

CS 3803 Syllabus

Technical Communication DCA 3 credits

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Kristine Nagel

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General Course Information

Description

This class will explore the discipline of technical communication, a subset of professional communication that focuses on useful, persuasive ways to transmit knowledge in the technology sector. The series of deliverables students create will integrate written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal (WOVEN) rhetorical skills for various audiences, purposes, and contexts applicable to students' professional experiences in the workplace. Students will develop their critical analysis and communication skills through rhetorical and design analyses, presentations, prototyping, usability testing, a reverse press release, and reporting.

Course Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, you will:

1. Collaborate on artifacts that address diverse contexts and exhibit effective persuasive strategies, tact, and sensitivity to theoretical, ethical, and legal concerns.
2. Construct, select, craft, revise, and repurpose information to reflect individual, cultural, and/or organizational values to communicate technical information to a wide range of audiences, as well as convey a clear purpose to a specific audience.
3. Use theories and principles of document design to create and present accessible, comprehensible, and usable artifacts in a variety of modes and media that effectively use text, graphics and other visual elements.
4. Demonstrate use of various prototyping strategies as a communication tool.

Required Course Materials

Markel/Selber's, [Technical Communication](https://www.macmillanlearning.com/college/us/product/Technical-Communication/p/1319414257), fourteenth edition, <https://www.macmillanlearning.com/college/us/product/Technical-Communication/p/1319414257> (Check Canvas for how to access.)

Canvas is used to organize course resources and to display grades. Canvas will be the official platform for this class regarding announcements, assignments, and

grading. You will need to check the course site regularly for important updates, information, and course resources. Course readings, guides, etc. will also be provided in the modules of Canvas and attached to the corresponding course module(s) and assignments. Other technologies and resources useful for the course include:

- GitHub (github.com) is a team version control site with a wiki and an issue tracker. We will use this for project management and to facilitate client handover of the project. You may use other systems with the approval of the instructors.
- CATME (<https://www.catme.org/login/index>) is a site for team collaboration and peer evaluation.
- For diagrams <https://app.diagrams.net/>
- Figma (<https://www.figma.com>) is a site for team collaboration in creating a digital prototype. You will need to obtain an educational/student account.
- Maze (<https://maze.co>) is a site that allows developers to conduct usability testing of their software products
- Communication Center (<http://www.communicationcenter.gatech.edu>) in Clough 477 assists students with developing, drafting, and revising all their communication multimodal artifacts. Additionally, the staff includes professional tutors specially trained to assist non-native speakers.
- Purdue Online Writing Lab (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>) is a convenient and comprehensive writing resource covering all writing facets, including grammar and other writing conventions.
- Georgia Tech portal to LinkedIn Learning (<https://linkedinlearning.gatech.edu/home>) is a valuable resource for learning how to use software with which you are not familiar. Training for use of software for this class is the student's responsibility.
- The IEEE citation style guide (<http://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/IEEE>) provides citation standards for written deliverables.
- Multimedia Studio (<http://librarycommons.gatech.edu/multimedia.php>) in the Georgia Tech library provides access to software for creating multimodal projects and hardware, including a plotter, color and black-and-white printers, scanner, and audio/recording equipment.

Grading Policy:

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

The course grade will be calculated as a weighted score using the following assignment categories with the associated percentages:

Technical Communications	Percent of Total Grade
Attendance (May not exceed 6 unexcused)	0%
Research & Writing 6-Pager	10%
Mini Pecha Kucha Presentation	5%
Project User Research	20%
Prototype Development	20%
Heuristics and Usability	10%
Final Presentation	10%
Project Management & Communications	10%
Reflections	5%
In-Class, Discussion, and Participatory Assignments	10%
Total	100%

Within each category, there may be several deliverable assignments, as the course outcomes are about developing effective communication processes and skills. For instance, in “Research and Writing”, there will be a selection of the topic and questions, a draft version, and a final version, with the final product most heavily weighted, but all being submitted as assignments in this category. There are no exams, but there are in-class presentations.

All assignments are due in .pdf format on Canvas on the date and time posted unless otherwise indicated.

All assignments requiring writing must use a cloud editor such as Google docs or Word online. You must submit a link to the cloud document so the grader can verify document history. Failure to do so may result in loss of some points on the assignment.

Description of Graded Components – Percentage Points are listed in table above

Research & Writing 6-Pager –Research a sustainability problem and develop an innovative technology service or intervention to improve outcomes. A 6-pager is a type of memo developed by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, to replace unnecessary meetings and speed up product development and ideation.

Mini Pecha Kucha Presentation - The purpose of this presentation is to pitch topics for your sustainability prototype project. A PechaKucha is a simple presentation format where you show slides, each for 20 seconds. The

images advance automatically and you talk along to the images. We are doing mini presentations that include seven slides for 20 seconds each.

Project User Research - As a team, you will conduct user research to answer the questions that emerged during your prototype vision development. The information that you collect should help better inform your user interaction design and identify key tasks and issues that users face. Your emphasis will be on the primary research.

Prototype Development – You will develop an initial lo-fi prototype and User Stories that will form the basis for the high-fidelity prototype you will develop as a team.

Heuristics and Usability - Perform heuristic evaluation of existing products and peer prototypes that you use to make improvements based on accepted usability principles. Your team will write a user experience (UX) report that conveys the results of the heuristic evaluations.

Final Presentation -The team project will culminate with a formal prototype live demo and presentation in which your team describes the project users, how the users impacted the prototype development and the lessons learned.

Project Management & Communications - The team will provide weekly meeting minutes during the prototype development and will meet regularly with the TA and instructor for in-person milestone meetings.

Reflections – You will reflect on collective team and individual processes throughout your project and highlight some of the key lessons you have learned from the experience in written reports and memos.

In-Class, Discussion, and Participatory Assignments - You will work in class on communication skills, including personal profiles of public speaking, with partner explore a corporation's code of conduct, values and environmental impact, role play scenarios, peer review presentations and prototypes.

Peer Evaluation

This course uses peer evaluation conducted through CATME, an online team management tool, to ensure that students are participating in the course and collaborating with their team constructively. Your final grade will be adjusted based on the ways your performance is rated in these evaluations. If you are concerned that your grade is going to be negatively impacted by peer evaluations, you will be given the opportunity to appear before the instructors and explain your situation.

Project Management

Learning the strategies and processes associated with working collaboratively with your peers is an important component of this course. This process needs to be managed individually and as a team. Accordingly, individuals and teams will be responsible for completing documents (such as a team charter and meeting minutes), which in

conjunction with your peer evaluation, will comprise the Project Management component of your grade.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

The Living Schedule is linked in Canvas and provides information about class meeting days, activities, assignments, and due dates. As the title implies, the schedule may be modified over the course of the semester to meet the needs of the class; please consult it regularly for the most up-to-date information. In the event of any discrepancy between the schedule and Canvas assignment due dates, please notify the instructors and defer to the Canvas assignment due dates.

Attendance

Just as employees are expected to report to work on time, attendance at each class session is required of all students. Participation in in-class discussions and activities is integral to developing awareness of your personal and professional network and various opportunities for you.

- If you have an institutionally approved absence (for example, an excuse approved by the Dean's office) it is not counted against your attendance record. You are required to provide your instructors with documentation (such as a Dean's letter) of an institutionally-approved absence.
- Students are given six (6) non-institutionally approved absences, for which you are not required to provide any explanation or supporting documents, although a courtesy email to your instructors is appreciated.
- Students are allowed three (3) excused absences for job interviews. While job interviews are not institute-approved excused absences, we recognize the need for students to pursue job opportunities. These three absences are to help those students who just cannot schedule an interview for any other time. You are required to provide evidence of the interview (e.g. itinerary, interview letter, etc.).
- Missing seven (7) classes with no documentation of institutional approval in the semester will lower your grade in the course.

If you are absent, it is your responsibility to check the course agenda and/or to find out from a teammate what you may have missed while absent and to have completed any work due the day you return. If you know you will be absent, please email your instructors as a courtesy. Please speak with your instructors or teaching assistants and confirm what needs to be done.

Attendance will be taken during most classes; should you arrive late, it is your responsibility to check in with the instructors so that an absence is not recorded. Arriving at class more than 15 minutes late is counted as an absence. If you know that you will be late to class, please let the instructors know prior to class meeting.

The instructors reserve the right to not take attendance in every class lecture.

Note that not all in-class assignments will be listed on the schedule; if you are absent on these days, you will not be allowed to make up the in-class assignment.

Because this is a communications course, your attendance and participation in each class session is vital. Almost every class meeting students will be asked to participate in breakout group discussions or activities. In-class and discussion points will be assessed based on a student's in-class discussion and active participation in breakout groups when appropriate. These scores will account for 10% of your final grade in this course.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Mental Health & Well-Being:

Georgia Tech has many resources available regarding mental health and well-being. It is important to take care of yourself so that you can be successful in your academic and personal life. Take time to explore these resources at <https://healthinitiatives.gatech.edu/well-being/mental> and ask a trusted staff or faculty member for help if you are ever feeling overwhelmed.

Dean of Students Office & CARE Center:

The CARE Center [Links to an external site.](#) and the Counseling Center [Links to an external site.](#), Stamps Health Services, and the Dean of Students Office will offer both in-person and virtual appointments. Student Center services and operations are available on the Student Center [Links to an external site.](#) website. For more information on these and other student services, contact the Dean of Students or the Division of Student Life [Links to an external site.](#)

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

Students are encouraged to have completed ENGL 1102, CS 2304, and CS 3001 or S 4001 to have appropriate background knowledge and experience to be successful in the course. This course is expected to be taken either as a pre-requisite or concurrently with the Capstone Project course, CX 3803.

Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI

One serious kind of academic misconduct is plagiarism, which occurs when a writer, speaker, or designer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, images, or other original material or code without fully acknowledging its source by quotation marks as appropriate, in footnotes or endnotes, in works cited, and in other ways as appropriate (modified from WPA Statement on "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism"). If you engage in plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct, you will fail the assignment in which you have engaged in academic misconduct and be referred to the Office of Student Integrity, as required by Georgia Tech policy.

We treat AI-based assistance the same way we treat collaboration with other people: you are welcome to talk about your ideas and work with other people, both inside and outside the class, as well as with AI-based assistants. However, all work you submit must be your own. You should never include in your assignment anything that was not written directly by you without proper citation (including quotation marks and in-line citation for direct

quotes). Including anything you did not write in your assignment without proper citation will be treated as an academic misconduct case.

We strongly urge you to be familiar with these Georgia Tech sites:

- Honor Challenge — <http://www.honor.gatech.edu/>
- Office of Student Integrity — <http://www.osi.gatech.edu/index.php/>
- Process for academic misconduct - <http://www.osi.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=15>

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Late Work:

You may submit your assignment up to two days late without penalty. No further extensions will be granted beyond this late window without an institute approved excuse or institute approved accommodation, coordinated no later than two days prior to the due date.

You are responsible for submitting all assignments by the posted due date and time. If you have an institute-approved absence or accommodation, you must communicate with your instructor and provide documentation as early as possible before the due date.

Regrading Assignment:

All requests for regrading an assignment must be submitted within 7 days of the grade being released. Regrade requests must be made through Ed Discussion.

Questions Regarding Assignment and Course Grades:

Rubrics with comments will be used to grade all assignments that are not graded for completion. We will use Ed Discussion in the Canvas course to handle questions regarding assignments, absences and grading. If you would like to discuss your grade or individual assignments, please email your instructor or TA to schedule a time to meet or schedule time during office hours.

Recordings of Class Sessions and Required Permissions:

Classes may not be recorded by students without the express consent of the instructor unless it is pursuant to an accommodation granted by the Office of Disability Services. Class recordings, lectures, presentations, and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students currently enrolled in the course.

Students may not record or share the materials or recordings, including screen capturing or automated bots, unless the instructor gives permission.

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources:

A list of resources for undergraduate students' academic success and information about advising can be found at [Success at Tech](#).

- Academic Support: Academic Success and Advising (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free support for your courses. Students can attend scheduled supplemental review (PLUS) sessions, stop by Drop-In Tutoring, or schedule a one-on-one appointment through Knack. To explore what options work best for you, please visit us online at success.gatech.edu/tutoring, email us at tutoring@gatech.edu, or come see us at Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, Suite 283.

Student Well-Being:

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A [comprehensive list](#) of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](#)).

Syllabus Updates

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus, in particular this is a special topics course and adjustments to assignments and schedule may need to be made during the semester. Those updates will be posted in Canvas and in Georgia Tech Syllabus website.