

TECM 4250: Procedures and Manuals

Semester: Fall 2019

Sections: TECM 4250-001 & TECM 4250-002

Location: AUSB 308

Instructor: Deborah Ray

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Office Hours: 12:30-2pm Tuesdays GAB 543 #11

Writing procedures and developing manuals are the cornerstone of the technical communication profession and an integral part of communication for subject matter experts in any industry. In this course, we'll explore this writing genre from the audience's perspective, discuss best practices for layout and design, and learn to plan, write, test, and revise procedural information.

Major Themes

- Unit 1: Intro to the course and audience analysis
- Unit 2: Writing and designing procedures
- Unit 3: Planning and developing manuals
- Unit 3a: Your Choice: Developing ReadMe files using Markdown, Creating online help, or Creating a Quick Reference
- Unit 4: Developing procedures and content for augmented reality

Core Competencies

By the end of this course, you will be able to

- Differentiate among descriptive, procedural, and persuasive types of content
- Identify audience information needs and determine the type of instructional materials best suited for the audience
- Identify the different types of documentation and when to use them
- Identify problematic writing and design in existing procedures and improve them
- Develop a content plan and task lists
- Develop procedures using best writing and design practices
- Identify the various components of "complete documentation"
- Identify content appropriate for Appendices
- Develop a complete user guide, including front and back matter
- Develop a ReadMe file using Markdown, a Quick Reference Guide, or Help Files based on your user guide
- Identify uses for instructions in augmented reality
- Use MS Word to design, write, and illustrate instructional materials

13 Rules for Success

This course will run much like a business where professionalism, participation, civil discourse, teamwork, on-time submissions, hard work, and accountability are expected. On a day-to-day and week-by-week basis, this means:

- Dedicate **9 to 12 hours per week** to this course—that's 3 lecture hours, plus 2 to 3 hours spent outside of class for each hour you spend in class.
- Use Canvas as the course hub for readings, quizzes, assignments, submissions, announcements, etc.
- Ask if you don't understand!
- Arrive on-time and leave when class is dismissed. Similarly....
- Arrive to class with your thinking caps on, any materials required for the class period, and a good attitude.
- Place your cell phone on your desk, face down, with the ringer/buzz silenced at all times.
- Turn off your computer monitors during in-class lectures and discussions unless otherwise noted.
- Contribute to class discussions. Your background, experience, and questions are important to share.
- Download lecture materials from Canvas and use those to take notes.
- Stay on top of readings and assignments.

- Arrive to class with your thinking caps on, any materials required for the class period, and a good attitude.
- Communicate proactively with me!
- Have fun!

Required Materials

Computing

- A computer. For in-class meetings:
 - AUSB 308 is a collaborative BYOD lab (bring your own device). Therefore, you must either bring your own device to every class period 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. As a UNT student, you can install a free version of MS Office Suite on your personal computer. Visit <https://it.unt.edu/installoffice365> for more information.
 - 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 AUSB307. 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.
- Internet connectivity, a browser, and Canvas
- Microsoft Word or OpenOffice Writer
- Depending: Notepad++ (<https://notepad-plus-plus.org/>) or Madcap Flash

Books & Materials

- *Writing and Designing Manuals and Warnings*(4th ed) by Patricia A. Robinson, CRC Press
- *Planning and Structuring User Assistance: How to Organize User Manuals, Online Help Systems, and Other Forms of User Assistance in a User-Friendly, Easily Accessible Way* by Marc Archtelig
- *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition or more recent
- \$15 in consumables for Major Assignment #1
- Additional reading materials will be provided

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans With Disabilities Act and Section 504 Rehabilitation Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided for all persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal participation in the course.

If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please document the disability with UNT's Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) and [contact me](#) as well, preferably during the first week of the course to avoid delaying accommodations. Any request for special consideration relating to attendance, participation, assignments, or any other aspect of the course will be coordinated with the ODA. For additional information, visit the [ODA website](#) or call them at 940.565.4323.

Plagiarism & Academic Dishonesty

Your academic honesty and integrity are expected in every aspect of this course. This means

- Do your own work!
- Develop new content for assignments. Do not recycle or repurpose work done previously or concurrently for other courses.
- Follow [UNT Policy for Student Academic Integrity](#), which defines plagiarism and cheating as follows:

Any instance of plagiarism or cheating in any work will result in:

- An automatic zero (0%) for the assignment.
- An automatic disqualification of earning an "A" for the course, meaning that even if the rest of your assignment and participation grades for the overall course are 90% or above, your final course grade will be a maximum of a "B."
- An automatic incident report to the of the incident submitted to the Office of Academic Honesty.
- Possible further reprimand from the program or department.

Definitions

If you have any question about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating as it relates to this course or as it relates to specific assignments or graded work, please contact me directly prior to submitting any work in question.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is "the use of another's thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student's intent, including but not limited to:

- the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation, or
- the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in selling term papers or other academic materials."

Cheating

Cheating refers to "the

- use of any unauthorized assistance to take exams, tests, quizzes, or other assessments.
- use of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments
- use, without permission, of tests, notes, or other academic materials belonging to instructors, staff members, or other students of the University
- dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor
- any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage on an academic assignment."

Assignments and Weights

- Attendance 10%
- Reading Pop Quizzes 15%
- Major Assignments 50%
 - Revision of Existing Procedures (150 points)
 - Developing Manuals (200 points)
 - Student Choice: ReadMe file using Markdown, Quick Reference, or Online Help (100)
 - Developing Content for Augmented Reality (100 points)
- Minor Assignments 25%
 - Audience Analysis Assignment (50 points)
 - Content Plan (50 points)
 - Documentation Test Plan & Testing (50 points)

Grading

TECM 4350 applies the following grading scale:

- A 89.5-100
Note: To earn an A in the course, you must complete all course requirements!
- B 79.5-89.4%
- C 69.5-79.4%
- D 59.5-69.4%
- F 59.4% and below

Late & Makeup Work Policies

With the exception of **documented significant circumstances** (e.g., extended illness, job-related travel, auto accident, family crises, or similar) that will be approved on a case-by-case basis, the following late work policies apply:

For Major Assignments

Major written assignments (that is, any written assignment that is not part of class participation or online discussion) are due via online Canvas submission by 11:59pm Central Time on the due date. The timestamp on your submission determines the time that you turn in an assignment. **You are allowed one late submission on a major written assignment with an automatic 25% deduction. Subsequent late work will not be accepted.**

For Minor Assignments

No late submissions will be accepted.

For Quizzes

No late or make-up quizzes will be accepted.

Instructor Bio Highlights

Hello and welcome to TECM 4250! I'm delighted to be teaching this course and to share my 20+ years of experience in technical communication. Here are some highlights of my experience that are relevant to this course:

- Founded *TECHWR-L Magazine* and managed it for ~13 years
- Coauthored ~20 computer books for Peachpit Press, Osborne McGraw-Hill, Sybex, and Hungry Minds (the "...for Dummies" publisher)
- Coauthored ~10 technology reviews articles published in *Technical Communication*
- Managed a TechPubs team at a software storage company that focused on end-user documentation
- Created and managed the editorial and process aspects of technical publications and content at a multi-national company
- Taught graduate and undergraduate courses at Utah State University, including
 - History of Technical Documentation (grad)
 - Advanced Technical Editing (grad)
 - Technical Book Authoring (grad)
 - Engineering Communications (undergrad)
- Taught 3000-level Technical Communication courses at Utah State University, University of Colorado at Denver, and Oklahoma State University
- Currently serve on the Editorial Board of the *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* journal