

TECM 4180 (004): Advanced Technical Communication

Instructor Information

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Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12pm-1:30pm or by appointment

Communication is essential to your success in this course. Connect with me via email for quick questions. If you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, send a follow-up email. Please note that I do not regularly respond to Teams or Canvas messages.

Stop by office hours or schedule an appointment with me if you need clarification or feedback on an assignment or have another class-related issue you would like to discuss. Appointments outside of office hours need to be requested at least two days in advance in most circumstances.

Course Information

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.

Structure

This is a 16-week face-to-face course. Each week will correspond with a weekly module on Canvas with course content. I will open a new module each week. You will be responsible for reviewing modules prior to class meetings and are expected to submit assignments through Canvas.

Objectives

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

Prerequisites

[TECM 2700](#)

Course Requirements

Materials

- *Organizing Ideas* by Matthew Spence (ISBN: 9781495984938)
- *Think Smarter, Critical Thinking to Improve Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills* by Michael Kallet (ISBN: 978-1118729830)*
- Supplementary materials will be available on Canvas

*eBook available through UNT Library

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere \(https://online.unt.edu/learn\)](https://online.unt.edu/learn).

Assignments

- Class Activities (15% of total)
- Student Interview Report (10% of total)
- Client Interview Report (15% of total)
- Intercultural Communication Report (20% of total)
- Pitch Proposal (10% of total)
- Research Plan (10% of total)
- Survey Report (20% of total)

Grading

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

Attendance and Participation

You are required to attend and participate in class. This means being both physically and mentally present. If you are not participating (on your phone, laptop, or doing other activities unrelated to class), you will receive a warning and will be marked absent if it happens again.

You are allowed to have three absences without a penalty. Each absence beyond the first three will result in a loss of a letter grade. There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences except those that fall under the UNT Student Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy (UNT Policy 06.039). Documentation concerning illness or extenuating circumstances that exceed 5 consecutive days should be provided directly to the Dean of Students' Office for consideration.

Tardiness and Early Dismissals

If you are not seated at the start of class, you will be considered late. For every third time you are late, you will receive an absence towards your total. If you are more than 10 minutes late or leave more than 10 minutes without prior approval, you will be marked absent for the day.

Assignment Submissions

All assignments in this class will be submitted via Canvas. If you have any technical issues with assignment submission through Canvas, email me with the assignment materials as soon as possible to avoid late penalties.

Late Work

Class activities will not be accepted late and cannot be completed if you are absent from the day they are assigned. Major assignments may be submitted late with a 10-point deduction per 24 hours past the original deadline. Requests for extensions without penalty must be submitted via email at least 48 hours before the assignment is due.

AI Tool Guidelines

Generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) may be used for brainstorming and idea generation in the initial planning of an assignment. However, it may not be used to write, revise, paraphrase, edit, or generate any portion of submitted work, nor to locate, summarize, or cite sources.

If using generative AI for ideation, students must provide an AI disclosure statement, citation, and AI prompt and output documentation. Misuse is considered cheating under the UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003).

Templates from programs such as Microsoft Word are also prohibited for all assignments.

Grade Disputes

You are required to wait 24 hours before contacting me to dispute a grade. Within that time, I expect you will review the assignment details and reflect on the quality of the work you turned in. If you would still like to

meet, contact me to set up a meeting. Please note that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits me from discussing your grades via email.

You should come to our scheduled meeting with specific examples that demonstrate that you earned a higher grade than you received. If you miss your scheduled meeting, you forfeit your right to a grade dispute. If you do not contact me to schedule a meeting within seven days of receiving your grade, you also forfeit your right to a grade dispute.

University Policies

ADA Accommodations

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodations at any time, but it's important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>).

Other Academic Success Resources

To explore campus resources designed to support you, check out [UNT's student support services and policies](#), find support through [Succeed at UNT](#), and take a moment to [learn about types of wellness](#). You can also visit [Scrappy Says](#) to find information about enrollment, student records, student accounts, and financial aid.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Acceptable Student Behavior

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. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's [Code of Student Conduct](#) to learn more.

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Semester Schedule

Readings should be completed before the day of class they are assigned unless otherwise instructed. Major assignments (MA) are due on Sundays. Class activities (CA) are due the day they are assigned. Topics, readings, and assignment deadlines are tentative and subject to change.

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	1/12	Introduction; Framework for critical thinking	Kallet, Section I (p. 3-20)	
	1/14	Communication traps; Student Interview Report	Spence, Ch. 1-3 (p. 13-44)	
2	1/19	MLK Jr Holiday (no class)		
	1/21	Preparing for interviews	Rowley, Conducting Interviews (PDF); How to Prepare Podcast Interview Questions (Link)	Student Interview Questions (CA1)
3	1/26	Conducting interviews	Citation Basics (Link); Knowledge & Attribution (Link)	
	1/28	Parts of messaging	Spence, Ch. 4-5 (p. 45-72)	Student Interview Report (MA1)
4	2/2	Emails; Client Interview Report	Spence, Ch. 7 (p. 81-87)	
	2/4	Identifying sources	Kallet, Ch. 22 (p. 128-131)	Incorporating Sources (CA2)
5	2/9	Organizing ideas	Spence, Ch. 8-9 (p. 89-98)	Client Interview Memo (CA3)
	2/11	Peer review; Editing process	Spence, Ch. 12 (p. 113-134)	Peer Review 1 (CA4); Client Interview Report (MA2)
6	2/16	Intercultural Communication Report	Intercultural Communication (Link)	
	2/18	Drawing conclusions; Country assignments	Kallet, Ch. 15-20 (p. 85-113)	Hofstede's Dimensions (CA5)
7	2/23	Cultural references	Hofstede Insights (Link); Culturegrams (Link)	Cultural Profile (CA6)
	2/25	IMRaD formatting	Spence, Ch. 14 (p. 137-146); How to Create an IMRaD Report (Link)	
8	3/2	Catch-up day		Communicating Across Cultures (CA7)
	3/4	Peer review		Peer Review 2 (CA8); Intercultural Communication Report (MA3)

Spring Break (no class)				
9	3/16	Persuasion; Pitch Proposal	Kallet, Ch. 23-26 (p. 132-154)	
	3/18	Developing research questions	How to Write a Research Question (Link); How to Write a Problem Statement (Link)	Problem Statement (CA9)
10	3/23	Presentations	Spence, Ch. 15 (p. 147-164); 10 Simple Rules (Link)	
	3/25	Peer review		Peer review 3 (CA10); Pitch Proposal (MA4)
11	3/30	Research design; Research Plan	Intro to Research Proposals (PDF)	Roles and Responsibilities (CA11)
	4/1	Literature reviews	How to Write a Literature Review (PDF)	
12	4/6	Survey design	How to Make a Survey (Link); Types of Demographic Questions (Link)	
	4/8	Peer review		Peer review 4 (CA12); Research Plan (MA5)
13	4/13	Creating online surveys; Survey Report	Qualtrics Online Surveys (Link)	Qualtrics Course(CA13)
	4/15	Conferences		
14	4/20	Data analysis	Survey Data Analysis (Link); Data & Analysis Basic Overview (Link)	
	4/22	Visualizing data	How to Make a Graph in Excel (Link)	Analyzing data (CA14)
15	4/27	Catch-up day		
	4/29	Peer review		Peer review 5 (CA15)
16	5/6	Final (no class)		Survey Report (MA6)