

TECM 4180: Advanced Technical Communication

Course Information

Term: Summer 2026

Location: Online – Canvas LMS

Instructor Information

Instructor: Cheryl Croall, Ed.D.

Office hours: Monday - Friday, via Zoom, You Can Book Me!
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Course Syllabus

Welcome to UNT!

I am excited to work with you this semester on your journey to becoming a professional and technical writer. I value all of our students and look forward to getting to know you!

As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact.

Course Summary

Welcome to TECM 4180! You are valued here.

Advanced Technical Communication 4180 is a senior-level course and student learning outcomes at this level emphasize the ability to argue, assess and support ideas. Students will demonstrate comprehension and skills through their ability to apply knowledge through a critical and evaluative lens.

This course challenges students to compose and produce materials as professionals in the workplace.

At the completion of this course, students are equipped with a deeper understanding of critical thinking in the workplace, how to transfer thought and knowledge to a technical document, and a strong understanding of how to succeed in a professional environment.

Professionals in all fields evaluate processes, improve outcomes and lead change. To make sound conclusions and influence others, you need to gather information, ensure that it's valid and present your findings in a compelling way.

Today, communication skills include the ability to write effectively, as well as to convey information orally and electronically. Both your instructor and peers will critique your work with the goal of helping you become a more skillful technical communicator through extensive guided practice and feedback.

We will use several instructional methods available including lecture and class discussion. Emphasis is placed on discussion, including small group discussions, as well as writing practicums and activities.

Advanced Technical Communication is a writing-intensive course. Each assignment requires substantial contribution and evidence of business writing principles, audience analysis, ethical considerations, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

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

- make decisions and solve problems;
- plan, organize and prioritize work;
- creating compelling presentations;
- obtain and process information;
- analyze quantitative data;
- understand technology related to the job;
- use software proficiently;
- create and/or edit reports;
- and influence others.

Textbook

You are not required to purchase a textbook for this class.

All required resources will be provided **for free with access and instructions in Canvas**. For example, LinkedIn Learning, available at no cost to UNT students, will be included as part of your learning materials.

If you would like to purchase full copies of the 2 course reference books, those books 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 required and available on Canvas.

Course Schedule

We will use Canvas and the modules section will be the most up-to-date resource for our course happenings and assignments.

Our Canvas Modules link: <https://unt.instructure.com/courses/145384/modules>

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. More specific instructions about each will be provided in-class and on Canvas.

College Topic Report

Interview a fellow student or conduct research about a college major or the college experience. Write a professional blog post that presents information and recommendations to your readers.

Professional Interview & Workplace Priorities Report

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.

Survey and Podcast Assignment

Team members will discuss workplace issues and choose which to develop into a survey. Teams will work as a group to identify research goals and to conduct a survey. Students will analyze the survey results and report your findings in a podcast.

Readings (Quizzes, Discussions, LinkedIn Certificates)

Discussions, Critical Thinking Exercises and Professionalism

Complete critical thinking activities and assigned readings as well as conduct yourself as a professional communicator. Please note that assignments in this category will be added to Canvas each week throughout the semester (module roll-out).

Drafts, Peer Review and Preparation

Complete assignment drafts, peer reviews and prepare materials for major assignments.

Assignment Grade Weight

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS - 60%	
College Article	15%
Workplace Priorities Report	20%
Survey & Podcast Project	25%
MINOR ASSIGNMENTS - 40%	
Discussions, Critical Thinking Exercises and In-Class Activities	15%
Drafts, Peer Reviews and Assignment Prep	10%
Reading Quizzes and LinkedIn Learning Certificates	15%

Submissions and Grading Expectations

TECM 4180 is an advanced, senior-level course.

Courses at this level expect students to demonstrate critical thinking and understanding (not simply memorization and effort). Students at this level are expected to have the ability to conduct research and obtain relevant information in the field. Students are able to combine the results of the research or reading into cohesive and persuasive statements. Students are able to produce substantial work such as reports and projects.

See your Canvas Page for more about grading and writing expectations.

Submission Format

- Assignments must be completed and uploaded to Canvas.
- Emailed assignments will not be accepted.

Your instructor reserves the right to utilize TurnItIn and other plagiarism and AI authentication services. Students will have opportunity to discuss any questionable submissions with the instructor.

Due Dates

Due Dates are displayed in Canvas.

Late assignments are discouraged and are penalized.

The Final Exam Project cannot be late.

Late Penalty

- Assignments submitted within 24 hours after the due date on Canvas are deducted 5% per day.
- Assignments submitted after 7 days earn zero credit.
- There are no make-ups available unless arrangements are made prior to the due date.
- Any exceptional circumstances that cause you to miss deadlines should be documented with the Dean of Students.
- Assignments graded as Complete/Incomplete earn credit when submitted by the due date. Assignments submitted after 24 hours after the due date do not earn completion credit.

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.

Attendance and Course Delivery

See Canvas:

<https://unt.instructure.com/courses/145384>

Your participation in this online course is mandatory, not optional.

Stay connected to UNT news sources about campus closures. Make sure your Eagle Alert contact info is current at myUNT.

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 Eagle Connect 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.

Classroom Expectations

This course prepares you to effectively communicate in professional and academic settings. Regardless of your career or major, the ability to effectively communicate your ideas is essential for your continued success. For example, if you are in the sciences, this course will help you convey your research results or convince your supervisor to support your plans.

Today, communication skills include the ability to write effectively, as well as to convey information orally and electronically. Both your instructor and classmates will extensively critique your written and oral work with the goal of helping you become a more skillful technical communicator through extensive guided practice and feedback.

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable, disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. 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.

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.

AI-Assistance Policies

See Canvas.

TECM 4180 is an advanced technical communication course. Technical communication comes in many forms including verbal, visual and written communication.

Gen AI is a robust tool we will use to help generate ideas, clarify concepts and many other uses that we will explore. However, because the nature of this course is to learn how to produce quality work, students are expected to write their own content. This is increasingly important as workplaces have coined the term '**workslop**' to describe low-quality, AI-generated content that looks polished but lacks real substance. Workslop may come in the form of vague reports, jargon-filled emails or other poorly written documentation. Workslop wastes time and may damage how colleagues see each other.

- Find out more about Workslop here:
 - https://youtube.com/shorts/eT0ZWhZPu_U?si=qWRbha9IW7ukJLILinks to an external site.
 - <https://hbr.org/2025/09/ai-generated-workslop-is-destroying-productivity>

The emergence and advancement of AI-assisted tools can increase efficiency. By harnessing the power of AI, you have the opportunity to better connect your writing to its intended audience and purpose. However, it's essential to use AI responsibly and ethically.

General Use of AI

You may leverage AI tools for brainstorming, proofreading, and general research assistance. However, you should thoroughly review, edit, and understand any direct output from an AI tool before submitting it. Just like any other source, if you use insights or outputs from an AI, ensure you acknowledge or cite it appropriately.

AI tools, while powerful, can sometimes produce fabricated or inaccurate information. It's your responsibility to vet any content, AI-generated or otherwise, before submission.

Understand that actions, such as fabricating content or misrepresenting work are considered breaches of academic integrity, with or without the use of AI.

If you're unsure about the appropriateness of using AI for a specific task, consult your instructor before proceeding.

Accommodation (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.

Course Adjustments and Communication

The instructor reserves the right to adjust the course schedule, assignments, and policies throughout the semester to maximize student learning and maintain appropriate course cadence. Such adjustments may be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances, including but not limited to university closures (weather-related or otherwise), shifts in class progress, or pedagogical considerations that emerge during the semester.

- In the event of any changes, the instructor will communicate adjustments to students in a timely manner through class instruction and Canvas Announcements.

While the instructor will make every effort to enhance the student experience and provide advance notice when possible, students are responsible for staying informed **by regularly checking course announcements**, monitoring their university email, and attending class.

Welcome to Your Professional Journey

Active engagement with course communications is essential to your success in this class.

This course represents an exciting step in your development as both a communicator and a professional. The skills you'll develop creating compelling technical documents and articulating your ideas with precision, will serve you in your career and other aspects of your life where clear communication matters.

I'm excited to work with each of you this semester and to see your growth as writers, thinkers, and professionals.

Here's to a great semester ahead! Let's get started!