

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communications Studies COMS 363 L01
Professional and Technical Communication

Winter 2016 (online)

Instructor: Aiden Buckland
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Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: 10:30-12:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays

Course Description

This class takes a rhetorical approach to understanding professional and technical communication. Emphasis is placed on how workplace communication is situated within distinct organizational or corporate cultures as well as broader socio-cultural contexts. Students will gain knowledge and skills in writing across genres and disciplines through experiential learning strategies and collaborative research projects. This is a performance driven class intended to teach students skills that can be applied to a variety of workplace situations.

Additional Information

This course is offered entirely online. Interaction with the instructor and grading teams can be arranged during office hours or by appointment. Students can expect to put in the same amount of work (in hours) as they would if the course met face to face.

Objectives of the Course

Students will learn about the process of planning, composing, and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences. This course is designed to help you develop

- A rhetorical approach to crafting documents--one in which you critically consider your purpose in writing, the needs of your audience(s), and relevant features of the context in which you are writing.
- Writing strategies to keep your writing focused, coherent, and readable.
- Familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of written genres, including business correspondence, proposals, and reports.
- Familiarity with a range of resources for professional writers, including tools for online research, for online composing, and for collaborative writing.
- Document design strategies to ensure that your documents look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and use visuals to communicate information effectively.
- Competence in the use of a standard style of documentation.
- Competence in preparing PowerPoint presentations.

Textbooks and Readings

Tebeau, E. & Dragga, S. (2015). *The essentials of technical communication*. (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Internet access: Students must have frequent, regular access to the Internet and email. A high-speed Internet connection is highly recommended. The course will be held online via the U of C's Desire2Learn (D2L) learning management system at <https://d2l.ucalgary.ca/>. I strongly recommend that you download a personal backup copy of this course outline and all online course materials (assignment descriptions and rubrics) in case you need them when Internet access is temporarily unavailable. A PDF reader is required.

Supported technologies: Course technologies usually work with all the major browsers (i.e. Firefox, Internet Explorer, Chrome, Safari) and operating systems (Mac, Windows, etc). However, compatibility problems may occur with outdated browsers, plugins or apps, and usability issues may occur on mobile devices. Check your system's compatibility in Desire2Learn via My Tools > System Check. Students are responsible for ensuring they have personal computer systems that are compatible with course technologies, or they must use on-campus computers provided in libraries or labs.

Sending email: When initiating an email to your instructor from your own email program, send email to abucklan@ucalgary.ca and put "COMS 363" anywhere in the subject line.

Email management: Students are responsible for ensuring they receive course email notifications and messages from the instructor, and receiving notifications they have subscribed to (i.e. email notifications of new messages from teammates in group discussion forums). Make sure course messages do not get filtered into spam or junk folders or get rejected by your mail server. By default, Desire2Learn will use the email address associated with your U of C ID. Configure your notification preferences in your D2L Settings, and then subscribe to desired discussion forums & threads.

Word processing software: The use of Microsoft Office software (ideally, 2007 or later) is highly recommended. Assignments require advanced features of Office programs (Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel) for professional formatting of tables, graphs, tables of contents, page numbering, headers, etc. MS Office is available to U of C Students through [Office 365](#).

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
Labs	10	Weekly (schedule posted on D2L)
Short writing assignments	60	January 22; February 5; February 26; March 18, 2016 (4 x 15%)
Group report	30	April 13th, 2016 (due at 9:00 am)
All assignments are due by 9 AM on the Friday they are due		

Labs (less than 500 words). Lab assignments will be due weekly on Fridays by 9 am. They will give you an opportunity to familiarize yourself course concepts and prepare for your final group assignment. These assignments are pass/fail, so late submissions will not be accepted. To earn a pass, submissions must adhere to all submission guidelines.

Short writing assignments (roughly 500 words each). These short writing assignments are designed to help you deliver different messages in a concise and coherent way. The styles and genres of your writing samples will vary by medium and message and should help prepare you for the final group assignment.

Group Report (1500-2000 words). The group report will be completed in small groups. The report is a full featured, substantive report. This assignment will require you to conduct both secondary and primary research and integrate the results into a report.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. Note: Please submit all assignments through D2L. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your essays directly to D2L under the appropriate dropbox folder. If it is not possible to do so, email your assignment to the instructor with "Coms 363 Temporary Submission" in the subject line. NOTE: As soon as Desire2Learn is accessible, resubmit your assignment normally AND leave the instructor and marker a note in your file submission area about using this temporary submission method, to avoid late penalties.

Please include your first and last name on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

Policy for Late Assignments

All assignments are due online by 9 AM Mountain Standard Time (MST) on Fridays throughout the term. Please see the schedule above for specific assignment due dates. Assignments can be submitted early when possible.

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Labs will not be accepted after their given due date.

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 (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors directly. Whenever 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>

Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using percentage grades.

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

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%

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, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . 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>

Research Ethics

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/resources/ethics>

In this course, COMS 363 L01 Winter 2016, students are expected to participate in at least one usability survey on a designated website. Survey participation (or recruitment) performs an educational role of helping students understand methods from the participant’s and the researcher’s perspective while interpreting the data.

Online surveys will be housed on the instructor’s Survey Monkey account. Students will be given access to their website’s anonymized survey data to analyze and report. Students must securely store the data and respect participant anonymity while reporting results (if participant identity is unexpectedly or circumstantially revealed in any answers).

All course assignments and drafts are confidential to their authors and the instructional team for the duration of the course. After the course, if students desire to share their reports with others, such as the owners of the website being analyzed, or as part of their professional portfolio, they may only do so with prior written permission of all co-authors.

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333
• Calgary Police Service	403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911
• Emergency Text Messaging	http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage
• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly	http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints
	If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safewalk Program 	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 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ 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 the 24-hour crisis line.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Can be found on D2L in the course resources folder.