

Spring 2020 TECM 4180 (Advanced Technical Communication)

Class Location: AUDB 313

Class Time: Thursday, 5:00PM-7:50PM

The first two pages of this document provide a quick overview of what to expect in this course. The other pages of this document provide additional details about assignments, policies, and grading criteria.

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- **What is this course about?**

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 need to 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.

- **Why is this course important?**

Your participation in this course will help you to develop the skills that employers want, including:

1. Work in a team.
2. Make decisions and solve problems.
3. Plan, organize and prioritize work.
4. Communicate verbally.
5. Obtain and process information.
6. Analyze quantitative data.
7. Understand technology related to the job.
8. Use software proficiently.
9. Create and/or edit reports.
10. Sell and influence others.¹

- **Major Units**

Critical Thinking

Explore practical applications of critical thinking techniques. Use these skills while conducting research, forming conclusions, and recommending action.

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¹ Source: 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

Interviewing

Develop your interview skills by conducting two interviews and writing recommendations based on your findings.

Survey Design and Reporting

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

Intercultural Communication & Secondary Research

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

- What books do I need to buy?

Please buy these books right away:

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

Additional reading assignments will be announced in class and listed in Canvas. You'll also do self-selected reading, primarily for the Secondary Research assignment.

- How much homework is there?

As with most 3-credit classes, you should plan for an average of 8 to 9 hours of homework each week. Out-of-class work will include reading assignments, reading summaries, research projects, and major writing assignments.

- What policies should I be aware of?

Please take the responsibility to read the entire Policies section of this document. Several of these policies are designed to incentivize good professional habits such as attendance, punctuality, accountability, and commitment to quality.

Consequently, there are **grade penalties** for:

Excessive absenteeism (1 letter grade off the final course grade for each **absence greater than 2**)

Off-task behaviors (1 absence or a half-absence may be recorded for off-task behaviors such as smartphone use, computer use, side conversations, sleeping, doing work for other courses, etc.)

Late submission of assignments (no late submission for low-stakes assignments; 10% deducted from major assignments for each day late)

Policies

- **ADA**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act, I will work with the Office of Disability Accommodation to help reasonably qualified students with disabilities. If you have such a disability, please advise me in writing of your needs no later than the second week of class.

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at [940.565.4323](tel:940.565.4323).

- **Academic Honesty and Integrity**

As a student enrolled in a senior-level university course, you are expected to take responsibility for your own learning and to uphold the highest academic standards at all times.

- Do your own work.
- Do new work for every assignment—do not reuse work that you created for other purposes.
- Do your best on every assignment—strive to meet professional standards.

Follow the UNT Policy for Student Academic Integrity.

(https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.003_StudentStandardsOfAcademicIntegrity_8_2017.pdf)

This policy defines the following forms of academic dishonesty:

Cheating: intentionally 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.

Plagiarism: the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgement.

Fabrication: intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Facilitating: academic dishonesty intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity.

If any course material is submitted that violates this policy of academic dishonesty, the assignment will receive a grade of "F," and appropriate judicial action will be filed. This action includes a report of academic misconduct to your college Dean and possible dismissal from The University of North Texas. There are no first-offense warnings regarding plagiarism. As this is a senior-level course it is expected that plagiarism and the correct use (citation) of others' ideas (including print, digital, images, and other media) are fully understood. Contact me if you're ever confused about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Misunderstandings,

miscommunication, oversights, or lack of comprehension as to what constitutes academic dishonesty is not accepted in this course.

- **Attendance**

The attendance policy is designed to help you to develop and practice the skills and habits that employers want. 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, my attendance policy generously allows 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.

(http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.039_StudentAttendance_2016.pdf)

DO NOT ask for an excused absence due to a minor illness, a doctor's appointment, car trouble, a job interview, a conference, or similar circumstances. These types of situations are why you get the penalty-free absences.

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.

Assignment Submission

The assignment submission policy is designed to help you develop the skills and habits that employers want. The self-discipline of meeting deadlines is an important aspect of professionalism. Responsible students understand and appreciate this policy, which helps you to follow through on your educational goals.

- Take responsibility to submit every assignment on time. **On time means before the deadline.**

The deadline for an assignment will be indicated in Canvas, included in the assignment instructions, and mentioned in class.

- Low-stakes assignments (worth 25 points or less) **will not** be accepted late. To earn more than 0 on these assignments, submit them before the deadline.

- For **each 24-hour period that a major assignment is late**, you will lose 10% of the total points possible for the assignment. After four 24-hour periods have passed, the paper receives an automatic "F." For example, if an assignment is due at 8 a.m. on Monday, and you submit it at 8:05 a.m. on Monday, you will lose 10% of the total points possible for the assignment.
- To avoid any negative impact from possible technical issues, you should develop the good habit of submitting your work at least 12 hours before the deadline. By doing so, you will give yourself time to resolve issues before the deadline.
- After submitting an assignment, verify that it is in Canvas and is available to the instructor for grading. It is your responsibility to use these tools correctly.
- **DO NOT** ask for "leeway." As in the workplace, there are consequences when a deadline is missed.
- As an adult enrolled in a senior-level university course, you are expected to take responsibility to learn how to submit assignments in Canvas, to manage your time, to resolve technical issues, and to meet deadlines.
- Before submitting an assignment for grading, ensure that it meets the assignment requirements as listed on the assignment sheet. Also double-check your work against the quality criteria that were presented for the assignment.
- When an assignment is due for grading, **submit it through Canvas**. Plan ahead and allow plenty of time to resolve any issues that you might experience with your computer, your Internet connection, Canvas availability, etc.
- **If you are asked to bring a printed document for an in-class activity**, such as Peer Review, print the document before class begins and remember to bring the printed document to class. **Do not** ask to leave class to print the document. **Do not** bring your laptop or other device and expect other students to read your document on that device. If you do not bring a printed document when one is required, you will not be able to participate in the activity, and the instructor may record an absence or half-absence for the class period.
- **Turnitin Submissions:** Some written assignments will be submitted as Turnitin assignments. Turnitin is a third-party web-based plagiarism detection service. Before submitting your paper to Turnitin, please remove your name and other personal information from the document. After submitting an assignment, verify that it was submitted and that it is available to the instructor for grading.

Classroom Conduct

The classroom conduct policy is designed to help you develop the skills and habits that employers want. The self-discipline of respectful, responsible, and productive behavior is an important aspect of professionalism. Responsible students understand and appreciate this policy, which helps you to follow through on your educational goals.

As a student in a senior-level course, you are expected to take responsibility for following the UNT Student Code of Conduct (https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/07.012_CodeofConduct_2013_0.pdf).

Off-task and disruptive behaviors: Even adults in a senior-level class sometimes need to be incentivized to stay on task. Therefore, 1 absence or a half-absence may be recorded if the instructor observes off-task behaviors such as smartphone use, computer use, side conversations, sleeping, doing work for other courses, etc., during lectures, small-group activities, or work periods.

Computer Lab Rules

This course takes place in a computer lab. Students must follow the lab rules.

- Make appropriate use of technology.
- Do not make disruptive, distracting, or off-task use of any technology during class.
- Do not use technology unless it is required for a classroom activity. For example, if there is a lecture or a class discussion, you should not be using your phone.
- If you fail to comply with instructions concerning the use of computers, phones, tablets, or other technology, you may be asked to leave the classroom, and in that event, you will be counted as absent for the day.

Religious Holidays

In accordance with State law, students absent due to the observance of a religious holiday may take examinations or complete assignments scheduled for the day missed within a reasonable time after the absence. Travel time required for religious observances shall also be excused. Please see the UNT Student Handbook for information on which holidays or holy days are covered by this policy. State law also requires that students notify their teachers at the beginning of the semester if they expect to miss class on a religious holiday during the semester but want to make up the work missed. Students will be allowed to make up the work **provided they have informed their teachers in writing within the first 15 days of the semester.**

University-Authorized Activities

University policy requires that students provide their teachers with **an official notification card issued by the university** if they want to make up any in-class work they missed while they were involved in a university authorized activity.

Emergency Notification and Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at <http://www.my.unt.edu>. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas in the buildings where your classes are held, 2) determine how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and 3) identify where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Peer Reviewing

As in many writing classes, this class includes a peer review component. For example, we will have peer review workshops, in which students evaluate one another's documents and provide written feedback. Be sure to talk with the instructor if you have any questions about how to evaluate and apply the suggestions from these workshops.

Grading

Each assignment will be graded according to the requirements and the quality criteria for the assignment.

Your final course grade will be based on the total points earned, minus any penalties for non-attendance (see Attendance).

- A: You earned 90-100% of the possible points.
- B: You earned 80-89.9% of the possible points OR your course grade was lowered to a B due to the Attendance Policy.
- C: 70-79.9% of the possible points OR your course grade was lowered to a C due to the Attendance Policy.
- D: You earned 60-69.9% of the possible points OR your course grade was lowered to a D due to the Attendance Policy.
- F: You earned less than 60% of the possible points OR your course grade was lowered to an F due to the Attendance Policy.

Typical criteria are provided below to help you understand the expectations. ***Assignment-specific requirements and grading criteria will be presented in class.***

Typical Criteria for Reading Summaries and Other In-Class Writing Assignments

In-Class assignments allow you to work through new information and to process your thoughts. Your writing should be specific, accurate, clear, and well organized; however, due to the short time frame, the writing is not expected to be highly polished.

	Fails to Meet Minimum Requirements	Meets Minimum Requirements
Content	Presents an incomplete, inconsistent, or extremely under-developed response to the assignment.	Submitted on time; addresses the required points accurately and with a reasonable level of detail, given the timeframe for the assignment.
Clarity	Often has such significant issues with structure or language that it is difficult for the reader to make out the meaning.	Submitted on time; generally presents information in a clear and organized manner, although it might lack the polish required for publishable writing.

	Does Not Meet or Partially Meets Minimum Requirements	Meets Minimum Requirements	Good Quality	Outstanding Quality
Purpose/ Audience	Purpose/audience is ineffectively communicated or is not consistent with this assignment.	<p>Generally effective, but the overall quality is diminished due to issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose/audience is too broad or too narrow for this assignment. • The purpose/audience is not completely sustained throughout the document. • The introduction needs revision to present a stronger or more focused appeal to a specific audience. • The conclusion needs revision to present a stronger or more focused appeal to a specific audience. 	<p>Responds to the rhetorical situation by establishing a significant purpose and addressing a specific audience. Usually sustains a clear focus and a strong purpose.</p> <p>The thesis is clearly stated at the beginning, and the introduction and conclusion present a focused appeal to a specific audience.</p> <p>There might be a need for revisions in a place or two, such as cutting a non-essential sentence from the intro or conclusion, or rewording a topic sentence to more clearly connect to the thesis and audience.</p>	<p>Presents a strong and substantial response to the rhetorical situation by establishing a clear purpose that is timely and relevant to the needs of a specific audience. Consistently focuses on this goal and the audience's needs.</p> <p>The introduction clearly states the thesis and is crafted to gain the audience's attention while establishing the context, relevance, and purpose.</p> <p>The conclusion wraps up the discussion without needless repetition and makes a final, purposeful appeal to the audience. Could be used as an exemplar for this Quality Indicator.</p>
Development and Support	<p>Overall, development or support is ineffective, is not consistent with this assignment, or is diminished due to issues such as these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not meet the requirements for the number or types of sources. • Misses the minimum word count/ presentation length by 10% or more. • Incorrect use of sources, such as unattributed text or missing quote marks around text. 	<p>Generally effective, but the overall quality is diminished by issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in support. • Redundant or extraneous information. • A source that the audience is unlikely to find credible. • Over-reliance on a single source. • Over-reliance on quotes from sources. 	<p>Usually presents sufficient detail to fulfill the rhetorical purpose and to enable the audience to take action.</p> <p>There might be a need for revisions in a place or two, such as clarifying an explanation, providing an additional detail, or cutting a redundant or off-topic sentence.</p>	<p>Presents sufficient and varied types of information to meet the demands of the rhetorical situation.</p> <p>The intended audience is likely to consider the information useful, credible, and actionable.</p> <p>Could be used as an exemplar for this Quality Indicator.</p>
Structure and Design	Overall, the structure of the document or the design of the visual elements is ineffective or is not consistent with the assignment.	<p>Generally effective, but the overall quality is diminished by issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective topic sentences. 	<p>Usually presents the content in a logical and effective arrangement.</p> <p>Most visual elements (if required by the assignment) are effective.</p>	<p>Presents the content in a logical and effective arrangement, guiding the audience through the information and ideas. The structure makes it easy for the</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information that would be more effective in different positions. • Overly long blocks of text. • A visual element that is unreadable or unappealing due to font size, color, position, size, or clarity. • A visual element that is not consistent with other elements. 	There might be a need for revisions in a place or two, such as rewording a topic sentence, moving a sentence or a paragraph to a more effective position, or enhancing the readability of a visual element.	<p>reader to understand, use, and refer to the information.</p> <p>All visual elements (if required by the assignment) are readable and useful. Considered together, these elements are professional, consistent in style, and well suited to the purpose/audience.</p> <p>Could be used as an exemplar for this Quality Indicator.</p>
Professional Ethos	Overall, the Professional Ethos is ineffective or is not consistent with the assignment.	<p>Generally effective, but the overall quality is diminished by issues such as imprecise wording, inconsistency in tone, abrupt changes of topic, wordy phrases, overly complex sentences, overly formal language, or passive voice.</p> <p>Most paragraphs are free of errors; however, there might be several errors that impact readability or clarity, such as fragments, run-ons, and misused words.</p>	<p>Usually is clear, concise, and appropriate in tone for the audience and purpose.</p> <p>There might be a need for revisions in a place or two, due to issues such as imprecise wording, inconsistency in tone, an abrupt change of topic, a wordy phrase, an overly complex sentence, overly formal language, or passive voice.</p> <p>Most paragraphs are free of errors. There might be occasional low-impact errors, but few errors that impact readability or clarity.</p>	<p>Consistently uses clear, concise, impactful language and a tone that is well-crafted to achieve the purpose and influence the audience.</p> <p>Makes effective use of transitional words and phrases to create a smooth flow of ideas and information.</p> <p>Is virtually free of errors, as expected in published writing.</p> <p>The department could use this document as an exemplar for this Quality Indicator.</p>

Typical Criteria and Point Values for Major Assignments

Major Assignments involve a process of **drafting, writing, feedback, and revision**. The final draft will be judged against professional standards, taking into consideration the audience, the scenario for the assignment, and other aspects of the rhetorical situation. Not all criteria below apply to all assignments. *Assignment-specific details will be discussed in class* to ensure that the requirements are clear.

Assignments

The assignments in this course are designed to provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate and develop your writing abilities. As 4180 is a writing-intensive course, each assignment, whether individual or group, requires substantial contribution and solid evidence of audience analysis, ethical considerations, and problem-solving skills. Throughout the process, this course requires review, revision and editing—all of which improve you writing.

Course assignments, type, and grade weight are listed in the table below:

Assignment	Type	Weight
Student Interview Report	Individual	10%
Client Interview Report	Individual	15%
Intercultural Communication Report	Individual	20%
Proposal Pitch	Individual	15%
Survey Workshops/Report	Group	25%
Professionalism, Homework, and Quizzes	Individual/Group	15%

Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule for this section of 4180. The schedule is subject to change pending our progress this semester.

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Week 1 (Jan 16)	Course intro, overview of syllabus, the three tools of persuasion, interviewing	Spence, Chps 1-2	
Week 2 (Jan 23)	Spence Method, assign student interview assignment, intro to critical thinking,	Spence, Chps. 3-4 plus, p. 48, p. 74 Supplementary Reading: "Conducting Interviews" (see Canvas)	In Class: Conduct Student Interview

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Week 3 (Jan 30)	Peer review of student interview draft, critical thinking discussion	Kallet Ch. 1, 2 , 4-6, 27, 29, 31 Spence Ch. 8-9 Supplementary Reading: Qualitative Research Techniques	Student interview report (draft)
Week 4 (Feb 6)	Assign client interview assignment, interview transcript activity, reporting verbs	Kallt 7-9 Read interview transcripts for class prep	Student interview report (final)
Week 5 (Feb 13)	Peer review of client interview, critical thinking discussion , passives	Spence Ch. 14	Client interview report (draft)
Week 6 (Feb 20)	Intro to intercultural communication, assign multicultural report, UNT related library resources	Supplementary Reading: "Writing for International Readers" (see Canvas)	Client interview report (final)
Week 7 (Feb 27)	Data storytelling, data visualization, work on multicultural report,	Kallet 15-17 Supplementary Reading: Lead with a Story	

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Week 8 (Mar 5)	Peer review of multicultural report, critical thinking discussion		Intercultural communication report (draft)
SPRING BREAK			
Week 9 (Mar 18)		Kallet 32 (criteria)	Intercultural communication report (final)
Week 10 (Mar 26)	Transitions		
Week 11 (Apr 2)	Peer review of secondary research pitch, critical thinking discussion	Kallet 21 Spence Ch. 12 (again)	Transitions homework Proposal/pitch (draft)
Week 12 (Apr 9)	Team members pitch their survey idea, intro to Qualtrics and survey design	Complete Qualtrics Tutorial #1 before class SPENCE Ch. 12 (again) Kallet 22-23	Proposal/pitch (final)
Week 13 (Apr 16)	In-Class Survey Workshop: Question Formulation and Survey Construction	Watch: Designing a Questionnaire Read: Questionnaire Design	

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Week 14 (Apr 23)	In-Class Survey Workshop: Data Analysis and Reporting	Submit Synthesis Matrix Spence Ch. 10 and 11	
Week 15 (April 30)	Group report writing, course wrap up	Kallet 33 Spence Ch. 12 (again)	Group survey report (final)
Finals Week (May 16)	NO FORMAL CLASS		Team evaluations on group survey due by end of final exam period