

Introduction to Professional, Science, and Technical Writing

Class & Section Number: 1700.400 & 1700.401

Term: Spring 2026

Location: AUDB 308

Time: Online asynchronous course

Instructor Information

Name: Dr. Ashley Rea-Maharaj (you can call me Dr. Rea!)

Office: LANG #407K

Student Hours: Widely by appointment! Email/Teams message me to find a time that works for you.

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Course Description, Structure, and Objectives

This course meets the requirements for the University CORE and is a process-oriented introduction to writing, especially for science, pre-engineering, and business students. We will focus on understanding the writing situation and practice writing in response to professional, scientific, and technical situations.

Learning Objectives

You will fulfill the following objectives by the end of this course:

- Learn effective study skills
- Learn to practice time management
- Learn to work as an effective member of a collaborative team
- Learn skills for evaluating effective writing
- Enhance grammar and punctuation skills
- Become familiar with the genres of writing common to technical disciplines
- Learn to apply the rhetorical situation (audience, purpose, occasion) to the decision-making process when writing and learning

Student Hours & Conferences

Student hours offer you an opportunity to ask for clarification or find support with understanding class material. Come visit me! I encourage you to connect with me and/or my TA, Silas Fuchs, for support. Additional office hours, in person and virtually, will be offered as the semester concludes. Your success is our goal.

See me when you have questions about an assignment, when you would like to try out some ideas before a document is due, or when you have questions about a comment. You should also see me to get help with particular writing problems, to resolve differences about grades, or to suggest ways to improve the course.

Required Materials

To fully participate in this class, students will be required to have access to the following:

- *Open Technical Communication* by Tiffani Reardon, Tammy Powell, Jonathan Arnett, Monique Logan, and Cassie Race. This open-source textbook can be found: <https://alg.manifoldapp.org/projects/open-tc>
- *Technical Writing Handbook* by iFixit. This open-source handbook can be found: https://about.ifixit.com/Tech_Writing

- Canvas Login to access course readings and documents
- UNT student email

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, and problem-solving skills. Instructions for each assignment will be explained in a detailed handout. Below are general descriptions.

Basic Technical Communication Analysis

Technical communication is meant to be used and not just read. Good technical communication conveys information to an audience who will act on that information in a variety of ways: in making hiring decisions, in following technical procedures, in developing research plans, and more. In this assignment, you will evaluate the usability of a piece of technical communication—that is, you will analyze whether the document effectively communicates the necessary information to its audience and where it fails to do so. In this way, the assignment will introduce you to basic elements of technical communication.

Correspondence Package

Communicating clearly and professionally in writing is a critical part of technical communication. For the correspondence package assignment, you will craft professional responses to specific academic and professional communication contexts. This assignment includes a claim letter and several discussion board activities.

iFixit Fast Fix and SEO Project

Technical communicators frequently create user guides and instructional material. Our overarching project this semester asks you to work in teams to create a full-service instruction manual for a real-world audience through the iFixit platform. In this project, you'll work with your teammates to choose something you think people should know how to fix. Then, you'll research and design a repair and create and share that procedure with others. Finally, you'll have the chance to peer review another team's guide and practice usability testing. For the SEO Project, you'll also enhance an existing device page using search engine optimization guidelines.

Final Reflection

Numerous studies show that metacognition, that is, thinking about your thinking, is a critical part of transferring what you have learned in one context to another. In lieu of a final exam, you will submit a final reflection that asks you to create your own "Theory of Writing" including principles of effective user-centered design.

Assessing Your Work

The following grading criteria serve as general guidelines for evaluating all assignments. Assignment-specific rubrics appear in Canvas.

- "A" (90-100%): The work demonstrates strong potential for producing future tech comm work that would impress a manager or client. In this course, that means work that goes above and beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment. The deliverables show careful planning and thoughtful execution.
- "B" (80-89%): A manager or client would be satisfied with the job but not especially impressed. This means that deliverables are well written and produced. 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 rework deliverables before allowing clients and others to see them. In other words, the deliverables may have clear, but underdeveloped ideas, or they might not engage or affect the audience. The deliverables may contain some errors in mechanics or logic.
- "D" (60-69%): A manager would be troubled by the poor quality of work and would ask someone else to rework the deliverables. This level of work forces the audience to work too hard to understand the main ideas or to act on the information. The deliverables may contain incomplete information, have serious mechanical problems, lack clear organization, or be conceptually unclear or inaccurate.
- "F" (0-59%): A manager would be distraught about the irrelevant, incomplete or unethical work and would begin looking for a replacement. This grade is earned for any deliverables with evidence of academic integrity violations.

Final Exam

Students will submit their final reflection on Canvas as the final exam for the class. There will not be an in-person final exam. Final drafts are due by the end of our scheduled final exam period.

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 [UNT drop dates](#).

Medical Withdrawals

If you must withdraw due to medical reasons, prior to the withdrawal deadline as indicated in the academic calendar, you may do so through the regular withdrawal process. If you are incapacitated or unable to make the request on your 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>.

Computer Operations and Access Requirements

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 personal computer or the computers provided by UNT. There are 14 computer labs on campus, including one 24-hour lab.

Device Requirements

Your class is an online asynchronous course. You'll need your own device to access the course content. You can also reserve a device from our TECM TechLab. If you bring your own device, it must be equipped with a non-web-based word processor and internet access capabilities via the UNT Wifi network. Tablets or devices with cloud-based word processors, such as GoogleDocs, are not recommended because they do not give you the full capabilities required in this TECM course. As a UNT student, you can install a free version of MS Office Suite on your personal computer. Visit <https://it.unt.edu/installoffice365> for more information.

For students who cannot bring a device to class, the TECM TechLab provides laptops that can be checked out at the main service desk in AADB307. Reserve your device early and through the WebCheckout link: <http://checkout.unt.edu/patron>. If you think you will need a device throughout the semester, WebCheckout allows you to make recurring reservations. These reservations are not to exceed your scheduled class time.

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.

Classroom Behavior

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

Our class is structured around discussion, so it's especially important you to respond to our course activities by being prepared with your materials and ready to discuss the module content. For more information about UNT's expectations, you can consult the Code of Student Conduct (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>).

Teamwork Behavior

You will complete one major project (the iFixit SEO Project) 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 improve communication. 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.

Generative AI (GenAI) Use

Throughout the semester, you may use specific Generative AI (GenAI) tools for certain assignments, with guidance on responsible use. These assignments help build ethical resilience and GenAI literacy, preparing you for careers in a GenAI-oriented workforce.

I use GenAI to generate examples and refine my pedagogical materials. I will always disclose how I use GenAI, and I expect the same from you. In accordance with the UNT Honor Code, unauthorized use of GenAI tools is prohibited. Using GenAI content without proper credit or substituting your own work with GenAI undermines the learning process and violates academic integrity. If you're unsure whether something is allowed, please seek clarification.

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 acts and the related 2700 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 acknowledgment. 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. 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.

How to Succeed in this Course

UNT strives to offer a high-quality education in a supportive environment where you can learn, grow, and thrive. As a faculty member, I am committed to supporting you, and I want to remind you that UNT offers a range of mental health and wellness services to help maintain balance and well-being. Utilizing these resources is a proactive way to support your academic and personal success. To explore campus resources designed to support you, check out [mental health services](https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies) (<https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies>), visit unt.edu/success, and explore unt.edu/wellness. To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to scrappysays.unt.edu.

Accommodations

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodations at any time, but it's important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>).

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.

Religious Holidays

If you will miss class or need an assignment extension due to the observance of an officially recognized religious holy day, please consult with me at least one week in advance so we can schedule missed work accordingly.

Course Calendar

Our course this fall is an 8-week online asynchronous class in the Fall 2026 second 8-week term. You can find our course calendar with weekly readings, activities, and assignments on our Canvas course page under the Syllabus, Modules, or Assignments tab. Each weekly module also includes an overview of the learning outcomes as well as the required readings and activities. For any questions, contact me via email or our class Teams site!