

TECM 4180: Advanced Technical Communication

Course Information

Term: Fall 2021

Location: AUSB 308

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Ana Krahmer

Office hours: W 10AM-1PM, or by appointment

Office location: Willis 028, or over Zoom.

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Course Summary

Professionals in all fields are increasingly called upon to evaluate processes, improve outcomes, and lead change. To make sound conclusions and to influence others, you must gather information, ensure that it's valid and credible, and present your findings and recommendations in a clear compelling way. In this course, you'll gather information through interviews, surveys, and secondary research. You'll hone your critical thinking skills. You'll learn how to organize your content for maximum impact. And you'll develop memos, articles, reports, and graphs.

By the end of this course you should be able to—

- work in a team;
- make decisions and solve problems;
- plan, organize and prioritize work;
- communicate verbally;
- obtain and process information;
- analyze quantitative data;
- understand technology related to the job;
- use software proficiently;
- create and/or edit reports; and
- sell and influence others.[\[1\]](#)

Textbook

The required texts for this course are

- *Organizing Ideas* by Matthew Spence

- *Think Smarter, Critical Thinking to Improve Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills* by Michael Kallet

Supplemental readings will be available on Canvas.

Assignments

The assignments in this course are designed to provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate and develop your writing abilities. As this is a writing-intensive course, each assignment, whether individual or group, requires substantial contribution and solid evidence of audience analysis, ethical considerations, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Below is a brief description of the major assignments you will complete in this course and the assignment grade weights. More specific instructions about each will be provided in-class and on Canvas.

Student Interview Report (individual), 10%

Interview a fellow student and then write a report (using the Spence method) that presents information and recommendations to your readers.

Client Interview Report (individual), 15%

Interview someone who is a leader in a non-profit organization, the owner or manager of a business, or a professional in a field that interests you. Write a report (using the Spence method) that presents information and recommendations to your readers.

Intercultural Communication Report (individual), 20%

Conduct secondary research to explore an intercultural communication situation that is critical to the success of an organization. Synthesize information from multiple sources to report your findings and recommendations.

Proposal Pitch (individual), 15%

Write a persuasive summary of secondary research and a proposal for a primary research project. Pitch this proposal to your assigned team. Team members will discuss all the proposals and choose which to develop into a survey.

Survey Report (group), 25%

Work as a group to identify research goals and to conduct a survey. Analyze your survey results and report your findings verbally and visually.

In-Class Assignments, Professionalism, Drafts, Peer Reviews, and Critical Thinking (individual/group), 15%

Complete assignment drafts, peer reviews, critical thinking activities, and assigned readings as well as conduct yourself as a professional communicator in class. Completion of in-class activities counts toward this 15% of your grade, and strong professional behavior for in-class activities can mean the difference between an A and a B when your grade hovers around an 89.5% at the end of the semester.

Grading

The below grading criteria serve as general guidelines for evaluating all assignments. Consider the following criteria very carefully as you make decisions about class participation, attendance, and communication between your professor and your peers.

Assignment-specific rubrics will be housed on Canvas.

"A" (90-100%): A manager would be very impressed and would remember the work when a promotion is discussed. In this course, that means work that is a pleasure to read, with excellent content, grammar, sentence structure, mechanics, and visual design. In addition, work is thorough, complete, coherent, well organized, supported sufficiently, and demonstrates a superior understanding of audience, purpose, and rationale.

"B" (80-89%): A manager would be satisfied with the job, but not especially impressed. This means that documents are well written and well produced and demonstrate a substantial addition to the learning process. Work is sufficiently developed, organized, and supported, and demonstrates a solid understanding of audience, purpose, and rationale.

"C" (70-79%): A manager would be disappointed and ask you to revise or rewrite sections before allowing clients and others to see the work. In other words, the document may have clear, but underdeveloped ideas, or it might not engage or affect the reader. The documents may contain some errors in grammar, mechanics, or logic.

"D" (60-69%): A manager would be troubled by the poor quality of work. This level of work forces the reader to work too hard to understand the main ideas. The documents may contain incomplete information, have serious grammar and mechanical problems, lack clear organization, or be conceptually unclear.

"F" (0-59%): A manager would start looking for someone to replace you. In particular, work fails to address the tasks of the assignment, is so underdeveloped as to demonstrate incompetence, and is mechanically and grammatically incomprehensible. This grade will also be assigned for any evidence of plagiarism.

Course Policies and Procedures

These policies provide you with the formal regulations governing this course. Submission of your first assignment indicates you have read, understood, and agreed to these policies.

Drop Dates

Please be aware of the below deadlines as well as the changes in grading policies. UNT students can no longer receive a grade of WF, and they can drop a course online without the instructor's signature. However, students have 5 business days to decide if they want to be re-instated in a dropped course.

Medical Withdrawals

If a student must withdraw due to medical reasons, prior to the withdrawal deadline as indicated in the academic calendar, a student may do so through the regular withdrawal process. If a student is incapacitated or unable to make the request on his/her own, please contact the Dean of Students Office for assistance at 940-565-2648. For details regarding the withdrawal process, go to <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/withdrawals>.

Attendance

The attendance policy is designed to help you to develop and practice the skills and habits that employers expect. The self-discipline of regular and prompt attendance is an important aspect of professionalism. Responsible students understand and appreciate this policy, which helps you to follow through on your educational goals.

You should make a firm commitment to attend every class meeting. However, due to the complexities of student life, I will allow for 2 absences without penalty. (That is a 10% rate of absenteeism, which would be unacceptable in most professional contexts.) You should reserve those absences for days when you are ill, accidentally sleep late, have car trouble, or experience other issues that unexpectedly prevent attendance.

Be clear about the requirements and penalties:

- After the 2 penalty-free absences, each additional absence will lower your final course grade by one letter.
- If you arrive more than 10 minutes late or leave before class is dismissed, I will record a half-day of absence.
- Excused absences will be granted only for Religious Holy Days (communicated during the first week of the semester), Active-Duty Military Service (communicated in advance), Official University Functions (communicated in advance), and documented medical issues of more than 1 week's duration, as described in the UNT Attendance Policy.
(https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.039_StudAttnandAuthAbsence.Pub2_.19.pdf)
- **DO NOT ask how you can “make up” for missed days.** To be fair to everyone, everyone gets the stated number of penalty-free absences and everyone is penalized in the same manner for excessive absences.

- UNT cares about student success. If you experience difficult circumstances that interfere with your educational goals, please consult the UNT Care Team or Student Services for guidance.

Face Coverings

UNT encourages everyone to wear a face covering when indoors, regardless of vaccination status, to protect yourself and others from COVID infection, as recommended by current CDC guidelines. Face covering guidelines could change based on community health conditions.

General Technology Requirements

Computer Operations and Access Requirements

As this is a senior-level course, you are expected to be familiar with the day-to-day operation of computers including UNT email (and sending attachments), Canvas, and standard software.

You are also expected to have regular access to computing technology, whether it be your computer at home or the computers provided by UNT. There are 14 computer labs on campus, including one 24-hour lab.

Hardware and Disk Media Requirements

It is your responsibility to ensure that the computer(s) and disk(s) you use are functional and that you have backed up your data in the case of technological failure.

As a student at UNT, you can back up data, up to 25 GB, through [OneDrive](#). A corrupted disk or crashed hard drive does not constitute an excuse for late or unsubmitted work. If you need to bring electronic files to class, please email them to yourself as attachments or use the OneDrive available through your EagleConnect account.

Email Requirement

All students must have a valid UNT email address, as it is the only email address I can use to communicate with you. You can forward your UNT email to your regular account (Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.), should you not wish to directly check your UNT account. It is also your responsibility to check your email regularly. I often use email to send class emails, including notices, updates, and advisories.

Assignment Submission and Grading

Format

Major assignments and drafts must be submitted through Canvas unless otherwise noted. Emailed assignments will not be accepted.

Deadlines

Assignments must be completed and uploaded to Canvas by the beginning of the designated class period, unless specified otherwise, or unless you use the **D'oh** form, which you can use twice during the semester. Without the D'oh form, I do not accept late work unless you have extenuating circumstances that you communicate to me with as early notice as possible.

It is your responsibility to turn in your work on time. Computer-related excuses will not be accepted as per the above technology requirements.

Lastly, you may not use program templates (e.g., Word templates) to format any of your documents — these don't encourage you to learn the programs and generally result in dull, unpersuasive documents.

Classroom Behavior

It is expected that discussions will occur in the classroom; consequently, it is important to be respectful and listen to the instructor and your classmates. "Listening" does not include answering a cell phone, texting, chatting to your neighbor, checking email, surfing the Internet, or reading the *North Texas Daily* or any other printed matter.

Your preparedness in this course also falls under the subject of classroom behavior. You are expected to come to every class with your textbook and appropriate note-taking materials. Likewise, you are expected to have completed all the assigned readings and all assignments due during that class period. We have regular in-class activities and assignments that are intended to help you with preparing your major assignments. Every in-class activity we do adds to your major assignment and counts toward your in-class professionalism grade.

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom, and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct (UNT Policy 17.012). The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

The Code applies to your interactions with everyone involved in this course: the instructor, classmates, your project teammates, and invited guests.

Teamwork Behavior

You will complete two major projects in teams. I will assign these teams based on your shared academic interests. Before any teamwork begins, you will create a charter that is designed to ensure strong communication across the team. Your charter will include information on team goals and member roles, strategies for conflict resolution, and protocols for missing deadlines. If your team encounters any project management issues, consult the charter before asking me to intervene. You will evaluate yourself and each team member at the semester's end. These evaluations could influence your grade.

Academic Integrity

I follow UNT's academic integrity and dishonesty policies. UNT defines six acts of academic dishonesty (see UNT Policy 06.003). Below is a brief description of these act and the related 4180 penalty for committing each act:

Cheating —using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours. You will receive a grade of 0 for any assignment that involves cheating.

Plagiarism — the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgement. You will receive a grade of 0 for any assignment that involves plagiarism.

Forgery — altering a score, grade, or official academic university record or forging the signature of an instructor or other student. You will receive a final grade of F in the course for any act of forgery.

Fabrication — intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. You will receive a grade of 0 for any assignment that involves fabrication.

Facilitating academic dishonesty — intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity. You will receive a grade of 0 for any assignment that involves facilitating academic dishonesty.

Sabotage — acting to prevent others from completing their work or willfully disrupting the academic work of others. You will receive a final grade of F in the course for any act of sabotage.

All acts of academic dishonesty will be reported to UNT's Academic Integrity Office. You can read UNT's policy at <http://tinyurl.com/nuwo42u>. At the beginning of the semester, we will review the six acts of academic dishonesty and their related penalties. You must also complete a quiz on the subject, which will certify that you understand the policies and procedures.

Accommodations (Special Arrangements)

UNT Office of Disability Accommodations

In accordance with university policies and state and federal regulations, the university is committed to full academic access for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. To this end, all academic units are willing to make reasonable and appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment and the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies in order to facilitate equality of educational access for persons with disabilities.

To receive accommodations, you must [register with the ODA](#) and then [request a Reasonable Accommodation form](#), which you should present to me within the first two weeks of class (see

UNT Policy 16.001). You can read UNT's policy on disability accommodation for students and academic units at <https://tinyurl.com/y7jshaqx>.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. (See UNT Policy 16.005)

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of [on-campus and off-campus resources](#) to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate. She can be reached through email at renee.mcnamara@unt.edu or by calling 940-565-2648.

Religious Holidays

Students needing to miss class due to the observance of an officially recognized religious holy day are asked to consult with me at least one week in advance so we can schedule missed work accordingly.

[1] Adams, Susan. "The 10 Skills Employers Most Want In 20-Something Employees." *Forbes*, 11 Oct. 2013, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/10/11/the-10-skills-employers-most-want-in-20-something-employees/#545cb7e86330>. Accessed 21 Aug. 2017.