

TECM 5191: Digital Literacies for Technical Communicators

University of North Texas
Linguistics & Technical Communication
Fall 2014

Instructor and Course Information

Time:	Monday Evenings 6:00- 8:50 p.m.
Place:	Auditorium 308
Instructor:	Dr. Chris Lam
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Course Description

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” information to a variety of technical contexts.
3. Students will create technical documents using a variety of markup languages including HTML and XML.
4. Students will understand and apply principles of 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

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

Project 1 - 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.

Project 2 - XML Database 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.

Project 3 - Persuasive Memo to Multiple Stakeholders

Technical communicators must be able to articulate their value to a variety of technical and non-technical stakeholders. This project is intended to expose you to the importance of persuasively communicating about technical topics. To successfully complete this project, you'll have to apply principles of technical communication literacy (using the language of technical communicator for multiple stakeholders), information literacy (being able to research and authoritatively communicate your research), and digital literacy (being able to competently use a new interface and describe its value to multiple stakeholders).

With this in mind, you'll be required to persuade three distinct stakeholders to adopt MadCap Flare as your authoring platform

Project 4 - Group Project: Author a Set of Procedures in MadCap Flare

Note: This project will likely change. I will make the announcement via the course website.

The purpose of this project is to allow you to explore and become literate using a highly-used technical communication authoring software. It is, of course, less important that you master MadCap Flare. Instead, I hope you can apply your working knowledge of XML to easily navigate and learn to use the software only as much as necessary.

Project 5 - 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

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.

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.

Late Work

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

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.

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

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

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 Honesty and Integrity

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.