# TECM 4180: Advanced Technical Communication

## **Course Syllabus**

## **Welcome to UNT!**

I am excited to work with you this semester on your journey to becoming a professional 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—

* work in a team;
* 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 sell and influence others.

## **Meet Your Instructor**

My name is Professor Croall and I will be your instructor this semester.

I have over 15 years of communications experience in a range of industries including strategic business consulting, construction, advertising and data analytics. I have held positions at Wunderman Thompson, a global digital advertising agency in over 70 markets, and McCarthy Building Companies, a national construction firm.

I am an experienced educator who has taught collegiate-level courses since 2005 in Technical Communication, Communication Studies, Public Speaking and Business Communication.

I am truly looking forward to our course this semester! Let’s get started!

Please [find my contact information](https://unt.instructure.com/courses/94307) and office hours on your Canvas page in the Welcome Module.

**Office Hours**

* You Can Book Me!
* Monday – Friday: [https://professorcroall.youcanbook.me (Links to an external site.)](https://professorcroall.youcanbook.me/)

**Email**

* [Cheryl.Croall@unt.edu](mailto:Cheryl.Croall@unt.edu)

## **Textbook**

Readings via LinkedIn Learning (free through UNT) 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.

**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 Report (individual),**

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, Client Interview Report, Workplace Issues (individual),**

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 Report and Podcast**

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

### **Professionalism / Attendance, Discussions, and Critical Thinking (individual),**

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 Materials (individual),**

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

## **What About Grades?**

**TECM 4180 is an advanced, senior-level course.**

Courses are 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.

The instructor reserves the right to submit any and all student submissions to “Turn It In” provided by UNT for academic integrity and plagiarism review. Students may access the “Turn It In” feature in Canvas and should contact the instructor or Canvas support with issues.

### **Due Dates**

Due Dates are displayed in Canvas.

Late assignments are highly 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 document with the Dean of Students.

Complete/incomplete assignments 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**

This is an in-person course and students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. This course prepares students for professional careers and attendance is a major component of professionalism. In business, attendance impacts productivity and workplace culture. In the classroom, absent students cannot contribute their unique perspectives to class discussion or group work and negatively affect other students’ learning opportunities. Research shows a strong positive correlation between student attendance and grades.

If you miss class, you are responsible for all material covered and all assignments.

**Absence Allowance (i.e. PTO):** Students are permitted to miss 3 class days without penalty or excuse. Absence Allowance does not grant an extension on assignments.

**Attendance Grade:**  See Canvas.

Stay connected to UNT news sources about campus closures. Make sure your [Eagle Alert](https://www.unt.edu/eaglealert) contact info is current at myUNT.

Stay connected to email/announcements in the case that I need to cancel class or move to remote instruction temporarily (i.e. quarantine period, etc.).

## **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](http://eagleconnect.unt.edu/). 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.

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 (exercises).

It is important to be respectful and listen to the instructor and your classmates. While some students may be able to listen to others while 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, this does not convey professionalism to your peers, so please be aware of your surroundings and act appropriately and professionally.

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. 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.

## **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.

The instructor reserves the right to run any and all work submitted in this course through “Turn It In”.

## **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](http://disability.unt.edu/services/apply) and then [request a Reasonable Accommodation form](http://disability.unt.edu/services/request), 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](http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/sexual-misconduct) 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.

## **Schedule**

The schedule for this course is found in Canvas.