TECM 4250 – Writing Technical Manuals and Procedures

Instructor Information

Instructor: Lee Dollar
Email: Lee.Dollar@unt.edu
Office: AUDB 105
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:20 PM, Tuesdays 3:00 – 4:50 PM

Required Materials

Developing Technical Training, Third Edition. Ruth Colvin Clark
Will be referred to as DTT on Daily Course Schedule

Writing Revisable Manuals: A Guidebook for Business and Government. FREE at
http://www.techcommunicators.com/emanuals/wrm/index.htm
Will be referred to as WRM on Daily Course Schedule

Course Overview

Technical Communicators must be able to research, write, and evaluate written content effectively. One common genre of technical communication is manuals and procedures. This course will focus on the holistic and iterative process of writing manuals and procedures. You will learn how to write manuals and procedures, as well as how to utilize technology in the research, writing, editing, and evaluation process. This course will be largely discussion based along with hands on experience in creating effective manuals and procedures.

Course Organization

A significant portion of the course will focus on learning what a technical communicator does, how non-technical communication majors will invariably work with technical communicators, and the responsibilities of all parties involved in creating technical documents (particularly manuals and procedures). This means we will discuss and develop an understanding of what value technical communicators bring to an organization, how to effectively communicate with subject-matter (content) experts, and writing (or communicating) about subjects in which you have no training.

A large portion of the course will focus on producing effective and comprehensive written print manuals. Class discussions and lectures will be dedicated to the study of subjects such as:

- Audience Analysis
- Rhetoric
- Style
- Organization

- Manual Components
- And Production

One or more classes will focus on learning to effectively use technology (Microsoft Word and/or InDesign). However, YOU are responsible for seeking the additional guidance you need from the lab staff in order to learn the technology to complete the manual.

The final portion of the course, which will also be a large portion of the course, will focus on the development and production of classroom and online technical training modules. This class will go beyond the traditional ideas of a "manual," and we will learn about what it takes to be an instructional designer. Discussions and lectures will be dedicated to learning Instructional System Design, and at least one class will focus on the use of technology (Dreamweaver, HTML, etc.) to effectively create an online technical training module. We will also discuss how classroom and online learning differ.

By the end of the course you should be able to:
- Communicate effectively with subject-matter (content) experts
- Write (communicate) confidently about a variety of technical topics
- Research, plan, write, test, and publish professional instructional tools for various media
- Objectively conduct research for planning and evaluation purposes
- Apply the principles of document design to both print and online manuals
- Work, as a professional, in group settings

Important to Note

This is an upper-level Technical Communication course, thus you should expect to spend a significant amount of time outside of class to produce the quality of work that will earn you an "A." Clearly, the work you put into this class will be reflected in your drafts and your final deliverables and will largely determine your final grade.

It should go without saying, this class is not a "blow off" class. Exams, assignments, and projects from other classes or job related issues will not be a sufficient excuse for missing work in this class. This class WILL NOT be an easy "A." You must put in the work to earn the grade you desire.

Course Assignments

Comparative Analyisis – (Team Grade) 25%

For this assignment, your team will research, describe the process of your research, and prepare a recommendation manual. I must approve the subject of the manual. I want the class to think of a product similar to what Consumer Reports produces, how they achieve such results, and how they present their findings. The manual will be due before class on June 15th and must be uploaded to Blackboard.

You must determine on your own the format for these deliverables. The Deliverables for this assignment will include:
- Needs analysis and audience analysis (1 page)
- Formal style guide

- Final product uploaded to BlackBoard
- Usability memo

Prezi or Slide Deck to Be Used by UNT Students – (Individual Grade) 25%

For this assignment, you will create a Prezi or Slide Deck (or other approved software tool) that would be used as a research resource guide. This guide would be designed to teach students how to do research and what resources students have available to them for research. This assignment will be due on June 22nd before the beginning of class (uploaded to BlackBoard).

You must determine on your own the format for these deliverables. The Deliverables for this assignment will include:
- Needs analysis and audience analysis (1 page)
- Formal style guide
- Final product uploaded to BlackBoard
- Usability memo

Online Training Module – (Individual Grade) 30%

For this team assignment, your team will choose a topic, which must be approved by me, and will prepare an online training module designed for a specific audience with an effectively usable design and must be related to a specific aspect of your major. This assignment will be due July 6th before the beginning of class. A digital copy, or active link, must be uploaded to BlackBoard along with a brief description on how I can copy and open the web site in some manner to be reviewed at a later date. A Dreamweaver as well as a brief HTML orientation will be provided. However, you are not required to use straight HTML or Dreamweaver to create this product.

Progress Report – (Individual Grade) 10%

For this assignment, you will create a one page memo detailing the progress you have made to the Online Training Module assignment. You may include future deadlines, as well as any difficulties you have had. This will be evaluated in the same manner a Supervisor/Manager would evaluate a progress report. This assignment is due on June 29th before the beginning of class (uploaded to BlackBoard).

Professionalism – 10%

Your Professionalism Grade Will be based on your fulfillment of the following expectations I have for you:
- Participate in class discussions
- Arrive to class on time
- Dress in a manner that is appropriate for the classroom
- Respect me, your fellow classmates, and yourself
- Turn your assignments in on time
- Use formal written English when you communicate with me (including email)
- Refrain from texting during class

- Keep the computer monitors turned off during class discussions
- Maintain consciousness

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance in this course is NOT optional. You are expected to attend every class. If you miss more than 3 classes, your grade will be reduced by one letter. If you miss more than 4 classes, your grade will be reduced by two letters. If you more than 5 classes, you will receive an "F" for the course.

I understand that unforeseen circumstances happen, thus you will be allowed <u>3</u> unexcused absences.

Excused absences are allowed but MUST be backed up by written documentation, including sickness. Absences cannot be excused without proper documentation.

Tardiness

If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will not be allowed to sign the attendance sheet and will be counted as absent. Regular tardiness may also adversely affect your Professionalism grade and thus your overall final grade.

Leaving Early

If you leave class before the class has ended (unless authorized by the instructor), you will be counted absent.

Late Work

Late work is not accepted except in cases of extenuating circumstances. I will not accept any work via email. If you are absent the day an assignment is due, you must make arrangements with me to submit the work.

Templates

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.

Email Requirement

All students must have a valid UNT email address. I will use your UNT email addresses to send mass emails to the class for notices, etc. It is your responsibility to check your email regularly. Not receiving an email is not a valid excuse for late or missing work.

Classroom Behavior

This course takes place in a computer lab. However, when we are holding class discussions or I am lecturing, your computer monitor should not be on. Further, no cell phone usage will be permitted during class. Students who choose to check email and surf the Internet,

with either the computer or a cell phone, will be asked to leave class and will be counted absent for the day.

Team Work

For the team assignment, the team will receive a grade. However, individuals will be held accountable for their participation with their team. Therefore, a team member who does not participate with his or her team may receive a 0 for a team assignment. Although teams should attempt to work out problems as a team, as a last resort, teams may contact me to help them overcome any problems or address any issues with an individual teammate. Teams are responsible for communicating any team problems to me.

ADA

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act, I will work with the Office of Disability Accommodation to help reasonably qualified students with disabilities. If you have such a disability, please advise me in writing of your needs no later than the second week of class.

Religious Holidays

In accordance with State law, students absent due to the observance of a religious holiday may take examinations or complete assignments scheduled for the day missed within a reasonable time after the absence. Travel time required for religious observances shall also be excused. Please see the UNT Student Handbook for information on which holidays or holy days are covered by this policy. State law also requires that students notify their teachers at the beginning of the semester if they expect to miss class on a religious holyday during the semester but want to make up the work missed. Students will be allowed to make up the work provided they have informed their teachers in writing within the first 15 days of the semester. Once again, all assignments and scheduled work must be turned in before the date of the excused absence. University policy requires that students provide their teachers with an official notification card issued by the university if they want to make up any in-class work they missed while they were involved in a university authorized activity.

Academic Dishonesty and Integrity

I follow UNT's academic integrity and dishonesty policies. UNT defines six acts of academic dishonesty. Below is a brief description of these act and the related 2700 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. 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.

The Daily Course Schedule is on the following pages. The Schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Course Schedule

January 17

Course Introduction

January 22

Introduce Comparative Analysis Assignment
Create Teams for Team Assignment
Be Prepared to Discuss the front matter and Chapter 1 in WRM

January 24

Be Prepared to Discuss topics for the Comparative Analysis
Manual Orientation
Be Prepared to Discuss Chapters 2 and 3 in WRM

January 29

Workshop Comparative Analysis assignment

January 31

Workshop Comparative Analysis assignment
Be Prepared to Discuss Chapters 4, 5, and 6 in WRM

February 5

Workshop Comparative Analysis assignment
Be Prepared to Discuss Chapters 7-10 in WRM

February 7

Workshop Comparative Analysis assignment
Be Prepared to Discuss End Matter of WRM

February 12

Comparative Analysis Assignment due before class
Introduce Slide Deck Assignment

February 14	Workshop Slide Deck
February 19	**Rough Draft of Slide Deck Due for Peer Review** Workshop Slide Deck
February 21	Workshop Slide Deck
February 26	**Slide Deck due before the beginning of class** Introduce Online Training Module Dreamweaver Orientation
February 28	Topic for Online Training Module Due Workshop Online Training
March 5	Tool for Designing Online Training Proposed Workshop Online Training
March 7	Workshop Online Training
March 12-16	SPRING BREAK

March 19	**Progress Report Due Before Beginning of Class** Workshop Online Training
March 21	**Rough Draft of Online Training Due** Workshop Online Training
March 26	Day off
March 28	Workshop Online Training
April 2	**Online Training Module Due Before Beginning of Class**
April 4	Workshop Online Training
April 9	Workshop Online Training
April 11	Workshop Online Training
April 16	Workshop Online Training
April 18	Workshop Online Training

April 23

Workshop Online Training

April 25

Workshop Online Training

April 9

Workshop Online Training

May 10

Workshop Online Training

On workshop days, do not expect to have the entire period to workshop your projects. Often we will have an engagement activity or lecture to help you understand what you should be workshopping.