

# ENGLISH 534

## theories and methods of the teaching of technical and professional writing

<http://arola.kuurola.com/534/>

### OVERVIEW

This seminar offers graduate students a theoretical and pedagogical foundation for teaching introductory courses in technical and professional communication. As such, it is a survey of current scholarship concerning objectives and methods of instruction in technical and professional communication that takes a rhetorical view of theory within the field. The seminar aims to not only investigate the historical and theoretical bases for production of writing in scientific and technical industries, but also to familiarize students with models of inquiry in the field, emphasizing the connections between theory and pedagogy in technical and professional communication.

This course also serves as a credentialing mechanism for graduate students who wish to teach Engl 402 or Engl 403 by providing the necessary pedagogical training in and scholarly context for professional communication.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

*by the end of the semester you should:*

- be familiar with the key theoretical issues in professional and technical communication
- understand how disciplinary theory and research can be used to shape classroom practice
- be familiar with common assignments, genres, and texts used to teach undergraduate professional and technical communication
- develop a detailed syllabus and assignment sequence for an undergraduate professional and technical communication course

### REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Dubinsky, James M. (ed.) *Teaching Technical Communication: Critical Issues for the Classroom*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.
- Johnson, Robert R. *User-Centered Technology*. Syracuse, NY: SUNY Press, 1998.
- Johnson-Eilola, Johndan and Stuart A. Selber (eds.) *Solving Problems in Technical Communication*. Chicago, IL: UChicago Press, 2013.
- Scott, J. Blake. (ed.) *Critical Power Tools: Technical Communication and Cultural Studies*. Syracuse, NY: SUNY Press, 2012.

## **POLICIES**

**Attendance:** This is a graduate class, thus your attendance is expected. But...for the record: I will forgive one missed class (note we already have 2 weeks off), but beyond that your participation grade will suffer. Additionally, please, if you're sick, do us a favor and stay home.

**Late Work:** Acceptance of late work is unusual and must be discussed in conference with the teacher. Late work will receive a lowered grade if turned in within one week of the original due date. Work turned in later than one week past the original due date will be given an automatic grade of F.

**Evaluation:** For more information on the assignments themselves, percentages, and evaluation criteria, visit the [tasks](#) page. The grading scale is 100-93 A III 90-92 A- III 88-89 B+ III 83-87 B III 80-82 B- and so on.

**Students with Disabilities:** Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please either visit or call the Access Center (Washington Building 217; 509-335-3417) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the Access Center.

**Academic Integrity:** Washington State University, a community dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, expects all students to behave in a manner consistent with its high standards of scholarship and conduct. Students are expected to uphold these standards both on and off campus and acknowledge the university's authority to take disciplinary action. The purpose of these standards and processes is to educate students and protect the welfare of the community. These standards of Conduct for Students can be found at [conduct.wsu.edu](http://conduct.wsu.edu).

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

**[worth 40% of final grade] Reading Summary & Connections Presentation + Blog:** Each week you will be responsible for providing the class with a brief summary of one of the week's readings. The summary must include: 1) the problem the author sees, 2) the solution/theory/practice/method the author suggests in order to address this problem, 3) 2-3 questions/issues you'd like to talk about as a class related to the article, and 4) connections to the readings presented before you in class. We will choose a random order on the day of class, so you won't necessarily know who will come before you. Thus, you need to be prepared to make connections to all of the readings from the week. You will also compose a blog post each week that should address 1-4. Consider the blog reading notes and/or presentation notes for yourself. I'm not looking for a formal essay, I just want to see that you've addressed issues 1-4 as listed above.

**[worth 20% of final grade] Journal Review.** This is a large scale project to be completed in groups. **Phase 1:** Each group will first review the past 10 years of one journal, and will provide an overview of the topics covered in each issue. After a first pass, the class as a whole will determine shared metadata with which to tag each article and issue. **Phase 2:** Each group will then return to their collection and tag each article with the appropriate tags. This material will be shared on a wiki or shared google site (TBD! And, I'm open to suggestions). At the end of the project, each group will write a 1-2 page memo describing their process and findings. Journals to be considered: Technical Communication, Journal of Business and Technical Communication (JBTC), Technical Communication Quarterly (TCQ), Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication.

**[worth 20% of final grade] Program and Course Report.** In pairs (or individually, tbd) you will conduct an interview with a professor at another University in order to discover 1) what the department's Professional and/or Technical Writing program, major, or minor looks like, and 2) what the department's 402-like course looks like (the course that all, or most, majors can take). The result of this interview will be a report on your findings, that 1) explains 1 and 2 from above, 2) explains how this is similar or different to WSU's program, and 3) explains your perceived pros and cons of both approaches. This report can take the form of a written report or a video. You will present this information in class.

**[worth 20% of final grade] Final Syllabus and Justification Paper.** The final project for this course will be a fully fleshed out English 402 syllabus and assignment sequence. Along with the syllabus and assignments, you must write a pedagogical justification that takes into account both the theory you have read, and the pedagogies you have reviewed.

For reading schedule, please visit: <http://arola.kuurola.com/534/>