

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

**Communications Studies COMS 463 L01  
Rhetorical Communication in Online Environments  
Fall 2015**

**Wednesday, September 9 – Friday, December 4  
(excluding Wednesday, November 11 and Friday, November 13)**

**Lecture: WF 12:00-12:50 Lab: WF 13:00-13:50**

**Instructor:** Lisa Stowe  
**Office:** SS206  
**Office Phone:** 403 220 4840  
**E-Mail:** lstowe@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** TH/F 11:00-11:50 or by appointment

**Course Description**

Using rhetorical perspectives, the course will explore the theory and criticism of professional communication from a social-cultural perspective. Students will read a selection of articles outlining the history, ethics and theoretical approaches to professional communication. Students will then critique samples of professional communication arising from a variety of organizational contexts in a variety of media and genres. Students will also engage in building an organization's website to understand first hand how effective online communication strategies develop strong ethical accountability. The course will incorporate a large degree of experiential learning and professional communication practice.

**Additional Information**

The Lecture section of this course will be on Wednesdays from 12-1:50 in SS012. The Lab sections will take place Fridays from 12-1:50 in the Arts Computer Lab SS018.

All assignments (with the exception of the two in-class tests), correspondence and group work will take place online in either D2L or another online collaborative program, such as Google docs or Zoho. Students are encouraged to become familiar with one of these platforms before the first computer lab.

**Objectives of the Course**

To understand socio-cultural and rhetorical perspectives of professional communication.

To apply theories to the criticism and production of professional discourse.

To learn the specific knowledge, technologies and skills needed to collaboratively construct and analyze effective online professional communications.

To learn the specific rhetorical skills, knowledge and technologies to effectively construct a variety of web based documents.

To learn how to work in a group that simulates a workplace environment.

To create and learn in a collaborative and safe environment.

### **Textbooks and Readings**

MacLennan, J. (2008). *Readings for technical communication*. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford UP.

Other readings will be posted on D2L.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

Because of the themes and objectives of this course, laptops and other computer devices are welcomed in class but are to be only used for class activities and note taking. Please be respectful of your fellow classmates while using computers.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

#### **Concept/Theme Presentation: Individual Assignment**

**Weight: 10%**

**Length: 10 minutes max/2-3 pages of presentation notes**

**Due Date: Ongoing**

#### **Description**

Students will choose one concept or theme related to rhetorical communication in online environments and present on that concept or theme to the rest of the class. A list of concepts and themes will be circulated in the first class for sign up. Presentations will be 10 minutes in length maximum. Presentation notes will be submitted digitally to the instructor following the presentation.

#### **Two In-class Reading Tests: Individual Assignment**

**Weight: 25% each (Total 50%)**

**Length: 90 minutes**

**Due Date: Wednesday, October 7 and Wednesday, November 18**

#### **Description**

Students will complete two in-class reading tests that will be scheduled for 90 minutes. There will be a variety of questions such as matching, multiple choice, short answer and fill in the blanks. Questions will be based on course readings and class discussions.

#### **Website Development Proposal: Group Assignment**

**Weight: 15%**

**Length 5 pages max**

**Due Date: Friday, October 16**

#### **Description**

Groups will submit a 5 page proposal outlining their website development plan. Proposals will include a description of the fictitious organization that is the subject of the website; project description and justification or why this organization needs a web

presence; a short literature review that outlines the theoretical concepts anchoring the project; an explanation and justification for which website construction platform they will be using; a breakdown of individual duties with a Gantt chart or other task table format; an explanation and justification of the online collaboration system, like google docs or zoho, that will be used as the main form of communication for the group; a list of possible challenges the group might face throughout this process; and a copy of a group contract that is agreed to and signed by all group members.

**Process Portfolio and Website Launch Presentation: Group Assignment**

**Weight: Total: 25% (Portfolio: 15% / Presentation: 10%)**

**Length: Approximately 12-15 pages max, including visuals and charts**

**Presentation: 15-20 minutes**

**Due Date: Friday, December 4**

**Description**

Students will digitally submit a process portfolio (as a pdf document) which will highlight and paint a picture of the process of creating a website for a particular organization. The portfolio will contain a number of documents including a justification for visual and graphic design with screenshot images; an information architecture assessment and rhetorical justification for content; an overview of the online ethical characteristics of the organization; an explanation with examples of the variety of genres within this organization; and a synthesis of how the course concepts and theories support or challenge the organization's online presence.

Each group member will also digitally submit an individual reflective evaluation on the process of working as a group on this project. These reflection essays will remain confidential between the individual group member and the instructor.

Students will also present or "launch" their website to the rest of the class during the last two weeks of classes, highlighting their creative and decision making processes.

**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: All assignments, with the exception of the two in-class exams will be submitted electronically via d2l. Instructions on how to upload documents in d2l will be covered in class.

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.

### Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

### 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 raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)

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%

<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>		<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>		<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	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 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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>

## Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Calgary Police Service</li> <li>· Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>· Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>· Safewalk Program</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a> If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort ( <b>220-5333</b> ). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· IT help line</li> </ul>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Writing Support Services</li> <li>· Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>· Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>
<b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Counselling Services</li> <li>· Health Services</li> <li>· Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</li> <li>· Online resources and tips</li> </ul>	<b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a> <b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a> 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:** A more detailed schedule of topics and readings will be available on d2l by the first week of classes.