

TECM 3100: Visual Technical Communication

Class Time: Tu/Th 2:00–3:20

Class Place: AudB 313

Lab Time: W 12:00–12:50

Lab Place: AudB 308

Instructor: Dr. Vince Robles

Office: AudB 305

Office Hours: Tu/Th 3:30–4:30

Email: Vincent.Robles@unt.edu

Teaching Assistant: Alexander Velderman

Email: Alexander.Velderman@my.unt.edu

Office: TECM Tech Lab (AudB 307)

Office Hours: M/W 1:00–3:00

Overview and Goals

The purpose of Visual Technical Communication is to develop your awareness of document design and data visualization principles while providing you with the technical skills you need to apply those principles to technical and business documents. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Assess a document's adherence to quality design principles
2. Revise documents using theoretically-driven design principles
3. Convey complex data in intuitive and readable way
4. Design sophisticated documents using industry-standard software

Texts and Materials

You are required to have a copy of the following course materials:

- Hagen, Rebecca, & Golombisky, Kim. *White space is not your enemy: A beginner's guide to communicating visually through graphic, web, & multimedia design*. 3rd edition. ISBN: 978-1138804647. Ebook permitted.
- Course website with Canvas (<https://unt.instructure.com>)
- Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, and Photoshop (available in TECM labs and through Desktop Streaming <https://itservices.cas.unt.edu/services/computers/articles/access-desktop-streaming>)
- Microsoft Office (<https://it.unt.edu/installoffice365>)

Course Assignments

The following is a grade breakdown of the assignments (1000 points) you will complete this semester:

- **Group Project** (250 points), *Measures outcome 1, 2, 3, and 4*
- **Lab Notebook** (200 points), *Measures outcome 1, 2, 3, and 4*
- **Long Document Redesign** (200 points), *Measures outcome 1, 2, 3, and 4*
- **Preparation and Participation** (150 points), *Measures outcome 1, 2, 3, and 4*
- **Short Document Redesign** (100 points), *Measures outcome 1, 2, and 4*
- **Document Analysis Memo** (100 points), *Measures outcome 1 and 2*

Evaluation

Preparation and participation is evaluated on a five-point scale:

- **5:** The preparation and participation is complete, timely, and thoughtful.
- **4:** The preparation and participation is complete and thoughtful, but it's late.
- **3:** The preparation and participation is complete and timely, but it's not thoughtful.
- **2:** The preparation and participation is incomplete, and it might be unthoughtful and/or late.
- **1:** The preparation and participation is missing but the student was present.
- **0:** The preparation and participation is missing and the student was absent without excuse.

Not every participation activity requires a concrete deliverable such as a document or a discussion post. In these cases, I take note if I notice you clearly are not doing the activity but otherwise award full points.

Writing assignments are evaluated on a four-point scale for five criteria:

- **Design:** The document follows acceptable format, uses headings, uses appropriate lists/visualizations, uses appropriate typography, and uses appropriate margins and spacing **(10%)**.
- **Organization:** The document uses an appropriate approach (direct/indirect), uses a content agenda, uses short, focused paragraphs, and uses an obvious opening, body, and closing **(30%)**.
- **Content:** The document uses a considerate tone, uses an opening and closing, uses plain language, uses complete examples, explanations, and/or definitions, and uses coherent logic **(40%)**.
- **Sentences:** The document uses clear, plain, and professional sentence structure and uses correct punctuation, mechanics, and grammar **(15%)**.
- **Delivery:** The document is submitted with the correct file type, name, and submission location **(5%)**.

Design assignments are evaluated on a four-point scale for three criteria

- **Aesthetics:** The document uses design principles and design elements that captures attention and evokes emotion **(20%)**.
- **Coherence:** The document uses design principles and design elements to convey unified information **(40%)**.
- **Composition:** The document uses design principles and design elements to control eye movement **(40%)**.

The following categorization is how final grades are determined for submission to the registrar:

- **A:** 900–1000
- **B:** 800–899
- **C:** 700–799
- **D:** 600–699
- **F:** 0–599

Late or Missing Submissions

- **Major assignments** will be penalized one letter grade for each day they are late (including weekend days) and will not be accepted if they are more than four days late. **Missing assignments** will penalize your final grade substantially.
- **Preparation and participation** activities cannot be completed after class or done in advance of class without an excused absence, though reviewing what was done in class on a certain day is encouraged no matter what reason you are absent.

Policies

These policies describe formal regulations governing Dr. Robles' sections of TECM 3100. Attending class after day 1 demonstrates that you agree to them. If you are absent the first day, then the next time you attend class after I point you to the policies demonstrates that you agree to them.

Assignment Submission

- Follow all assignment submission specifications: file name, file type, and submission location.
- You may not use program templates (e.g., Word templates) to format any of your documents.

Attendance and Tardiness

The attendance policy is the following:

- **Class Absences:** Missing more than 3 *class meetings* will lower your grade. Each absence after 3 results in a half-letter grade deduction to your final grade total (50-point increments). Thus, 4 absences will result in a half-letter deduction (50 points), and 5 absences will result in a one-letter grade deduction (100 points). **I don't enforce this policy after the one-letter grade reduction.** A 100-point deduction substantially lowers your ability to pass the course with an acceptable grade.
- **Lab Absences:** Your lab absences do not contribute to your absence total for the course as indicated previously. However, the TA records lab attendance, and missing labs will lower the grade earned on labs. More importantly, missing labs will cause you to miss key guidance, instruction, and work time, which will inevitably cause you to be behind during the course.
- **Absences for Group Presentations:** Missing the day of a group presentation means taking an F for that presentation, unless for one of the excused criteria, in which case we will work together to allow you to complete the requirements for these activities or assignments in a reasonable time frame.
- **Excused Absences:** To attend *an official university function, to observe a religious holiday, to attend a job interview, or to attend to a medical emergency* does not count toward your absence total. You must present any accompanying documentation, however, to be excused. You will be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment you miss within a reasonable period after the absence. However, I may take appropriate action if you fail to satisfactorily complete an assignment within a reasonable time.
- **Tardies:** You receive a tardy if you arrive 15 minutes or more after class begins. Two tardies will result in an absence. If you are more than 30 minutes late or if you leave 30 minutes early (in both cases without permission), you will be counted absent. The tardiness policy does not apply to the lab meetings; however, the lab meeting is only 50 minutes. Arriving lately to the lab meeting can contribute toward your being behind on your lab work.

General Technology Requirements

You are expected to be familiar with the day-to-day operation of computers including email, standard software, and Canvas. If you need to develop your computer skills, please consider consulting with the University Information Technology (<https://it.unt.edu/uit>).

- You are also expected to have regular access to computers whether it be your computer or the computers provided by the university.
- Ensure that the computer(s) and storage device(s) you use are functional and that you have, in the case of technological failure, backed up your data. As a student at UNT, you can back up data on OneDrive.
- All students must have a valid UNT email address. You must check your email regularly. I often use email to send class emails.

Your TECM classroom has computers available to you, but your lab classroom is a collaborative BYOD (bring your own device) lab. Therefore, you must either bring your own device to every lab or reserve a device from our TECM TechLab.

If you bring your own device, it must be equipped with a non-web-based word processor and internet access capabilities via the UNT Wifi network. Tablets or devices with cloud-based word processors, such as GoogleDocs, are not recommended because they do not give you the full capabilities required in this TECM course.

For students who cannot bring a device to class, the TECM TechLab provides laptops that can be checked out at the main service desk in AUIDB 307. Reserve your device early and through the WebCheckout link

(<http://checkout.unt.edu/patron>). If you think you will need a device throughout the semester, WebCheckout allows you to make reoccurring reservations. These reservations are not to exceed your scheduled class time.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://www.deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

Academic Dishonesty & Integrity

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

In this course, I will enforce a policy against plagiarizing work that is not yours. Further, I will enforce a policy against any cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, bribery, or sabotage. First, I will invite you to visit with me in my office to discuss the issue privately. Then I will notify and consult with the chair or assistant chair of the department of technical communication in order to discuss consequences, which could be failure of the assignment and/or consultation with the Dean of Students. Further consequences may result from consultation with the Dean of Students.

Students with Disabilities

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation.

Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940-565-4323.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more (See UNT

Policy 16.005). **I am a mandatory reporter of any signs or reports of sexual harassment. I cannot guarantee confidence, by law.**

Visit <http://www.deanofstudents.unt.edu/sexual-misconduct> to learn about UNT's on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate. She can be reached through email at renee.mcnamara@unt.edu or by calling 940-565-2648.

Carrying of Concealed Handguns on Campus

The University of North Texas is committed to providing a safe environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors, and to respecting the right of individuals who are licensed to carry **a concealed handgun** where permitted by law. Individuals who are licensed to carry may do so on campus premises except in locations and at activities prohibited by law or by this policy. To learn more, read the complete policy (https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/04.001_CarryingOfConcealedHandgunsOnCampus_2016.pdf).

Retention of Student Records

I maintain student records pertaining to this course in a secure location. All records such as assignments and activities submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed through the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, **information about students' records will not be divulged to other individuals, including parents and legal spouses, without proper written consent.** Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy.

Critical Campus Conditions

Stay connected to university news sources. When a decision is made to close the university or if another critical incident arises, UNT will notify you by:

- sending an Eagle Alert message
- providing the information to campus telephone operators
- posting a message to the university web site
- posting a message on the [UNT Facebook page](#).
- tweeting a message from [@UNTEagleAlert](#)
- sending campus emails
- informing news media

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Read/Watch Before Class	Do Before Class
1/14	Introduction		
1/15	Lab 1		
1/16	Design	WSINYE Ch. 1; Redish	Discussion Post
1/21	Design Principles	WSINYE Ch. 4–5	Discussion Post; Lab 1
1/22	Lab 2		
1/23	Design Principles		
1/28	Single-Page Design	WSINYE Ch. 3 & 6; Layouts & Grids: 1, 2, & 5	Design Wiki; Lab 2
1/29	Lab 3		
1/30	Single-Page Design		
2/4	Multi-Page Design	Lupton: Grid; Layouts & Grids: 3-4	Lab 3
2/5	Lab 4		
2/6	Multi-Page Design		
2/11	Typography	WSINYE Ch. 7; Lupton: Type	Lab 4
2/12	Lab 5		
2/13	Typography		
2/18	Color	WSINYE Ch. 8	Lab 5
2/19	Lab 6		
2/20	Color		Discussion Post
2/25	Graphics	WSINYE Ch. 9	Lab 6; Document Analysis Memo (midnight)
2/26	Lab 7		
2/27	Print Production		Discussion Post
3/3	Short Document Redesign Workshop		Lab 7; Discussion Post
3/4	Lab 8		
3/5	Short Document Redesign Workshop		Discussion Post; Short Document Redesign (midnight)
3/17	Data Displays	Yau Ch. 3–4	Lab 8
3/18	Lab 9		
3/19	Data Displays	Yau, Ch. 5	
3/24	No Class (Instructor at Conference)		
3/25	Lab 9		
3/26	Forms	Kimball & Hawkins, Forms	Lab 9
3/31	Tables	Kimball & Hawkins, Tables	
4/1	Lab 10		
4/2	Design Projects	Kimball & Hawkins, Design Projects	
4/7	Long Document Redesign Workshop		Lab 10; Discussion Post
4/8	Lab Notebook Workshop		
4/9	Long Document Redesign Workshop		Discussion Post; Long Document Redesign (midnight)
4/14	Group Project Workshop		
4/15	Lab Notebook Workshop		
4/16	Group Project Workshop		
4/21	Group Project Workshop		
4/22	Lab Notebook Workshop		
4/23	Group Project Workshop		Discussion Post
4/28	Group Project Workshop		
4/29	Lab Notebook Workshop		
4/30	Group Project Workshop		Discussion Post; Lab Notebook (midnight)
5/7	Group Project Presentation		Group Presentation; Group Project (midnight)