

Communication Studies (COMS) 363- Lecture 04
Professional and Technical Communication
Fall 2012
Saturday 8:00-11:30 Sept. 15 – Dec. 1
No class on Nov. 10

Instructor: Christine Mains
Office Location: SS307
Office Phone: 220-7789
E-Mail: cmains@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: Blackboard
Office Hours: Tues 12:30-1:30, Sat 11:30-12:30

Course Description

This course is a study of the principles and techniques of technical writing, taking a rhetorical approach to understanding effective professional and technical communication. Through assignments designed to reflect both written and oral formats common in workplace settings, students will gain expertise in analyzing and meeting the needs of a variety of audiences, including customers, co-workers, and clients. Issues such as readability, document design, the use of visuals, editing, and collaborative writing will be considered.

Objectives of the Course

This course aims to equip students with fundamental knowledge and skills to write and speak more effectively and ethically in a variety of professional contexts. Students will learn to:

- Think critically and read critically
- Adapt to communication situations based on rhetorical analysis
- Communicate effectively both through oral presentations and written documents
- Research complex problems and situations individually and collaboratively
- Understand the conventions and strategies for a range of formats
- Design documents that look professional and communicate information effectively
- Produce written documents that are focused, coherent, and readable

Internet and electronic communication device information

In the classroom, students may use laptops to take notes, but not to do personal work. In the lab, students may use laptops to work on class assignments but are responsible for making sure that the resulting assignment can be opened on the lab computers which use the same software as the instructor. At no time may students use cell phones for any reason whatsoever.

Textbook and Readings

G.J. Alred et al. (2011). *Handbook of Technical Writing* (10th edition, spiral bound).

Assignments and Evaluation

Instructions	Sept. 22	5%
Technical Memo	Sept. 29	5%
Professional Correspondence Portfolio	Oct. 13	10%
In-Class Midterm Exam	Oct. 20	15%
Proposal for Final Project (Team)	Oct. 27	5%
Final Project: Presentation (Team)	Nov. 17-24	10%
Final Project: Report (Team)	Dec. 8	25%
Take-Home Exam	Dec. 13	25%

All written assignments will be submitted through Digital Dropbox on Blackboard. No assignments will be submitted by email attachment or in hardcopy, whether handed to the instructor, dropped at the main office, or slid under office doors. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment, and to check email regularly for notices of missing assignments. All assignments and exams must be completed in order to pass the course.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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. Requests for extensions must be made in advance of the assignment due date, and are at the instructor's discretion.

Instructions This assignment is a 1-2 page document containing text and visuals, describing a step-by-step process for completing a task shown in a video posted on Blackboard.

Memo This assignment is a 1-page document containing text, "translating" a document made available on Blackboard into plain language for two different audiences.

Correspondence Portfolio This assignment is a 5-page document containing letters of various types as described in the textbook, responding to situations posted on Blackboard.

In-Class Midterm Exam Students will be given a document and asked to analyze that document and write a brief essay of about 500-750 words developing an argument about the document's effectiveness, using terms and concepts covered in the class to that date.

Team Project: Proposal This assignment is a 3-4 page document containing text, outlining the group's proposed client and assigning areas of responsibility for group members.

Team Project: Presentation This assignment includes a PowerPoint slideshow containing text and visuals; each group member will speak for 3-5 minutes.

Team Project: Formal Report This assignment will be worked on in the lab and outside of class time, as part of an assigned group. It is a 20-25 page document containing text and visuals, including both primary and secondary research by all group members, properly edited and cited using MLA or APA.

Take-Home Exam This assignment will be worked on outside of class during the exam period. Students will be given a document and asked to analyze that document and write a brief essay of about 750-1000 words developing an argument about the document's effectiveness, using terms and concepts covered in the class from the start to end of term.

Attendance and Participation Because this course is designed to prepare students for work in technical or business communication, collaborative work is an important component. A substantial part of the grade will be based on the team project, and there will be group work early in the term as preparation for individual assignments as well. Students will not automatically receive the team grade if they do not contribute meaningfully, substantially, and equally to the team's success. Therefore it is essential that all students attend all classes; occasional absence for reasons of illness or emergency is unlikely to seriously affect the grade, but regular absence because of conflicts with work schedules or personal issues certainly will. Students should consider this course as a commitment equal to that expected of a career-oriented job.

Writing Skills Statement

Faculty 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 according to a recognized citation style (in this class either APA or MLA). 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>

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.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library) 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>

Grading System

In this class, you will receive grades in the 4-point scale (2.7, 3.0, 3.3) *rather than* percentages.

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:
(Revised, effective September 2008)

Letter Grade	Grading Scale	Grade Point Value (see U of C Calendar: Academic Standing)
A+	96-100	4
A	90-95.99	4
A -	85-89.99	3.7
B+	80-84.99	3.3
B	75-79.99	3
B-	70-74.99	2.7
C+	65-69.99	2.3
C	60-64.99	2
C-	55-59.99	1.7
D+	53-54.99	1.3
D	50-52.99	1
F	0-49	0

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

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. 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>.

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/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

The reading schedule will be posted throughout the term through Blackboard announcements. Students are responsible for checking the Blackboard site at least once a week, well before each class, in order to keep up to date. Readings will include selections from the required textbook, as well as additional documents posted to Blackboard to support assignments as necessary.