

LMC 3403

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Title LMC 3403 - Technical Communication, Theory and Practice

Section C26

Credits 3 credits

Semester and Academic Year Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor Dr. Courtney Hoffman

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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

As CS/CM majors you may be called upon to design and create various products used by a wide range of people as you take the next stage in your careers. How usable are the websites, apps, and tools we encounter in our daily lives? Is usability intuitive? For whom are our digital apps designed? What influences design of these products and what were/should the designers have been thinking when they created the things we use? Whether you are working for a company that makes digital products or you are the designer attempting to market your product, usability is an important concept to understand – and be able to communicate about within your working environment.

This section of LMC 3403 will focus on user-centered design as a vehicle through which to improve your strategies for technical communication. We will attempt the following: 1) learn what user-centered design means when applied to documentation; 2) investigate how to research, document, and report usability using websites and applications as our objects of study; and 3) incorporate research design practices into our class work.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Mike Markel and Stuart A. Selber, *Technical Communication*, 13th edition, Macmillan, 2021. ISBN: 9781319245009.

Additional readings will be made available on our online Canvas course site.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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 and 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.

GRADING POLICY

For our course, I will be using contract grading, meaning that you will earn your course grade based on the amount of work you would like to contribute. At the end of

the semester, if you complete the following, you will earn a **B** for this course:

- Work at least 6 hrs/week* on LMC 3403 and keep a work log, submitted at 4-week intervals throughout the semester
- Contribute as an equal partner in your collaborative class project
- Complete all parts of major projects
- Complete 75% of reflections
- Submit all work on time, unless you have discussed an extension with me 24 hrs prior to deadline.
- Your final project fulfills all listed requirements.

To earn an **A**, complete (2) of the following in addition to the above:

- Complete all reflections
- Complete work log reflections
- Miscellaneous labor benefiting the class in some way related to technical communication
- Create a lesson/activity/handout
- Complete a report on your technical communication activities at your summer job/internship

* Class meetings and meetings with me count as part of your labor.

DESCRIPTION OF GRADED COMPONENTS

Project 1: Usability Analysis (Individual)

You will choose a digital or analog text or experience and write a 1000-word analysis of its usability, incorporating evidence from the text or experience.

Due: September 18

Project 2: User Testing Instructions (Individual)

You will act as a user tester and create instructions for how to test the usability of a specific digital or analog test or experience, including how you would recruit use testers and how you would communicate with them.

Due: October 16

Project 3: Usability Report (Collaborative)

In groups, you will analyze and user test a digital text (e.g., website, app, or other tool) based on a research question or hypothesis you have collaboratively developed. You will then write a 2500-3000 word report detailing your findings, including peer-reviewed sources to support your analysis.

Due: November 13

Project 4: Usability Recommendation Presentation (Collaborative)

Your group will create and give a 10-minute presentation pitching recommended revisions to the text your Usability Report analyzed, with appropriate slide deck.

Due: In class on December 2 or December 7

Final Project: Performance Reviews (Individual)

At the end of the term, in lieu of a final exam, you will complete self and team performance reviews of your work throughout the semester.

Due: December 16

COURSE POLICIES**Attendance**

Attendance and participation are essential to success in courses in the Writing and Communication Program. In this course, you are expected to attend class in person.

There may be times when you cannot or should not attend class, such as if you are not feeling well, have an interview, or have family responsibilities. In such situations, please let me know ahead of time. I can communicate with you 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.

If you think you may miss so many classes that it might affect your performance, please discuss alternative ways of engaging with me. You may also need to make up any work that you missed, in accordance with your instructor's late work policy. Due to the nature of discussion- and workshop-based writing courses, some work may not be able to be made up.

Participation

While participation as such will not factor directly into your course grade, we will have several opportunities for you and your peers to evaluate your contributions to our class discussions (e.g., asking and answering questions, small group activities) and to our collaborative projects (e.g., equitable work, completing assigned parts of the projects in a timely and agreed upon manner). These reviews will be assessed as assignments, and therefore must be completed as noted in our grading scheme.

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.

AI Policy

This course is about growing in your ability to write, communicate, and think critically. Generative AI agents such as ChatGPT, DALL-E 2, and others present great opportunities for learning and for communicating. However, AI cannot learn or communicate for you, and so cannot meet the course requirements for you.

In this course, using generative AI tools in the work of the course (including assignments, discussions, ungraded work, etc.) is allowed only in instances specified by your instructor.

As with any technology, generative AI tools need to be used critically and according to academic and professional expectations. Thus, in instances in which your instructor allows generative AI tool use, you are expected to adhere to these principles:

- **Responsibility:** You are responsible for the work you submit. In instances in which your instructor allows 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.

Using generative AI tools at times not allowed by the instructor will be considered an infraction of the Georgia Tech Honor Code subject to investigation by the Office of Student Integrity. Likewise, using generative AI tools in the course without adhering to these principles will be considered an infraction of the Georgia Tech Honor Code subject to investigation by the Office of Student Integrity.

Course Completion

If you fail to complete any component of the course, including projects, assignments, and stages of projects or assignments, this may result in failure of the course, as determined by me 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.

Other Course Specific Policies

Late and Missing Work

You should aim to complete all work on time. However, should you have extenuating circumstances, I am prepared to grant reasonable extensions for assignments **as long as you speak with me in advance**. If you are missing assignments by the end of the class, your grade will be affected, as per our grading policy (see above). Bear in mind that for some assignments, your missing work will affect your classmates' work.

Missing Class and Making Up In-class Work

If you miss class, you are responsible for making up anything you missed during that class period. You should first check with a classmate to determine what was completed that you missed. A good idea might be to arrange a buddy to reciprocally exchange information. Ideally, if you will be absent from class, you will have worked out how to make up the assignments with me ahead of time.

Assignment Revision

Assignments are considered complete when submitted. However, should an assignment not be completed as instructed, the assignment may be reassigned. In that case, you should revise your work and resubmit. The new submission will be considered in the same manner as the original submission in order to complete the assignment.