

**Communications Studies COMS 363 L05**  
**Professional and Technical Communication**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Thursday: 6:30 – 9:20 p.m.**

**Instructor:** Linda Vennard  
**Office Location:** SS307 (Shared Office)  
**Office Phone:** TBA  
**E-Mail:** vennard@ucalgary.ca  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday 10:00 – 12:00 noon

**Additional Information**

Instructor is also available by appointment.

**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to professional and technical communication. Students will learn the practical dimension of written and oral communication in various settings, including workplace and academic, and the broader socio-cultural contexts of appropriate communication practices within these settings. Students will learn the processes involved in planning, composing and delivering professional and technical communication to a variety of audiences through “doing”.

**Objectives of the Course**

The primary objectives of this course are to help students develop skills in communicating effectively in a variety of professional and technical contexts. Students will:

- Learn current theories of genre and become competent and familiar with conventions and communication strategies in a variety of settings for a range of genres, including proposals and reports
- Develop skill and competence in finding, constructing and producing information for different audiences and purposes
- Learn and demonstrate skill in applying document design strategies and presentations appropriate to a variety of genres
- Develop skill in the mechanics of writing and grammar, organization and document design
- Learn to communicate effectively through oral presentations and written documents

**Internet and electronic communication device information**

Students are encouraged to bring their laptops, the use of which will be during designated times in class and only for purposes of the class, and otherwise not permitted.  
No texting or cell phone use permitted in class.

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

Graves, H. & Graves, R. (2007). *A Strategic Guide to Technical Communication*. Peterborough: Broadview Press.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

- In Class Exercise #1 (10%): on Sept 26, 2013
- In Class Exercise #2 (10%): on Oct 10, 2013
- In Class Exercise #3 (15%): on Nov 7, 2013
- Proposal (20%): due Oct 17, 2013
- Paper (20%): due Nov 28, 2013
- Presentation (10%): last week of class
- Grammar/Punctuation Oral Presentations (5%): throughout the course (sign-up first class)
- Participation (10%): Ongoing

### **About the In Class Exercises:**

There are three In Class Exercises with similar formats. Students will work collaboratively in small groups and prepare a short (1-4 pg.) essay or report on a specific topic, and a short (3-10 minute) presentation for the class. Students will complete the Exercises in class time, and the grade will be a common grade for the group. Specific topics in these themes will be assigned on the day of each exercise:

- In Class Exercise #1 (10%) on Sept 26, 2013 – Theme: Definition and Explanation.
- In Class Exercise #2 (10%) on Oct 10, 2013 – Theme: Description of Process
- In Class Exercise #3 (15%) on Nov 7, 2013 – Theme: Usability Study. Students will test and report on the usability of websites.

### **About the Proposal:**

Students will decide on a business or technical topic of their choosing and individually produce a 5 page *Proposal* (20% - due Oct 17, 2013) demonstrating competence in illustrating the conventions of the appropriate genre.

### **About the Paper:**

Students will decide on a business or technical topic of their choosing and individually produce a 5 page *Report (White Paper or Recommendation Report)* (20% - due Nov 28, 2013) demonstrating competence in illustrating the conventions of the appropriate genre.

### **About the Presentation:**

During the last week of class Students will present EITHER their individual Paper or Proposal to the class in a 10 minute presentation.

**About the Grammar/Punctuation Oral Presentations:**

Students will prepare a brief (5 minute) individual presentation on a specific topic of grammar/punctuation for the class. Sign-up for topics and dates is on the first day of class.

**About Participation:**

Participation (10%) through regular attendance and participation in class activities is an essential component of the course. The course is designed to reinforce student learning and mastery of the material through active engagement and “doing”, and Students can expect activities each class. Students are expected to attend classes and participate; “participation” is not only attendance per se but contributing to each others’ learning and participating in the creation of a positive atmosphere and learning environment.

**You do not need to complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in the course.**

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or 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. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

**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.

**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/cfreb>

### **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

A daily schedule of lectures and readings, as well as detailed assignment descriptions, will be made available on Blackboard on the first day of class.