

# LMC 3403: Technical Communication, Theory and Practice

## COURSE INFORMATION

**Section** C40

**Credits** 3 credits

**Semester and Academic Year** Fall 2026

## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

**Instructor:** Dr. Kestrel Anderson [they/them or she/her]

**Email:** [kanderson351@gatech.edu](mailto:kanderson351@gatech.edu)

**\*\***I will respond to emails within 24 hours while the university is in session; I will not reply to emails after 6pm or on the weekends.

**Office:** Hall 121-11

**Drop-in Hours:** Tuesdays (12:00pm-1:30pm), Fridays (1pm-2:30pm), and by appointment, in person or in the Zoom meeting room (linked on Canvas). I encourage you to come by at least once this semester, with questions about course materials or to talk through points of interest.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to workplace document genres to develop visual and verbal skills in critical analysis and document development.

## COURSE THEME/TOPIC DESCRIPTION

How does collaborative writing work when you don't have defined group projects? This section holistically considers technical writing as the research and design of iterative, collaborative communication in real systems. You will create projects in a range of communication modes and professional genres, engaging with usability, accessibility, audience-focused communication, and (re)design.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

| Category                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Rhetoric:</b> Rhetoric focuses on available means of persuasion, considering the synergy of factors such as context, audience, purpose, role, argument, organization, design, visuals, and conventions of language. | Fashion artifacts that address the exigencies of diverse contexts, exhibiting effective persuasive strategies, tact, and sensitivity to theoretical, ethical and legal concerns. Collect, craft, and present technical information in ways that convey a clear purpose to a specific audience. |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Process:</b> Processes for communication—for example, creating, planning, drafting, designing, rehearsing, revising, presenting, publishing—are recursive, not linear. Learning productive processes is as important as creating products.</p> | <p>Construct, select, craft, revise, and repurpose information to reflect individual, cultural, and/or organizational values.<br/>Collaborate on artifacts that meet the needs specific audiences.</p>                                                            |
| <p><b>Modes and Media:</b> Activities and assignments should use a variety of modes and media—written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal—singly and in combination. The context and culture of multimodality and multimedia are critical.</p>  | <p>Create WOVEN (Written, Oral, Visual, Electronic, and Nonverbal) artifacts— such as memos, emails, proposals, reports, instructions, manuals, websites, and short and long presentations— that display strategic uses of generic and stylistic conventions.</p> |
| <p><b>Design:</b> Documents and other artifacts should arrange visual elements according to consistent, efficient, and effective principles.</p>                                                                                                     | <p>Use theories and principles of document design to create and present accessible, comprehensible, and usable artifacts.<br/>Integrate graphics to achieve maximum clarity in print documents, presentation slides, websites, and other artifacts.</p>           |

## REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

For this course, you will need access to a copy of:

Markel, Mike and Stuart Selber. *Technical Communication*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2025, ISBN 9781319567408.

- Available as an [ebook directly from the publisher](#), [GaTech Barnes and Noble](#), and [Amazon](#)

All other readings and viewings will be available on Canvas.

## GRADING POLICY

For final grade calculation purposes, the following scale will be used. Partial percentages will be rounded to the nearest whole number, and I reserve the right to round with discretion for borderline numbers. Assignments are weighted. Grading specifics will be given for each assignment, but the guiding principle is this: Did you demonstrate your familiarity with the target genre and address all assignment goals?

|                 |         |        |        |        |       |
|-----------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| <b>Letter:</b>  | A       | B      | C      | D      | F     |
| <b>Percent:</b> | 90-100% | 80-89% | 70-79% | 60-69% | 0-59% |

## DESCRIPTION OF GRADED COMPONENTS

Below are brief descriptions of our major assignments. You can find more details on Canvas, and we will discuss each in class. Please ask me any questions you have!

**Academic Engagement (5%):** Our goal is to learn about technical communication in a way that is generative and can be applied across a variety of situations. We will read, write, and discuss a wide range of topics that you may or may not be initially interested in, or that may not directly reflect your career plans. I expect that everyone will be respectful of the readings and each other's opinions. Learning is a messy endeavor that requires lots of time, energy, and labor. I ask that, through your participation in this course, you demonstrate your *academic engagement*.

Your involvement is graded based on your regular attendance, engagement with the materials, lessons, discussions, and instruction during class sessions, as well as completion of assignments. However, engagement is not one-size-fits all. For example, while some of you may be confident speaking up in class, some of you may be more comfortable with written interactions – I will do my best to offer multiple ways to engage throughout the semester, and I am always open to discussing options with you.

Throughout the semester, everyone must ask at least one relevant question in class: I will hand out colored index cards on the first day of the semester. You are welcome to ask a question aloud and turn in your card at the end of the period, or to hand in your card with a question written on it at the beginning or end of class.

### **Weekly Problem/Response (15%):**

Each week, you will write a short response to an analytical or design prompt or submit the work from an in-class activity. The goal is to practice concepts from the course and to document your thinking during the semester. Please cite any material you reference.

### **Instructions and Usability Testing (25%):**

You will prepare written instructions (including visuals!) for completing a complex task. This will be designed for a public audience with a range of experience—while most of your audience will probably be knowledgeable with the “givens,” the task might be a stretch for others. You'll create your own materials (including photos and directions). You will then swap your instructions with another classmate to give them a usability test. For your final submission, you will revise your initial instructions.

### **Process or Product Description (20%):**

For this assignment, you will write a document explaining a complex, specialized, or technical product or process to a specifically designated lay audience (e.g. middle schoolers, store-owners). You will choose a topic to research and then write your own description, with self-created graphics and visuals as appropriate, to communicate how your product or process works. Before starting, you will submit a one-paragraph topic proposal.

**Technical Genre Explainer Video (10%):**

You will briefly research technical and workplace genres in a field you want to work in or are interested in. Then, you will select a common genre (e.g. white paper, software documentation, business proposal) and find examples of that genre to learn about what it does in within that professional community. You will create and caption a 3-5 minute explainer video telling your classmates about the target genre.

**Accessible Document Redesign (25%):**

As your capstone for this course, you will apply all you have learned about technical writing to a document of your choice. You will identify what is and is not working for the document's audience and use that analysis to redesign the document. You will consider audience, usability, rhetorical design, and—importantly—accessibility. You will use course materials and digital accessibility tools to evaluate your document and redesign. In addition to your redesign, you will submit a project proposal, a cover letter, and a reflection.

**COURSE POLICIES****Attendance**

Attendance and participation are essential to success in courses in the Writing and Communication Program. Because of this, you are expected to attend class in person. Not attending a scheduled class session in-person results in an absence. I check off attendance at the start of class: If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to make sure I know you are there and marked as present.

There may be times when you cannot or should not attend class, such as if you are not feeling well (seriously, please don't come if you're sick, and if you have new respiratory symptoms, please consider wearing a mask), have an interview, or have family responsibilities. Therefore, this course allows a specified number of absences without penalty, regardless of reason. After that, penalties accrue. Exceptions are allowed for Institute-approved absences (for example, those documented by the Registrar), situations such as hospitalization or family emergencies (documented by the Office of the Dean of Students), and major faith-based events or obligations.

You and I can communicate about how to access materials or make up work you may have missed during your absence or suggest ways to participate in class remotely and/or asynchronously. It is your responsibility to reach out. Students may miss a total of four (4) classes over the course of the semester without penalty. If necessary, I may also extend up to two (2) excused absences for professional reasons (e.g. interview or career fair). Each additional absence after that deducts 2% from your final grade.

**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.

### **Classroom Expectations**

You are welcome to use your laptop, tablet, or smartphone, but only for notes and other class-related tasks. Practice professional courtesy by paying attention when others are talking and be aware of your own contributions (give others time to contribute to the discussion). If you must leave or enter the room during class, please be minimally disruptive. If you need to attend to an urgent call or message, move to the hall. We are all tasked with, at minimum: engaging with one another in good faith; being respectful of each other; maintaining personal and professional confidentiality; and referring to every member of the course by the names and pronouns they give the class to use.

### **Generative AI Policy**

Generative AI tools are allowed in *specific* instances. Please only use “Artificial Intelligence”/machine learning (such as ChatGPT or Copilot) for this class when you have been asked to for a specific assignment. We will be exploring the features and limits of GenAI together to understand what they are “good at” and where they fail. These programs collect the work of others and, much like predictive text on your phone, recombine information based on statistics from its dataset. Though the resulting text may seem to be complete and accurate, it may have generated incorrect or nonexistent information, and learning how to research and distinguish that is the aim of the GenAI-engaged assignments in this course. You are expected to adhere to these principles:

- **Responsibility:** You are responsible for the work you submit. In instances in which I allow generative AI tool use, this means that any work you submit should be your own, with any AI assistance appropriately disclosed (see “Transparency” below) and any AI-generated content appropriately cited (see “Documentation” below). This also means you must ensure that any factual statements produced by a generative AI tool are true and that any references or citations produced by the AI tool are correct.
- **Transparency:** Any generative AI tools you use in the work of the course should be clearly acknowledged as indicated by the instructor. This work includes not

only when you use content directly produced by a generative AI tool but also when you use a generative AI tool in the process of composition (for example, for brainstorming, outlining, or translation purposes).

- **Documentation:** You should cite any content generated by an AI tool as you would when quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing ideas, text, images, or other content made by other people.

### **Course Completion**

Failure to complete any component of the course, including projects, assignments, and stages of projects or assignments, may result in failure of the course, as determined by the instructor of the course in consultation with the Director of the Writing and Communication Program.

### **Syllabus Modifications**

This syllabus may be modified as the semester progresses to meet course outcomes and address the needs of members of the class.

### **Late and Missing Work**

Student work must be completed and submitted on time. Major assignment components or any peer review turned in late will result in a drop of one full letter grade (for example, from B to C or A- to B-) for that assignment for each day late. Any assignment due at 11:59 PM has a grace period until 9:00 AM the following morning; assignments due during working hours do not. Minor assignments, like reflections, may be submitted up to two days late without penalty. If for *any* reason you find yourself unable to meet a deadline, contact me in advance of the deadline (except, of course, in the case of emergencies), and I will work with you to get your work completed once you're able. I try not to schedule assignment due dates on major religious or secular calendar events, but I might miss something—in that case, just notify me and we'll sort it out without penalty.

### **Missing Class and Making Up In-class Work**

You have absences for a reason: If you need to take the time away from class, I want you to take that time. That said, if you have circumstances that you believe warrant making up class time (e.g. you feel well but may be contagious), please reach out to me for an attendance "make up." These are intended to be solutions for one-off circumstances, **not** a replacement for regular class attendance. Even when you miss class, you are expected to submit assignments (with an extension). Some in-class work cannot be made up (e.g. small group discussion documents), and depending on the nature of the assignment, I will let you know if there is an in-class assignment or alternate to complete, or if I have marked you exempt from something you were not able to do. Peer-review has its own expectations, which will be discussed ahead of time.

### **Assignment Revision**

I allow revisions to major projects (10% or more of your grade) that you have received 80% or less on. Revisions **must** substantially address my comments on the graded assignment. Process work (i.e. proposals, outlines, and drafts) must be submitted in sequence: That is, you cannot, for example, submit or revise an outline after you have submitted the draft. The point of sequenced assignments is to help you develop a

project fully across time and cannot be done retroactively. Revisions must be completed within two weeks.