Tentative Syllabus for TECM 4250: Writing Technical Procedures and Manuals (Fall 2025)
or <mark>Writing Tech Docs</mark>

<mark>**This course meets on campus twice a week:**</mark> Mondays & Wednesdays from 2:00 - 3:20 pm in 312 Auditorium Building.

Intro to Your Instructor

Your instructor is Dr. Kim Sydow Campbell, whom most students call "Dr. Kim."

- **Preferred Contact:** chat via Microsoft Teams
- **Email:** Kim.Campbell@unt.edu (<mark>**for formal, lengthy messages only**</mark>)
- **Office Hours in 305 AUDB:** Mondays and Wednesday from 1-2pm & 3:30-4:00pm and by appointment
- **LinkedIn:** connect with Dr. Kim (especially to receive internship/job announcements)

We will use Teams for quick, unplanned, informal communication. That is where you should ask Dr. Kim questions. Your chats are private and seen only by her; she will respond within 24 hours (and often more quickly). Email should be used only for formal or lengthy messages. You can always attend Dr. Kim's office hours, too.

If you want to know Dr. Kim's qualifications, see a timeline of her professional experience on Canvas.

Course Description

The application of the principles of technical style to the writing of technical procedures and manuals. Intensive practice in writing technical procedures and manuals.

Course Objectives
Before you read the official learning objectives, which are true but not very exciting, think of our goal as making you into a <mark style="background-color:red">**superhero**</mark> who solves problems for strangers who are stuck.

Upon successful completion of this course, you will demonstrate your competence in these areas.

1. You will be able **to describe**

A. the context of technical documentation (and technical writers) in product development
B. the greatest challenges novice technical writers face and how you are prepared to overcome them
C. the importance of content management and single-source publishing in the context of technical documentation
D. the benefits and challenges of using genAI tools as a technical writer

2. When developing technical documentation, you will be able **to apply knowledge of**
   A. plain language
   B. minimalism
   C. topic-based authoring
   D. standards and style guides
   E. information architecture
   F. findability
   G. genAI

3. You will be able **to use professional techniques and tools for**
   A. developing and communicating technical content in writing
   B. collaboration and project management
   C. single-source publishing
   D. creating micro content

4. You will **demonstrate professional behavior** by
   A. being curious and thinking critically about concepts, techniques, and tools covered in the course
   B. engaging confidently and respectfully with others about ideas and experiences
   C. being a good teammate through contributing, communicating, expecting quality work, and keeping the work on track

TECM 4250 requires a significant amount of work. The good news is that **students who put in the effort will be well-qualified for an entry-level opening** as a technical writer in the software or manufacturing industries. (See the Week 1 Overview on Canvas for more details.)

Course Topics of Instruction

To meet the course learning objectives, you will move through 15 weekly modules of content in the course.

The table below lists the topics and tools covered in each of the weekly modules.

Week	Topic Focus
1	Intro to Technical Documentation & the Course
2	Quality in Technical Documentation
3	Technical Documentation Writer Challenges
4	Product Docs & Research for Project Work
5	General Technical Documentation Standards
6	Specific Standards for Project Work
7	Component Content Management for Project Work
8	Structured Content for Project Work
9	Project Team Formation & Planning
10	Collaboration in Flare Online for Project Work
11	Review & Editing Content for Project Work
12	Information Architecture in Project Work
13	Design for Project Work
14	Microcontent & Search for Project Work
15	Looking Back & Forward

Prerequisites
Credit for TECM 2700.

Required and Supplementary Texts
The required book for TECM 4250 is The Product is Docs: Writing technical documentation in a product development group, 2nd edition 2020 by Christopher Gales at Splunk (ISBN: 9798621549824). Other required readings and other source materials like podcasts are available on Canvas.

Assignments sometimes point to background content in the (free) open-source textbook: [Technical and Professional Writing Genres: A Study in Theory and Practice](#) by Michael Beilfuss, Staci Bettes, and Katrina Peterson.

Required Technology
Knowledge of and the capacity to learn new technology is a critical skill for all technical communicators. The software tools required for use in TECM 4250 is provided to students. You will be using

- Microsoft Word, Teams, and OneDrive, provided to UNT students through [Microsoft Office 365](#)
- MadCap Flare 2025

Students are expected to be proficient in Microsoft Office apps. Instructions for access to Flare appears on Canvas and begins during in-class activities.

If you need technology help in TECM 4250, **use the TECM Tech Lab**.

> Hours: Monday - Thursday 8am - 10pm & Friday 8am - 5pm (Central Time Zone)
> Room: Auditorium Building 307
> Email: unttechlab@gmail.com
> Phone: 940-565-4193

Visit the [TECM Tech Lab Resources](#) page for more information.

Course Assignments, Grades and Policies

Course Activities & Assessments
Students achieve the learning goals of the course through a variety of graded assignments. All assignment instructions, including evaluation criteria and due dates, are found on Canvas. Assignment instructions include an estimate of the hours required to successfully complete them.

The table provides a short description of assignments and explains how they determine course grades.

Graded Assignments (number)	Short Task Description	Points Possible	Late Penalty
In-Class Meeting Activities (29)	Participate in individual and group activities for applying concepts and practicing with	29 points	100%

	techniques and tools related to assignments.		
Reading Quizzes (13)	Demonstrate comprehension of required readings (videos) from industry professionals.	26 points	100%
Tech Writing Basics Assignment (1)	Demonstrate competence in the basics of technical style and design.	5 points	50% within 24 hours
Minimalism & Plain Language Assignment (1)	Demonstrate advanced skill in the use of general technical style standards for tech docs.	10	50% within 24 hours
Style Guide & Standards Assignment (1)	Analyze similarities and differences of common standards for technical documentation.	5	50% within 24 hours
Topic Transformation Assignment (1)	Demonstrate competence in applying DITA standards to tech docs.	5	50% within 24 hours
Team Style Sheet Assignment (1)	Create a style sheet from recommended sources with a team for a tech doc project.	10	50% within 24 hours
Team Content Management Project (1)	Collaborate on a team to develop and publish single-source docs with a component content management system.	10 points	50% within 24 hours
Optional Final (1)	Reflect on the applicability of course content and assignments for your job search.	3 extra credit points	100%
	Subtotal	**103 points**	

Ungraded Assignments	Short Description	Lost Points Possible	Late Penalty
Syllabus Quiz	Complete a quiz on syllabus content.	-3 points	100%
CATME Team Formation	Complete a survey that includes your schedule for project team formation.	-3 points	100%
Team Charter & Kanban Board	Negotiate a charter and create a project management system to guide team work.	-1 point	100%
CATME Team Evaluation	Complete an evaluation of yourself and your teammates.	-3 points	100%
Subtotal		**-10 points**	

Letter grades for the course are assigned based on the total points earned, using a 10-point scale (e.g., 90-100 points = A, 80-89 points = B, etc.). Students may earn up to 105 possible points and lose up to 10 points as outlined in the table.

Late Work

The table above shows which graded assignments receive 50% credit when submitted within 24 hours after the due date. All other graded assignments earn zero credit after the due date. There are no make-ups available unless arrangements are made prior to due dates. You can succeed in achieving the learning objectives in the course only if you stay on schedule with course assignments.

Any exceptional circumstances that cause you to miss deadlines should be documented with the UNT Dean of Students: Union 409 or 940-565-2648.

TECM Grading Criteria

The following grading criteria serve as general guidelines in TECM courses for evaluating all graded 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.

Grade-related Policies

Attendance. Your class attendance is expected and rewarded through points for participation in activities that support your learning. Attendance is not tracked. Explanations (or excuses) for lack of attendance are not required (or accepted). In-class activities cannot be duplicated outside of the class meeting.

Let Dr. Kim know as soon as possible if you will be absent for active military service, a religious holy day, or an official university function as stated in the Student Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy. If you are having difficulties managing your course responsibilities, let her know—early. There are many campus resources available to support you through the UNT Dean of Students.

24/7 Rule. Dr. Kim encourages you to talk to her if you have questions about your performance on graded assignments. However, all students must wait 24 hours after receiving a grade to discuss that assignment. Any errors should be brought to her attention within 7 days after the grade is posted.

Turnaround Time. You can expect meaningful feedback on assignments from Dr. Kim within 7 days of the deadline. Questions about grades or other personal issues should be directed to her privately during office hours or in private chat on Teams.

Use of Writing Tools. Because the effective use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools is increasingly important to the work of technical communicators, their use is sometimes required or allowed in course assignments. AI tools can support a content creator during all phases of their work:

- **pre-writing:** before content is created, writers can use some tools to research topics, collect genre samples, brainstorm ideas, craft outlines, etc.
- **drafting:** some tools support the generation of content
- **revising:** after content is generated, many tools aid writers in identifying and altering style/tone, spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.

Note: These phases also apply to the creation of oral or visual content.

In the course, the specific rules for the use of AI tools appear in the Canvas descriptions for all assignments. Failure to follow these specific rules constitutes academic dishonesty. For a description of academic dishonesty, see the UNT policy.

Classroom Policies

Teamwork Behavior. You will be assigned to a team based on your responses on the team fo. rmation survey at CATME.org and are expected to continue working together for the duration of the project. Your team will create a charter in which your responsibilities and the consequences for failing to meet them are spelled out. Dr. Kim will uphold the details of your team charter, which may result in a lower grade for individual team members on team-produced assignments.

Classroom Behavior. Every student has the right to learn and engage within an environment of respect and courtesy from others. Dr. Kim promises to treat you with respect and your time as valuable. One of the ways you are expected to behave is to arrive before the class period begins. Dr. Kim will close the classroom door at 2:00pm to create an environment without distractions. If you want to enter after the door is closed, you will be required to explain your tardiness to your classmates.

You may be asked to leave the classroom if your behavior interferes with the learning environment. You are encouraged to review UNT's student code of conduct to understand what counts as inappropriate behavior (Code of Student Conduct). The learning environment requires

that electronic devices be used only for course-related purposes.
Phones and laptops should be silent. Headphones are prohibited.

UNT Resources

There are many people eager to help you meet your educational goals.

Getting Help: Student Support Services
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)
- Counseling and Testing Services
  (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
- UNT Care Team (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)
- UNT Psychiatric Services
  (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-
  center/services/psychiatry)
- Individual Counseling
  (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-
  services/services/individual-counseling)

Other student support services offered by UNT include

- Registrar (https://registrar.unt.edu/registration)
- Financial Aid (https://financialaid.unt.edu/)
- Student Legal Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-
  legal-services)
- Career Center (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center)
- Multicultural Center (https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center)
- Counseling and Testing Services
  (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
- Pride Alliance (https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance)
- UNT Food Pantry
  (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry)

Getting Help: Academic Support Services
- Academic Resource Center
  (https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources)
- Academic Success Center (https://success.unt.edu/asc)
- UNT Libraries (https://library.unt.edu/)
- Writing Lab (http://writingcenter.unt.edu/)

- [MathLab](https://math.unt.edu/mathlab) (https://math.unt.edu/mathlab)

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy
Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. 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. [Insert specific sanction or academic penalty for specific academic integrity violation.]

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](https://disability.unt.edu/) (https://disability.unt.edu/).

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 Blackboard 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 Blackboard 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.

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 (https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect).

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 [insert administration dates] 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 (http://spot.unt.edu/) or email spot@unt.edu.

Sexual Assault Prevention
UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit 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. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at (940) 565 2759.

Student Verification

UNT takes measures to protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance education courses by verifying student identity, protecting student privacy, and notifying students of any special meeting times/locations or additional charges associated with student identity verification in distance education courses.

See UNT Policy 07-002 Student Identity Verification, Privacy, and Notification and Distance Education Courses (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002).

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.