

University of Calgary
Department of Communication and Culture

Communications Studies COMS 363, L01
PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

FALL 2014

Wed., Sept. 10 – Wed., Dec. 3

This section is entirely web-based, with no meeting times or labs

Instructor: Jo-Anne Andre, M.A.
Office: SS 300
Office Phone: (403) 220-7429
E-Mail: andre@ucalgary.ca (Please put 363 in the subject line)
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00–3:00 or by appointment except for Tuesdays

Additional information:

- This course is delivered via the D2L (Desire to Learn) system. Please check D2L frequently for course announcements and updates.
- For instructions on submitting assignments and viewing marked assignments and quizzes in D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>
- You are responsible for ensuring that your email address in D2L is current and working. In week 1, please email yourself a message from D2L. If you neglect to do this (and to fix any problems with your email), you may miss important messages about the course.

Course description and objectives:

An introduction to professional and technical communication. Students will learn the rhetorical dimensions of workplace settings as well as the process of planning, researching, composing, and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences. The major project in this course will involve a usability study of a website.

Objectives of the course:

The course will help you develop

- a rhetorical approach to crafting documents--one in which you critically consider your purpose, the needs of your audience, and relevant features of the context
- familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of written genres, including proposals and reports
- document design strategies to ensure that your documents and websites look professional, promote easy information retrieval, and use visuals to communicate information effectively
- writing and editing strategies to keep your writing focused, coherent, and readable
- familiarity with tools for online research and competence in using APA documentation style
- competence in preparing PowerPoint presentations.

Required textbook and readings:

Graves, H., & Graves. R. (2012). *A strategic guide to technical communication*, 2ND ed. Peterborough ON: Broadview Press.

Links to other required readings available online are provided in the weekly syllabus at the end of this outline.

Assignments & evaluation:

All the following (except the quizzes) must be completed in order to pass the course. Except as noted, assignments are to be done individually. See D2L for guidelines for all the written assignments.

Due Wed...	Assignment		Description
Sept.17	Quiz 1	4%	Quiz (on D2L) on Ch. 1, 2, 4, 5, & editing materials posted
Sept.24	Quiz 2	4%	Quiz (on D2L) on Ch. 7, 10, & APA materials posted
Oct. 1	Documentation evaluation memo	15%	2 or 3 single-spaced page memo (or letter) evaluating some aspect of D2L documentation (instructional material).
Oct. 8	Quiz 3	4%	Quiz (on D2L) on Ch. 3, 11, & other readings for this week.
Oct. 15	Quiz 4	4%	Quiz (on D2L) on Ch. 12 & other readings for this week.
Oct. 22	Quiz 5	4%	Quiz (on D2L) on Ch. 8, 9, & report writing guidelines posted
Oct. 29	Usability study proposal. GROUP**	16%	3 to 5 single-spaced pages plus references and appendices. The proposal outlines your usability study focus and method.
Nov. 5	Quiz 6	4%	Quiz (on D2L) on Ch. 6 & the Few (2007) reading.
	Visual critique	10%	1- or 2-page single-spaced memo evaluating a table or graph (online)
Nov. 26	Usability study report & letter of transmittal. GROUP**	25%	12 to 17 single-spaced pages, including the letter of transmittal, title page, references list, and all report elements except for appendices. This document will present the results of your usability study.
Dec. 3	Usability study PowerPoint GROUP**	10%	8- to 12-slide PowerPoint presentation (with integrated presentation notes) presenting the results of your usability study.

Registrar-scheduled exam: NO

* **Quizzes:** The quizzes are multiple-choice and administered through D2L. They are to be done individually without collaboration. Quizzes will remain open until midnight the day after the due date; quizzes submitted before the grace period ends will not be penalized for lateness. Quizzes not submitted by the end of the grace period will earn zero.

****Group assignments:** Students may opt to work individually rather than in groups for the three assignments related to the usability study (i.e., the proposal, final report, and PowerPoint); however, the workload will be the same whether the project is done individually or in a group. Students opting to work individually should advise the instructor by Tuesday, September 23.

Marking sections:

Students will be assigned to one of the following marking sections. Please direct all queries about assignments to the instructor (andre@ucalgary.ca) rather than to the markers.

Sec	Marker	Email
AF	Anabelle Fournier	anabellebf@gmail.com
AH	Andrea Hanslip	andreamarker@mac.com
JL	Jeremy Leipert	jkleiper@ucalgary.ca
CS	Christine Sopczak	cmsopcza@ucalgary.ca

Submission of assignments:

Please submit all assignments to the designated drop box in D2L. Marked assignments will be available for review on D2L. Only one copy of group assignments should be submitted; the marked copy will be available to all group members via D2L.

Be sure to include your name and ID number on all assignments. 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>

Please use .docx and .pptx (or .rtf) file formats for assignments. Avoid .pdf files as markers cannot add comments to them. Please use the following format for naming your files: *363 proposal Smith, Ngo, & Carter.doc*

Note: Students are responsible for keeping a copy of each submitted assignment and for ensuring that the correct copy of the assignment is uploaded to D2L. (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 are due at 7:00 pm on the due date, but students will be allowed a 48-hour grace period on all written assignments (i.e., until 7:00 pm on Friday for assignments due Wednesday). Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late, including weekends. Late penalties may apply when the assignment is submitted on time, but the wrong copy is uploaded.

Assignment length requirements:

Assignments more than 25% over the stated maximum length will be subject to a one-level grade penalty (e.g., from B to B-). Note that conciseness is a virtue in workplace writing.

Grade appeals:

Within 15 days of the return of an assignment, students may request a reassessment. Such requests should be directed to the instructor (by email), be professional in tone, and clearly explain the grounds for the reassessment. Note that grades may be increased or lowered on appeal. As explained in the University Calendar, reassessed grades may be further appealed at the department level within 15 days.

Policy on group assignment grades:

Students working in a group on the usability study will normally receive the same grade on the group assignments. However, the instructor reserves the right to deduct up to a full letter grade (e.g., from B to C) for a group member who contributes minimal work toward a group assignment. Students who contribute nothing toward a group assignment will earn an F (zero) on that assignment.

Group assignment submissions should include only the names of members who contributed to the assignment; including the name of a group member who did not contribute toward the assignment will be considered plagiarism.

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>

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 <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd 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>

Grading system & Department of Communication and Culture grade scale:

Except for the quizzes, work in this course will be graded using letter grades (or the percentage equivalents indicated below). The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in Communication and Culture:

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%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

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/research/research-ethics>

This course has received course-based ethics approval from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. All usability research in this course is to involve only Coms 363 students from this course section as research participants. Students must abide by the research ethics guidelines posted on D2L.

Important information, services, and contacts for students:

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 picarts@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus 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.

Please see the next page for the weekly syllabus for this course.

Weekly syllabus for Coms 363 (L01) Fall 2014		Instructor: J. Andre
Wed.	Deliverable due	Readings for this week (chapters from Graves & Graves)
Sept. 10		Course outline & Intro to Coms 363 (posted on D2L) Ch. 1 Thinking about audience, purpose, & genre (28 pp)
Sept. 17	Quiz 1 (4%, on Ch. 1, 2, 4, 5 & editing materials posted)	Ch. 2 Leading and misleading the reader (13 pp) Ch. 4 Writing technical prose (21 pp) Ch. 5 Designing documents and page layout (18 pp) Materials on editing (for pronouns, etc.) posted on D2L
Sept. 24	Quiz 2 (4%, on Ch. 7, 10 & APA materials posted)	Ch. 7 Writing email and letters for the workplace (13 pp) Ch. 10 Writing how-to documents (23 pp) Materials on Using APA Documentation Style (on D2L)
Oct. 1	Documentation evaluation memo or letter (15%)	Documentation evaluation memo or letter assignment guidelines (on D2L)
Oct. 8	Quiz 3 (4%, on Ch. 3, 11, + other readings for this week)	Ch. 3 Researching technical subjects (21 pp) Ch. 11 Testing and reporting document usability (21 pp) Gullikson, S., et al. (1999). The impact of information architecture on academic web site usability. <i>The Electronic Library</i> 17(5), 293-304. Retrieved from https://www.unc.edu/~acrystal/110-117/gullikson.pdf Jerz, D. (2010). Usability testing: 8 quick tips for designing tests. Retrieved from http://jerz.setonhill.edu/design/usability/tips.htm U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. (n.d). [Sections on usability basics, methods, & guidelines] Retrieved from http://www.usability.gov
Oct. 15	Quiz 4 (4%, on Ch. 12 + other readings for this week)	Ch. 12 Taking technical communication online (21 pp) Lynch, P. J. & Horton, S. (2009). <i>Web style guide, 3rd ed.</i> Retrieved from http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html Morkes, J. & Nielsen, J. (1997). Concise, scannable, and objective: How to write for the web. Retrieved from http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/writing.html
Oct. 22	Quiz 5 (4%, on Ch. 8, 9, & report-writing guidelines)	Ch. 8 Writing winning proposals (27 pp) Ch. 9 Reporting technical information (38 pp) Report writing guidelines (posted on D2L)
Oct. 29	Usability Study Proposal (16%)	Usability study proposal assignment guidelines (on D2L)
Nov. 5	Quiz 6 (4%, on Ch. 6 + Few reading) Visual critique memo (10%)	Ch. 6 Communicating through visuals (11 pp) Few, S. (2007). Save the pies for dessert. Retrieved from http://www.perceptualedge.com/articles/08-21-07.pdf (read fully) North Carolina State University (NCSU). (2004). LabWrite Resources, at http://labwrite.ncsu.edu/res/res-homepage.htm (review for reference only)
Nov. 12		No readings. Work on usability study and report
Nov. 19		No readings. Work on usability study and report.
Nov. 26	Usability Study Final Report (25%)	Ch. 13 Presenting technical information orally (13 pp) Brent, D., & Andre, J. (2011). Using PowerPoint Intelligently [PPT on D2L]
Dec. 3	Usability Study PowerPoint (10%)	