TECM 3550 (001): Content Strategy

Course Information

Term: Fall 2025
Class time: T/Th 3:30pm–4:50pm
Location: AudB 308

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Jiaxin Zhang (Dr. Zhang or Dr. Z)
Office hours: T/Th 12:15pm–1:45pm, or by appointment (on Calendly)
Office location: LANG 407-J
Email: jiaxin.zhang@unt.edu

Course Overview

This class will cover various aspects of content strategy, including auditing content, interviewing content stakeholders, and recommending content improvements. By the end of this course you will be able to

- understand the importance of developing high-quality web content
- analyze existing content to determine whether it meets audience expectations and best practices for usability
- communicate content strategy deliverables in written and visual reports
- use data from analytics and user tests to inform content strategy decisions
- understand cultural and linguistic differences that shape global content strategy

Course Materials

To succeed in this course, you'll engage with a mix of readings, video tutorials, and supplementary materials. These resources have been selected to provide both foundational knowledge and practical skills relevant to content strategy.

- Textbook: Swisher, V. (2014). *Global content strategy: A primer*. XML Press.
- LinkedIn Learning: Google Analytics 4 (GA4) Essential Training by Corey Koberg LinkedIn Learning Course (1 hr 56 min)
- LinkedIn learning: SEO Foundations by David Booth LinkedIn Learning Course (1 hr 32 min)
- Additional resources and materials linked in the course schedule or provided by the instructor throughout the semester.

Attendance

I do expect you attend class when you're able, but I don't want you to attend when you're sick. If you can't come to class, please contact me to see what kind of a plan we can come up with. Please note:

- If you have to miss class, you will miss out on any in-class assignments or activities we do that day. Those cannot be made up. However, you may have up to two waivers or exemptions for missed in-class assignments or activities.
- Three instances of arriving late or leaving early (for 10min) will count as one absence.
- **If you miss more than 6 classes (unexcused absences), you will receive a grade of 'F' in the class.**

Assignments

You'll complete the majority of the assignments in this course individually. Some of the large assignments, however, will be completed in groups. Just over one-fourth of your final grade will be based on groupwork. A brief summary of the assignments you'll complete this semester appears below.

Assignment Name	Points Possible
A1: Internal stakeholder interview (GROUP ASSIGNMENT) *Conduct an interview with a stakeholder (student) in the Department of Technical Communication (TECM).*	100 (10%)
A2: Analytics *Analyze and interpret analytics data from the TECM website.*	50 (5%)
A3: Audience persona *Develop data-driven audience personas for users of the TECM website.*	25 (2.5%)
A4: Content types and channels *Identify relevant content types and channels based on a competitor analysis.*	50 (5%)
A5: SEO *Analyze the content of the target website to determine how well it conforms to SEO best practices.*	25 (2.5%)
A6.1: Content audit spreadsheet *Catalogue a portion of the content currently published on the target website.*	50 (5%)
A6.2: Content audit report (GROUP ASSIGNMENT) *Analyze the content audit spreadsheet and present your findings in a formal technical report.*	150 (15%)
A7: Content model *Develop templates that align content types with content channels.*	50 (5%)
A8: DITA – Structured Content *Use DITA XML to plan and author a structured technical document.*	100 (10%)
A9: Content strategy plan *Outline how to revise and edit, ensure usability and accessibility, and govern/maintain the content in a formal technical report.*	150 (15%)

A10: Translation and localization challenge (GROUP ASSIGNMENT) *Identify localization challenges and propose strategies to ensure the content remains effective and appropriate across target audiences.*	25 (2.5%)
A11: Global content strategy *Demonstrate your understanding of global content strategy.*	75 (7.5%)
A12: Reading report *Present a short report summarizing the reading for the day.*	50 (5%)
In-class assignments *We will have 10 in-class assignments throughout the semester. I will drop the lowest scores for two of them. This means you need to complete at least eight to earn all 100 points possible.*	100 (10%)
Extra credit *Filling out your end-of-the-semester student evaluation (choose one of the following).* • *If 70% of the students in the course fill out an evaluation, everyone will get 5 points of extra credit.* • *If 80% of the students in the course fill out an evaluation, everyone will get 10 points of extra credit.* • *If 90% of the students in the course fill out an evaluation, everyone will get 20 points of extra credit.*	20 (2%)
Total (Groupwork total)	1,020 (102%) 275 (27.5%)

Late Work

In my late-work policy, I try to be fair and understanding while still encouraging you to keep up with the course. We move quickly, which means it can be easy to fall behind. I don't want that for you!

I do accept late work, but only under one of these three circumstances:

- **If the assignment is submitted within the grace period.** I allow a grace period of 24 hours for each assignment due. This means that you have 24 hours from the specified due date to turn in your assignment without penalty. Because in-class assignments are due at the end of class, there is no grace period for them.
- **If we have agreed on a deadline extension.** If you know you have an extenuating circumstance that will prevent you from meeting a deadline or submitting an assignment within in the 24-hour grace period, please let me know by email at least 48 hours before the assignment is due. We can then discuss next steps.
- **If you missed a deadline due to an emergency.** If you or a loved one has an emergency that you must attend to, please do so. When things have calmed down, email me. I will never ask for specifics about the situation or for any kind of proof that what you're telling me is true—I believe you! We'll arrange for a deadline extension.

Please note that lost or corrupted files do not constitute an excuse for late or unsubmitted work.

Grading

There are 1,000 points possible in the class plus 20 points of extra credit. I will round your final grades to the nearest whole number based on two decimal places, but that is all. So, for example, if you earn an 89.50% at the end of the semester, your grade will round to an A. However, if you earn an 89.49%, your grade will be a B.

I will give you written feedback for all of the major assignments you submit for this course. Letter grades are assigned based on the percent earned at the end of the course. Those letter grades correspond to the following levels of performance:

Scale	Criteria
A (90%–100%)	A manager/client 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%-89.9%)	A manager/client would be satisfied with the job, but not especially impressed. This means that work is well written and well produced, and demonstrates 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%-79.9%)	A manager/client would be disappointed and ask you to revise or rewrite the work before allowing clients and others to see it. In other words, the work may have clear, but underdeveloped ideas, or it might not engage or affect the reader. The work may contain some errors in grammar, mechanics, or logic.
D (60%-69.9%)	A manager/client 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 work may contain incomplete information, have serious grammar and mechanical problems, lack clear organization, or be conceptually unclear.
F (< 59.9%)	A manager/client would start looking for someone to replace you. In particular, the work fails to address the tasks of the assignment, is so underdeveloped as to demonstrate incompetence, and is mechanically and grammatically incomprehensible.

Use of AI Writing Tools

Artificial intelligence tools (like OpenAI's ChatGPT) have become freakishly sophisticated. Their use in school and professional settings has caused people to ask a lot of questions about how to use them ethically. For many of these questions, we don't have good answers. We're still figuring things out.

I recognize that there can be a lot of value in using AI tools to help with the writing process, and I believe that we should be figuring out how to use them well. For that reason, we'll be using them this semester. However, as I've been working with these tools in my own work, I've come to learn that using them effectively takes skill, critical thinking, and quite a bit of work. Expecting that you can entirely offload the work of learning and writing to an AI tool is a mistake. As you work on the assignments for this class, I encourage you to explore how AI tools might help you, but always be aware that you are ultimately responsible for the work you submit.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

ADA Policy

UNT 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 a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students 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 [ODA website.](#)

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The

University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students 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). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

Acceptable Student Behavior

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. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's [Code of Student Conduct](#) to learn more.

Access to Information - Eagle Connect

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: [my.unt.edu](#) . All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail [Eagle Connect.](#)

Student Evaluation Administration Dates

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13, 14 and 15 of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT

SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website or email spot@unt.edu.

Survivor Advocacy

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-5652648.

Use of Student Work

A student owns the copyright for all work (e.g. software, photographs, reports, presentations, and email postings) he or she creates within a class and the University is not entitled to use any student work without the student's permission unless all of the following criteria are met:

- The work is used only once.
- The work is not used in its entirety.
- Use of the work does not affect any potential profits from the work.
- The student is not identified.
- The work is identified as student work.

If the use of the work does not meet all of the above criteria, then the University office or department using the work must obtain the student's written permission.

Academic Support & Student Services

Student Support Services

Mental Health

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)

- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)
- [UNT Psychiatric Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry)

Chosen Names

A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. Below is a list of resources for updating your chosen name at UNT.

- [UNT Records](#)
- [UNT ID Card](#)
- [UNT Email Address](#)
- [Legal Name](#)

*UNT euIDs cannot be changed at this time. The collaborating offices are working on a process to make this option accessible to UNT community members.

Pronouns

Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction, both virtually and in person. Just as we ask and don't assume someone's name, we should also ask and not assume someone's pronouns.

You can [add your pronouns to your Canvas account,](#) so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

Below is a list of additional resources regarding pronouns and their usage:

- [What are pronouns and why are they important?](#)
- [How do I use pronouns?](#)
- [How do I share my pronouns?](#)
- [How do I ask for another person's pronouns?](#)
- [How do I correct myself or others when the wrong pronoun is used?](#)

Additional Student Support Services

- [Registrar](#)
- [Financial Aid](#)
- [Student Legal Services](#)
- [Career Center](#)
- [Multicultural Center](#)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](#)

- [Pride Alliance](#)
- [UNT Food Pantry](#)

Academic Support Services

- [Academic Resource Center](#)
- [Academic Success Center](#)
- [UNT Libraries](#)
- [Writing Lab](#)

Copyright Notice

Materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection. Materials may include, but are not limited to: documents, slides, images, audio, and video. Materials in this course Web site are only for the use of students enrolled in this course, for purposes associated with this course, and may not be retained for longer than the class term. Unauthorized retention, duplication, distribution, or modification of copyrighted materials is strictly prohibited by law. For more information, visit the [UNT Policy Office](#) or [Copyright.gov](#) .

Course Schedule

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change. Check back regularly for updates.

Week	Date	Topic and Resources	Readings/Videos Due	In-Class Assignments Due	Reading Report(s)	Homework Due
W1	Tue-Aug 19	Class intro				Reading report sign-up
	Thu-Aug 21	The process of content strategy	Getto et al. (2023) Intro Getto et al. (2023) Ch. 1 Getto et al. (2023) Ch. 2		Name 1 Name 2 Name 3	
W2	Tue-Aug 26	Stasis Theory & Stakeholder Assign working groups Set up interviews	Getto et al. (2023) Ch. 3 How to Conduct a User Interview that Actually Uncovers Valuable Insights		Name 4 Name 5	
	Thu-Aug 28	Interview Protocol Finish interview guides ICA1 (part of A1: Stakeholder interviews)	Personas Make Users Memorable for Product Team Members	ICA1: Interviews	Name 6	
W3	Tue-Sep 02	Conducting Interview Interview Workshop (A1)				
	Thu-Sep 04	GA4 Analytics/interview workshop	Google Analytics 4 (GA4) Essential Training by Corey Koberg	ICA2: Analytics	Name 7 Name 8 Name 9	A1: Stakeholder interviews (GROUP

			LinkedIn Learning Course (1 hr 56 min)		Name 10 Name 11	ASSIGNMENT) (due Friday)
W4	Tue-Sep 09	Personas	A Closer Look at Personas	ICA3: Personas	Name 12	
	Thu-Sep 11	Content types and channels pt 1	Content modelling and structured content: the basics Content Types	ICA4: Content types and channels	Name 13 Name 14	A2: Analytics (due Friday)
W5	Tue-Sep 16	Content types and channels pt 2 (competitor analysis)				A3: Audience persona
	Thu-Sep 18	SEO: Keywords	SEO Foundations by David Booth LinkedIn Learning Course (1 hr 32 min)	ICA5: SEO (pt.1)	Name 15 Name 16	A4: Content types and channels (due Friday)
W6	Tue-Sep 23	SEO: Backlinks	Link Building for SEO	ICA6: SEO (pt. 2)	Name 17	
	Thu-Sep 25	SEO & GEO	How to implement generative engine optimization (GEO) strategies		Name 18	A5: SEO (due Friday)
W7	Tue-Sep 30	Content inventory & audits Anonymous midsemester feedback survey	Content Inventory and Auditing 101		Name 19	
	Thu-Oct 02	Content audit workshop Content Audit Types & Measurements I	How to Perform a Content Audit		Name 20	A6.1: Content audit spreadsheet

W8	Tue-Oct 07	Content Audit Measurement II Content Audit Report & IMR&D				
	Thu-Oct 09	Content Model	Content Modelling: A Master Skill Elements of a Content Model		Name 21 Name 22	A6.2: Content audit report (GROUP ASSIGNMENT) (due Friday)
W9	Tue-Oct 14	Wireframes	What are Wireframes? How to Draw a Wireframe (Even if You Can't Draw)-recommended reading	ICA7: Wireframes	Name 23	
	Thu-Oct 16	XML vs. HTML DITA Basics	What's the Difference Between HTML and XML? Introduction to DITA (Darwin Information Typing Architecture)		Name 24 Name 25	A7: Content models (due Friday)
W10	Tue-Oct 21	DITA Set-up DITA Markup – Topics	Ch3. DITA Topics (pp. 13-22)	ICA8: Create a How-to by DITA	Name 26	
	Thu-Oct 23	No class. (Dr. Z is out of town for SIGDOC conference travel)				
W11	Tue-Oct 28	DITA Markup – Maps & Metadata	Ch3. DITA Maps (pp. 22-31)		Name 27 Name 28	

			Ch3. DITA Metadata (pp. 31-37)			
	Thu-Oct 30	DITA Processing	Ch4. DITA Processing (pp. 39-47)		Name 29	
W12	Tue-Nov 04	DITA Workshop				A8: Structured content (due Friday)
	Thu-Nov 06	Content strategy plans Revising and editing content		ICA9: Revising and editing content		
W13	Tue-Nov 11	Content Governance Editorial Calendar	What is an editorial calendar? My guide to building one [examples + templates]	ICA10: Content governance	Name 30	
	Thu-Nov 13	GTC Basics – Intercultural Competence	Deardorff & Jones, "Intercultural competence" (Journal article – not fun to read, but worth your time)		Name 31	A9: Content strategy plan (due Friday)
W14	Tue-Nov 18	Global Content Strategy I - Foundations	Swisher (2014) Chs. 1-2 Swisher (2014) Chs. 3-4		Name 32 Name 33	
	Thu-Nov 20	Lost in Translation? Localizing Global Messages	Lost in Translation: 8 International Marketing Fails			A10: Translation and localization challenge (GROUP WORK due Friday)
W15	Thanksgiving Break (no classes). November 24-30, 2025					

W16	Tue-Dec 02	Global Content Strategy II - Implementation	Swisher (2014) Chs. 5-6 Swisher (2014) Chs. 7-8		Name 34 Name 35	
	Thu-Dec 04	Global content strategy workshop Last Day of Class				A11: Global content strategy (due Friday) SPOT Eval (Extra Credit)