

Communications Studies (COMS) 363—Lecture 04
Professional and Technical Communication
Fall 2011 Wednesday, 13:00-15:50

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to effective communication in the most common genres of professional and technical writing and speech. You will learn the processes involved in planning, composing, and delivering of technical communication for a variety of audiences and rhetorical contexts. Guided practice and peer review will assist you in developing expertise in visual, electronic, print, and face-to-face communication.

Objectives of the Course

At the completion of this course, you will be able to demonstrate strong written and oral communication skills, so people both inside and outside your area of expertise can easily understand the professional and technical information you are conveying. To this end, we will study the principles and techniques of professional and technical writing, focusing on both written and oral communication skills. You will enhance your writing, editing, and speaking skills, in addition to learning to generate effective professional and technical documents. You will also increase your abilities to read and think critically and to do rhetorical analyses of professional and technical documents.

Important Information

- Be courteous to your classmates and me. See the University's policy on non-academic misconduct in the University Calendar; this is conduct that "seriously disrupts the lawful educational and related activities of other students and/or University staff." Please respect your classmates' right to hear class material.
- Do not send abusive emails to your instructor; these are considered non-academic misconduct and will be dealt with accordingly.
- Do not send email attachments to your instructor: assignments will not be accepted in this form.

- Any student who plagiarizes his or her assignment or part of an assignment will be reported to the appropriate authorities. No excuses are accepted for plagiarism, even “accidental” plagiarism. Please see the section on “Plagiarism” on page 4 of this outline.
- Because you are responsible for all material covered in class, attending all classes is strongly recommended. If you miss lectures or readings, you must make your own arrangements to catch up.
- Make sure you read the emails from your instructor: you are responsible for information you have received but ignored.
- Your instructor will not edit drafts of your assignments; she will discuss concerns with you, but it is up to you to make necessary changes. Also, showing your instructor a draft of your assignment does not guarantee an A on the assignment.
- Allow a 24-hour cooling-off period before discussing a returned assignment with your instructor. Because your instructor marks meticulously, she expects you to read her comments and suggestions carefully before discussing the assignment with her.

Internet and Electronic Communication Device Information

Laptop computers may be used only to take notes during class. Please do not use your laptop to view non-class related content or do work not for this class. Those who do not adhere to this rule will lose laptop privileges.

There will be no twittering, texting, phone ringing, or any other use of cells phones in our classroom during class time. Please be courteous to your instructor and classmates; it is extremely distracting to others when people are using their phones, including “discreet” texting under the desk. Those who are unable to resist using their phones during class will be asked to leave.

Textbooks and Readings

Our textbook is available in the University of Calgary Bookstore:

Elizabeth Tebeaux and Sam Dragga. *The Essentials of Technical Communication*. New York: Oxford, 2010. ISBN 978-0-19-538422-2

It is essential that you have this textbook available for reading. You will have a difficult time fulfilling the assignment requirements without doing the assigned background readings.

Assignments and Evaluation

It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. Please do not throw away returned assignments until you have received your final grade for the course.

Please hand in your assignments directly to your instructor if possible. 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 outside SS320. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in your instructor's mailbox. Please do note, however, that the Social Sciences building is locked at some point in the evening, so the dropbox may not be available late at night.

Table 1, following, lists the assignments, percents worth, and due dates. Assignments in **bold** must be completed to receive a passing grade in this course.

Table 1: Schedule of Assignments and Due Dates

Assignment Name	Percent	Due Date
Writing for Readers	10	September 28
Authorization for proposal/ report/ presentation topic (digital dropbox)*	5	October 5
Citation assignment	10	October 12
Proposal*	15	October 26
Final report project presentation*	20	November 16, 23, 30
Final Report*	30	December 7
In-class assignments (written and oral). Please note that in-class assignments cannot be "made up" at a later date.	10	on-going

Assignments with asterisks* may be completed in groups of two. If you choose to work in a group, you will have to follow the collaborating guidelines, which entail careful documentation of group meetings and filling out group evaluation forms. These will be available on Blackboard. Group assignments will be given group grades, unless one person has done considerably more or less work on the assignment.

There is no registrar-scheduled final examination for this class.

Assignments' Brief Descriptions

The detailed specifications for these assignments are posted on Blackboard under "Assignments."

Writing for Readers

Find a short passage from a technical document in your field and rewrite it entirely in your own words. The final document should be between 1.5 and 2 pages, line spacing of one and one half spaces.

Topic Authorization

You will need to choose an appropriate topic for your research project, which comprises the report and presentation. It is essential that you discuss this topic with me before beginning the citation, proposal, and report assignments. For a list of appropriate topics, please see the Proposal assignment specifications on Blackboard.

Citation Assignment

This assignment requires that you find three scholarly sources that you could use for gathering research for your final report. The first page of this assignment is a References page, in which you format the sources in correct APA style. The second part is an evaluation of each source, according to the list of criteria specified on the "Citation" assignment on Blackboard. This assignment should be about 4-5 pages in length.

Proposal

Using the topic you have received my approval to do, write a proposal for how you will be getting your report and presentation done successfully. The proposal is like a plan and includes details of work done, work to be done, and the expected outcome. The proposal assignment and checklist are posted on Blackboard. The proposal should be between 3-5 pages long.

Report

The report discusses and analyzes your findings on your topic. It needs to be a professional looking technical document that includes all the required sections as described on the detailed assignment instructions and checklist that you can find on Blackboard. The report should be no shorter than 8 pages (single or space and one half) and preferably no longer than 15 pages. This length includes only the report body from introduction to conclusion.

Presentation

The presentation is a talk you will give to the class on the date you are assigned. This presentation gives a summary of the report's contents. You are evaluated on the professionalism with which you present in addition to the content of the presentation. The presentation should be between 10-15 minutes.

In-class assignments

In each class, you will be doing particular assignments that will help you comprehend the course material that we are covering. Usually, these assignments are done as small group projects. In-class assignments cannot be made up at a later date.

Policy for Late Assignments

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

Late assignments will be graded but not marked. **Assignments more than five days late will not be accepted.** In the case of illness, you must submit a doctor's note with your late assignment. For any other circumstance that prevents you from submitting your assignment on time, you must provide appropriate documentation to your instructor.

If you are unable to submit your assignment in hard copy by the assigned date and time, please submit the assignment into the digital dropbox as evidence that it has been done on time. You may then submit the paper copy no longer than 24 hours later to avoid the late penalty.

Please note that because all out-of-class assignments (including the presentation) must be completed to receive a passing grade in this course, it is essential that you hand in assignments no later than five days after the due date. If you miss your presentation, you will have to provide clear documentation justifying your absence. Otherwise, you will not pass this course.

Your instructor will not take responsibility for those assignments not handed into her personally in hard copy in class (paper).

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number on the reverse of this page. Also, you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.** For more information, see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details, see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. 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: www.efwr.ucalgary.ca

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture (Table 2):

Table 2: Grading System

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A-	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99

D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

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. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources. The sources for graphics that you have not created yourself must also be documented.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, efwr.ucalgary.ca) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof, please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor **no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.**

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts, see

<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office, see

<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly Points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night—call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone, or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

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

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreh>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Each assignment requires specific readings; this information will be included with each specific assignment.