

**Communications Studies (COMS) 363 - Lecture 04**  
**Professional and Technical Communication**  
**Fall 2013**

**Saturdays 13:00-16:30**

**Class Dates: Sept. 14, 21, 28, Oct. 5, 12, 19, 26, Nov. 2, 16, 23, 30**

**Instructor:** Rebecca Carruthers Den Hoed

**Office Location:** SS 337

**Office Phone:** n/a

**E-Mail:** rcarruth@ucalgary.ca

**Web Page:** blackboard.ucalgary.ca

**Office Hours:** Saturdays 10:00-12:00

### **Course Description**

An introduction to professional and technical communication. Students will learn the rhetorical dimensions of workplace settings and the process of planning, researching, composing, and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences.

### **Additional Information**

Course projects will focus on professional and technical communication for a variety of industries. Students should be prepared to research and communicate about topics beyond their own technical/professional expertise. However, students can select the topic of their group project and are encouraged to choose a topic associated with their area(s) of study.

### **Objectives of the Course**

The course will help you develop:

- a rhetorical approach to crafting documents in which you critically consider your purpose, the needs of your audience, and relevant context;
- a familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of technical and professional genres, including professional correspondence, proposals, reports, and presentations;
- document design strategies to ensure documents look professional, promote easy information retrieval, and use visuals effectively;
- writing strategies to keep writing focused, coherent, and readable;
- skill in editing to eliminate common errors in sentence structure, grammar, word use, spelling, and punctuation;
- familiarity with tools for online research and competence using a standard style of

documentation (e.g., IEEE, APA, MLA).

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

*Electronic devices in the classroom:* Students are welcome to use electronic devices in class (laptops, tablets, phones) for course-related communications. Students who use electronic devices for non-course-related reasons during class will be asked to leave the room while doing so, to avoid distracting students and the instructor.

*Recording lectures:* 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.

*E-mail Policy:* When emailing the instructor, make sure COMS 363.L04 is in the subject line and your name is in the “from” line. You can expect a response from your instructor within 48 hours.

*Blackboard E-mail:* Announcements are sometimes emailed to students *via* Blackboard. It is your responsibility to make sure Blackboard has an up-to-date email address for you. To update your email address in the University of Calgary (and Blackboard) system, follow the instructions at <<http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/blackboard/email>>.

### **Textbooks and Readings**

Tebeaux, E. & Dragga, S. (2012). *The Essentials of Technical Communication*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Correspondence	(15%)	Sept. 28th, 2013 @ 13:00
Editing for Readability/Design	(20%)	Oct. 12th, 2013 @ 13:00
Group Work Contract	(P/F)	Oct. 19th, 2013 @ 13:00
Questionnaire/Instructions	(15%)	Oct. 26th, 2013 @ 13:00
Proposal	(15%)	Nov. 9th, 2013 @ 13:00
Slideware Presentation	(15%)	Nov. 30th, 2013 @ 13:00
Formal Report	(20%)	Dec. 6th, 2013 @ 13:00

**Correspondence (solo):** Write two letters (200-500 words each) regarding an organizational change, addressing each to a different audience. Write a memo (300-500 words) that justifies the variations you made in the two letters.

**Editing for Style/Design (solo):** Edit two documents: one for writing style and the other for document design & graphics. Insert all editorial comments and suggested revisions into the documents using track changes.

**Questionnaire/Instructions (solo):** Draft a questionnaire/instructions for a website usability test. The questionnaire/instructions should include (1) 4-6 tasks for users, (2) 1-3 follow-up questions for each task, and (3) 2 or more questions about users' initial/final impressions of the website. This assignment is linked to the group usability study (below) and should focus on the website chosen for the group study.

**Proposal, Formal Report, Slideware Presentation (group):** These are linked assignments to be completed in groups of 2-3. Each group will write a proposal (500-600 words/ group member) that responds to a request for a *website usability study*. The proposal should outline the group's plan to conduct the requested usability test. After the usability test has been conducted, each group will write up a formal report of their usability findings and recommendations (900-1000 words / group member, not including letter of transmittal, references, or appendices). Each group will also present key findings and recommendations in an oral report (a "slideware" presentation clocking in at 3-5 min. / group member). Each group will also write and sign a group work contract: students who fail to fulfill the terms of their group contract will be subject to penalties agreed upon in advance by the group.

All assignments should be *emailed* to the instructor on or before the deadline. The subject line of the email should state "COMS 363 L04 [Assignment Name] [Student Last Names]." Attached files should be .doc, .docx, or .pages files. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Alternatively, assignments should be handed in directly to your instructor. If it is not possible to do so (and if email is not an option), 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.

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** No

### **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments are due by 1:00 pm on the due date. Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. If you need an extension, please email the instructor to ask for an extension at least 5 days before the assignment due date.

### **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>.

### **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://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: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

### **Grading System**

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
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.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) 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 Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) 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.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

### **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/ethics/cfreb>

Your instructor has applied for course-based ethics approval for COMS363. However, she must review and approve of your research plans, as set out in your proposal. If your instructor has any concerns, she may direct your proposal to the faculty research ethics committee.

- For COMS363, the research ethics requirements are explained in the assignment guidelines, and templates for letters of consent and anonymous surveys are available on Blackboard.

In your usability study proposal, you must clearly explain exactly how you plan to comply with the research ethics guidelines for your usability study project. If you have questions about the requirements, please contact the instructor. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see the Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site: <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

## **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

### **September 14**

Lecture: Workplace Writing; Ethics

Readings: Chapters 1 & 3

### **September 21**

Lecture: Writing for Readers; Correspondence

Readings: Chapter 2 & 7

### **September 28**

Lecture: Writing Style

Readings: Chapter 4

### **October 5**

Lecture: Design & Graphics

Readings: Chapters 5 & 6

### **October 12**

Lecture: Usability & Collaborative Writing  
Readings: TBA

**October 19**

Lecture: Instructions & Questionnaires  
Readings: Chapter 10

**October 26**

Lecture: Proposals  
Readings: Chapter 9

**November 2**

Lecture: Written Reports  
Readings: Chapter 8

**November 9**

no class

**November 16**

IN CLASS USABILITY TEST

**November 23**

Lecture: Oral Reports  
Readings: Chapter 11

**November 30**

IN CLASS PRESENTATIONS