

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communications Studies COMS 363 L06
Professional and Technical Communication
Winter 2016

January 15 - April 08 (excluding February 19 and March 25)
Fridays 12:00-14:45

Instructor: Prof. Bryce
Office: Social Sciences 216
E-Mail: bryce@ucalgary.ca
Office Hours: Tuesdays 14:00-16:00 and by appointment

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the practical elements of professional and technical communication. You will learn how to produce documents appropriate for the workplace and academic settings that encompass both written and oral forms of professional and technical communication. Our class assignments include practice in writing and speaking. The individual assignments will allow you to apply what you have learned to create quality documents.

Objectives of the Course

The objectives of this course are the following:

- Learning to communicate effectively through oral presentations and written documents
- Developing expertise in the mechanics of writing: spelling, grammar, and punctuation, sentence structure, paragraphs
- Preparing various forms of documents including reports, proposals, literature reviews, summaries, and cover letters
- Becoming competent in finding and analyzing reliable sources to be used for producing information for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Learning document design techniques to create documents and websites that look professional and enable users to find and use information easily.

Textbooks and Readings

Ewald, T. (2014). *Writing in the Technical Field: A Practical Guide*. Oxford University Press.
This book is available in the University of Calgary bookstore.

Internet and electronic communication device information

To ensure everyone has equal opportunity to listen and learn without distraction, please put away your cell phone during class time: texting, twittering, emailing, and so on interferes with the learning environment, both for students and the instructor. Please respect your classmates' right to hear class material.

You are welcome to bring and use your laptop for assignments and other course work for this class. Please do not use your laptop for purposes not related to the class material of the day.

Recording any part of any lecture in any form without permission is not permitted. Lecture slides will not be posted on the web. Photographing lecture slides is not permitted. These restrictions are due to copyright and intellectual property issues and are strictly enforced.

Assignments and Evaluation

Table 1, following, lists the assignments, due dates, and percentage worth.

Table 1: Assignments and evaluation

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage Worth
In-class group assignment 1 (group mark)	January 22	5%
In-class group assignment 2 (group mark)	January 29	5%
In-class assignment 3 (individual mark)	February 5	5%
In-class group assignment 4 (group mark)	February 12	5%
Individually graded proposal	February 26	10%
In-class group assignment 5 (group mark)	March 4	5%
Individually graded literature Review	March 11	15%
Presentation skills (group mark)	March 18	10%
Individually graded oral presentation on findings	April 1 and April 8	15%
Individually graded recommendations report	April 8	25%

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

All assignments and exams weighted more than 5 % must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course.

Assignment Details and Descriptions

This section describes the contents of each assignment for this course.

In-class Assignments: 1-5

For each of these assignments (except assignment 3), you will work in a group (randomly selected) and prepare a written piece on the topic of the day. (For each assignment, you will be given time in class to prepare.)

1. Emailing: considering audience, purpose, style, tone, structure
2. Writing a formal letter: creating appropriate content, organizing information, letter format and conventions
3. Finding and citing scholarly sources: We will meet in the library for this class. Our librarian, Mrs. Susan Beatty, will help you discover an efficient process for finding useful and high quality sources that you can use in your proposal, literature review, and final report. At the end of the library session, you will need to submit a list of three sources

formatted in APA or IEEE and listed as you would on a references page for a document. Please submit this assignment to the D2L drop box.

4. Creating a prototype/mock up for a business's home page. Using the website usability criteria you have found so far, prepare a prototype/mock up for a particular type of business. The list of possible business types will be handed out during class.
5. Writing and following instructions: You will prepare a set of instructions for a particular procedure. These instructions will be tested by another group in the class.

The proposal, literature review, report, and presentation are focused on a particular website that you will choose from a list given out in class. **You will want to take several screenshots and make detailed notes about the website in case it suddenly disappears.** Having these available will help decrease the stress of no longer having your website available for your presentation and report.

The Proposal

Following the guidelines in the textbook and covered in class, you need to conduct preliminary research and write a proposal describing your final project. The proposal must include the website you have chosen to analyze and recommend changes for. The proposal must also include a carefully thought out schedule that gives a detailed list of the tasks you need to complete your final report and presentation. The proposal should be three to four pages (space and one half), not including the References list or schedule.

The proposal must be written in report format following the conventions of page design shown in the textbook and covered in class. Please separate the proposal sections with headings, use an appropriate amount of white space between sections and paragraphs, and number the pages. The proposal will be graded on format and writing, as well as content.

Individual Literature Review

Write a short literature review that is the equivalent in length to 3-4 pages space and one half. Your review should include at least 6 to 10 sources, most of which should be scholarly sources.

This review is your preparation for your research report; it will suggest how the review findings will lead to the analysis and recommendations about your website in your report. You are summarizing, evaluating, and comparing scholarly, high quality sources into one document to show where your research is heading and the areas on which you are focusing in the recommendation report.

Remember to divide the literature review into sections, each with a descriptive heading that identifies precisely what you are discussing in that section. Your review needs an introduction, main points, support points, and a conclusion. Remember to give each paragraph a topic sentence, supporting points, and a concluding sentence.

Recommendation Report

Using the guidelines from the textbook and covered in class, write a recommendation report in which you analyze the same website you discussed in your proposal and literature review. The analysis should incorporate, build on, and add to the scholarly resources you found for your proposal and literature review. After you have analyzed the website and discussed its strengths and weaknesses, describe ways that it can be improved (recommendations).

Your research findings will help you direct and organize your points. Assuming about 250 words per page, your report should be about 2000-2500 words or 8 to 10 pages. This page count does not include the front or back matter.

To make the report stronger, I recommend that you also do primary research--an anonymous class survey on the website's usability. Please see the section on Research Ethics on page 7.

Presentation

During the two last weeks of term, you will present your report to the class in an 8-minute presentation. You are evaluated on the professionalism with which you present in addition to the content of the presentation.

Submission of Assignments

Please hand in your assignments directly to your instructor. 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. Please upload the proposal, literature review, and your report to D2L as well as submitting a hard copy to me.

Please include your name and ID number 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

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. In-class assignments cannot be "made up" at a later 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_o.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 a combination of letter grades and raw scores. The proposal, literature review, project presentation, and final report will be given a letter grade. In-class assignments 1-5 will be given a grade out of 5. The group presentation will be given a grade out of 10.

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. 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>

However, one approved exception is for usability studies in COMS 363 in which students may conduct anonymous online usability surveys to get their classmates' opinions on the usability of a website. Doing this usability study to gather data for your final report is highly recommended.

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 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 IT help line	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE 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 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 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

This information is available on D2L.