

FALL 2018 TECM 4180 (Advanced Technical Communication)

This one-pager provides a quick overview of what to expect in this course. The other pages of this document provide additional details about assignments, policies, and grading criteria.

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What is this course about?

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.

Why is this course important?

Your participation in this course will help you to develop the skills that employers want, including:

1. Work in a team.
2. Make decisions and solve problems.
3. Plan, organize and prioritize work.
4. Communicate verbally.
5. Obtain and process information.
6. Analyze quantitative data.
7. Understand technology related to the job.
8. Use software proficiently.
9. Create and/or edit reports.
10. Sell and influence others.¹

Major Units

Critical Thinking

Explore practical applications of critical thinking techniques. Use these skills while conducting research, forming conclusions, and recommending action.

Interviewing

Develop your interview skills by conducting two interviews and writing recommendations based on your findings.

Survey Design and Reporting

Work as a group to identify research goals and to conduct a survey. Analyze your survey results and report your findings verbally and visually.

Secondary Research

Conduct secondary research to explore a challenge or opportunity that is critical to the success of an organization or business. Synthesize information from multiple sources to report your findings and recommendations.

What books do I need to buy?

Please buy these books right away:

- *Organizing Ideas* by Matthew Spence
- *Think Smarter, Critical Thinking to Improve Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills* by Michael Kallet

Additional reading assignments will be announced in class and listed in Canvas. You'll also do self-selected reading, primarily for the Secondary Research assignment.

How much homework is there?

As with most 3-credit classes, you should plan for an average of 8 to 9 hours of homework each week. Out-of-class work will include reading assignments, reading summaries, research projects, and major writing assignments.

What policies should I be aware of?

Please take the responsibility to read the entire Policies section of this document. Several of these policies are designed to incentivize good professional habits such as attendance, punctuality, accountability, and commitment to quality.

Consequently, there are **grade penalties** for:

- **Excessive absenteeism** (1 letter grade off the final course grade for each absence greater than 3)
- **Off-task behaviors** (1 absence or a half-absence may be recorded for off-task behaviors such as smartphone use, computer use, side conversations, sleeping, doing work for other courses, etc.)
- **Late submission of assignments** (no late submission for low-stakes assignments; 10% deducted from major assignments for each day late)

¹ Source: 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-](https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/10/11/the-10-skills-employers-most-want-in-20-something-employees/#545cb7e86330)

[skills-employers-most-want-in-20-something-employees/#545cb7e86330](https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/10/11/the-10-skills-employers-most-want-in-20-something-employees/#545cb7e86330). Accessed 21 Aug. 2017

Policies

ADA

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act, I will work with the Office of Disability Accommodation to help reasonably qualified students with disabilities. If you have such a disability, please advise me in writing of your needs no later than the second week of class.

The University of North Texas 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 you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You 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 Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at [940.565.4323](tel:940.565.4323).

Academic Honesty and Integrity

As a student enrolled in a senior-level university course, you are expected to take responsibility for your own learning and to uphold the highest academic standards at all times.

- Do your own work.
- Do new work for every assignment—do not reuse work that you created for other purposes.
- Do your best on every assignment—strive to meet professional standards.
- Follow the UNT Policy for Student Academic Integrity.

(https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.003_StudentStandardsOfAcademicIntegrity_8_2017.pdf)

This policy defines the following forms of academic dishonesty:

- **Cheating:** intentionally 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.
- **Plagiarism:** the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgement.
- **Fabrication:** intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- **Facilitating:** academic dishonesty intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity.

If any course material is submitted that violates this policy of academic dishonesty, the assignment will receive a grade of "F," and appropriate judicial action will be filed. This action includes a report of academic misconduct to your college Dean and possible dismissal from The University of North Texas. There are no first-offense warnings regarding plagiarism. As this is a senior-level course it is expected that plagiarism and the correct use (citation) of others' ideas (including print, digital, images, and other media) are fully understood. Contact me if you're ever confused about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Misunderstandings, miscommunication, oversights, or lack of comprehension as to what constitutes academic dishonesty is not accepted in this course.

Attendance

The attendance policy is designed to help you to develop and practice the skills and habits that employers want. The self-discipline of regular and prompt attendance is an important aspect of professionalism. Responsible students understand and appreciate this policy, which helps you to follow through on your educational goals.

You should make a firm commitment to attend every class meeting. However, due to the complexities of student life, my attendance policy generously allows 3 absences without penalty. (That is a 10% rate of absenteeism, which would be unacceptable in most professional contexts.) You should reserve those absences for days when you are ill, accidentally sleep late, have car trouble, or experience other issues that unexpectedly prevent attendance.

Be clear about the requirements and penalties:

- After the 3 penalty-free absences, each additional absence will lower your final course grade by one letter.
- If you arrive more than 10 minutes late or leave before class is dismissed, I will record a half-day of absence.

- Excused absences will be granted **only** for Religious Holy Days (communicated during the first week of the semester), Active-Duty Military Service (communicated in advance), Official University Functions (communicated in advance), and documented medical issues of more than 1 week's duration, as described in the UNT Attendance Policy.
(http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.039_StudentAttendance_2016.pdf)

DO NOT ask for an excused absence due to a minor illness, a doctor's appointment, car trouble, a job interview, a conference, or similar circumstances. These types of situations are why you get the penalty-free absences.

- DO NOT** ask how you can "make up" for missed days. To be fair to everyone, everyone gets the stated number of penalty-free absences and everyone is penalized in the same manner for excessive absences.
- UNT cares about student success. If you experience difficult circumstances that interfere with your educational goals, please consult the UNT Care Team or Student Services for guidance.

Assignment Submission

The assignment submission policy is designed to help you develop the skills and habits that employers want. The self-discipline of meeting deadlines is an important aspect of professionalism. Responsible students understand and appreciate this policy, which helps you to follow through on your educational goals.

- Take responsibility to submit every assignment on time. **On time means before the deadline.**
- The deadline for an assignment will be indicated in Canvas, included in the assignment instructions, and mentioned in class.
- Low-stakes assignments (worth 25 points or less) **will not** be accepted late. To earn more than 0 on these assignments, submit them before the deadline.
- For **each 24-hour period that a major assignment is late**, you will lose 10% of the total points possible for the assignment. After four 24-hour periods have passed, the paper receives an automatic "F."
For example, if an assignment is due at 8 a.m. on Monday, and you submit it at 8:05 a.m. on Monday, you will lose 10% of the total points possible for the assignment.
- To avoid any negative impact from possible technical issues, you should develop the good habit of submitting your work at least 12 hours before the deadline. By doing so, you will give yourself time to resolve issues before the deadline.
- After submitting an assignment, verify that it is in Canvas and is available to the instructor for grading. It is your responsibility to use these tools correctly.
- DO NOT** ask for "leeway." As in the workplace, there are consequences when a deadline is missed.
- As an adult enrolled in a senior-level university course, you are expected to take responsibility to learn how to submit assignments in Canvas, to manage your time, to resolve technical issues, and to meet deadlines.
- Before submitting an assignment for grading, ensure that it meets the assignment requirements as listed on the assignment sheet. Also double-check your work against the quality criteria that were presented for the assignment.
- When an assignment is due for grading, **submit it through Canvas**. Plan ahead and allow plenty of time to resolve any issues that you might experience with your computer, your Internet connection, Canvas availability, etc.
- If you are asked to bring a printed document for an in-class activity**, such as Peer Review, print the document before class begins and remember to bring the printed document to class. **Do not** ask to leave class to print the document. **Do not** bring your laptop or other device and expect other students to read your document on that device. If you do not bring a printed document when one is required, you will not be able to participate in the activity, and the instructor may record an absence or half-absence for the class period.
- Turnitin Submissions:** Some written assignments will be submitted as Turnitin assignments. Turnitin is a third-party web-based plagiarism detection service. Before submitting your paper to Turnitin, please remove your name and other personal information from the document. After submitting an assignment, verify that it was submitted and that it is available to the instructor for grading.

Classroom Conduct

The classroom conduct policy is designed to help you develop the skills and habits that employers want. The self-discipline of respectful, responsible, and productive behavior is an important aspect of professionalism. Responsible students understand and appreciate this policy, which helps you to follow through on your educational goals.

As a student in a senior-level course, you are expected to take responsibility for following the UNT Student Code of Conduct (https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/07.012_CodeofConduct_2013_0.pdf).

Off-task and disruptive behaviors: Even adults in a senior-level class sometimes need to be incentivized to stay on task. Therefore, 1 absence or a half-absence may be recorded if the instructor observes off-task behaviors such as smartphone use, computer use, side conversations, sleeping, doing work for other courses, etc., during lectures, small-group activities, or work periods.

Computer Lab Rules

This course takes place in a computer lab. Students must follow the lab rules.

- Make appropriate use of technology.
- Do not make disruptive, distracting, or off-task use of any technology during class.
- Do not use technology unless it is required for a classroom activity. For example, if there is a lecture or a class discussion, you should not be using your phone.
- If you fail to comply with instructions concerning the use of computers, phones, tablets, or other technology, you may be asked to leave the classroom, and in that event, you will be counted as absent for the day.

Religious Holidays

In accordance with State law, students absent due to the observance of a religious holiday may take examinations or complete assignments scheduled for the day missed within a reasonable time after the absence. Travel time required for religious observances shall also be excused. Please see the UNT Student Handbook for information on which holidays or holy days are covered by this policy. State law also requires that students notify their teachers at the beginning of the semester if they expect to miss class on a religious holiday during the semester but want to make up the work missed. Students will be allowed to make up the work **provided they have informed their teachers in writing within the first 15 days of the semester.**

University-Authorized Activities

University policy requires that students provide their teachers with **an official notification card issued by the university** if they want to make up any in-class work they missed while they were involved in a university authorized activity.

Workshopping

As in many writing classes, this class includes a workshop component, in which students' writing samples are evaluated or discussed. For example, we will have peer review workshops, in which students evaluate one another's documents and provide written feedback. We also will have workshops in which the whole class looks at a selected document and discusses possible improvements. If your document is chosen for this purpose, it will be an extra opportunity to get additional feedback and guidance on your writing. Be sure to talk with the instructor if you have any questions about how to evaluate and apply the suggestions from these workshops.

Grading

Each assignment will be graded according to the requirements and the quality criteria for the assignment.

Your final course grade will be based on the total points earned, minus any penalties for non-attendance (see [Attendance](#)).

- A: You earned 90-100% of the possible points.
- B: You earned 80-89.9% of the possible points OR your course grade was lowered to a B due to the Attendance Policy.
- C: 70-79.9% of the possible points OR your course grade was lowered to a C due to the Attendance Policy.
- D: You earned 60-69.9% of the possible points OR your course grade was lowered to a D due to the Attendance Policy.
- F: You earned less than 60% of the possible points OR your course grade was lowered to an F due to the Attendance Policy.

Typical criteria are provided below to help you understand the expectations. *Assignment-specific requirements and grading criteria will be presented in class.*

Point Values for Assignments

Assignment	Points Possible
Student Interview Prelim. Draft	10
Student Interview Final Draft	130
Pre-Interview Memo including Annotated Citations for 2 articles	10
Client Interview Prelim. Draft	10
Client Interview Final Draft	140
Survey Prep Work	30
Survey Report Prelim. Draft	10
Survey Report Final Draft	160
Synthesis Matrix for 3 articles	10
Project Proposal Memo with 3 annotated citations	10
Secondary Research Report Prelim. Draft	10
Secondary Research Report Final Draft	190
Reading Summaries and Low-Stakes Assignments--Unit #1	20
Reading Summaries and Low-Stakes Assignments--Unit #2	20
Reading Summaries and Low-Stakes Assignments--Unit #3	20
Reading Summaries and Low-Stakes Assignments--Unit #4	20
CT Mid-Term Exam	100
CT Final Exam	100
Total Points	1000

Typical Criteria for Reading Summaries and Other Low-Stakes Assignments

Low-stakes assignments allow you to work through new information and to process your thoughts. Your writing should be specific, accurate, clear, and well organized; however, due to the short time frame, the writing is not expected to be highly polished.

	Fails to Meet Minimum Requirements	Meets Minimum Requirements
Content	Presents an incomplete, inconsistent, or extremely under-developed response to the assignment.	Submitted on time; addresses the required points accurately and with a reasonable level of detail, given the timeframe for the assignment.
Clarity	Often has such significant issues with structure or language that it is difficult for the reader to make out the meaning.	Submitted on time; generally presents information in a clear and organized manner, although it might lack the polish required for publishable writing.

Typical Criteria and Point Values for Major Assignments

Major Assignments involve a process of prewriting, writing, feedback, and revision. The final draft will be judged against professional standards, taking into consideration the audience, the scenario for the assignment, and other aspects of the rhetorical situation. Not all criteria below apply to all assignments. ***Assignment-specific details will be discussed in class*** to ensure that the requirements are clear.

	Does Not Meet or Partially Meets Minimum Requirements	Meets Minimum Requirements	Good Quality	Outstanding Quality
Purpose/ Audience	Purpose/audience is ineffectively communicated or is not consistent with this assignment.	<p>Generally effective, but the overall quality is diminished due to issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose/audience is too broad or too narrow for this assignment. • The purpose/audience is not completely sustained throughout the document. • The introduction needs revision to present a stronger or more focused appeal to a specific audience. • The conclusion needs revision to present a stronger or more focused appeal to a specific audience. 	<p>Responds to the rhetorical situation by establishing a significant purpose and addressing a specific audience. Usually sustains a clear focus and a strong purpose.</p> <p>The thesis is clearly stated at the beginning, and the introduction and conclusion present a focused appeal to a specific audience.</p> <p>There might be a need for revisions in a place or two, such as cutting a non-essential sentence from the intro or conclusion, or rewording a topic sentence to more clearly connect to the thesis and audience.</p>	<p>Presents a strong and substantial response to the rhetorical situation by establishing a clear purpose that is timely and relevant to the needs of a specific audience. Consistently focuses on this goal and the audience's needs.</p> <p>The introduction clearly states the thesis and is crafted to gain the audience's attention while establishing the context, relevance, and purpose.</p> <p>The conclusion wraps up the discussion without needless repetition and makes a final, purposeful appeal to the audience. Could be used as an exemplar for this Quality Indicator.</p>
Development and Support	<p>Overall, development or support is ineffective, is not consistent with this assignment, or is diminished due to issues such as these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not meet the requirements for the number or types of sources. • Misses the minimum word count/ presentation length by 10% or more. • Incorrect use of sources, such as unattributed text or missing quote marks around text. 	<p>Generally effective, but the overall quality is diminished by issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in support. • Redundant or extraneous information. • A source that the audience is unlikely to find credible. • Over-reliance on a single source. • Over-reliance on quotes from sources. 	<p>Usually presents sufficient detail to fulfill the rhetorical purpose and to enable the audience to take action.</p> <p>There might be a need for revisions in a place or two, such as clarifying an explanation, providing an additional detail, or cutting a redundant or off-topic sentence.</p>	<p>Presents sufficient and varied types of information to meet the demands of the rhetorical situation.</p> <p>The intended audience is likely to consider the information useful, credible, and actionable.</p> <p>Could be used as an exemplar for this Quality Indicator.</p>

	Does Not Meet or Partially Meets Minimum Requirements	Meets Minimum Requirements	Good Quality	Outstanding Quality
Structure and Design	Overall, the structure of the document or the design of the visual elements is ineffective or is not consistent with the assignment.	<p>Generally effective, but the overall quality is diminished by issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective topic sentences. • Information that would be more effective in different positions. • Overly long blocks of text. • A visual element that is unreadable or unappealing due to font size, color, position, size, or clarity. • A visual element that is not consistent with other elements. 	<p>Usually presents the content in a logical and effective arrangement.</p> <p>Most visual elements (if required by the assignment) are effective.</p> <p>There might be a need for revisions in a place or two, such as rewording a topic sentence, moving a sentence or a paragraph to a more effective position, or enhancing the readability of a visual element.</p>	<p>Presents the content in a logical and effective arrangement, guiding the audience through the information and ideas. The structure makes it easy for the reader to understand, use, and refer to the information.</p> <p>All visual elements (if required by the assignment) are readable and useful. Considered together, these elements are professional, consistent in style, and well suited to the purpose/audience.</p> <p>Could be used as an exemplar for this Quality Indicator.</p>
Professional Ethos	Overall, the Professional Ethos is ineffective or is not consistent with the assignment.	<p>Generally effective, but the overall quality is diminished by issues such as imprecise wording, inconsistency in tone, abrupt changes of topic, wordy phrases, overly complex sentences, overly formal language, or passive voice.</p> <p>Most paragraphs are free of errors; however, there might be several errors that impact readability or clarity, such as fragments, run-ons, and misused words.</p>	<p>Usually is clear, concise, and appropriate in tone for the audience and purpose.</p> <p>There might be a need for revisions in a place or two, due to issues such as imprecise wording, inconsistency in tone, an abrupt change of topic, a wordy phrase, an overly complex sentence, overly formal language, or passive voice.</p> <p>Most paragraphs are free of errors. There might be occasional low-impact errors, but few errors that impact readability or clarity.</p>	<p>Consistently uses clear, concise, impactful language and a tone that is well-crafted to achieve the purpose and influence the audience.</p> <p>Makes effective use of transitional words and phrases to create a smooth flow of ideas and information.</p> <p>Is virtually free of errors, as expected in published writing.</p> <p>The department could use this document as an exemplar for this Quality Indicator.</p>

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Unit 1			
Week 1			
August 28	Activity: What is TC?, review syllabus, correspondence case (completed in-class)		
August 30	Opening lab orientation, review correspondence case, writing diagnostic	Spence Ch. 1, 2 & p. 48, p. 74	Writing diagnostic; "Technical writing and me" memo
Week 2			
September 4	Academic integrity, Activity: Snow policy memo, assign policy memo, style lecture (editing for clarity and concision)	Kallet Ch. 1, 2, and 31	
September 6	Style lecture (editing for fluency, finding the exact words, adjusting your tone)	Kallet 4-6 Spence Ch. 3-4	Academic integrity quiz; Ch. 11 reading quiz
Unit 2			
Week 3			
September 11	Writing professional emails, policy memo practice	Spence Ch. 8-9	Language and style activity
September 13	Guided workshop on policy memo	Kallet 27 and 29	Policy memo (draft)
Week 4			
September 18	Instructions and procedures, usability	Spence Ch. 12	Policy memo (final); Ch. 19 reading quiz
September 20		Kallet Ch. 7-9	
Week 5			

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
September 25	Designing your professional brand, Activity: Resume assessment	Kallet Ch. 10-12	
September 27	Assign resume and LinkedIn summary, resume types, Activity: Resume conventions	Spence Ch. 14	
UNIT 3			
Week 6			
October 2	Job posting analysis, design principles: typography, contrast, repetition, alignment, and repetition		2-3 internship job postings; Ch. 13 reading quiz
October 4	Creating a resume "shell" with MS-Word tables, LinkedIn 101		Ch. 25 reading quiz
Week 7			
October 9	Guided workshop on resume and LinkedIn summary, discuss policy memo revisions	Kallet Ch. 15-17	Resume and LinkedIn summary (draft)
October 11	Cover letters, Interviewing skills, portfolios, and references		Resume and LinkedIn summary (final)
Week 8			
October 16	Activity: Working with a team and writing a team charter; Team roles , Learning styles ,		Ch. 5 reading quiz
October 18	IMR&D reports, assign project management report, Activity: Creating user-test scenarios		Policy memos (optional revision)

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Week 9			
October 23	Activity: Creating user-test scenarios (cont.), draft methods		
October 25	Activity: User-test guidelines, draft results	Kallet Ch. 32	
Week 10			
October 30	Assign employment outlook report, team brainstorming		Project management report (final); Ch. 21 reading quiz
November 1			
Week 11			
November 6	Exploring primary and secondary sources, interviews, and surveys	Kallet Ch. 18-20	Ch. 7 reading quiz
November 8	Team workday	Kallet Ch. 21 Spence Ch. 12 (again)	
Week 12			
November 13	Evaluating and interpreting information	Kallet Ch. 22-23	
November 15	Progress reports, assign LinkedIn profile	Spence Ch. 12 (again)	
Week 13			
November 20	Summarizing research findings, Activity: Interview summary	Kallet Ch. 24-26	Ch. 9 reading quiz
November 22	NO CLASS		
Week 14			
November 27	Designing visual information, Activity: Technical graphics	Spence Ch. 10 and 11	Ch. 12 reading quiz
November 29	Building a formal report template, MS-Word styles	Kallet Ch. 33	

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Week 15			
December 4	Writing abstracts, Bookmarking in Adobe Acrobat	Kallet Ch. 13	
December 6	Team workday	Spence Ch. 12 (again)	Employment outlook report (final, due at the end of class)
May * -- FINAL EXAM PERIOD	Writing diagnostic, correspondence case post-test (completed during exam period)		LinkedIn profile content (final)