

TECM 5180

Professional Writing (Content Analysis)

Spring 2022

Instructor Information

Instructor Dr. Ryan Boettger

Office Hours By appointment

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Course Summary and Goals

Effective content analysts possess strong data information literacies and familiarity with human-coded and computer-assisted tools and approaches.

In this course, we'll examine how content analysis is defined and used in academic and professional settings.

To researchers, content analysis is the systematic, objective, and quantitative analysis of message characteristics (Neuendorf 2017).

In professional settings, content analysis is an essential part of UX design projects that include existing content (Jones 2009). Decisions related to merging multiple websites into one or repurposing content for additional channels are informed by content analysis.

By the end of this semester, you should be able to —

- State the characteristics of content analysis and factors of validity and reliability.
- Employ basic data management skills, including locating, cleaning, labeling, and organizing data.
- Apply existing analysis tools and interpret the findings.
- Generate and evaluate the accuracy of content generated by Artificial Intelligence.
- Illustrate data visually.
- Explain your results in plain language that informs and persuades decision-makers and communicates the value of technical communicators.

Textbooks

You have one required textbook for this course, which is open-access (and free!) —

Geisler, Cheryl, & Swarts, Jason. (2019). *Coding streams of language*. The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado. <https://doi.org/10.37514/PRA-B.2019.0230>

Supplemental readings will be linked to Canvas.

Assignments

The assignments are designed to provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate and develop your critical thinking and writing abilities. Every assignment, whether individual or group, requires substantial contribution and solid evidence of audience analysis, ethical considerations, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Below is a brief description of the major assignments and the grade weights. Full assignment descriptions and assessment rubrics will be provided in class when assigned.

Writing Summary Report (20% of course grade)

Write a report that describes the content features of your 12-15-piece content sample

iFixit SEO Writing Project (20% of course grade)

Create and optimize content on an existing iFixit device page for improved search engine optimization (SEO). Effective SEO is not about fooling the bots or tricking the algorithms; **it's about providing trustworthy information that results in a great user experience**. Your SEO improvements will make it easier for users around the world to find and repair information relevant to their device.

iFixit will be your client for this multi-stage project: you will research your device, submit a proposal to iFixit, optimize the approved device page for SEO, and revise the SEO based on the client's feedback.

iFixit sells parts and provides guides to allow users to repair their electronics. The company was founded in 2003 with a goal of reducing the 100 million tons of e-waste that is illegally imported into developing countries like Africa. These citizens (as young as six years old) burn the waste to mine it for copper, inhaling toxins like arsenic, mercury, and lead. iFixit has helped reduce the number of devices that end up in landfills by empowering people to fix their electronics. Your work on these projects will show technical communication in action and the global influence of effective content.

Federal Plain Language Analysis (20% of course grade)

Conduct a plain language analysis of website content produced by the US Federal Government. I will assign you one of 21 federal agencies.

To focus your content analysis, use the trait-based criteria developed by the Center for Plain Language (<https://centerforplainlanguage.org/awards/clearmark/criteria/>). Your independent analysis must also assess your agency's website for audience; style and voice; structure and content; information design and navigation; pictures, graphics, and charts; and overall effectiveness. In addition, analyze the analytics of your agency's website to determine popular web pages and desirable content (<https://analytics.usa.gov/>).

Report your findings in a 12–15-page formal report. Your primary audience is the secretary of your assigned agency (I'm a secondary audience). Besides providing recommendations, your report must show an understanding of plain language principles as articulated in the Plain Writing Act of 2010 and beyond.

Writing Diagnostic Report (20% of course grade)

Write a report that assesses and reports on three diagnostic issues identified in your writing. You'll use ProWritingAid to assist you with this.

Case Activities, Discussion Posts, and Professionalism (20% of course grade)

Complete activities—connected to the major assignments—that expand your data information literacies. Activities will include collecting and cleaning data, analyzing customer voice, understanding descriptive statistics, designing codebooks and achieving inter-rater reliability, and conducting sentiment analyses.

Grading

The general grading criteria serve as general guidelines for all course assignments.

"A" (90-100%): A manager would be very impressed and would remember the work when a promotion is discussed. In this course, that means work that is a pleasure to read, with excellent content, grammar, sentence structure, mechanics, and visual design. In addition, work is thorough, complete, coherent, well organized, supported sufficiently, and demonstrates a superior understanding of audience, purpose, and rationale.

"B" (80-89%): A manager would be satisfied with the job, but not especially impressed. This means that papers are well written and well produced, and demonstrate a substantial addition to the learning process. Work is sufficiently developed, organized, and supported, and demonstrates a solid understanding of audience, purpose, and rationale.

"C" (70-79%): A manager would be disappointed and ask you to revise or rewrite sections before allowing clients and others to see the work. In other words, the paper may have clear, but underdeveloped ideas, or the paper might not engage or affect the reader. The paper may contain some errors in grammar, mechanics, or logic.

"D" (60-69%): A manager would be troubled by the poor quality of work. This level of work forces the reader to work too hard to understand the main ideas. The paper may contain incomplete information, have serious grammar and mechanical problems, lack clear organization, or be conceptually unclear.

"F" (0-59%): A manager would start looking for someone to replace you. In particular, work fails to address the tasks of the assignment, is so underdeveloped as to demonstrate incompetence, and is mechanically and grammatically incomprehensible. This grade will also be assigned for any evidence of plagiarism.

Policies

These policies provide you with the formal regulations governing Dr. Boettger's section of ENGL 5377. Submission of your first assignment indicates you have read, understood, and agreed to the policies.

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Attendance

Your presence in this course is mandatory not optional. You are required to sign the attendance sheet at the beginning of each class. Failure to sign the attendance sheet will result in an absence even if you are present that day in class.

Any student who accumulates 4 absences during the semester will be dropped from the course via a formal written request to the college dean. You will be notified at absence #3 that a drop is pending. If you have missed 4 classes, you have missed 25% of the semester. You will not have received sufficient exposure to the material to meet the goals and learning outcomes of the course.

Lates (tardies): These may be logged and can result in a lowered grade should they begin to accumulate. If, for example, a participation grade or quiz is given during the first 15 minutes and a student arrives late, a grade of zero (0) will be received for that assignment.

Leaving Class: Any student who leaves before the class has ended without my prior approval will automatically receive an absence for that day.

General Technology Requirements

As this is a graduate-level course, you are expected to be familiar with the day-to-day operation of computers including email (and sending attachments) and standard software. If you need to develop your computer skills, please consider signing up for the courses offered by the Computer and Information Technology Center.

You are also expected to have regular access to computing technology whether it be your computer at home or the computers provided by the Library. There are 14 computer labs on campus, including one 24-hour lab should the library be closed.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the computer(s) and disk(s) you use are functional and that you have, in the case of technological failure, backed up your data.

As a student at UNT, you can back up data, up to 25 GB, through SkyDrive. A corrupted disk or crashed hard drive does not constitute an excuse for late or unsubmitted work. If you need to bring electronic files to class, please email them to yourself as attachments.

All students must have a valid UNT email address. You can forward your UNT email to your regular account (Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.), should you not wish to directly check your UNT account. It is also your responsibility to check your email regularly. I often use email to send class emails, including notices, updates, and advisories.

Assignment Submission

Format

I only accept assignments through email unless specified otherwise.

Deadlines

Your assignments must be emailed at beginning of class on the designated due date unless specified otherwise.

You will lose one letter grade (or 10%) per calendar day late for major assignments. If extenuating circumstances apply, your work will be due the day after you return from your athletic event or the day after you attend the emergency appointment or funeral.

You will fail the class if you do not attempt and submit ALL major assignments. Assignments more than a week (7 days) late automatically receive a grade of zero (0). It is your responsibility to turn in your work on time. Computer-related excuses will not be accepted.

Lastly, you may not use program templates (e.g., Word templates) to format any of your documents — these don't encourage you to learn the programs and generally result in dull, unpersuasive documents.

Classroom Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's 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 all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Academic Dishonesty & Integrity

It is your responsibility to become familiar with UNT's Policy of Academic Dishonesty.

This policy defines the following forms of academic dishonesty:

- **Cheating** intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.
- **Plagiarism** the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgement.
- **Fabrication** intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- **Facilitating** academic dishonesty intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity.

If any course material is submitted that violates this policy of academic dishonesty, the assignment will receive a grade of "F" and appropriate judicial action will be filed. This

action includes a report of academic misconduct to your college Dean and possible dismissal from the university There are no first-offense warnings regarding plagiarism.

As this is a graduate-level course it is expected that plagiarism and the correct use (citation) of other's ideas (including print, digital, images, and other media) are fully understood. Contact me if you're ever confused about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Misunderstandings, miscommunication, oversights, or lack of comprehension as to what constitutes academic dishonesty is not accepted in this course.

Accommodations (Special Arrangements)

UNT Office of Disability Accommodations

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations.

UNT's Office of Disability Accommodations offers a variety of services but require qualified students to follow an application process. Please check their Web site for more information on these procedures and their deadlines.

Religious Holidays

Students needing to miss class due to the observance of an officially recognized religious holy day are asked to consult with me in advance so we can schedule missed work accordingly.

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Professional Writing – Content Analysis Spring 2022

Below is the topic and reading schedule for this semester. The schedule is subject to change based on our progress over these next eight weeks.

Unless otherwise noted, mid-week activities are due by 11:59pm on Wednesdays, and end-of-week activities are due by 11:59pm on Sundays. Major assignments are always due on Sundays.

Week (Date)	Topic	Readings	Mid-Week Activities	End-of-Week Activities
Week 1 (Jan 18–Jan 23)	Crucial content fact, building a content inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jones, Chs 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss your content preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CA: Compile content inventory
Week 2 (Jan 24–Jan 30)	Spences causes of bad communication, ProWriting Aid, Voyant Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spence, Ch 1• “How to Use ProWritingAid” (PDF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CA: PWA revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CA: Voyant Tools analysis
Week 3 (Jan 31–Feb 6)	Vocabulary size and density, federal agency assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cutts, Chs 6 & 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vocabulary analysis of discussion posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CA: Self-mentions
Week 4 (Feb 7–Feb 13)	Readability formulas, readability analysis PWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• List of readability metrics (PDF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CA: Readability analysis and PWA revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diagnostic report
Week 5 (Feb 14–Feb 20)	iFixit mission, SEO	iFixIt roadmaps for the SEO and the Editing projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• iFixit editing project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• iFixit SEO project
Week 6 (Feb 21–Feb 27)	What is Plain English (LinkedIn Learning course), anatomy of an excellent home page	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cutts, Chs 11 & 21• Careers in Plain Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CA: Plain language assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• iFixit Edit and SEO projects (final to client)

Week (Date)	Topic	Readings	Mid-Week Activities	End-of-Week Activities
Week 7 (Feb 28-Mar 6)	Federal plain language analysis, PWA reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutts, Chs 1 & 3 • Five Steps to Plain Language (html) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct analysis for diagnostic report (1/3, for feedback) • Plain language assessment (for feedback) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal plain language report
Week 8 (Mar 7–Mar 11)	Careers in content analysis, final work on diagnostic report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct analysis for diagnostic report (2/3, for feedback) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing diagnostic report (due by Saturday, Mar 12 at 11:59pm)