

TECM 4180: Advanced Technical Communication

Course Information

Term: Spring 2026
Location: Audb 308
Time: Th 5:00pm-7:50pm

Instructor Information

Instructor: Kathryn Beasley Walther
Office hours: T/Th 12pm to 1pm via [Zoom](#) or by appointment
Office location: Discovery Park, E201
Email: Kathryn.Beasley@unt.edu

Textbook

The required texts for this course are:

- *Organizing Ideas* by Matthew Spence (ISBN-10: 1495984931)
- *Think Smarter, Critical Thinking to Improve Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills* by Michael Kallet (ISBN-10: 1118729838)

Supplemental readings will be available on Canvas.

Course Summary

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.

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;
- communicate verbally;
- 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.¹

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 and the assignment grade weights. More specific instructions about each will be provided in-class and on Canvas.

Student Interview Report (individual), 10%

Interview a fellow student and then write a report (using the Spence method) that presents information and recommendations to your readers.

Client Interview Report (individual), 15%

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.

Intercultural Communication Report (individual), 20%

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

Proposal Pitch (individual), 15%

Write a persuasive summary of secondary research and a proposal for a primary research project. Pitch this proposal to your assigned team. Team members will discuss all the proposals and choose which to develop into a survey.

Survey Report (group), 25%

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, Drafts, Peer Reviews, and Critical Thinking (individual/group), 15%

Complete assignment drafts, peer reviews, critical thinking activities, and assigned readings as well as conduct yourself as a professional communicator.

¹ 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.

Grading

The below grading criteria serve as general guidelines for evaluating all assignments. Assignment-specific rubrics will be housed on Canvas.

"A" (90-100%): A manager 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%): A manager would be satisfied with the job, but not especially impressed. This means that documents are well written and well produced and demonstrate 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%): A manager would be disappointed and ask you to revise or rewrite sections before allowing clients and others to see the work. In other words, the document may have clear, but underdeveloped ideas, or it might not engage or affect the reader. The documents may contain some errors in grammar, mechanics, or logic.

"D" (60-69%): A manager 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 documents may contain incomplete information, have serious grammar and mechanical problems, lack clear organization, or be conceptually unclear.

"F" (0-59%): A manager would start looking for someone to replace you. In particular, work fails to address the tasks of the assignment, is so underdeveloped as to demonstrate incompetence, and is mechanically and grammatically incomprehensible. This grade will also be assigned for any evidence of plagiarism.

Assignment Submission and Grading

Format

Major assignments and drafts must be submitted through Canvas unless otherwise noted. Emailed assignments will not be accepted.

Due Dates

Assignments must be completed and uploaded to Canvas by the beginning of the designated class period, unless specified otherwise. I do not accept late work unless you have documented extenuating circumstances related to university events or the observance of a recognized holy day.

It is your responsibility to turn in your work on time. Computer-related excuses will not be accepted as per the above technology requirements.

Lastly, you may not use program templates (e.g., Word templates) to format any of your documents — these don't encourage you to learn the programs and generally result in dull, unpersuasive documents.

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

Your presence in this course is mandatory, not optional. You cannot perform well in this course unless you attend class. If you miss class for any reason, you are responsible for all material covered and all assignments completed while you were absent. Should you miss more than 3 classes, your grade will be lowered by one letter grade for each the 3rd and 4th absence. If you miss 5 classes, you will receive a grade of 'F' in the class.

Lates (tardies) may be logged and can result in a lowered grade should they accumulate. If, for example, a participation grade or quiz is given during the first 15 minutes and a student arrives late, a grade of zero (0) will be earned for that assignment.

Likewise, any student who *leaves class* before it has ended or without my prior approval will automatically receive an absence for that day. Stay connected to UNT news sources about campus closures. Make sure your [Eagle Alert](#) contact info is current at myUNT.

Drop Dates

Please be aware of the below deadlines as well as the changes in grading policies. UNT students can no longer receive a grade of WF, and they can drop a course online without the instructor's signature. However, students have 5 business days to decide if they want to be re-instated in a dropped course.

- January 12 Classes start
- January 16 Last day to add or swap class
- January 25 Drop with grade of W begins
- April 10 Last day to drop a course (through Registrar's Office by 5pm)
- May 4 - May 8 Final exams

Medical Withdrawals

If a student must withdraw due to medical reasons, prior to the withdrawal deadline as indicated in the academic calendar, a student may do so through the regular withdrawal process. If a student is incapacitated or unable to make the request on his/her 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>.

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 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

It is expected that discussions will occur in the classroom; consequently, it is important to be respectful and listen to the instructor and your classmates. "Listening" does not include answering a cell phone, texting, chatting to your neighbor, checking email, searching the Internet, or reading the *North Texas Daily* or any other printed matter.

Your preparedness in this course also falls under the subject of classroom behavior. You are expected to come to every class period with your textbook and appropriate note-taking materials. Likewise, you are expected to have completed all the assigned readings and all assignments due during that class period.

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 (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.

Teamwork Behavior

You will complete two major projects 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. These evaluations could influence your grade.

If a team member does not sufficiently participate in the group project(s), I will intervene, most likely by either reducing the grade of the non-participatory team member or removing the team member from the group and requiring them to complete the assignment on their own.

Email Policies

Writing professional emails is an integral part of successful workplace communication. You are expected to practice your professional email skills when you communicate with me and your classmates.

- Make your email communication polite, respectful, and courteous.
- I aim to reply to email within 48 hours of receiving it. I am most likely to reply Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm.
- I will communicate with you through your official UNT email address. You should check this email regularly.
- Check your syllabus, assignment descriptions, and Canvas before emailing me. It is much more efficient for you to find the information in the resources that are available to you instead of waiting on a reply from me.
- Your subject line should be short, informative, and give me an idea of what you are writing about (e.g., TECM 4180 – Question about Student Interview Assignment).
- Be clear and concise in your email text. The more clarity you provide, the easier it is for me to fully answer your question.

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.

Accommodations (Special Arrangements)

UNT Office of Disability Accommodations

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course.

You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class.

Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student.

For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

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 in advance so we can schedule missed work accordingly.

Schedule

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

Key:

Think Smarter=K

Organizing Ideas=S

Canvas Readings (marked with “title”)—see Canvas folder “Readings”

Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Week 1			
1/15	Course Welcome Organization and Communication Spence Method		Buy Textbooks
Week 2			
1/22	Introduction to Critical Thinking Critical Thinking: Asking Questions Building Interviews Interview Preparation Peer Review Processes Assign Interview Partners	S. Chapter 1 K. pp. 3-22 Rowley, “Conducting Interviews” Read assignment prompt: Student Interview	
Week 3			
1/29	Student Interview Peer Review From Peer to Client	S. Chapter 2-3, 7	Student Interview (Draft)
Week 4			
2/5	Critical Thinking: Unpacking Issues Building a Puzzle Organization and Clarity The Rhetorical Triangle	K. Chapter 4, 6, and 7 S. Chapter 5	Student Interview (Final)

Week 5			
2/12	Critical Thinking: Predictions Framing Ideas Brainstorming Organization and Formatting	K. Chapter 9-11 S. Chapter 6, 8	Client Prep Memo
Week 6			
2/19	Peer Review Intercultural Communication Critical Thinking: Assumptions Going to McDonald's!	K. Chapter 20 Save This Link	Client Interview (Draft)
Week 7			
2/26	Critical Thinking: Punctuation Data Usage and Visualization Examining Cultural Issues	S. Chapter 13	Client Interview (Final)
Week 8			
3/5	Critical Thinking: Objectivity and Subjectivity Peer Review: Testing the Report Critical Thinking: Outside the Box Clarifying our Message	K. Chapter 16-19 K. Chapter 26 S. Chapter 12	Intercultural Communication Report (Draft)
Week 9			
3/19	Critical Thinking: New Approaches Brainstorming Ideas Pitching Ideas Revisiting Clarity, Concision, and Fluency Assign Teams Team Charter		Intercultural Communication Report (Final)
Week 10			
3/26	Overview of Intercultural Communication Discuss Workplace Problems		
Week 11			
4/2	Pitch Workday Scheduling Pitching Moving onto Surveys		
Week 12			
4/9	Teams Pitching Voting and Moving Forward		Pitch Proposal (Final)
Week 13			
4/16	Designing a Questionnaire Using Qualtrics Building and Perfecting Questions Survey Workday		
Week 14			
4/23	Complete Surveys for Each Team Survey Memo Review		
Week 15			
4/30	Report Writing Workshop Group Conferences		Survey Memo (Individual)
Finals Week			
5/4-5/8			Survey Report (Final)