

# TECM 5190: Style in Technical Writing

## 8W1 Fall 2025

### Instructor Contact

<b>Name:</b>	Professor <a href="#">Kim Sydow Campbell</a> (aka “Dr. Kim”)
<b>Preferred Contact:</b>	via Microsoft Teams (see the assignment instructions in Canvas)
<b>Email:</b>	Kim.Campbell@unt.edu
<b>Virtual Office Hours:</b>	Thursdays via Teams from 5-6 pm (central time) and by appointment
<b>LinkedIn:</b>	<a href="#">connect with Dr. Kim</a> (especially to receive job/internship announcements)

Watch the [video introduction from your instructor](#) on YouTube (17 minutes). **Don't skip this video!**

### Course Description

Focus on the role of writing style in creating tone of voice in content from organizational brands. Students will learn the connection between linguistic style and voice and then apply their knowledge in analyzing existing technical content as well as developing guidelines for altering a brand's voice.

### Course Objectives

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

1. using accurate, industry terminology and technology for style, voice and tone and explaining their importance in tech comm
2. manipulating language to alter style, voice and tone
3. assessing the effectiveness of style, voice and tone in technical content
4. providing effective feedback to content creators and being a good teammate
5. presenting data and recommendations with slide decks
6. reflecting on knowledge and using a content management system (CMS)
7. demonstrating professionalism

### Course Structure and Communication

This course takes place 100% online and asynchronously. [Canvas](#) is the official UNT home for the course.

We will use [Microsoft Teams](#) for quick, informal communication and for virtual meetings. Teams is part of the [Microsoft 365 family of applications](#) provided to all UNT students. You'll complete an activity to get yourself set up in Teams during the first few days of the course. While your interactions with the instructor and your fellow students takes place in Teams, course materials and assignments are housed in Canvas. That is where you should submit all course work.

Teams offers something like text messaging on steroids plus file storage and more. It is a common communication tool in workplaces, so the course will help you become literate in it. When you post a question, either Dr. Kim or one of your classmates will answer. This way we can all benefit from questions asked, and they can be answered in a venue that the whole class can see.

If you have a private question, contact Dr. Kim using private chat on Teams. She will respond within 12 hours (often within an hour). You can always schedule a virtual meeting, too. She wants to support your growth as a tech comm professional.

There are 8 weekly modules of content that you will move through to complete the course.

On Canvas, you'll find always find a Module Overview labeled **START HERE. Each Module Overview includes specific suggestions for how much time to allocate to each module activity for the week.**

Module	Topic or Focus of Instruction
1	Intro to Style/Voice/Tone & Content Guides
2	Language Basics & genAI
3	Plain Language
4	Tone of Voice
5	genAI & Tone of Voice
6	Research Basics & A/B Testing
7	Slide Decks for Industry Research
8	Wrapping Up

## Texts and Tools

One software tool is required: [ChatGPT-5](#). You can use the tool for free. As of today, [the limits on free users seem negligible](#). But this space changes often. You can try the free version and switch to the paid version ([ChatGPT Plus](#) at \$20 per month) if needed. This tool should not be used in the course before Module 3, so there is no need to purchase it until then if you want to save money.

There is no textbook for TECM 5190. All required readings and other source materials are available in Canvas. Assignments sometimes point to background content in the (free) open-source textbook: [Technical and Professional Writing Genres \[Beta\]: A Study in Theory and Practice](#) by Michael Beilfuss, Staci Bettes, and Katrina Peterson.

## Course Prerequisites or Other Restrictions

Because our tech comm graduate programs (both MA and GAC) admit students in any term, this course does not require prerequisite courses or knowledge apart from digital technology abilities (see Technology Requirements below for more on these abilities and sources for learning them).

## Course Requirements

Students achieve the learning goals of the course through several major assignments. All assignment instructions, including evaluation criteria and due dates, are found on Canvas. Assignments include an estimate of the hours required to successfully complete them.

The table that follows includes a brief description of major assignments, the specific learning outcomes they measure, and their weight in determining final course grades. The Gantt chart found on Canvas provides additional information about how course work is distributed throughout the 8 weekly modules.

Assignment	Short Description	Points Possible
Content Guide Report & Peer Reviews	Compare and contrast industry content guides to demonstrate your understanding of and the importance of style/voice/tone	10

Assignment	Short Description	Points Possible
	in tech comm, and present feedback to content creators (measures Course Outcomes 1 & 4)	
Plain Language Revision & Peer Reviews	Alter user-focus by manipulating language in technical content, assess readability, and present feedback to content creators (measures Course Outcomes 1-4)	20
Tone of Voice Versions & Peer Reviews with genAI	Create distinct tones of voice. Present feedback created with use of ChatGPT-4o to content creators about altering voice/tone (measures Course Outcomes 1, 3-4)	10
genAI Tone Analysis Report	Submit voice/tone versions augmented with ChatGPT-4o and analyze language (measures Course Outcomes 1-3)	10
Reflective Blog Posts (3)	Reflect on your development as a content creator and reviewer during the course (measures Course Outcomes 1 & 6)	20
Professionalism	Demonstrate readiness for a professional career as a technical communicator through contributing, interacting, staying on track, and showing commitment to quality work (measures Course Outcome 7)	5
Team Research Proposal	Propose A/B testing research on tone options as a team (measures Course Outcomes 1-2 & 4)	10
Team Research Slide Deck	Report results of A/B testing research on tone options in a slide deck as a team (measures all Course Outcomes)	15
<b>Total Points Possible</b>		<b>100</b>

Students may earn up to 100 possible points in the course. 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.). 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 the deliverables before allowing clients and others to see them. In other words, the deliverables may have clear, but underdeveloped ideas, or it 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.

For graduate-level coursework, only A- and B-level work represents a passing grade. A graduate student is placed on academic probation at the end of any subsequent term in which the CGPA falls below a 3.0. (See the [UNT Graduate Catalog](#).)

## **Grade-related Policies**

### ***Rules for 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 and its consequences, see the section below on UNT policies.

### ***Late Work***

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due by 11:59 pm on either Thursdays (midweek) or Sundays (end of week). The Canvas mobile app is not a reliable source of information about due dates. Use the browser version only for determining when assignments are due.

Please refer to the Modules or Syllabus/Course Summary in Canvas where you can see a list of all assignments by date or download the Gantt chart with all assignments listed to plan course workload .

Assignments submitted within 24 hours after the due date on Canvas earn 50% credit. Assignments submitted after that time earn zero credit. There are no make-ups available unless arrangements are made prior to due dates. Because this is an accelerated graduate course meeting for only 8 weeks, you can succeed only if you stay on schedule with course activities. Any exceptional circumstances that cause you to miss deadlines should be documented with the Dean of Students: Union 409 or 940-565-2648.

The University is committed to providing a reliable online course system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty, you should immediately

report any problems to the instructor and contact the UNT Student Help Desk: [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu) or 940-565-2324 and obtain a ticket number.

### ***Turnaround Time***

You can expect meaningful feedback on assignments within 7 days of the deadline. Questions about grades or other individual issues should be directed to the instructor, not posted in the #general channel on Teams. My evaluation process for your written submissions in the course is somewhat similar to the multiple passes used by editing professionals (for those who have taken tech editing TECM 5195):

**First Pass:** Read all submissions to get general impression of content and different approaches to crafting the document.

**Second Pass:** Read and comment on each submission in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Assign preliminary grade.

**Third Pass:** Compare comments on all submissions and ensure fairness in grades across all submissions.

I almost always do only one pass per day.

### ***Course Evaluation***

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is the student evaluation system for UNT and allows students the ability to confidentially provide constructive feedback to their instructor and department to improve the quality of student experiences in the course.

### ***Course Policies***

#### ***Attendance Policy***

You should log in to the Canvas course site every 24-48 hours and have notifications for our Teams channel set to notify you immediately of any course announcements or instructor chat messages.

#### ***Syllabus Change Policy***

Changes to the syllabus, course information, or due dates will be announced on Teams and reflected on Canvas.

### ***Technical Requirements & Skills***

Knowledge of and the capacity to learn new technology is a critical skill for all technical communicators. Students need Microsoft Word and either PowerPoint or another slide presentation software tool for TECM 5190. We will also use Microsoft Teams. All are provided to UNT students through [Microsoft Office 365](#).

You must also have ChatGPT Plus (\$20 per month). This tool will not be used in the course before Module 3, so there is no need to purchase it until then if you want to save money on the monthly subscription. Instructions for accessing it appear in a tutorial for its use on Canvas.

To successfully complete this course, you must have access to a reliable internet source. You should also have these skills:

- using the learning management system (Canvas)
- using web-based software (ChatGPT-4o)

### ***Technology Help***

If you need technology help in TECM 5190, use the TECM Tech Lab.

**Hours:** Monday - Thursday 8am - 10pm & Friday 8am - 5pm (Central Time Zone)

**Room:** Auditorium Building 307

**Email:** [unttechlab@gmail.com](mailto:unttechlab@gmail.com)

**Phone:** 940-565-4193

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

Other technology help at UNT:

- [UNT Help Desk](#)
- [Canvas Support](#)
- [Computer and Internet Literacy](#)

### **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.

In this course, academic dishonesty on one assignment results in a grade of zero for the assignment. Academic dishonesty on more than one assignment results in a failing grade of F for the course.

#### ***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.

#### ***Rules of Engagement***

Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors online. Behavior that interferes with instruction or other students' opportunity to learn

cannot be tolerated. Consequences may include being referred to the Dean of Students to consider whether the behavior violated the Code of Student Conduct (UNT Policy 17.012). The university's and instructor's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional settings.

The total points earned in the course can be reduced by up to 10 points (one letter grade) for demonstrating lack of professionalism. To avoid this, you should remain

- **Respectful** to the instructor and other students through your actions and words;
- **Responsive** to the instructor and other students; and
- **Knowledgeable** of course policies and procedures.

A student will receive one warning before points are deducted.

See these [Engagement Guidelines](https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) (https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) for more information.

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

### ***Getting Help: Academic Support Services***

- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (https://success.unt.edu/asc)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (https://library.unt.edu/)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (http://writingcenter.unt.edu/)
- [MathLab](https://math.unt.edu/mathlab) (https://math.unt.edu/mathlab)

### ***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.

### ***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](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/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](https://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) (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](mailto: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/) (http://spot.unt.edu/) or email [spot@unt.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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) (<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.

## **Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses**

### ***Federal Regulation***

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website](http://www.ecfr.gov/) (<http://www.ecfr.gov/>). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

***University of North Texas Compliance***

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

- (1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.
- (2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email [internationaladvising@unt.edu](mailto:internationaladvising@unt.edu)) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.