

TECM 5280: Designing Technical Documents Fall 2018

University of North Texas
Department of Technical Communication
Dr. Erin Friess
Associate Professor
erin.friess@unt.edu

Welcome to TECM 5280!

Simplicity is about subtracting the obvious and adding the meaningful. –John Maeda

Design cannot rescue failed content. –Edward Tufte

Excellent content should not be undermined by poor design. –Erin Friess

As a student of technical communication or a student who wants to someday teach technical writing or communication, you are probably a better-than-average writer. But you might not know how to do things with the visual elements on the page to enhance the reader experience.

The purpose of this class is to make sure you know what aspects of design can improve your content and what aspects of design can undermine reader comprehension.

I can't promise you will be an outstanding design by the end of the course. But I can promise you that you will be better equipped to look at documents and determine why they do or do not function as a successful piece of communication from a design perspective.

Goals of the Course

In this class, we will learn

- The basic principles of design,
- How to use technology to create designed documents, and
- How to produce documents that can demonstrate to an employer that you understand the concepts of design and, if relevant, convey those concepts to students.

Specifically, by the end of the class you will be able to

- Identify at least five design sins to avoid as you develop content,
- Identify at least three design principles that you should always incorporate in your content, and
- Develop at least three types of documents that demonstrate production mastery of the design sign and design principles.

What You Need

Book: Rebecca Hagan and Kim Golomisky. *White Space is Not Your Enemy. A Beginner's Guide to Communicating Visually through Graphic, Web, and Multimedia Design*. Focal Press: New York. 2nd or 3rd editions.

Additional Readings: All additional readings will be provided to you in Canvas.

Access to the Internet: As an online course, you will need access to the internet. You will be required to watch videos; thus, you will need enough broadband to support this activity.

Storage: You will need some kind of system to save your work. I suggest a cloud-based storage system, such as Dropbox or Google Drive, that works for you.

Adobe Creative Cloud: You will need Adobe InDesign, Acrobat, and PhotoShop. The way to get it is through Adobe.com. The Creative Cloud costs \$20 a month, and you are required to purchase a 12 month plan.

Other Things You Need to Know

Attendance: This is an online class, thus there is no attendance component. If you do not participate, your grade will be lowered.

ADA Accommodation Statement: 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>.

Academic Integrity: All work in this class must be your own and original. Please see <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003> for details on UNT's policy on academic integrity. The consequences for academic integrity violations are listed below.

- Cheating= No credit for the assignment
- Fabrication= No credit for the assignment
- Forgery= Failure of class
- Plagiarism=No credit for the assignment
- Sabotage=Failure of class

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.

Netiquette: Netiquette is the way that you behave online. Please conduct your online interactions civilly, as you would do face-to-face. Learn more about netiquette here:
<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

Graduate Student Support Services: As a UNT student, you have access to several services to support you in your health, career, and education. Learn more about these services here:
<https://tgs.unt.edu/graduate-student-support-services>

Student Behavior: Student behavior that interferes with the 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 Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr.

Assignments

All assignments are due as noted in the assignment description. '

Daily Work (20%) Daily work is work, often written work, in which you demonstrate your understanding of design principles.

Professionalism (15%) In order to have discussions about your design work (a critical aspect of becoming a better designer), you need to complete that work. While that work will often not be graded, failure to submit anything to the appropriate forum will affect your professionalism grade. Furthermore, any comments to your classmates or to me that are not presented in a respectful manner may affect your professionalism grade.

Exercise Responses (15%) These are opportunities for you to submit work and get feedback from me and your classmates and for you to give feedback on your classmates' work. I am looking for good faith efforts in these daily work attempts.

Design Sins and Design Principles Exam (25%) You will take a 4-hour open book, open note, open everything exam. You will be given a poorly designed document and then will write an explanation about what about the document makes it poorly designed.

Design Portfolio (25%) In this portfolio, you will create and compile documents that you would want to show a future employer.