TECM 4500: Content Analysis in Technical Communication

Course Information

Term: Fall 2018

Location: AudB 308

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Ryan Boettger

Office hours: Wednesdays 3:30–5pm, or by appointment

Office location: AudB 317D (TECM main office)

Email: ryan.boettger@unt.edu

Course Summary

Content analysis is the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics. It includes both human-coded analyses and computer-aided text analysis. There has been a growing interest among commercial researchers and communication practitioners in applications of CA (Neuendorf 2017)

By the end of this course you should be able to—

- The building blocks of CA, including locating and cleaning content and designing a hypothesis-driven study that addresses validity and reliability.
- Human-coded and computer-aided analysis approaches. Create code books and analyze texts on linguistic and psychological dimensions.
- Data visualization skills to help tech comm practitioners understand the applicability of your CAs to workplace practices.
- Math isn't scary. Learn descriptive and basic inferential statistics to help communicate the significance of your results.
- Communicate your CAs in lay terms, emphasizing the value of your results to tech comm. Write up your results for practitioner-geared publications.

Textbook

The required text for this course is

Cutt's *Oxford Guide to Plain English* ISBN: 978-0199669172. (You can buy used copies on Amazon for about $4)

Supplemental readings will be available on Canvas.

Assignments

The assignments in this course are designed to provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate and develop your writing abilities. As this is a writing-intensive course, each

assignment, whether individual or group, requires substantial contribution and solid evidence of audience analysis, ethical considerations, and problem-solving skills.

Below is a brief description of the major assignments you will complete in this course and the assignment grade weights. More specific instructions about each will be provided in-class and on Canvas.

Content Analysis of your Writing, 20%
Conduct a content analysis of your own writing using the tools and techniques we have learned. Submit a report of your findings as well as documentation of how you collected and analyzed data.

Federal Plain Language Analysis, 20%
Conduct a plain language analysis of content produced by the US Federal Government. I will assign you one of 21 federal agencies as well as direct you to the content options you have for this analysis.

Case Studies, 30%
You will respond to several cases that allow you to develop your data information literacies. Topics will include collecting and cleaning data, analyzing voice of customer data, understanding descripting statistics, designing codebooks and obtaining inter-rater reliability, and conducting sentiment analyses.

Content Analysis of Technical Writers, 20%
Conduct a content analysis of the data I provide from over 300 technical writers. In addition, your team you will supplement this data with an additional analysis. Synthesize the data in a report.

Professionalism, Homework, and Quizzes, 10%
Complete homework, quizzes, in-class activities, and assigned readings as well as conduct yourself as a professional communicator.

Grading
The below grading criteria serve as general guidelines for evaluating all assignments. Assignment-specific rubrics will be housed on Canvas.

"A" (90-100%): A manager would be very impressed and would remember the work when a promotion is discussed. In this course, that 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 documents 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. In other words, the document may have clear, but underdeveloped ideas, or it might not engage or affect the reader. The documents may contain some errors in grammar, mechanics, or logic.

"D" (60-69%): A manager would be troubled by the poor quality of work. This level of work forces the reader to work too hard to understand the main ideas. The documents 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.

Course Policies and Procedures
These policies provide you with the formal regulations governing this course. Submission of your first assignment indicates you have read, understood, and agreed to these policies.

Attendance
Your presence in this course is mandatory not optional. You cannot perform well in this course unless you attend class. If you miss class for any reason, you are responsible for all material covered and all assignments completed. Should you miss more than 3 classes, your grade will be lowered one letter. If you miss 6 classes, you will receive a grade of 'F' in the class.

Drop Dates
Please be aware of the below deadlines as well as the changes in grading policies. UNT students can no longer receive a grade of WF, and they can drop a course online without the instructor's signature. However, students have 5 business days to decide if they want to be re-instated in a dropped course.

Date	Description
Sept 11	Beginning this date, a student who wishes to drop a course must complete the drop process by submitting an online drop form to the Office of the Registrar (student receives W).
Nov 5	Last day for a student to drop a course (student receives W).
Nov 11	Beginning this date, a student who qualifies (75% complete and passing) may request an Incomplete, with a grade of I.
Nov 21	Last day to withdraw (drop all classes—student receives W).

Medical Withdrawals
If a student must withdraw due to medical reasons, prior to the withdrawal deadline as indicated in the academic calendar, a student may do so through the regular withdrawal process. If a student is incapacitated or unable to make the request on his/her own, please

contact the Dean of Students Office for assistance at 940-565-2648. For details regarding the withdrawal process, go to http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/withdrawals.

General Technology Requirements

Computer Operations and Access Requirements

As this is a senior-level course, you are expected to be familiar with the day-to-day operation of computers including UNT email (and sending attachments), Canvas, and standard software.

You are also expected to have regular access to computing technology, whether it be your computer at home or the computers provided by UNT. There are 14 computer labs on campus, including one 24-hour lab.

Hardware and Disk Media Requirements

It is your responsibility to ensure that the computer(s) and disk(s) you use are functional and that you have backed up your data in the case of technological failure.

As a student at UNT, you can back up data, up to 25 GB, through OneDrive. A corrupted disk or crashed hard drive does not constitute an excuse for late or unsubmitted work. If you need to bring electronic files to class, please email them to yourself as attachments or use the OneDrive available through your EagleConnect account.

Email Requirement

All students must have a valid UNT email address, as it is the only email address I can use to communicate with you. You can forward your UNT email to your regular account (Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.), should you not wish to directly check your UNT account. It is also your responsibility to check your email regularly. I often use email to send class emails, including notices, updates, and advisories.

Assignment Submission and Grading

Format

Major assignments and drafts must be submitted through Canvas unless otherwise noted. Emailed assignments will not be accepted.

Due Dates

Assignments must be completed and uploaded to Canvas by the beginning of the designated class period, unless specified otherwise. I do not accept late work unless you have documented extenuating circumstances related to university events or the observance of a recognized holy day.

It is your responsibility to turn in your work on time. Computer-related excuses will not be accepted as per the above technology requirements.

Lastly, 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.

Classroom Behavior

It is expected that discussions will occur in the classroom; consequently, it is important to be respectful and listen to the instructor and your classmates. "Listening" does not include answering a cell phone, texting, chatting to your neighbor, checking email, surfing the Internet, or reading the *North Texas Daily* or any other printed matter.

Your preparedness in this course also falls under the subject of classroom behavior. You are expected to come to every class period with your textbook and appropriate note-taking materials. Likewise, you are expected to have completed all the assigned readings and all assignments due during that class period.

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 (UNT Policy 17.012). 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 applies to your interactions with everyone involved in this course: the instructor, classmates, your project teammates, and invited guests.

Academic Integrity

I follow UNT's academic integrity and dishonesty policies. UNT defines six acts of academic dishonesty (see UNT Policy 06.003). Below is a brief description of these act and the related 2700 penalty for committing each act:

- *Cheating* —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. You will receive a grade of 0 for any assignment that involves cheating.

- *Plagiarism* — the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgement. You will receive a grade of 0 for any assignment that involves plagiarism.

- *Forgery* — altering a score, grade, or official academic university record or forging the signature of an instructor or other student. You will receive a final grade of F in the course for any act of forgery.

- *Fabrication* — intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. You will receive a grade of 0 for any assignment that involves fabrication.

- *Facilitating academic dishonesty* — intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity. You

will receive a grade of 0 for any assignment that involves facilitating academic dishonesty.

- *Sabotage* — acting to prevent others from completing their work or willfully disrupting the academic work of others. You will receive a final grade of F in the course for any act of sabotage.

All acts of academic dishonesty will be reported to UNT's Academic Integrity Office. You can read UNT's policy at http://tinyurl.com/nuwo42u. At the beginning of the semester, we will review the six acts of academic dishonesty and their related penalties. You must also complete a quiz on the subject, which will certify that you understand the policies and procedures.

Accommodations (Special Arrangements)

UNT Office of Disability Accommodations

In accordance with university policies and state and federal regulations, the university is committed to full academic access for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. To this end, all academic units are willing to make reasonable and appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment and the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies in order to facilitate equality of educational access for persons with disabilities.

To receive accommodations, you must register with the ODA and then request a Reasonable Accommodation form, which you should present to me within the first two weeks of class (see UNT Policy 16.001). You can read UNT's policy on disability accommodation for students and academic units at https://tinyurl.com/y7jshaqx.

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. 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)

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of 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.

Religious Holidays

Students needing to miss class due to the observance of an officially recognized religious holy day are asked to consult with me at least one week in advance so we can schedule missed work accordingly.

Date	In-Class Activities	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Aug 27	Opening orientation, CA as a method, Facebook headline activity, MailChimp job posting, review syllabus		
Aug 29	Coding content (inter-rater reliability, codebook); inventorying content (word wrap, numbering, *Freeze Frame* function); summarizing content (*Sort & Filter* function, Pivot tables)	Ch 11 (Cutts)	Identify 10 headlines related to technology
Sept 3	Labor Day – No Class		
Sept 5	Data inventory and summary refresher, near synonyms/AntConc introduction	Watch the AntConc Tutorial 1: Getting Started video	Download AntConc to your computer
Sept 10	Four basic parts of speech, evaluative adjectives	Ch 2 (Cutts)	AntConc homework
Sept 12	Word lists, exporting AntConc results to Excel, evaluative adjective coding activity		Evaluative adjectives homework
Sept 17	Discuss case study #1 assignment, convert Word docs/PDFs to TXT format, hedges and boosters		
Sept 19	Workday for corpus compilation (case study #1)	Ch 7 (Cutts)	Hedges and boosters homework Case study #1 (due by 11:59pm) Office hours extended from 4-5:30pm for 1-on-1 consultations
Sept 24	Readability formulas, discuss case study #2, =AVERAGE and =STDEV formulas in Excel	Ch 5 (Cutts)	
Sept 26	Workday for vocabulary and readability (case study #2)	Ch 10 (Cutts)	Case study #2 (due by 11:59pm)

			Office hours extended to 5:30pm for 1-on-1 consultations
Oct 1	Reporting verbs, case study #3, planning a language analysis	Ch 5 (Cutts)	
Oct 3	Passive voice, workday for ca (case study #3)	Ch 4 (Cutts)	Reporting verbs homework
Oct 8	Transitions, Google Data Studio, discuss CA of your writing (major assignment #1)	Ch 16 (Cutts)	
Oct 10	Methods and results writing, data storytelling		Case study #3 (due Friday by 11:59pm) Office hours extended to 5:30pm for 1-on-1 consultations
Oct 15	Introduction to plain language, plain language and websites (part 1). discuss Plain Language/federal agency major assignment	Ch 1 (Cutts)	
Oct 17	Workday for CA of your writing (major assignment #1)		
Oct 22	Boettger Gone — No Formal Class	Watch the Writing in Plain English course from Lynda.com	
Oct 24	Boettger Gone — No Formal Class	Watch the Writing in Plain English course from Lynda.com	Case study #4 (due by 11:59pm) CA of Your Writing (due Sunday by 11:59pm) Office hours extended to 5:30pm for 1-on-1 consultations
Oct 29	Plain language and websites (part 2)		
Oct 31	The Center for Plain Language rubric, applying criteria to websites		Case study #4 (due by Friday at 11:59pm)

			Office hours extended to 5:30pm for 1-on-1 consultations
Nov 5	IMR&D, cookie lab report		
Nov 7	Talkback on Val Swisher, transitions, CA of case study #5		
Nov 12	Revisiting reporting verbs and plain language verbs, CA of case study #5		Transitions homework
Nov 14	Formal report discussion		Plain Language report (due by 11:59pm) Office hours extended to 5:30pm for 1-on-1 consultations
Nov 19	Roadmap for semester finale, intro the technical writers survey data		
Nov 21	Library work day		
Nov 26	Sentiment analysis (case study #6) team meeting	Review possible second sources for tech writer CA	
Nov 28	Primary data component to tech writer data, team meeting		Case study #6 (due Sunday by 11:59pm)
Dec 3	Data visualization (case study #7), team meeting		
Dec 5	Course conclusion, team meeting		Case study #7 (due by 11:59pm)
Dec 13	Final exam period 1:30-3:30pm		Boettger will be in AudB 313 Technical writers report (due Friday, December 14 by 11:59pm)