

TECM 4180: Advanced Technical Communication
University of North Texas
Technical Communication
Fall 2015

Instructor and Course Information

Time:	Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30-4:50
Place:	Auditorium 312
Instructor:	Dr. Chris Lam
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Website:	http://courses.christopherylam.com/4180

Course Description

This course is designed to be distinctly unique from TECM 2700. It is highly recommended that you have already taken TECM 2700 to be successful in this course. If you have not taken 2700, it is your responsibility to independently learn the concepts and genres presented in that course.

TECM 4180 introduces you to the advanced aspects of technical communication and is not merely a survey of genres of technical communication (manuals, reports, correspondence, proposals, etc.).

While you will create genres, the course focuses on the core concepts and competencies that a professional or technical communicator must have to be successful in a variety of organizational contexts.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will:

1. Analyze the audience, context, and purpose of any situation and effectively communicate in written or oral communication.
2. Differentiate technical writing from other forms of writing and employ a technical style across a variety of genres.
3. Collect, analyze, and interpret data and draw conclusions from that data. They will also be able to write, design, and present complex data to a variety of audiences.
4. Design infographics, charts, graphs, and tables that present data in a clear and compelling way.
5. Plan, script, and execute a video tutorial that teaches complex information to a designated audience.
6. Work effectively in teams to complete a major client research project.

Required Readings

1. Paul V. Anderson. Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach 8th Edition.
2. Miscellaneous (free) readings that I will post to the website

Course Projects

Project 1 - Building a knowledge base for UNT freshman

For this assignment, you will create a knowledge base for IT-related information for freshman students at UNT. The knowledge base must be delivered in an online format using a website builder or by using HTML/CSS. You will work in teams of two to complete this project.

As part of the project, you'll be required to conduct primary research by interviewing and/or surveying freshman students at UNT. Based on this research, you will create an audience profile and an initial set of items for your knowledge base.

This project will last approximately 6 weeks. Plan accordingly.

Project 2 - Infographic

You will create an infographic to educate a particular audience (determined by you) about a problem. The idea is to express some idea/concept/principle/piece of knowledge to the audience by visually displaying raw data in a meaningful and compelling way. You will have already selected a dataset to pull your raw data from. Be bold and creative while still adhering to core design principles we've discussed in class.

This project will last 3 weeks. Plan accordingly.

Project 3 - Video or other multimedia tutorial

You will develop a tutorial (it can be something brand new, or an entry from your knowledge base). The tutorial must NOT be written, but it must use some multimedia element to deliver your message. This means you can use ANY development tools you would. For example, you could create a video tutorial, screencast, illustration, or interactive web-based module. The idea is not for you to become an expert at video editing, post-production, or some other piece of software. Instead, the idea is to analyze what information you must convey and convey it in a clear and meaningful way to your audience.

This project will last 3 weeks. Plan accordingly.

Project 4 – Client User Test and Report

This client project will involve designing and executing a user test for a web application. You will also be required to identify and recruit test participants for the test. Finally, you'll be required to write a formal, empirical report for the client.

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance in this course is NOT optional. You are expected to attend every class period. Each unexcused absence will result in the deduction of 5% off of your final grade. You will automatically be DROPPED from the course if you've missed 5 classes.

I understand that unforeseen circumstances often happen and you will be allowed 2 unexcused absence as long as you email me at least 3 hours prior to the course meeting time. Excused absences

are allowed but **MUST** be backed up 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.

Late Work

Late work is not accepted for homework, quizzes, or any other non-major assignment. In-class work cannot be made up.

Major Assignments

If you are absent the day an assignment is due, I will not accept any work via email. You must make arrangements with me to submit work before the deadline or put your work in my department mailbox, located on the third floor of the Auditorium building. You will lose one letter grade (or 10%) per calendar day late for major assignments. If extenuating circumstances apply, your work will be due the day after your return from your athletic event or the day after you attend the emergency appointment or funeral.

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 MyUNT to send mass emails to the class. I often use email to send class emails, including quizzes, notices, updates, and advisories. It is your responsibility to check 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 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 will be asked to leave class and will receive an absent grade for the day.

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 holiday 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

It is your responsibility to become familiar with UNT's Policy of Academic Dishonesty.

This policy defines the following forms of academic dishonesty:

- Cheating intentionally 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.
- Plagiarism the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgement.
- Fabrication intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- Facilitating academic dishonesty intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity. If any course material is submitted that violates this policy of academic dishonesty, the assignment will receive a grade of "F" and appropriate judicial action will be filed. This action includes a report of academic misconduct to your college Dean and possible dismissal from The University of North Texas. There are no first-offense warnings regarding plagiarism.
- As this is a course for majors, it is expected that plagiarism and the correct use (citation) of other's ideas (including print, digital, images and other media) are fully understood. Contact me if you're ever confused about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Misunderstandings, miscommunication, oversights, or lack of comprehension as to what constitutes academic dishonesty is not accepted in this.