

# TECM 2700: Introduction to Technical Writing

## Course Information

Term: Spring 2018

Location: AudB 313

## Instructor Information

Instructor: Meesha Thomas

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## Course Summary

Every profession, regardless of the field, requires solid communication skills: the ability to communicate with an audience inside and outside of the profession. The effective professional has a keen sense of audience and purpose, a command of the language, and an ability to adapt to a variety of communication tasks. Technical Writing introduces students to the genres, style, and design of technical documents that are used in various professional fields including engineering, science, business, and criminal justice.

By the end of this course you should be able to

- analyze communication contexts rhetorically by understanding audiences, purposes, and situations
- create technical documents that solve problems and improve a reader's access to information
- write effective technical prose
- design convincing and usable documents
- research, synthesize, articulate, and graphically represent technical data
- write collaboratively and work as a member of a team

## Textbook

The required text for this course is

Lannon and Gurak's *Technical Communication*, 14 ed (2016). ISBN: 9780134271958. Subscription to MyWritingLab is optional.

Supplemental readings will be available on Blackboard.

## **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, 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 Blackboard.

### ***Policy Memo, 15%***

Revise the policy memo on employee time reporting. You will be assessed on your ability to deliver information using direct and indirect styles as well as your use of appropriate devices such as active and passive voice, parallelism, and imperative mood.

### ***Resume and LinkedIn Summary, 20%***

Select an internship posting based on your current qualifications. If you're planning on graduating this year, approach this assignment as if you have your degree. Design and construct a resume based on this posting's desired qualifications. You will be evaluated on the content and appearance of the resume as well as how effectively it targets your audience. Resumes produced with existing templates will not be accepted.

Additionally, write a LinkedIn Summary, which would appeal to recruiters and hiring managers. The summary paragraph will be assessed on its content and persuasiveness.

### ***Project Management Software Report, 15%***

In assigned groups, research and assess the efficacy of two free project management tools such as Asana, Dropbox, Google Drive, GoToMeeting, or Slack. After your team has selected its tools, you will perform a usability test. Your team will then synthesize your findings an IMR&D (Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion) report.

### ***Employment Outlook Report, 20%***

In the groups from your previous assignment, research and report the employment outlook for your future profession. Each team member is responsible for locating and synthesizing data from the Occupational Outlook Handbook (Bureau of Labor Statistics) as well as 3 current job postings in his or her desired field and location. Each team member will also interview one relevant professional who works outside the university. Your team must use the project management tool you recommended in the project management report to communicate with one another.

The audience for the employment outlook report is academic advisors and undergraduate directors who advise and recruit students into your major. The report will be assessed on your ability to analyze, synthesize, and visualize technical information.

### ***Progress Report, 10%***

Submit a 1-page progress report (in memo format) on your individual contributions to the employment outlook report. The report should update me on your individual preliminary

research findings as well as a description of how this research contributes to the construction of the final report.

### ***LinkedIn Profile Content, 10%***

Write the content necessary for an effective LinkedIn profile. If you don't wish to post these materials on LinkedIn, submit them via Blackboard. The profile content should include a professional headshot as well as the following sections: summary, experience, courses, skills, and education. Organize these sections based on what we've discussed about hierarchy in class as well as the experiences that distinguish you from the competition.

### ***Professionalism 10%***

Professionalism includes your engagement, participation, and attendance.

### **Grading**

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

"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.

### Professionalism Policy

10% of your semester grade is based on professionalism. Your professionalism grade is comprised of three components:

- Attendance—number of unexcused absences. I only excuse absences for university sanctioned events, religious holidays, or ODA accommodation.
- Engagement—how actively you engage in class discussions, with your classmates, and with me, how actively you submit online quizzes, and complete homework.
- Contribution—how much you contribute to the success of yourself, your team, and every project you submit.

### Attendance

You will receive three attendance grades—one at the end of each five-week period. Your grade will be calculated by how many absences you have during the 5 week period. At the beginning of each 5-week period your absences will reset. Following is the grade breakdown per absence:

<b>0 absences= 100%</b>	<b>1 absence= 90%</b>	<b>2 absences= 80%</b>
<b>3 absence= 70%</b>	<b>4 absences= 60%</b>	<b>5 absences= 0%</b>

You will be considered absent if,

- You do not come
- You are more than 10 minutes late
- You leave more than 10 minutes before the end of class without my approval.

I understand that extenuating circumstance do exist, so if you feel an exception is needed in any of these cases, please see me after class or contact me via email.

**If you miss class for any reason, you are responsible for all material covered and all assignments made. However, you cannot make-up assignments that were written and submitted during class.** It is your responsibility to keep track of your own absences. If you have questions regarding your absence(s), please speak to me during office hours, or send me an email.

### Engagement

Daily effective participation that demonstrates knowledge of the course readings.	100
Weekly effective participation that demonstrates knowledge of course material	80
Occasional participation that demonstrates some knowledge of the course material	70
Infrequent or ineffective participation	60
None	50

### Contribution

Attends office hours (when needed), submits all work, and demonstrates full team engagement by participating actively both online and face-to-face.	100
Attends office hours (when needed), submits most work, demonstrates team engagement by participating both online and face-to-face	80
Occasionally attends office hours, submits some work, some team engagement	70
Never attended office hours, regularly fails to submit work, little team engagement	60
No engagement with instructor or team	50

### Assignment Submission and Grading:

#### Format

Major assignments and drafts must be submitted through Blackboard unless otherwise noted. Emailed assignments will not be accepted.

#### Due Dates

To receive full credit for an assignment, you must upload it to Blackboard by the posted time and date. I will deduct 10 points for every calendar day (not school day) the assignment is late. For example:

- Your assignment was due at 11:59 on 2/1. You submitted the assignment at 12:10. I will deduct 10 points.
- Your assignment was due at 11:59 on 2/1. You submitted your assignment at 8 am on 2/5. I will deduct 40 points.

Students frequently try to blame Blackboard when they submit assignments late. I will deduct points unless you have:

- written evidence to prove that you submitted the paper on time
- written evidence that a legitimate Blackboard issue prevented you from submitting your work on time

If you cannot upload your document to Blackboard for some reason, send me an email with the document attached to verify that you submitted the document before the deadline. I do not grade documents that aren't in Blackboard, so see me as soon as possible to resolve the problem.

If you need help with either of these issues, contact the Blackboard student help desk: 940-565-2324.

***If I allow your class to revise a document for a higher grade, you cannot make up points lost for lateness.***

### **Templates**

***You may not use program templates (e.g., Word templates) to format any of your documents.***

### **Other Policies and Information**

#### **General Technology Requirements:**

##### *Computer Operations and Access Requirements*

As this is a sophomore-level course, you are expected to be familiar with the day-to-day operation of computers including UNT email, Blackboard Learn, 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 the Library. 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. ***A corrupted disk or crashed hard drive does not constitute an excuse for late or unsubmitted work.*** To bring electronic files to class, email them to yourself as attachments or use the OneDrive available through EagleConnect.

##### *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. It is also your responsibility to check your email regularly.

#### **Academic Integrity:**

I follow UNT's policy for academic dishonesty. You can access these guidelines and the UNT policy at <http://tinyurl.com/nuwo42u>. You are responsible for knowing and following the student standards for academic integrity.

#### **Accommodations (Special Arrangements):**

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations.

UNT's Office of Disability Accommodations offers a variety of services but requires qualified students to follow an application process. Please check their Web site for more information.

New ODA policy – *The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.*

**Senate Bill 11 (“Campus Carry”):**

Students must read UNT's policy on concealed handguns on campus, available at <http://campuscarry.unt.edu/untpolicy>.

**Emergency Procedures**

In my class we will follow the emergency procedures recommended by the university. You can find a complete description of these procedures by going to the link below. Please review these procedures:

- <https://emergency.unt.edu/emergency-guidelines-0>

**Emergency Notifications**

[Eagle Alert](#) is the primary alert notification system for the University of North of Texas and it will be used to communicate emergency messages to the campus community. Other alert notification methods should be utilized in addition to Eagle Alert.

**Local Notifications/Alerts**

- [Eagle Alert](#)
- [City of Denton Code Red](#)
- [Denton County Alert System](#)
- [City of Denton Outdoor Warning Sirens](#)

**Additional Resources**

- [NOAA Weather Radios](#)
- [FEMA App](#)
- [Barron Threat Net App](#)
- [NWS Twitter Alerts](#)

Please be alert for emergency notifications, and always read them immediately.

## Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule for this section of 2700. The schedule is subject to change pending our progress this semester.

<b>Date</b>	<b>In-Class Activities</b>	<b>Readings Due</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
Jan 16	Activity: What is TC?  Review Syllabus  Correspondence Case  Understanding Academic Integrity		Correspondence Case (completed in-class)  Academic Integrity Quiz
Jan 18	Opening Lab Orientation  Review Correspondence Case  Writing Diagnostic	Ch. 1	Writing Diagnostic (completed in-class)
<b>Unit 1. Technical Style</b>			
Jan 23	Style Lecture—Editing for clarity and concision  Activity: Snow Policy Memo  Assign: Policy Memo	Ch. 11, pp. 202–214  <a href="#">"Social media in the workplace: Where does it fit in?"</a>	
Jan 25	Style lecture: Editing for fluency, choosing the best words, adjusting your tone  Activity: Language and Style	Ch. 11, pp. 215–235  Ch. 14	Ch. 11 reading quiz  Language and style Activity
Jan 30	Lecture: Writing professional emails  Review: Language and Style Activity	Ch. 15	
Feb 1	Guided Workshop: Policy memos		Rough Draft of Policy Memo
Feb 6	Lecture: Instructions and procedures, usability	Ch. 19	Final Draft of Policy Memo  Ch. 19 reading quiz



<b>Date</b>	<b>In-Class Activities</b>	<b>Readings Due</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
<b>Unit 2. Technical Design</b>			
Feb 8	Lecture: Designing your professional brand  Activity: Resume assessment	<a href="#">"How to create a personal branding resume"</a>	
Feb 13	Assign: Resume and LinkedIn summary  Lecture: Resume types  Activity: Resume Conventions	Ch. 16 (pp. 367-377)	
Feb 15	Activity: Job posting analysis  Lecture: Design principles—typography, contrast, repetition, alignment, and repetition	Ch. 13	2-3 internship job postings  Ch. 13 reading quiz
Feb 20	Activity: Creating a resume "shell" with MS-Word tables  Lecture: LinkedIn 101	Ch. 25  Palmer's <a href="#">"LinkedIn: Are you making the key connections?"</a>	Ch. 25 reading quiz
Feb 22	Guided Workshop: Resume and LinkedIn Summary  Discuss policy memo revisions		Resume and LinkedIn summary (draft)
Feb 27	Lecture: Cover letters, Interviewing skills, portfolios, and references	Ch. 16, pp. 378–385	Resume and LinkedIn summary (final)
<b>Unit 3. Project Management</b>			
Mar 1	Lecture: Collaborating with a team  Team Work 101	Ch. 5  "Guidelines for managing a collaborative project" pp. 83–84	Ch. 5 reading quiz  Team Roles Quiz  Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire
Mar 6	Lecture: IMR&D reports, assign project management report  Activity: Creating user-test scenarios	Ch. 25 "Writing Reader-Centered Empirical Reports" (PDF on BB)	Policy memos (optional revision)
Mar 8	Activity: User Testing—Tables in Hall		

<b>Date</b>	<b>In-Class Activities</b>	<b>Readings Due</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
	Activity: Draft methods section		
Mar 13	Spring Break- No Class		
Mar 15	Spring Break- No Class		
Mar 20	Activity: Peer Review—Tables in Hall  Activity: Draft results	“Usability test demo” (YouTube video linked on BB)	
Mar 22	Assign: Employment Outlook Report  Activity: Team brainstorming	Ch. 21	Final Draft of Project Management Report  Ch. 21 reading quiz
<b>Unit 4. Data Synthesis</b>			
Mar 27	Lecture: Exploring primary and secondary sources, interviews, and surveys	Ch. 7	Ch. 7 reading quiz
Mar 29	Team workday		
Apr 3	Lecture: Evaluating and interpreting information	Ch. 8	
Apr 5	Lecture: Progress reports  Assign: LinkedIn Profile	Ch. 20, pp 471-475	
Apr 10	Lecture: Summarizing research findings  Activity: Summarizing Interviews	Ch. 9	Ch. 9 reading quiz
Apr 12	Team workday		Progress report (final)
Apr 17	Lecture: Designing Visual Information  Activity: Creating Technical graphics  Lab Orientation: Building a formal report template, MS-Word styles	Ch. 12	Ch. 12 reading quiz
Apr 19	Lecture: Writing abstracts		
Apr 24	Peer Review—Tables in Hall		

<b>Date</b>	<b>In-Class Activities</b>	<b>Readings Due</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
Apr 26	Team workday		Final Draft of Employment Outlook Report (due at the end of class)
May 1	Activity: Complete Team Evaluations  Activity: LinkedIn Workshop  Course wrap up	Review Ch. 16	Rough Draft of LinkedIn Profile Content  Ch. 16 reading quiz  Writing Diagnostic
May 3 – Last Day of Class	Complete team evaluations, LinkedIn workshop, course wrap up		Team evaluations  LinkedIn profile content (final) –Due May 8
May 10 – FINAL EXAM PERIOD 10:30AM – 12:30AM	Writing Diagnostic (due by end of final period)  Final: Correspondence Case (completed during exam period)		Final Exam