

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 363, L01
PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

FALL 2016: Mon., Sept. 12 – Wed., Dec. 7

This section is entirely web-based, with no meeting times or labs

Instructor: Jo-Anne Andre, M.A.
Office: SS 300
Office Phone: (403) 220-7429
E-Mail: andre@ucalgary.ca (Please put 363 in the subject line)
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00–3:00 or by appointment

Course description and objectives:

An introduction to professional and technical communication. Students will learn the rhetorical dimensions of workplace settings as well as the process of planning, researching, composing, and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences. The major project in this course will involve a usability study of a website.

Additional information:

- Please check D2L twice a week for course announcements and ensure that your email address in D2L is current so that you do not miss important emails about the course. To test the email function, please email yourself a message from D2L in week 1.

Objectives of the course:

The course will help you develop

- a rhetorical approach to crafting documents—one in which you critically consider your purpose, the needs of your audience, and relevant features of the context
- familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of written genres, including proposals and reports
- document design strategies to ensure your documents and websites look professional, promote easy information retrieval, and use visuals to communicate information effectively
- writing and editing strategies to keep your writing focused, coherent, and readable
- familiarity with tools for online research and competence in using APA documentation style
- competence in preparing PowerPoint presentations.

Required textbook and readings:

Graves, H., & Graves, R. (2012). *A strategic guide to technical communication*, 2ND Canadian ed. Peterborough ON: Broadview Press.

See the weekly syllabus at the end of this outline for links to other required readings. The D2L course website will also include required handouts and Powerpoints to review.

Assignments & evaluation:

All assignments and quizzes must be completed in order to pass the course. Except as noted, assignments are to be done individually.

Due	Assignment	%	Brief description. (See D2L for detailed guidelines)
Sept. 28	Résumé & Cover Letter	15%	A résumé (1-3 pages) and cover letter (1-2 pages, single spaced) in response to an online job ad. Include both parts plus a copy of the job ad in a single file uploaded to D2L.
Oct. 5	Quiz 1 online	10%	An untimed open-book quiz to be done individually with no collaboration. Quiz 1 will cover Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, & 7 plus material in handouts, PowerPoints, and readings to the end of Oct. 5. Questions may be randomly drawn from a question bank created by the instructor. This quiz will remain open with no late penalty until 9:00 am Mon., Oct. 10.
Oct. 12	Visual critique memo	15%	A memo evaluating a table or graph and recommending improvements (2 pages, single spaced).
Oct. 26	Usability study proposal GROUP	10%	A proposal outlining your proposed website usability study (3 or 4 single-spaced pages plus references & appendices)
Nov. 2	Quiz 2 online	10%	An untimed open-book quiz to be done individually without collaboration. Quiz 2 will cover Chapters 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, & 12 plus the material on working in groups, and any other PPTs or readings to the end of Nov. 2 (i.e., since Quiz 1). Quiz 2 will remain open with no late penalty until 9:00 am, Mon., Nov. 7.
Nov. 30	Website usability study report GROUP	25%	A formal report presenting your usability study (13 to 16 single-spaced pages, including the letter of transmittal, title page, executive summary, table of contents, lists of figures & tables, introduction, methods, findings, conclusions, and recommendations, but excluding the reference list and appendices)
	Usability study PowerPoint GROUP	10%	A PowerPoint presentation on your website usability study focus, method, findings, and key recommendations (8 to 12 slides, with integrated presentation notes)
Dec. 7	Quiz 3 online	5%	An untimed open-book quiz to be done individually with no collaboration. Quiz 3 will cover Chapters 10 & 13, plus any readings, handouts, or other materials from Nov. 3 onward (i.e., since Quiz 2). It will remain open with no late penalty until 9:00 am, Sat., Dec. 10
No registrar-scheduled exam			

GROUP ASSIGNMENTS: The default is that students will complete the group project and associated assignments (proposal, report, and PowerPoint) in randomly assigned groups of three to be formed on D2L by noon, Wed., Sept. 28. However, you may opt out of this arrangement, as explained below.

- (1) If any two or three students wish to form their own group, they should email the instructor **by noon Sept. 27** (in a single email, please) with the full names of the group members and their rationale for being allowed to form their own group. (Please cc all prospective group members on the email.)
- (2) If you wish to complete all the group assignments individually, email the instructor **by noon Sept. 27** with a compelling rationale for being allowed to work on your own. Be aware that the workload expectations will be the same for individuals or groups. Only students who make a strong case supporting their request to work on their own will be allowed to do so. A bad experience with group projects in the past is not in itself a strong enough rationale to support a request to work individually. While working in a group can come with challenges, it can also be a fun and rewarding learning experience and valuable preparation for real-world workplace writing.

Please ensure that all your emails are clear, concise but informative, carefully edited, and thoughtfully structured, with an informative subject line. And, when emailing the instructor, don't forget to include Coms 363 in the subject line.

All members of a group will normally earn the same grade for group assignments. However, any student may email the instructor to request that group peer evaluations be administered in their group. If a group peer evaluation is done, then individual assignment grades will be adjusted based on the results if warranted. If the instructor finds good reason to do so, she may deduct up to a full letter grade (e.g., from B to C) for a group member who contributed minimal or extremely low quality work toward a group assignment. Students who did not contribute to a group assignment will earn an F (zero) on that assignment, and students who contributed next to nothing may earn a D on the assignment. Grade adjustments will be at the discretion of the instructor based on peer review submissions (and possible meetings) with all group members.

Note: Group assignment submissions should include only the names of members who contributed to the assignment; including the name of a group member who did not contribute toward the assignment will be considered plagiarism.

Despite members' best efforts, problems sometimes arise in group work. Keep in mind that differences of opinion in a group are normal and that working through such differences can greatly improve the quality of a collaborative project. However, when interpersonal differences or other problems threaten the function and well-being of a group, students should request intervention by the instructor. In serious cases where a group member fails to complete promised work, attend group meetings, or maintain contact with fellow group members after being warned once, the instructor may remove that individual from the group and require him or her to complete the remaining group assignments individually.

In preparation for your collaborative usability study project, please read the following online publication produced by the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University (2010): *Working in groups: A note to faculty and a quick guide for students* (available at <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/wigintro.html>)

FORMATTING, UPLOADING, & RETRIEVING ASSIGNMENT FILES:

- Please use **.docx, .doc, or .rtf file formats** for assignments. Files in .PDF and Pages formats are often problematic for markers.

- Because markers may download a batch of 35 or 70 files at one time, each file should have an informative file name; we recommend that you use the following format for naming your files: **363 proposal Smith, Ngo, & Carter.docx** Students' names should appear both in the file name and on the first page of any assignment submission (just as it would be included on page one of an assignment submitted in hard copy).
- Upload all assignments to the designated drop box in D2L.
- Retrieve your marked assignments from D2L. If you wish, you may review your marked assignments (as well as your drafts) with the instructor. (If you know that an assignment has been marked but you have trouble finding your marked assignment on D2L, please consult with IT support at 403-220-5555.)
- Save your working files often using a flash (thumb) drive or a cloud-based service like Google Docs or Box.net, and always keep a copy of each submitted assignment. Include a date or version number in the file names of your working drafts (e.g., Nov. 10 draft 3 report) so that you do not inadvertently upload the wrong copy of an assignment.

Policy for late assignments:

Written assignments are due at midnight on the due date, but markers will allow a 24-hour grace period on all written assignments before they begin deducting late penalties for late assignments. Assignments submitted after the deadline will normally be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late, including weekends. Late penalties may apply when the assignment is submitted on time, but the wrong copy is uploaded.

Quizzes have a built-in grace period. Students who have not submitted a quiz by the time it closes will earn zero on it.

Assignment length requirements:

Always edit for conciseness. Assignments more than 25% over the stated maximum length will normally be subject to a one-level grade penalty (e.g., from B to B-).

Markers:

After the first assignment, students will be assigned to one of the following marking sections for the rest of the term (with all members of a project group assigned to the same marking section). Please direct questions about assignments to the instructor.

Marking Sections	Marker	Email
Sopczak 1 & 2	Christine Sopczak	cmsopcza@ucalgary.ca
Hanslip 3, 4, & 5	Andrea Hanslip	arhansli@ucalgary.ca
Solomon 6, 7, & 8	Monique Solomon	solomonm@ucalgary.ca

Student accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf .

Please note:

1. Students seeking accommodations for transient illnesses like the flu should contact their instructors directly. When possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
2. When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
3. For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA & IEEE), see the course website in D2L or visit the links provided at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Grading System & Dept of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades will be reported as letter grades. In this course, written assignments will be given letter grades, and quizzes will earn a numerical score. In calculating the final grade, quiz scores will be used along with the percentage equivalent for letter grades, as indicated in the table below. The calculated final grade will be converted back into a final letter grade using the range in column 4 of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

If a student's final grade falls within half a percentage of the next higher grade level, the instructor will normally round up the grade if the student completed all quizzes with a grade of at least 60% and did well on both individual and group assignments.

Grade reassessments:

Within 15 days of the return of an assignment, students may request a reassessment. Such requests should be directed to the instructor (by email), be professional in tone, and clearly explain the grounds for the reassessment. Note that grades may be increased or lowered on appeal. As explained in the University Calendar, reassessed grades may be further appealed at the department level within 15 days.

Research ethics:

This course has been granted research ethics clearance for survey research and in-person usability testing involving students registered in the course. All other research is subject to ethics review. Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students:

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 picarts@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calgary Police Service• Emergency Text Messaging• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly• Safewalk Program	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IT help line	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing Support Services• Student Services Mobile App	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faculty of Arts Reps• Student Ombudsman	http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counselling Services• Health Services• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE• Online resources and tips	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or call the crisis line.

Wed.	Due	Readings for this week (chapters are from Graves & Graves)
Sept. 14		Course outline (on D2L). Start reading for next week. 1. Ch. 1 ...Audience, purpose, & genre (p. 29-46, 50-56) (23 pp)
Sept. 21		1. Ch. 7 Writing email and letters for the workplace (13 pp) 2. Handout on Parallelism on D2L (in the EDITING area of CONTENT) 3. Government of Alberta. (2016). ALIS – Alberta Work Search Online. Retrieved from http://alis.alberta.ca/worksearch/resumes/types.html . Read all the following sections listed on the menu on the left, including linked examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume Types • Resumes That Fit the Job • Resume Writing • Resume Formats • Cover Letters and Emails • References Also read the section on Action Words: http://alis.alberta.ca/ep/eps/tips/tips.html?EK=119 4. Assignment guidelines on D2L for the resume and cover letter.
Sept. 28	Resume & Cover Letter (15%)	1. Ch. 2 Leading and misleading the reader (13 pp) 2. Ch. 4 Writing technical prose (21 pp) 3. All the editing handouts posted on D2L
Oct. 5	Quiz 1 (10%)	1. Ch. 6 Communicating through visuals (11 pp) 2. Wainer, H. (1992). Understanding graphs and tables. <i>Educational Researcher</i> , 21(1), 14-23. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1176346?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents 3. Few, S. (2007). Save the pies for dessert. Retrieved from http://www.perceptualedge.com/articles/08-21-07.pdf 4. North Carolina State University (NCSU). (2004). LabWrite Resources, at http://labwrite.ncsu.edu/res/res-homepage.htm (for reference only) 5. Material on APA documentation style (posted on D2L in APA area) 6. Assignment guidelines on D2L for the visual critique memo. NOTES on Quiz 1 (in D2L, under the ASSESSMENTS tab): Quiz 1 is an untimed open book quiz to be done without consulting other students. It will stay open (with no late penalty) until 9:00 am, Mon., Oct. 10. The quiz will cover Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, & 7 plus material in handouts, PowerPoints, and readings to the end of October 5 (ALIS, Few, Waiver, NCSU, etc.). Questions may be randomly drawn from a question bank created by the instructor.

Oct. 12	Visual Critique Memo (15%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University. (2010). <i>Working in groups: A note to faculty and a quick guide for students</i>: http://sites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/wigintro.html 2. Ch. 5 Designing documents and page layout (19 pp). 3. Ch. 3 Researching technical subjects (21 pp) 4. Assignment guidelines on D2L for the Website Usability Study (including the proposal, final report, and PowerPoint assignments.) <p>NOTE: You should set up a meeting with your project group this week to begin work on the website usability study and proposal.</p>
Oct. 19		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ch. 11 Testing and reporting document usability (21 pp) 2. Jerz, D. (2010). Usability testing: 8 quick tips for designing tests. Retrieved from http://jerz.setonhill.edu/design/usability/tips.htm 3. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. (n.d). [Sections on usability basics, methods, & guidelines] at http://www.usability.gov 4. Lynch, P. J. & Horton, S. (2009). <i>Web style guide, 3rd ed.</i> Retrieved from http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html 5. Morkes, J. & Nielsen, J. (1997). Concise, scannable, and objective: How to write for the web. Retrieved from http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/writing.html
Oct. 26	Usability Study Proposal (10%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ch. 12 Taking technical communication online (21 pp) 2. Ch. 8 Writing winning proposals (27 pp)
Nov. 2	Quiz 2 (10%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ch. 9 Reporting technical information (38 pp) <p>NOTE: Quiz 2 is an untimed open book quiz to be done individually, with no collaboration. It will remain open (with no late penalty) until 9:00 am, Mon., Nov. 7. Quiz 2 will cover Chapters 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, & 12 plus the Harvard material on working in groups, and any other PPTs or readings from Oct. 12 to Nov. 2 inclusive.</p>
Nov. 9		<i>Work on usability study, writing final report, & preparing PPT.</i>
Nov. 16		<i>Work on usability study, writing final report, & preparing PPT.</i>
Nov. 23		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ch. 13 Presenting technical information orally (13 pp) 2. Brent, D., & Andre, J. (2011). Using PowerPoint Intelligently [on D2L] <p><i>Work on usability study, writing final report, & preparing PPT.</i></p> <p>If time permits, review your draft report with the instructor.</p>
Nov. 30	Usability Study Final Report (25%) + PPT (10%)	<p><i>Complete work on your website usability project and submit your final report and accompanying PowerPoint.</i></p> <p>Complete online course evaluation (USRI). Thank you.</p>
Dec. 7	Quiz 3 (5%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ch. 10 Writing how-to documents (23 pp) <p>NOTE: Quiz 3 is an untimed open book quiz to be done individually, with no collaboration. It will remain open (with no late penalty) until 9:00 am, Sat., Dec. 10. Quiz 3 will cover Chapters 10 & 13, plus any other readings or handouts posted since Quiz 2.</p>