

English 314

# Technical Communication

Instructor: Geoffrey Sauer

Office: Ross 433

Day/Time: T/TH 9:30am-10:50am

Office hours: T 11-12, W 11-12, Th 8:45-9:25am, and by appt.

Location: T Durham 141 / TH Ross 025

Email: [gsauer@iastate.edu](mailto:gsauer@iastate.edu)

## Prerequisites

English 250; Junior or Senior Classification

## Course Expectations

During this semester, you will work individually and with your classmates to address and solve several communication problems typically encountered by professionals. You will learn and practice communication skills needed to excel at developing and refining successful documents in your field, in part by analyzing your readers' information needs, their attitudes and values, and the communication context.

## Overall Course Goals

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

- Apply rhetorical principles to 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 and professional 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.

## Texts and Materials

This Advanced Communication course (English 302, 309, or 314) requires a publisher's digital content—called Connect/LearnSmart—through the University Book Store's Inclusive Access program. Inclusive Access is a new textbook model that converts physical, printed course materials into instantly accessible, totally interactive and adaptive digital content. The ISU Bookstore, publishers, and faculty collaborate to make the digital course material available to every student on the first day of class. Because every student enrolled receives the digital course material, the publisher charges a lower bulk rate to the bookstore resulting in a lower retail price to the student.

English 314 uses Inclusive Access for its Connect/LearnSmart materials. However, you need to **go to the ISU Bookstore and buy a hard copy of the book**. An ebook is NOT included. The ISU Bookstore has the best price.

## FAQs

### How should I contact my instructor?

The best way is by email. I will try to respond within 24 hours of receiving email, but it may take 48 hours. To meet with me in person, come to my office hours or set up an appointment for an online conference.

### What is my course grade so far?

Grades are entered on the course website. You can monitor your progress at any time by signing in to your account and looking at the grade book.

### Will spelling and grammar affect my grade?

Yes, they can. Spelling and punctuation can have a big impact in the workplace; your errors are "noise" that can interfere with successful communication.

### Can I attend an earlier final-exam session?

No. By the ISU Registrar's policy, you must attend at the time scheduled by the university. I cannot accommodate early travel (see the third bullet point here: <http://www.registrar.iastate.edu/students/exams>).

### Where can I get help for my projects?

You can meet with me during office hours or an appointment time, but there are additional options. The Writing and Media Center (<http://www.dso.iastate.edu/wmc>) offers one-on-one assistance for written, oral, visual, and electronic communication projects.

Textbook = Leo Finklestein, Jr.'s Pocket Book of Technical Writing for Engineers and Scientists, 3rd edition  
ISBN-13: 9781260381450

You have been charged for the digital content through your U-Bill. If you choose not to use the required digital course material through the University Book Store, you have through the 10th day of class to opt out of the inclusive access program and get a refund. Should you opt out, you will be responsible for finding the required digital content by other means. Keep in mind that the ISU Bookstore and publisher have already negotiated to get you the lowest price possible for the digital content. You also have through the 10th day of class to receive a refund if you drop the course.

For more information on inclusive access go to <http://www.isubookstore.com/inclusive-access>. Pricing for Inclusive Access digital content and the optional supplemental loose-leaf textbook can be found by viewing your booklist through your Class Schedule on Access Plus.

## Performance Evaluation

The following is a grade breakdown of the work you will complete this semester:

<b>Pretest</b>	<b>+2%</b>
20 points extra credit possible; multiple-choice exam	
<b>Memo Analysis</b>	<b>10%</b>
Analyzes technical descriptions (individual)	
<b>Problem Statement</b>	<b>5%</b>
Synthesizes research that establishes the problem the technical description will help to solve (individual)	
<b>Topic Proposal (and revision)</b>	<b>15%</b>
Proposes the topic for the technical description (individual)	
<b>Paper-Airplane Instructions</b>	<b>10%</b>
Provides technical instructions (collaborative)	
<b>Feasibility Report on Instructions</b>	<b>10%</b>
Tests another group's instructions (collaborative)	
<b>Technical Description (and revision)</b>	<b>20%</b>
Constitutes the major project for the course (collaborative)	
<b>Presentation of Technical Description</b>	<b>10%</b>
Presents the group's process of creating the technical description and its recommendations (collaborative)	
<b>Posttest</b>	<b>5%</b>
Multiple-choice exam	
<b>Professionalism</b>	<b>5%</b>
See the text box on the right.	
<b>LearnSmart Online Homework</b>	<b>10%</b>
It is your responsibility to complete these assignments on time.	

## Grading and Evaluation

Your assignments will be assessed in five major categories: context, substance, organization, style, and delivery. These categories are further delineated into specific expectations. To earn an A in this course, you must demonstrate exemplary accomplishment of all assigned tasks. To earn a B, your work must be mature.

### Professionalism

Professionalism is expected **at all times**.

**Respect for others.** In agreement with ISU's policies on student conduct, you are to carry yourself with respect for others and in ways conducive to maintaining a positive learning environment. In this course, you will restrict your oral commentary to class-specific activities and discussion, will refrain from profane or offensive outbursts or from disruptions, and will not engage in behavior that is demeaning, threatening or harmful to either yourself or class members. For further details, see ISU's policies: <http://policy.iastate.edu/policy/SDR#a4>

**Turn off or silence cell phones.** When you come to class, turn your phone off or set it to vibrate.

**Participate.** Participation means being present mentally as well as bodily; it means among other things: (1) thoughtfully contributing to any online discussions or other work; (2) preparing for class, having your materials with you in class, and actively engaging in class discussions; (3) carefully completing any in-class assignments. *Just showing up is not enough.*

**Send complete email messages.** Provide a subject line, a statement of the email's purpose, a specific request, your name, and any other content your audience (including my) needs.

**Follow directions.** Directions are there for a reason, whether they are in-class directives, instructions for submitting work, or genre conventions. Ignoring directions, even small ones, can signal you don't take your work seriously.

**Proofread.** Proofread *everything*, including emails. Word-processing programs have built-in spell- and grammar-check functions. Use them. Then check your work for mistakes the software program didn't catch.

**If you miss class, find out what you missed.** When you must miss class, actively seek out what you've missed. Ask your peers or send me an email and ask, "What can I do to catch up?" or something similar. This question shows awareness of the time I spend creating useful class activities, lectures, and discussions.

Major assignments will be penalized **one letter grade for each day they are late** (including weekend days) and will not be accepted if they are more than four days late. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me well in advance. You must successfully complete all major assignments to receive a passing grade at the end of the semester.

<b>A</b>	93 – 100	<b>B-</b>	80 – 82	<b>D+</b>	67 – 69
<b>A-</b>	90 – 92	<b>C+</b>	77 – 79	<b>D</b>	63 – 66
<b>B+</b>	87 – 89	<b>C</b>	73 – 76	<b>D-</b>	60 – 62
<b>B</b>	83 – 86	<b>C-</b>	70 – 72	<b>F</b>	00 – 59

**You may revise assignments the memo, the appraisal, and the collaborative report.** Your grade may increase by a maximum of one letter grade (e.g., B- to A-).

## Letter Grades and Corresponding Percentages

The scale to the right will be used when assigning grades.

## Grading Criteria

All major projects will be assigned letter grades according to the following criteria:

- A Exemplary 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 very few mechanical errors and requires little or no revision. The piece is ready to be presented to the intended audience.
- B Mature Work.** 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 Developing.** 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 Formative.** Provides an inadequate response to the assignment and/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 project could not be presented to the intended audience without intensive revision or completely starting over.

Percentages are not rounded: You will have ample opportunities to bolster your grade through homework and professionalism. Therefore, when you have earned 89.75 percent of the points possible, your course grade will be a B+, not an A-.

## Attendance and Grades

The attendance policy for the ISUComm Advanced Communication program is consistent across courses and sections. Absences damage your grade and create the probability that you will need to drop the course. Much of what occurs in Advanced Communication courses cannot be rescheduled, made up, or accepted late—regardless of the reason for missing class. To ensure that you stay on schedule individually and as a team-project member, the codirectors of the Advanced Communication program enforce these policies:

- **Missing more than four classes (MWF) or three classes (TTH) will lower your grade, and excessive absences (three weeks of classes) will result in a failing grade for the course.** Specifically, if your absences total 5 to 8 MWF classes or 4 to 5 TTH classes, your class grade will decrease two increments. For example, a B+ becomes a B-; a C becomes a D+. This decrease happens for the *range* of 5 to 8 MWF absences or 4 to 5 TTH absences, not for each individual absence within the range. Even so, the impact on your grade is significant once you exceed your allotted absences (4 on MWF or 3 on TTH).
- **After a total of 9 MWF absences or 6 TTH absences, you must drop the course, or you will receive an F.** Even with a valid reason to miss, you can accumulate so many absences in a semester that your work and classroom experience are too compromised for you to remain in the class.

- **If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be counted absent.**
- **If you have medical condition that will affect your attendance, you must speak to the Disability Resources Office (DRO) at the beginning of the semester to officially request an accommodation;** however, we cannot approve an *indefinite* number of absences or late arrivals. We will work with the DRO to arrive at an accommodation that allows you to be successful without altering the rigor and basic requirements of the class.
- **Do not schedule travel that requires you to leave campus early for fall break or for semester break,** as leaving early could conflict with your class or your final-exam session. Your instructor cannot make individual arrangements for you.
- **If you will have athletic absences, you must present them to your instructor at the beginning of the semester;** your instructor will consult with the codirectors of the Advanced Communication program. If your absences will be numerous and will interfere with your participation in the class, your instructor will advise you to drop the class and enroll in it during a semester when you can attend regularly.
  - Remember that missing 3 MWF classes or 2 TTH classes means missing a week of class. Absences add up fast and do compromise your ability to be successful in the course. You may need to take the class in a semester when your sport is not active.
  - If the time of day for the class is not convenient for you, speak to your adviser immediately about changing to another section. **If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be counted absent.**
  - **Missing during group work or on the day of your oral presentation means taking an F for that activity.**
  - When classes are cancelled for scheduled conferences, **missing a scheduled individual or group conference counts as an absence.**

## Validating Enrollment

To validate your enrollment in each course at the beginning of the semester, you must attend the first or second meeting (first meeting if the class meets only once a week). If you add a course after the term begins, you must attend the next class meeting. If you do not validate your enrollment, you must drop the course, or you will receive an F grade. (See the bottom of this webpage: <http://catalog.iastate.edu/registration/>.)

## Canvas for Students at ISU

### Getting Started

1. Be sure to have an ISU NetID. If you do not, please visit Passwords and Accounts (<https://www.it.iastate.edu/services/accounts>).
2. Log in to Canvas with your ISU NetID and password and look for your course, ENGL 314, for this semester.

### General Help with Canvas

1. Use the Canvas Help on Canvas (click on the question mark at the bottom of the vertical red bar on the left of your Canvas screen after you have logged in).
2. Call the Solution Center (515-294-4000).

### Basic Troubleshooting (if Canvas is not working)

1. Username/Password not working?
  - a. Your Username (ISUNetID) and Password for Canvas are the same as those for your ISU email account.
  - b. For help with Username and Password, please visit Password and Account or contact the Solution Center at 515-294-4000 or [solution@iastate.edu](mailto:solution@iastate.edu).
2. If you get an error message, check for Browser and Java issues on your computer.
3. If you are unable to access course content or activities (e.g. Tests, Discussions, Assignments, etc.) contact me.
4. Check General Technology Support for Students (<https://www.it.iastate.edu/foryou/students/>).

## McGraw-Hill Assignments

English 314 uses learning materials from McGraw-Hill called LearnSmart. These assignments are adaptive in nature, meaning that they give you the opportunity to get more practice with concepts you find challenging, and less practice with concepts you already understand. If you run into technical difficulties with these assignments, contact McGraw-Hill Support. You can call, email or chat with IT support through the McGraw-Hill website: <http://mpss.mhhe.com/>.

## University Policies

### *Academic Misconduct*

All acts of dishonesty in any work constitute academic misconduct. Online courses are not an exception. The Student Disciplinary Regulations (<http://policy.iastate.edu/policy/SDR>) will be followed in the event of academic misconduct. Depending on the act, a student could receive an F grade on the test/assignment, F grade for the course, and could be suspended or expelled from the University. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing attempt to help another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to each of the following acts when performed in any type of academic or academically related matter, exercise, or activity:

#### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the act of representing directly or indirectly another person's work as your own. It can involve presenting someone's speech, wholly or partially, as your own; quoting without acknowledging the true source of the quoted material; copying and handing in another person's work with your name on it; and similar infractions. Even indirect quotation, paraphrasing, etc., can be considered plagiarism unless sources are properly cited. Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and students could receive an F grade on the test/assignment or an F grade for the course.

#### **Obtaining Unauthorized Information**

Unauthorized information is information that is obtained dishonestly, for example, by copying graded homework assignments from another student, by working with another student on a test or homework when not specifically permitted to do so, or by looking at your notes or other written work during an examination when not specifically permitted to do so.

#### **Tendering of Information**

Students may not give or sell their work to another person who plans to submit it as his or her own work. This includes giving their work to another student to be copied, giving someone answers to exam questions during the exam, taking an exam and discussing its contents with students who will be taking the same exam, or giving or selling a term paper to another student.

#### **Misrepresentation**

Students misrepresent their work when they hand in the work of someone else. The following are examples: purchasing a paper from a term paper service; reproducing another person's paper (even with modifications) and submitting it as their own; having another student do their online homework or having someone else take their exam.

#### **Bribery**

Offering money or any item or service to a faculty member or any other person to gain academic advantage for yourself or another is dishonest.

### *Religious Accommodation*

Please address any religious accommodations or potential conflicts on the basis of closely held religious beliefs with me at the beginning of the semester, or at the earliest possible time. It is advisable to address any potential conflicts as early as possible to allow time to consider alternatives. You or I may seek further guidance from the Office of Equal Opportunity (<http://www.eoc.iastate.edu/>).

### *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 Student Disability Resources office, located in the Student Services Building, Room 1076. Phone (515) 294-7220 to set an appointment. Email: [disabilityresources@iastate.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@iastate.edu). Website: <http://www.dso.iastate.edu/dr/>.

### ***Diversity Affirmation***

Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. veteran. Inquiries can be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity, 3350 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-7612.

### ***Harassment and Discrimination***

Iowa State University strives to maintain our campus as a place of work and study for faculty, staff, and students that is free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and harassment based upon race, ethnicity, sex (including sexual assault), pregnancy, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, or status as a U. S. veteran. Any student who has concerns about such behavior should contact me, Student Assistance at 515-294-1020 or email [dso-sas@iastate.edu](mailto:dso-sas@iastate.edu), or the Office of Equal Opportunity at 515-294-7612.

## **Department Policies**

### ***Reporting Grievances***

If you become concerned about my class management, please communicate your concerns with me. Concerns sometimes relate to grading methods, paper turnaround time, and course policies, as examples. If you feel uncomfortable speaking with me, contact the Co-Directors of Advanced Communication, Jenny Aune ([jeaune@iastate.edu](mailto:jeaune@iastate.edu)) or Jo Mackiewicz ([jomack@iastate.edu](mailto:jomack@iastate.edu)).

### ***Grade Appeal***

If you feel that your final grade does not reflect the quality of the work you produced this past semester, please discuss the issue with me. If, after talking with me, you still feel that your final grade does not reflect the quality of your work, you can file a grade appeal with Deanna Stumbo (229 Ross Hall). For a grade appeal, you will need to submit the following materials:

- A memo explaining why your final grade does not reflect the quality of work you produced
- All the work you completed during the semester
- The course policies with grade breakdown
- The assignment sheets

A panel of instructors will review your materials blindly and assign a grade based on the quality of the work. If the grade the panel assigns is higher than the grade you received, your grade will be change accordingly. If, however, the grade the panel assigns is lower than the grade you received, your grade will remain the same.