

Technical Communication in the Zombie Apocalypse



ENG 451 | Spring 2020
Time | Location

Illinois State University

Scenario

Early reports indicate that a deadly disease has been spreading rapidly in large cities across the country. Not much is known about the outbreak at the time, but it is known that it appears to spread primarily through a bite from the infected. Teams of intellectuals and government officials are working to learn more and inform the public how to take appropriate precautions to slow and stop its spread.

A team of technical writers has survived the initial outbreak and has found safety in a secure area that still has access to electricity, internet, water, food, and other basic amenities... for now. They are using their skills as public intellectuals to contact the public and inform them of key knowledge to help with their survival. They are also in communication with the CDC, who provides them information from outside and aids in distributing materials. This team specializes in both technical communication skills (community research, report writing, document design, usability and UX, social media management, web design, etc) and maintains a focus on social justice, even in the face of a disaster.

Objective

The Zombie Tech Comm Team will research the outbreak and communicate survival techniques to civilians. They will also maintain their focus on social justice work, seeking to answer the question, **how can technical communicators enact social justice, even and especially in the face of crisis and disaster?** The team will examine a range of disaster and crisis events and consider a range of technical communication theories and practices to arrive at an answer or answers.

Team Leader

Name: Dr. Erika M. Sparby

Email:

Phone:

Home Base:

Base Hours:

Website:

Team Readings

- **Brooks:** *World War Z*
- **Walton, Moore, and Jones:** *Technical Communication after the Social Justice Turn*
- **Potts:** *Social Media in Disaster Response*
- Other readings as assigned on ReggieNet

Brief Project Descriptions

(Full prompts are available on ReggieNet)

Technical Description (Individual - 10 points)

Using *World War Z*, write a technical description of a zombie. Consider what it looks like, how it moves, and any other notable features.

Visualization (Individual - 10 points)

Using your technical description, craft an infographic about how to identify and respond to a zombie.

Social Media (Team - 20 points)

The Zombie Tech Comm Team will work together to strategize a digital social media campaign for the CDC to promote zombie awareness and survival.

Survival Guide (Team - 25 points)

The Zombie Tech Comm Team will work together to design an analog survival guide that will be distributed to local, national, and even international communities.

Website (Team - 25 points)

After surviving the zombie outbreak, the Zombie Tech Comm Team will archive their work, provide ongoing recommendations for living with zombies, and make connections to other disaster and crisis events.

Class Facilitation (Individual - 10 points)

Once during the semester, team members will facilitate discussion of the readings for 30-45 mins. Stimulate productive discussions, provide visual aids, synthesize conversations, and create opportunities for all to contribute.

Grading Scale

A	100-90
B	89-90
C	79-70
D	69-60
F	59 or below



Disclaimer

I recommend staying away from non-*World War Z* zombie-related materials for the semester. There is a lot of contradicting zombie lore, and we are relying on Brooks's book as the central zombie text.

Course Policies

(The policies in this syllabus are contractual; if you remain in the class, you have agreed to them)

Attendance and Punctuality

If you are ill or have a personal emergency, you are responsible for notifying me and making up the work. Medical documentation may be required in the case of illness.

You will be working collaboratively with peers; thus, you will also be required to attend any scheduled out-of-class meetings with your team.

Homework Submission

All coursework will be submitted on ReggieNet on the date and time listed in the prompt. Presentations cannot be rescheduled except in extreme situations.

Late work is accepted, but you will lose points from the final grade if no extension has been arranged. Technological mishaps are not accepted as excuses for late work.

Professionalism and Content Warnings

During class discussions, peer feedback, and in your writing, you are expected to treat others with respect. This pertains to all class members, the professor, the audiences you write for, and the people you write about. I do not tolerate intolerant discourses. If a student engages in disrespectful or hateful speech, we will discuss conduct; if it happens a second time, the offender may be removed from the course altogether.

You are expected to produce professional, high-quality documents. All ISU students are responsible for upholding the Code of Academic Integrity and the Student Code of Conduct available online. Intentional plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course.

Some of the content and discussions in this course may trigger traumas and strong emotions. I will give content warnings, but be aware of your own capabilities and limitations. If you think a topic may be triggering, please sit by the door so that you can step out if needed. If you decide to miss class, your absence may be excused but you will be responsible for making up any missed work.

Technology

This course's information exchange is largely digital, so a basic knowledge of some digital technologies is required.

- You are expected to back up all files
- You are expected to have proficiency with your ISU email account and ReggieNet functionality.

You are expected to become proficient with unfamiliar computer technologies and apps.

Accessibility

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact SASS (Student Access and Accommodation Services).

Location: 350 Fell Hall

Website: <http://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu>

Phone: (309) 438-5853

TTY: (309) 438-8620

Email: ableisu@ilstu.edu

Thank you

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