

TECM 4180

Advanced Technical Communication

15-Week Asynchronous Online Course

Instructor

Dr. Sarah Martin

Location

This section of 4180 is *asynchronous*, which means we do NOT meet on a designated day and time each week. Course content can be accessed through Canvas (<https://unt.instructure.com>).

Office Hours

By appointment.

If you'd like to schedule an appointment, email me your availability.

E-mail Address

Sarah.Martin@unt.edu

Textbooks

You have two required texts for this course –

- *Organizing Ideas* by Matthew Spence (ISBN-10: 1495984931)
- *Think Smarter, Critical Thinking to Improve Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills* by Michael Kallet (ISBN-10: 1118729838)

Supplemental readings will be available on Canvas.

Course Description

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.

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.

Course Structure

This course takes place 100% online. This is an asynchronous class, which means we do not meet on a specific day or time. Work will be due on **Fridays at 11:59pm CST** unless otherwise noted. You will be free to work at your own pace in the course but must adhere to the assignment deadlines.

You should expect to spend at least 6 hours a week working on material for this class. This will fluctuate by the module based upon your familiarity with the subject matter. Our goal in this class is to get you a solid understanding of the course principles along with some skills that will be helpful in future courses and in your career. And, that takes time! However, the time will be well worth it.

Course Schedule

The schedule will be posted on Canvas and is subject to change. See Canvas for the most up to date information.

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 collaborative, 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.

Complete assignment descriptions and assessment rubrics are available in Canvas.

Informal Assignments, 15%

These are small opportunities to succeed and will likely take you less than an hour to complete (some will be MUCH shorter). Consider these to be homework or daily assignments. Evaluation may include assignment drafts, peer reviews, critical thinking activities, quizzes, and assigned readings, as well as conducting yourself as a professional communicator.

Formal Assignments, 85%

In major assignments you will create original writing or professional evaluation and recommendations based on your knowledge and mastery of the course concepts.

Formal assignments include:

- Student Interview Report, 10% (individual)
- Client Interview Report, 15% (individual)

- Proposal Pitch, 15% (individual)
- Survey Report, 20% (group)
- Intercultural Communication Report, 25% (collaborative)

Full assignment details are available on Canvas.

Grading

“A”: 90-100% (Outstanding, excellent work. The student performs well above the minimum criteria.): 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% (Good, impressive work. The student performs above the minimum criteria.): 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% (Solid, college-level work. The student meets the general criteria of the assignment.): 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% (Below average work. The student fails to meet the minimum criteria.): 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”: 59 and below (Sub-par work. The student fails to complete the assignment.): 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.

Grade Disputes: Questions about grades or other individual issues should be emailed to the instructor, not posted on the discussion forum. If you are disputing or need clarification on a grade, please do the following within 3 calendar days of receiving your original grade: Review the assignment instructions, all instructor feedback, your score, and email me a short reflection on the quality of work you turned in. Include the assignment name, what specific part of feedback or scoring you are disputing, and why. Include page numbers and/or highlight sections of your work that support your dispute. This helps me more thoroughly review your concern.

Late Work

Students are allowed **one** 48-hour “Late Pass” to use on any assignment (except Extra credit and the Intercultural Communication Report), no questions asked. Simply write “Late Pass” in the assignment submission comment box *and* email the instructor to let them know you are using your Late Pass and specify which assignment you are using it for. You must complete and submit the assignment **within 48-hours** of the original due date. The submission will be graded as it was originally assigned.

Besides the Late Pass, **no** assignments will be accepted after the due date. Assignments turned in after the deadline will receive a grade of zero unless the student has a [university-excused absence](#) and provides documentation within 48 hours of the missed deadline.

If you meet these requirements, you must do the following:

- Notify me, via email or in person, within 48 hours of the initial due date with the assignment name and reason for late submission
- If approved, establish a new due date with the instructor
- Submit the assignment by the new due date

Online Learning, Attendance, and Communication

This course has been developed to promote asynchronous learning. The instructor and students do NOT meet on a designated day and time each week.

For each module, there is a timeframe to complete all activities and assignments, and you may work at your own pace within that timeframe. **However, you must adhere to the deadlines outlined in Canvas.** You should log into the course daily to check for updates, review lessons, and participate in activities.

You can expect meaningful feedback on written assignments within 7-10 days of the assignment deadline (sometimes sooner). If you turn in work before the assignment deadline, I may not review it until after the original deadline. Questions about grades or other individual issues should be emailed to the instructor, not posted on the discussion forum.

NOTE: When corresponding with your instructor and classmates, please use appropriate language and etiquette.

Technology Requirements

To successfully complete this course, you should have access to a reliable internet source. You should also have these technical skills:

- Microsoft Office Suite: You are welcome to use alternatives to these products. **However, all assignments must be in .doc., docx, or PDF format unless otherwise noted.**
- Microphone: A microphone on your headphones or internal to your computer is good enough.
- Camera/Webcam: The camera on your cell phone is likely good enough. You may need to have a ring light for better lighting. We won't be having synchronous classes, but the webcam is needed for presentation assignments and will be useful for conversations with me or your classmates.

Remember that your password is the only thing protecting you from data breaches or more serious harm.

- Don't share your password with anyone.
- Change your password if you think someone else might know it.
- Always log out when you are finished using Canvas.

The following information has been provided to assist you with the technological aspect of the course.

- [UNT Help Desk](#)
- [Hardware and software necessary to use Canvas](#)
- [Browser requirements](#)
- [Computer and Internet Literacy](#)

Netiquette Guide

When communicating online, you should

- Treat others with the same respect you would show in a face-to-face classroom.

- Err on the side of being too formal rather than too informal. You should take your cue for the right level from how your professor interacts with you and other students.
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm as it can easily be misunderstood.
- Be careful with personal information (both your own and other people's).

Email Policies

Please read my email policies carefully. Email professionalism is a skill that correlates with the most successful workplace communicators.

I want you to be successful in this course, and I am looking forward to our interactions. To help make our interactions respectful, polite, and courteous, follow these guidelines when emailing me:

- I respond to email during business hours (9am-5pm) on Monday–Friday. Please do not expect a response on the weekend.
- You must have a valid UNT email address, and you must check this account regularly. I often use email to send class updates and advisories, and I only respond to student email sent from a valid UNT account. Do not email me from one account, for example, and ask me to reply to another. You are responsible for managing your email accounts.
- Check the syllabus or assignment schedule before you send your email as I will not respond to requests for information contained in the course materials or texts.
- Do not post personal or grade questions to the Student Q&A board. Contact me directly via Canvas or email for these matters.
- Do not SPAM me or your classmates. I define *spamming* as sending multiple emails before the recipient has had an appropriate amount of time to respond. Think carefully before sending multiple emails (in *any* situation).
- Your email should address me by name. My name is Dr. Martin, so you can address me as Dr. Martin.
- Your email should include a short, informative subject line (**e.g., TECM 4180: Question about Student Interview Assignment**). Do not leave the subject line blank.
- Keep email concise. If your question is short or direct, a one-sentence email (plus a greeting and a signature) is just fine and also preferred.

AI Policy

AI tools can be a powerful resource for technical communication tasks. However, these tools must be used responsibly and ethically.

Unless approved by the Instructor otherwise, permissible use of AI tools in this course includes the following.

You **may** use AI for:

- brainstorming or general proofreading
- clarifying concepts or assignment instructions (similar to asking a ‘tutor’ or classmate)
- conducting general research or locating sources

You should thoroughly review, edit, and understand any direct output from an AI tool before submitting it. AI tools do not have the full context for our specific course goals, objectives, or assignments. Just like any other source, if you use insights or outputs from an AI, ensure you acknowledge or cite it appropriately.

You **may not** use AI for:

- composing original writing or to draft or conceptualize your responses; you should develop your responses based on your understanding and skills
- preparing assignment answers, or other assignment content that you submit as your own; do not use AI to fabricate or exaggerate any part of your original writing
- providing recommendations, evaluations, insights, and comparisons of technical concepts and/or artifacts; these should be based on your own understanding and analysis

Understand that actions, such as fabricating content or misrepresenting work would be considered breaches of academic integrity, with or without the use of AI. If you're unsure about the appropriateness of using AI for a specific task, consult your instructor before proceeding

Academic Integrity

I follow UNT’s academic integrity and dishonesty policies. UNT defines six acts of academic dishonesty (see [UNT Policy 06.003](#)). All acts of academic dishonesty will be reported to UNT’s Academic Integrity Office.

Below is a brief description of these acts and the related penalty for committing each act. Submission of your first assignment certifies that you understand these policies and procedures.

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.
Drop Dates	Please be aware of the UNT Registrar deadlines and associated grading policies.
Accommodations (Special Arrangements)	<p>The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable 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 a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course.</p> <p>You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a <i>new</i> letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member <i>prior</i> to implementation in each class.</p>

Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student.

For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://disability.unt.edu/>. You may also contact them by phone at [940.565.4323](tel:940.565.4323).

Federal Regulation for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website at <http://www.ecfr.gov/>. The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

University of North Texas Compliance

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

1. Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.
2. Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

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 to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs.