 9:45 a.m.)	Unit #4: Electronic Portfolio due.