TECM 2700.024: Technical Writing

Course Information

Term: Spring 2017
Location: AudB 313

Instructor Information

Instructor: Meesha Thomas
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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 Memo, 15%
Revise the policy memo on employee time reporting. 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. If you're planning on graduating this year, approach this assignment as if you have your degree. 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 must 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 (in memo format) 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. You will receive an overall professionalism grade, which is worth a total of 500 points. 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* 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.

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, always 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.

Academic Integrity
I follow UNT's academic integrity and dishonesty policies. UNT defines six acts of academic dishonesty. Below is a brief description of these act and the related 2700 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
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
Jan 18	Activity: What is TC?, review syllabus		
Jan 20	Correspondence case (completed in-class), opening lab orientation	Ch. 1	
Jan 23	Complete writing diagnostic, review correspondence case, discuss academic integrity		"Technical writing and me" memo
Unit 1. Technical Style			
Jan 25	Activity: Snow policy memo, assign policy memo		Academic integrity quiz
Jan 27	Style lecture (editing for clarity and concision)	Ch. 11, pp. 202–214	
Jan 30	Social media in the workplace, style lecture (editing for fluency, finding the exact words	"Social media in the workplace: Where does it fit in?" Ch. 11, pp. 215–235	Ch. 11 reading quiz
Feb 1	Style lecture (adjusting your tone), memos and letters	Ch. 15	
Feb 3	Writing professional emails	Ch. 14	Language and style activity
Feb 6	Policy memo practice		
Feb 8	Guided workshop on policy memo		Policy memo (draft)
Feb 10	Instructions and procedures, usability	Ch. 19	Policy memo (final); Ch. 19 reading quiz
Unit 2. Technical Design			
Feb 13	Designing your professional brand	"How to create a personal branding resume"	
Feb 15	Activity: Resume assessment, assign resume and LinkedIn summary	Ch. 16 (pp. 367-377)	
Feb 17	Resume types, Activity: Resume conventions		
Feb 20	Job posting analysis, design principles: typography, alignment, and repetition	Ch. 13	2–3 internship job postings, Ch. 13 reading quiz

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Feb 22	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
Feb 24	Guided workshop on resume		Resume (draft)
Feb 27	Guided workshop on LinkedIn summary		LinkedIn summary (draft)
Mar 1	Discuss policy memo revisions, cover letters		Resume and LinkedIn summary (final)
Mar 3	Interviewing skills, portfolios, and references	Ch. 16, pp. 378–385	Ch. 16 reading quiz
Unit 3. Project Management			
Mar 6	Activity: Working with a team and writing a team charter, Team roles, Learning styles,	Ch. 5 and "Guidelines for managing a collaborative project" pp. 83–84	Ch. 5 reading quiz
Mar 8	IMR&D reports, assign project management report	"Writing Reader-Centered Empirical Reports" (PDF on BB)	
Mar 10	Activity: Creating user-test scenarios		Policy memo (optional revision)
Mar 13–19	SPRING BREAK — NO CLASSES		
Mar 20	Draft methods section of report, Activity: User-test guidelines	"Usability test demo" (YouTube video linked on BB)	
Mar 22	Activity: User-test guidelines (cont.)		
Mar 24	Draft results section of report		
Mar 27	Assign employment outlook report, team brainstorming	Ch. 21	Project management report (final) and Ch. 21 reading quiz
Unit 4. Data Synthesis			
Mar 29	Exploring primary and secondary sources	Ch. 7	Ch. 7 reading quiz
Mar 31	Interviews and surveys, team work day		
Apr 3	Team workday		
Apr 5	Evaluating sources (online information and evidence)	Ch. 8	
Apr 7	Evaluating information for ethical reasoning,		

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
	acknowledging limits of research		
Apr 10	Progress reports, assign LinkedIn profile	Ch. 20, pp 471-475	
Apr 12	Summarizing research findings	Ch. 9	Ch. 9 reading quiz
Apr 14	Activity: Interview summary		
Apr 17	Team workday		Progress report (final)
Apr 19	Designing visual information, Activity: Technical graphics	Ch. 12	Ch. 12 reading quiz
Apr 21	Building a formal report template		
Apr 24	Writing abstracts, team work day		
Apr 26	MS-Word styles, bookmarking in Adobe Acrobat, team workday		
Apr 28	Team workday, complete team evaluations		
May 1	Team workday		Employment outlook report (final, due at the end of class)
May 3	LinkedIn workshop, course wrap up	Review Ch. 16	LinkedIn profile content (draft)
May 5	READING DAY – NO CLASSES		
May 8 10:30AM-12:30PM	Writing diagnostic, correspondence case post-test (completed during exam period)		LinkedIn profile content (final)