

# **TECM 5191: Digital Literacies for Technical Communicators**

University of North Texas  
Linguistics & Technical Communication  
Fall 2015

## **Instructor and Course Information**

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Time:	Monday Evenings 6:00- 8:50 p.m.
Place:	Auditorium 302
Instructor:	Dr. Chris Lam
Office:	Auditorium 316
Email:	Christopher.lam@unt.edu
Website:	<a href="http://courses.christopherylamm.com/5191">http://courses.christopherylamm.com/5191</a>

## **Course Description**

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This course is an advanced graduate course that will introduce students to the core literacies required of technical and professional communicators. In this course, students will learn and apply concepts related to information literacy, source literacy, and technical communication concept literacy. Students will be required to

## **Learning Objectives**

1. Students will know the most relevant core digital literacies for technical communicators.
2. Students will apply the principles of information literacy by finding, evaluating, synthesizing, and applying “just in time” research to a variety of technical contexts.
3. Students will apply the principles of source literacy by creating technical documents using a variety of markup languages including HTML/CSS, XML, and XSLT.
4. Students will understand and apply principles of tool literacy by writing for single sourcing as it relates to technical communication.
5. Students will learn and exhibit “best practices” of document version control using GitHub via the command line.

## **Major Projects**

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**Note:** See course website for grading criteria and additional details.

### **Literacy I - Primary Research and Data Analysis (Interview/Survey and Corpus Analysis)**

The purpose of this project is to learn about the various digital literacies of a technical communicator. To this end, you'll use two main data sources for this project: 1) Interview or survey of at least three practicing technical communicators and 2) a corpus analysis of technical communication job ads. You will have three weeks to complete this project.

### **Literacy 2: Source Code (XML, Single Sourcing, and HTML Transformation)**

The purpose of this project is to introduce you to source literacies in technical communication. You will work with data at all phases for the data lifecycle. This includes 1) marking up raw data (XML), 2) processing the data (XSLT), and 3) outputting the data in a usable format (HTML/CSS) then You

will be required to markup a dataset (of your choosing) in XML. You will then be required to transform the XML into an HTML table or list using XSLT. Finally, you'll be required to apply minimal styles to the table using CSS.

### **Literacy 3: Data-driven Audience analysis, information architecture, information design (Creating a knowledge base)**

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. 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.

### **Literacy 4: Tool Acquisition (Persuasive Guide)**

For this project, you are asked to create a guide (online or in print) for technical communicators for a tool that you have never used. Part of the project will be conducting primary and secondary research to identify the tool. You will create a guide that outlines the purpose, application, and relevant procedural information for technical communicators. The guide should also be persuasive in that it should clearly convince a technical communicator to adopt the tool for their own work.

### **Literacy 5: Oral Communication (Graduate-level Discussion Facilitator- in teams of 2)**

In teams of 2, you will prepare a 20-30 minute discussion on the topic you are assigned to. Everyone in the class will be assigned a graduate-level academic reading by me. In addition to this, you will assign one more academic reading for the class.

## **Grading Policy**

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The grading criteria serve as general guidelines for all course assignments.

A (90-100%): A manager would be very impressed and would remember the work when a promotion is discussed. In this course, this means your code is well formed, fully validated, and well written. For written assignments, this 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 papers (and code) 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. This means code is only partially correct. For written assignments, the paper may have clear, but underdeveloped ideas, or the paper might not engage or affect the reader. The paper may contain some errors in grammar, mechanics, or logic.

D (60-69%): A manager would be troubled by the poor quality of work. Code is almost entirely incorrect and demonstrates a clear misunderstanding of the underlying concepts of the markup or

programming language. This level of work forces the reader to work too hard to understand the main ideas. The paper 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.

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### **Attendance and Tardiness**

Attendance in this course is NOT optional. You are expected to attend every class period. Each unexcused absence will result in the deduction of 10% off of your final grade. This includes not showing up for scheduled Google Hangouts. You will automatically be DROPPED from the course if you’ve missed 4 classes.

I understand that unforeseen circumstances often happen and you will be allowed 1 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.

If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will not be allowed to sign the attendance sheet and will be counted as absent.

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### **Late Work**

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

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### **Major Projects**

All major projects will be submitted online as agreed upon on the first day of class. For late work, 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. Additionally, you may use existing code from tutorial sites like W3Schools. However, you must be able to explain how or why the code is functioning to receive full credit on an assignment.

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### **Technology Requirement**

This course is the most tech-heavy course you will take in this program. While I will explicitly teach you to use GitHub to create repositories and turn in assignments, you are required to research and apply knowledge on your own if you fall behind or miss a class. Not understanding how to use the technology is not an excuse in this course. I, of course, am more than willing to work with you (one-on-one or in small groups) to further clarify any confusion regarding technology.

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. You will also need your UNT email address to check your grade throughout the semester.

In addition, this is a tech-heavy class. You must have access to a computer (come to the lab if you don't own one) for 10+ hours per week outside of class. Access is not a valid excuse.

### **Classroom Behavior**

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You **MUST** participate in class. This means that you must come to class prepared by completing all readings and assignments prior to coming to class. While I understand that people get busy during a semester, a regular pattern of being unprepared will result in a failing grade for the course.

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**

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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**

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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 Honesty and Integrity**

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Because of the nature of this course, using existing code is permitted. However, you **MUST** be able to explain how the code works and why you chose to use the code. If you use adapted code in a major project, you must explicitly let me know in writing where the code came from.

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 graduate course 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 plagiarism.