

CS 3803 Syllabus

Course Information

Course Title: CS 3803 Technical Communication

Sections: DCA, DCB

Credits: 3 credits

Semester and Academic Year: Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. KellyAnn Fitzpatrick

Instructor email: kellyann@gatech.edu

Office hours: check Canvas course

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, a project pitch, prototyping, usability testing and reporting.

Course Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, you will:

1. Analyze real-world professional and technical communication (PTC) situations by identifying audiences, stakeholders, constraints, and risks in organizations and user communities.
2. Collaborate on artifacts that address diverse contexts and exhibit effective persuasive strategies, tact, and sensitivity to theoretical, ethical, and legal concerns.
3. 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.

4. 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.

After successfully completing this course, you will have developed skills in four areas:

Category	Outcomes
Rhetoric 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.
Process 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.	• Construct, select, craft, revise, and repurpose information to reflect individual, cultural, and/or organizational values. • Collaborate on artifacts that meet the needs of the specific audiences.
Modes & Media 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.	• 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.
Design Documents and other artifacts should arrange visual elements according to consistent, efficient, and effective principles.	• Use theories and principles of document design to create and present accessible, comprehensible, and usable artifacts.

	Integrate graphics to achieve maximum clarity in print documents, presentation slides, websites, and other artifacts.
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Required Course Materials

You do not need to purchase a single, comprehensive textbook. All required reading, viewing, and training materials will be available via Canvas, the library, LinkedIn Learning, or free online sources.

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 corresponding Canvas course module(s) and assignments.

Other technologies required for the course include:

- Personal laptop/tablets/computer.
- Georgia Tech portal to LinkedIn Learning (<https://linkedinlearning.gatech.edu/home>). In addition to assigned modules, LinkedIn Learning 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.
- CATME (<https://www.catme.org/login/index>) is a site for team collaboration and peer evaluation.

Other technologies that may be useful for the course include:

- GitHub (github.com) is a team version control site with a wiki and an issue tracker that can be used for project management and to facilitate client handover of projects.
- 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.

Additional resources useful for the course include:

- 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.
- 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%

There is no curve in this course. The course grade will be calculated as a weighted score using the following assignment categories with the associated percentages:

Assignment	Percent of Total Grade
Attendance (May not exceed 6 unexcused absences)	0%
Professional Bio	5%
Mini Pecha Kucha Presentation	10%
Project User Research	20%
Prototype Development	20%
Heuristics and Usability	10%
Project Presentation	10%
Project Management & Communication	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, the “Professional Bio” will involve 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

Professional Bio – An articulation of your professional computing identity submitted at the beginning of the course and revised at the end of the course.

Mini Pecha Kucha Presentation - The purpose of this presentation is to pitch topics for your group 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.

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 - 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, meeting minutes, and AI policy), which in conjunction with your peer evaluation, will comprise the Project Management component of your grade.

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, peer review presentations and prototypes, and analyze topical instances of technical communication from the tech industry itself. Cadence will be roughly weekly with a minimum of 10 assignments over the course of the semester (all evenly weighted).

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 instructor and explain your situation.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

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 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. These must be communicated in advance when possible. You are required to provide evidence of

the interview (e.g. itinerary, interview letter, etc.) to the instructor no later than one week after the interview takes place.

- Students are given six (6) non-institutionally approved (“unexcused”) absences, for which you are not required to provide any explanation or supporting documents.
- Missing seven (7) or more classes in the semester with no documentation of institutional approval will lower your grade in the course by 10 pts for each unexcused absence beyond the allowed six.

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.

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.

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 assignment.

Because this is a communications course, your attendance and participation in class each week is vital. Almost every week 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.

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 and Group Work

This course asks you to participate in and collaborate on a variety of individual and team assignments. While collaboration and feedback are welcome, plagiarism is not.

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 failure to adhere to the Artificial Intelligence Policy outlined in this syllabus as a form of academic dishonesty.

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

Honor Challenge — <http://www.honor.gatech.edu/Links> to an external site.

Office of Student Integrity — <http://www.osi.gatech.edu/index.php/Links> to an external site.

Process for academic misconduct -

<http://www.osi.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=15>Links to an external site.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

This course uses a modified version of the CX 3803 (Senior Design Capstone) Policy.

Generative AI tools may be used as learning and development aids in this course. Their use must support, rather than replace, the knowledge, judgment, creativity, and technical skills that the capstone project is intended to assess.

Permitted uses

Examples of generally permitted uses include:

- Learning unfamiliar technologies, frameworks, programming languages, or technical concepts.
- Brainstorming possible designs, architectures, research questions, or presentation approaches.
- Generating starter code, pseudocode, test cases, debugging suggestions, or alternative implementations.
- Building prototypes.
- Improving spelling, grammar, organization, sentence clarity, visual design, or presentation delivery.
- Receiving feedback on drafts created by the student.
- Taking notes during team meetings and calls.

These examples are not exhaustive. When uncertain about a proposed use, students should consult the instructional team before submitting the work.

Student responsibility

Students are responsible for every component they submit, regardless of whether an AI tool contributed to it. Students must:

- Verify that code, calculations, citations, technical claims, and other outputs are correct.
- Review and appropriately revise AI-generated material rather than accepting it uncritically.
- Ensure that submitted work satisfies licensing, confidentiality, privacy, security, and intellectual-property requirements.
- Be able to explain the purpose, design, operation, limitations, and major decisions associated with their work.
- Remove any code, text, analysis, citation, or other content that they cannot explain or defend.

Unacceptable uses

AI tools must not be used to fabricate experimental results, references, project activities, user feedback, testing outcomes, or other evidence. In addition, they are not permitted for conducting interviews or as a substitute for your own reactions and feedback when providing peer feedback on another student or team's deliverables.

Again, these examples are not exhaustive. When uncertain about a proposed use, students should consult the instructional team before submitting the work.

Code and technical artifacts

AI tools may assist with code, tests, documentation, diagrams, and other technical artifacts. However, students must understand how the submitted deliverable works and must independently review and validate it.

The instructional team may ask students to explain selected portions of the implementation, modify the code, diagnose an error, or justify a technical decision. Inability to do so may affect the assessment of the student's individual contribution and understanding.

Written assignments

AI tools may be used to provide feedback on grammar, clarity, structure, and presentation. They may also suggest possible wording or organization.

The substantive intellectual content of written deliverables—including the project rationale, design decisions, interpretation of results, evaluation of alternatives, limitations, and conclusions—must reflect the students' own reasoning and judgment. Students must critically review and revise any AI-assisted wording and must be able to explain and defend all statements in the report.

AI-generated references or factual claims must be verified using reliable original sources. AI tools should not be cited as evidence for technical or scholarly claims.

Disclosure

Material use of generative AI must be disclosed in an "AI Use and Acknowledgements" section for any assignment in which it is used. Routine spelling correction or autocomplete does not need to be disclosed unless instructed otherwise. A disclosure template will be provided and reviewed in class prior to the due date for the first written assignment.

Students should retain relevant drafts, prompts, outputs, version-control history, calculations, and project notes until final grades have been issued.

Team projects

Each team will develop a Team AI Use policy as part of their project management deliverables. Team AI Use policies must adhere to the constraints of the course AI policy in that they may be less permissive than the course policy but cannot be more permissive than the course AI policy.

Each team member is expected to adhere to any additional constraints on AI use articulated in the Team AI Use policy when working on team deliverables; Team AI use policies are not in effect for individual assignments unrelated to group work. Each team member must also understand the portions of the project attributed to them. The team's disclosure should describe significant AI use across the project, but disclosure does not replace the requirement to identify individual contributions.

Review of possible violations

When there is a reasonable concern about authorship or understanding, the instructional team may review relevant drafts, repository history, project records, or AI-use disclosures and may conduct a brief oral discussion or demonstration.

Students will be informed of the concern and given an opportunity to explain their work and provide relevant evidence. No single form of evidence, such as an Overleaf history or AI-detection score, will by itself determine whether a violation occurred.

Suspected violations will be addressed according to the institution's academic-integrity procedures. Consequences will reflect the nature, extent, and academic significance of the violation.

Extensions & Late Assignments

Late Work

You may submit your assignment up to 48 hours late without penalty. No further extensions are likely to 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.

Questions Regarding Assignment and Course Grades

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.

All requests for regrading an assignment must be submitted within 7 days of the grade being released. Regrade requests must be made through a private post on Ed Discussion to your TA (with the Head TA and instructor copied).

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.

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

If a weather-related (or football-related) event affects campus operations, check Canvas to see how this affects our class session(s).

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.

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](https://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 \(gatech.edu\)](#))