**TECM 3010 Syllabus**

**The Profession of Technical Writing**

**Term: Fall 2025**

**Days & Time**: Sec 002 (14696): Monday/Wednesday: 3:30 – 4:50

**Room**: 312 Audb

**Instructor**: Syd Coppersmith

**Email**: [syd.coppersmith@unt.edu](mailto:syd.coppersmith@unt.edu)

**Office**: Currently homeless; will eventually be Room 105 in the Languages (LANG) building

**Office Hours**: By Appointment Until New Office is Set Up

**Course Introduction**

TECM 3010 is designed to provide you with a comprehensive overview of the technical writing field, including the range of jobs available. You will get a variety of perspectives on the field through guest speaker presentations.

The course assignments focus on writing skills, of course, but also a variety of other skills critical in any technical or professional writing job.

* Concise Text
* Professional Formatting
* Research & Credibility
* Audience Analysis
* Online Visual Design
* Problem Finding (an order of magnitude above problem solving)
* Argumentation
* Editing & Proofreading
* Teamwork
* Job Search
* Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint

**About Me**

I have been a full-time technical writer for close to 30 years, most recently at Texas Instruments. During that time, I taught evening classes in writing and technical writing at Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Texas at Dallas. Three years ago, I left the corporate world to teach full-time at UNT, where I am ecstatically happy.

**Textbook**

You are not required to purchase the textbook for the class as we will be doing readings in-class and onscreen. There will be exercises and occasional quizzes associated with the readings that will count towards your participation grade.

The class text is The Insider’s Guide to Technical Writing by Krista Van Laan, 2nd edition. It is available on Amazon at the link below. The online version is $19.99 and the book version is $31.89.

[The Insider's Guide to Technical Writing: Van Laan, Krista, Hackos, Joann T: 9781937434786: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/Insiders-Guide-Technical-Writing/dp/1937434788)

**Assignments**

You will complete the following assignments in the class.

**Assignment Grade Weight**

Instructions Revision & Explanation 10%

Group Proposal 15%

Website Content & Formatting (Indiv & Group) 10%

PowerPoint Slides 10%

Group Presentation 5%

Professional Development Plan & Excel 10%

In-Class Exercises & Quizzes 10%

Professionalism 10%

Teamwork 10%

Class Participation 10%

**Late Assignments**

You have until one week after the due date to turn a paper in. You can’t learn what you’re supposed to be learning if you don’t turn in assignments, so I would rather get them late than not at all. Late papers are downgraded one letter grade.

**Revisions**

After assignments are graded, you have the option to revise. This will apply to all assignments (but not quizzes) over the course of the semester. If you are submitting a revision, you must specify REVISION in the comments section. You must also either highlight the changes you made in yellow or describe them in the comments section.

**Note**: The overall course grade shown in Canvas will be an accurate average of your paper grades, but it won’t account for class participation, lateness and absences.

**Attendance & Tardies**

You must attend class. You get 3 free absences. These free absences include when your car doesn’t start, you get stuck in traffic, you don’t feel well (exceptions made for Covid and communicable diseases, as described below), you have a sick relative, you couldn’t find a parking space, etc.

If you have Covid and can prove it with a doctor’s note, that will not count towards your absences. However, I reserve the right to make you submit your note to the Dean’s office for verification of your condition.

**Number of Absences and Consequences**

* 3 Absences: No impact on final grade
* 4 Absences: Final grade lowered 1/3 of a letter grade
* 5 Absences: Final grade lowered one full letter grade
* 6 Absences: You will not pass the class
* If you leave before the end of class without permission, it will count as an absence.
* If you are more than 30 minutes late to class, it will count as an absence.

Canvas will assign you a grade based on the attendance entered. IGNORE THIS. I have the Canvas attendance grade set to 0% of your grade because I follow the guidelines above.

**Tardies**

You can be late to class up to 4 times with no consequences. Five latenesses will count as an absence. If you continue to be late after that, every two tardies will count as an absence. When you come in late, it is your responsibility to tell me after class that you’re here. Otherwise, you will remain listed as absent for the day.

**Classroom Behavior**

**Cell Phones & Computer Screens**

Unless I have stated otherwise, cell phones are to be put away and computer screens are to be down during lectures and discussions.

**From the TECM Official Syllabus**

It is expected that lectures 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, putting your head down on your desk, surfing the Internet, or reading 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 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.

**Device Requirements**

* You are required to bring a PC to class (not a tablet, not a phone). If you don’t have one, just go to the TECM TechLab in Audb 307 and sign one out.
* As a UNT student, you can—and for this class, must—install a free version of MS Office Suite on your personal computer. Assignments will be turned in using Microsoft Word PowerPoint and Excel. Visit <https://it.unt.edu/installoffice365> for more information. The tech support people in Audb 307 can help you with this.
* I highly recommend backing up all your files on the UNT OneDrive. Not only will you not lose work if your files are backed up, but you’ll also be able to access your files if, say, you forget your laptop and need to borrow one from the Tech Lab.

**Academic Integrity**

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.

**Disability Accommodations**

**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](http://disability.unt.edu/services/apply) and then [request a Reasonable Accommodation form](http://disability.unt.edu/services/request), 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>.