

**University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Communications Studies COMS 363 L04
Professional and Technical Communication**

Winter 2016

Thurs., Jan. 14 – Thurs., April 7 (excluding Feb. 18)

Thurs. 12:30-3:15

Instructor: Lisa Stowe
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Office Phone: 403 220 4840
E-Mail: lstowe@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: N/A
Office Hours: TU/TR 11:00-12:00

Course Description

COMS 363 is an introduction to professional and technical communication. 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.

This class will not provide you with a cookie cutter approach to technical and professional writing. Rather it will help you develop general concepts and tools to help you make sense of the various workplace writing situations. Emphasis will be placed on audience and genre analysis to help determine the best possible technical or professional structure. COMS 363 will help you develop general concepts and tools to help you make sense of workplace writing situations as they arise.

Objectives of the Course

Students will learn how to take 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.

Students will understand current theories of genre and become familiar with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of written genres, including business correspondence, proposals, and reports.

Students will design documents with strategies to ensure that professional documents look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and use visuals to communicate information effectively.

Students will learn about writing strategies to keep writing focused, coherent, and readable.

Students will acquire a sound command of the mechanics of writing and the skills to edit.

Students will identify and eliminate common errors in sentence structure, grammar, word use, spelling, and punctuation.

Students will become competent in the use of a standard style of documentation.

Students will become familiar with a range of resources for professional writers, including tools for online research, for online composing, and for collaborative writing.

Students will develop skills in conducting primary research (usability analysis, surveys).

Students will become competent in preparing PowerPoint presentations.

Textbooks and Readings

Ewald, T. (2014). *Writing in the Technical Fields*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP.

Other readings and resources are located on D2L.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Electronic devices and internet usage is encouraged as long as they are used for classroom activities. Please be respectful and mindful of those around you.

Assignments and Evaluation

Class Participation

Weight: 10%

Due Date: Ongoing

Students are encouraged to participate in this class in a variety of different ways including asking questions, facilitating discussion and engaging with others while doing group activities. A more extensive participation policy will be discussed in the first week of classes.

Reading Tests (Individual Assignment)

Weight: 2 @ 10% each = 20%

Due:

Reading Test 1: February 11

Reading Test 2: March 24

Objective: Each reading test will test students on their comprehension and synthesis of the material covered in class. Tests will be comprised of sections such as matching, fill in the blanks, multiple choice, short answer and longer answer questions.

Project proposal (Group Assignment)

Weight: 15%

Due: February 25 at 4:30pm

Length: 6-8 pages (8 absolute maximum) excluding appendices

Objective: Students must submit a project proposal which describes the focus of the proposed usability study of a website. The proposal will explain the criteria for analysis, offer a short literature review section that provides a scholarly overview of the theories and concepts that will be used in the report, set out proposed research methods in some detail and show that ethics considerations are taken into account before any primary research is conducted. Drafts of interview questions or survey questions are included.

Online Collaboration Recommendation Memo (Individual Assignment)

Weight: 20%

Due: March 10 in class

Length: 1000 - 1200 words

Objectives: Students will write a memo recommending an online collaborative project management system to bring a modest amount of secondary research to bear on a problem and to formulate a reasoned position based on that secondary research. Students will gain an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of collaborating online.

PowerPoint presentation & notes (Group Assignment)

Weight: 10%

Due: April 7

Length: 12-15 slides (15 maximum) plus speaker notes

Objectives: This assignment will test students skill at reducing their report findings to a concise presentation that would effectively highlight the key points for an intended audience. Assessment will be based on slide design as well as slide content. Speaker notes must complement the slides, not replicate the material on the slides.

Final report (with letter of transmittal) (Group Assignment)

Weight: 25%

Due: April 7 in class

Length: 15-18 single spaces pages (20 pages max, excluding appendices)

Objectives: By completing this assignment students will use both primary and secondary research techniques to gather material for a professional report and then prepare a report using accepted conventions of report layout. There is an expectation that students will bring together the past 13 weeks of instruction on audience, readability and style.

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 submit all assignments excluding the reading to tests to the drop boxes in D2L. No paper copies of the assignments will be accepted in this class.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments 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

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

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

- X letter grades
- X percentage grades
- X raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)
- GPA values (using any value on the 0 to 4.0 scale, including, e.g., 3.2 or 2.8)
- a combination of the above. (Specify—e.g., letter grades for written course work, scores for participation grades, and percentages for examinations).

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>

Ethics

This course requires students to engage with primary research and human research subjects. 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:

The Department of Communication, Media and Film Research Ethics site: <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics> or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/cfreb>

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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Calgary Police Service <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Text Messaging <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Evacuation & Assembly <input type="checkbox"/> 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"> <input type="checkbox"/> 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"> <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Support Services <input type="checkbox"/> 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"> <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty of Arts Reps <input type="checkbox"/> Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds

<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Counselling Services <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services <input type="checkbox"/> Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE <input type="checkbox"/> Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>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.</p>
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Schedule of Lectures and Readings

A more detailed schedule of classes and readings will be posted on D2L before classes start.