

TECM 4180: Advanced Technical Communication

Course Information

Term: Fall 2019

Location: AudB 306

Instructor Information

Instructor: Ms. Thomas

Office hours: In Office T/Th 8:25AM–9:25AM

Video Conference: By Appointment M/W 9:00AM – 12:00PM

Office location: AudB 105

Email: meesha.thomas@unt.edu

Course Summary

Professionals in all fields are increasingly called upon to evaluate processes, improve outcomes and lead change. To make sound conclusions and 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.

By the end of this course you should be able to—

- work in a team;
- make decisions and solve problems;
- plan, organize and prioritize work;
- communicate verbally;
- obtain and process information;
- analyze quantitative data;
- understand technology related to the job;
- use software proficiently;
- create and/or edit reports; and sell and influence others.[\[1\]](#)

Textbook

The required texts for this course are

- *Organizing Ideas* by Matthew Spence ISBN-13: 978-1495984938
- *Think Smarter, Critical Thinking to Improve Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills* by Michael Kallet ISBN-13: 978-1118729830

Supplemental readings will be available on Canvas.

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, critical thinking, 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 Canvas.

Student Interview Report (individual), 10%

Interview a fellow student and then write a report (using the Spence method) that presents information and recommendations to your readers.

Client Interview Report (individual), 15%

Interview someone who is a leader in a non-profit organization, the owner or manager of a business, or a professional in a field that interests you. Write a report (using the Spence method) that presents information and recommendations to your readers.

Intercultural Communication Report (individual), 20%

Conduct secondary research to explore an intercultural communication situation that is critical to the success of an organization. Synthesize information from multiple sources to report your findings and recommendations.

Proposal Pitch (individual), 15%

Write a persuasive summary of secondary research and a proposal for a primary research project. Pitch this proposal to your assigned team. Team members will discuss all the proposals and choose which to develop into a survey.

Survey Workshops/Report (group), 25%

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

Professionalism, Drafts, Peer Reviews, and Critical Thinking (individual/group), 10%

Complete assignment drafts, peer reviews, critical thinking activities, and assigned readings as well as conduct yourself as a professional communicator.

Grading

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

"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 completed. Should you miss more than 3 classes, your grade will be lowered one letter. If you miss 6 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 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 earned 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. Stay connected to UNT news sources about campus closures. Make sure your [Eagle Alert \(Links to an external site.\)](#) contact info is current at myUNT.

Drop Dates

Please be aware of the below deadlines as well as the changes in grading policies. UNT students can no longer receive a grade of WF, and they can drop a course online without the instructor's signature. However, students have 5 business days to decide if they want to be re-instated in a dropped course.

Medical Withdrawals

If a student must withdraw due to medical reasons, prior to the withdrawal deadline as indicated in the academic calendar, a student may do so through the regular withdrawal process. If a student is incapacitated or unable to make the request on his/her own, please contact the Dean of Students Office for assistance at 940-565-2648. For details regarding the withdrawal process, go to <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/withdrawals> (Links to an external site.).

General Technology Requirements

Computer Operations and Access Requirements

As this is a senior-level course, you are expected to be familiar with the day-to-day operation of computers including UNT email (and sending attachments), Canvas, 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 UNT. 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 \(Links to an external site.\)](#). 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 Canvas unless otherwise noted.

Emailed assignments will not be accepted.

Due Dates

Assignments must be completed and uploaded to Canvas 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.

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 (UNT Policy 17.012). The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

The Code applies to your interactions with everyone involved in this course: the instructor, classmates, your project teammates, and invited guests.

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, 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 (see UNT Policy 06.003). Below is a brief description of these act and the related 4180 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> ([Links to an external site.](#)). 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

In accordance with university policies and state and federal regulations, the university is committed to full academic access for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. To this end, all academic units are willing to make reasonable and appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment and the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies in order to facilitate equality of educational access for persons with disabilities.

To receive accommodations, you must [register with the ODA \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and then [request a Reasonable Accommodation form \(Links to an external site.\)](#), which you should present to me within the first two weeks of class (see UNT Policy 16.001). You can read UNT's policy on disability accommodation for students and academic units at <https://tinyurl.com/y7jshaqx> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. (See UNT Policy 16.005)

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of [on-campus and off-campus resources \(Links to an external site.\)](#) to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate. She can be reached through email at renee.mcnamara@unt.edu or by calling 940-565-2648.

Religious Holidays

Students needing to miss class due to the observance of an officially recognized religious holy day are asked to consult with me at least one week in advance so we can schedule missed work accordingly.

Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule for this section of 4180. The schedule is subject to change pending our progress this semester.

Key:

Think Smarter=K

Organizing Ideas=S

Canvas Readings (marked with "title")—see Canvas folder "Readings"

Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Week 1			
	Course Welcome		
8-27	Lab Orientation		Buy Textbooks
	Organization and Communication	"Conducting	
8-29	Introduction to Data Driven Learning (DDL)	Interviews"	DDL #1
		S. Introduction	

	Spence Method		
Week 2			
9-3	Critical Thinking: Asking Questions	S. Chapter 1 K. pp. 3-22	
	Building Interviews	Research Techniques (Links to an external site.) Read	
9-5	Interview Preparation	Assignment Prompt: Student Interview	
	Peer Review Processes		
Week 3			
9-10	Student Interview Peer Review		Student Interview (Draft)
9-12	DDL	S. Chapter 2-3, 7	DDL #2
	From Peer to Client		
Week 4			
9-17	Critical Thinking: Unpacking Issues Building a Puzzle Organization and Clarity	K. Chapter 4, 6, and 7	Student Interview (Final)
9-19	DDL	S. Chapter 5	Client Interview (Prep Memo)
	The Rhetorical Triangle		
Week 5			
9-24	Critical Thinking: Predictions	K. Chapter 9-11	DDL #3
	Framing Ideas		
	Brainstorming		
9-26	Peer Review	S. Chapter 6, 8	Client Interview (Draft)
	Organization and Formatting		
Week 6			
10-1	Intercultural Communication Critical Thinking: Assumptions	“Writing for International Readers”	Client Interview (Final)

	Going to McDonald's!	K. Chapter 20	
10-3	DDL	Save This Link (Links to an external site.)	
	Cultural Dimensions		
Week 7			
	Critical Thinking: Punctuation		
10-8		S. Chapter 13	DDL #4
	Data Usage and Visualization		
	Examining Cultural Issues		
10-10			
Week 8			
	DDL	K. Chapter 16-19	
10-15	Critical Thinking: Objectivity and Subjectivity		DDL #5
	Peer Review: Testing the Report	K. Chapter 26	
	Critical Thinking: Outside the Box	K. Chapter 27	Intercultural Communication Report (Draft)
10-17	Clarifying our Message	S. Chapter 12	
Week 9			
	Critical Thinking: New Approaches		
	Brainstorming Ideas		Intercultural Communication Report (Final)
10-22		K. Chapter 28-29	
	Pitching Ideas		
	DDL		
	Revisiting Clarity, Concision, and Fluency		
10-24			DDL #6
	Scheduling Pitches		
	Moving onto Surveys		
Week 10			
10-29	Teams 1, 2, 3, 4 Pitching		
10-31	Teams 5, 6, 7 Pitching		Pitch Proposal (Final)
Week 11			

11-5 Voting and Moving Forward

11-7 Designing a Questionnaire

[Design \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Week 12

11-12 Using Qualtrics

11-14 Building and Perfecting Questions

S. Chapter 12 (re-read)

Course Satisfaction
Survey

Week 13

11-19 Critical Thinking: Roulette

11-21 Polishing the Test

Survey Report (Link to
Survey)

Week 14

11-26 Utilizing Data/Survey Time

11-28 Qualtrics Day

Week 15

12-3 Report Writing Workshop

12-5 Report Writing Workshop

Final Exam Week

Dec.
10 Survey Report due online by 10AM

Survey Report (Final)