TECM 2700: Technical Writing

Course Information
Term: Fall 2016

Class Time: 8am – 9:20am

Location: AudB 312

Instructor Information
Instructor: Meesha Thomas

Office hours: T & Th 9:30–11am, 3:00–3:30, and by appointment

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Course Summary
Every profession, regardless of the field, requires solid communication skills: the ability to communicate with an audience inside and outside of the profession. The effective professional has a keen sense of audience and purpose, a command of the language, and an ability to adapt to a variety of communication tasks. Technical Writing introduces students to the genres, style, and design of technical documents that are used in various professional fields including engineering, science, business, and criminal justice.

By the end of this course you should be able to

- analyze communication contexts rhetorically by understanding audiences, purposes, and situations
- create technical documents that solve problems and improve a reader's access to information
- write effective technical prose
- design convincing and usable documents
- research, synthesize, articulate, and graphically represent technical data
- write collaboratively and work as a member of a team

Textbook
The required text for this course is

> Lannon and Gurak's *Technical Communication*, 14 ed (2016).
> ISBN: 9780134271958. Subscription to MyWritingLab is optional.

Supplemental readings will be available on Blackboard.

Assignments
The assignments in this course are designed to provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate and develop your writing abilities. As this is a writing-intensive course, each

assignment, whether individual or group, requires substantial contribution and solid evidence of audience analysis, ethical considerations, and problem-solving skills.

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 Blackboard.

Policy Memos, 15%
Revise the policy memos on social media use and dress code. You will be assessed on your ability to deliver information using direct and indirect styles as well as your use of appropriate devices such as active and passive voice, parallelism, and imperative mood.

Resume and LinkedIn Summary, 20%
Select an internship posting based on your current qualifications. Design and construct a resume based on this posting's desired qualifications. You will be evaluated on the content and appearance of the resume as well as how effectively it targets your audience. Resumes produced with existing templates will not be accepted.

Additionally, write a LinkedIn Summary, which would appeal to recruiters and hiring managers. The summary paragraph will be assessed on its content and persuasiveness.

Project Management Software Report, 15%
In assigned groups, research and assess the efficacy of two free project management tools such as Asana, Dropbox, Google Drive, GoToMeeting, or Slack. After your team has selected its tools, you will perform a usability test. Your team will then synthesize your findings an IMR&D (Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion) report.

Employment Outlook Report, 20%
In the groups from your previous assignment, research and report the employment outlook for your future profession. Each team member is responsible for locating and synthesizing data from the Occupational Outlook Handbook (Bureau of Labor Statistics) as well as 3 current job postings in his or her desired field and location. Each team member will also interview one relevant professional who works outside the university. Your team use the project management tool you recommended in the project management report to communicate with one another.

The audience for the employment outlook report is academic advisors and undergraduate directors who advise and recruit students into your major. The report will be assessed on your ability to analyze, synthesize, and visualize technical information.

Progress Report, 10%
Submit a 1-page progress report on your individual contributions to the employment outlook report. The report should update me on your individual preliminary research findings as well as a description of how this research contributes to the construction of the final report.

LinkedIn Profile Content, 10%
Write the content necessary for an effective LinkedIn profile. If you don't wish to post these materials on LinkedIn, submit them via Blackboard. The profile content should include a

professional headshot as well as the following sections: summary, experience, courses, skills, and education. Organize these sections based on what we've discussed about hierarchy in class as well as the experiences that distinguish you from the competition.

Professionalism, Homework, and Quizzes, 10%
Complete homework, quizzes, in-class activities, and assigned readings as well as conduct yourself as a professional communicator. At the end of the course, you will receive an overall professionalism grade (worth 500pts, or the equivalent of five quizzes). Professionalism includes your engagement, participation, and attendance.

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

"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.

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 made. Should you miss more than 2 classes, your grade will be lowered one letter. If you miss more than 3 classes, your grade will be lowered 2 letters. 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 begin to 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 received for that assignment.

Likewise, any student who *leaves class* has before it has ended or without my prior approval will automatically receive an absence for that day.

General Technology Requirements

Computer Operations and Access Requirements

As this is a sophomore-level course, you are expected to be familiar with the day-to-day operation of computers including UNT email (and sending attachments), Blackboard Learn, 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 the Library. 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.

Assignment Submission and Grading

Format

Major assignments and drafts must be submitted through Blackboard unless otherwise noted. E-mailed assignments will not be accepted.

Due Dates

Assignments must be completed and uploaded to Blackboard 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.

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, surfing 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.

Academic Integrity
I follow UNT's policy for academic dishonesty. You can access these guidelines and the UNT policy at http://tinyurl.com/nuwo42u. You are responsible for knowing and following the student standards for academic integrity.

Accommodations (Special Arrangements)
UNT Office of Disability Accommodations
Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations.

UNT's Office of Disability Accommodations offers a variety of services but require qualified students to follow an application process. Please check their Web site for more information on these procedures and their deadlines.

New ODA policy – *The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.*

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 2700. The schedule is subject to change pending our progress this semester.

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Aug 30	Activity: What is TC?, review syllabus, correspondence case		Correspondences case (completed in-class)
Sept 1	Opening lab orientation, review correspondence case, writing diagnostic	Ch. 1	Writing diagnostic (completed in-class); "Technical writing and me" memo
Unit 1. Technical Style			
Sept 6	Activity: Snow policy memo, assign policy memos, style lecture (editing for clarity and concision)	Ch. 11, pp. 202–214 and "Social media in the workplace: Where does it fit in?"	
Sept 8	Style lecture (editing for fluency, finding the exact words, adjusting your tone)	Ch. 11, pp. 215–235 and Ch. 14	Ch. 11 reading quiz
Sept 13	Writing professional emails	Ch. 15	Language and style activity
Sept 15	Guided workshop on policy memos		Policy memos (draft)
Sept 20	Instructions and procedures, usability	Ch. 19	Policy memos (final); Ch. 19 reading quiz
Unit 2. Technical Design			
Sept 22	Designing your professional brand, Activity: Resume assessment	"How to create a personal branding resume"	
Sept 27	Assign resume and LinkedIn summary, resume types, Activity: Resume conventions	Ch. 16 (pp. 367-377)	
Sept 29	Job posting analysis, design principles: typography, contrast, repetition, alignment, and repetition	Ch. 13	2-3 internship job postings, Ch. 13 reading quiz
Oct 4	Creating a resume "shell" with MS-Word tables, LinkedIn 101	Ch. 25 and Palmer's "LinkedIn: Are you making the key connections?"	Ch. 25 reading quiz

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Oct 6	Guided workshop on resume and LinkedIn summary, discuss policy memo revisions		Resume and LinkedIn summary (draft)
Oct 11	Cover letters, Interviewing skills, portfolios, and references	Ch. 16, pp. 378–385	Resume and LinkedIn summary (final)
Unit 3. Project Management			
Oct 13	Collaborating with a team; Team roles, Learning styles,	Ch. 5 and "Guidelines for managing a collaborative project" pp. 83–84	Ch. 5 reading quiz
Oct 18	IMR&D reports, assign project management report, Activity: Creating user-test scenarios	Ch. 25 "Writing Reader-Centered Empirical Reports" (PDF on BB)	Policy memos (optional revision)
Oct 20	Activity: Creating user-test scenarios (cont.), draft methods		
Oct 25	Activity: User-test guidelines, draft results	"Usability test demo" (YouTube video linked on BB)	
Oct 27	Assign employment outlook report, team brainstorming	Ch. 21	Project management report (final) and Ch. 21 reading quiz
Unit 4. Data Synthesis			
Nov 1	Exploring primary and secondary sources, interviews, and surveys	Ch. 7	Ch. 7 reading quiz
Nov 3	Team workday		
Nov 8	Evaluating and interpreting information	Ch. 8	
Nov 10	Progress reports, assign LinkedIn profile	Ch. 20, pp 471-475	
Nov 15	Summarizing research findings, Activity: Interview summary	Ch. 9	Ch. 9 reading quiz
Nov 17	Team workday		Progress report (final)
Nov 22	Designing visual information, Activity: Technical graphics	Ch. 12	Ch. 12 reading quiz

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Nov 29	Building a formal report template, MS-Word styles		
Dec 1	Writing abstracts, Bookmarking in Adobe Acrobat		
Dec 6	Team workday		Employment outlook report (final, due at the end of class)
Dec 8	Complete team evaluations, LinkedIn workshop, course wrap up	Review Ch. 16	LinkedIn profile content (draft) and Ch. 16 reading quiz
Dec 13 **8am-10am** FINAL EXAM PERIOD	Writing diagnostic, correspondence case post-test (completed during exam period)		LinkedIn profile content (final)