University of Calgary
Department of Communication and Culture

Communications Studies COMS 363 L02

Professional and Technical Communication

Fall 2014

An on-line course on D2L: https://d2l.ucalgary.ca/d2l

Instructor:	Lisa Stowe
Office:	SS206
Office Phone:	403 220 4840
E-Mail:	lstowe@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours:	By appointment

Course Description

COMS 363 is an introduction to professional and technical communication. **Note that this section of the course will be offered entirely online. There are no tutorials or formal classes for this course.**

This class takes a rhetorical approach to understanding professional and technical communication. Emphasis is placed on how workplace communication is situated within distinct organizational or corporate cultures as well as broader socio-cultural contexts.

This class will not provide you with a cookie cutter approach to technical and professional writing. Rather it will help you develop general concepts and tools to help you make sense of the various workplace writing situations. Emphasis will be placed on audience and genre analysis to help determine the best possible technical or professional structure. COMS 363 will help you develop general concepts and tools to help you make sense of workplace writing situations as they arise

Additional Information

*Please note: Put COMS 363 in your subject line so that I don't miss your message. Please read the entire course outline for valuable tips and advice on how to manage an online course.

Marking Groups and Markers: There are no face-to-face tutorials in this class. However, all students will be in one of eight marking groups on D2L. These groups will be assigned at random after the drop/add date, but I may move some students later in the term either to balance marking loads or to bring together students who wish to

collaborate on the final project. If you wish to change marking groups, please make your request as soon as possible.

If you wish to work as a group you must form your group by October 3 and submit your group members' names to me.

Objectives of the Course

This course will help you develop:

- a rhetorical approach to crafting documents--one in which you critically consider your purpose in writing, the needs of your audience(s), and relevant features of the context in which you are writing.

- an understanding of current theories of genre and familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of written genres, including business correspondence, proposals, and reports.

- document design strategies to ensure that your documents look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and use visuals to communicate information effectively;

- writing strategies to keep your writing focused, coherent, and readable.

- a sound command of the mechanics of writing and the skills to edit effectively to eliminate common errors in sentence structure, grammar, word use, spelling, and punctuation.

- competence in the use of a standard style of documentation.

- familiarity with a range of resources for professional writers, including tools for online research, for online composing, and for collaborative writing.

- skills in conducting primary research (usability analysis, surveys).

- competence in preparing PowerPoint presentations.

Textbooks and Readings

Ewald, T. (2014). Writing in the Technical Fields. Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP.

Other readings and resources are located on D2L. Relevant readings are identified in each specific module.

Internet and electronic communication device information
N/A
Technical requirements & support:

TO DO (1): Before the course begins, please visit the e-learning student help page:
http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students. Here, you will find helpful
resources for D2L plus links to information about obtaining an IT account, changing your
password, and updating your e-mail address in the system. Note that you must have an
IT account in order to access D2L. If you already have an @ucalgary.ca e-mail address,
you have the necessary IT account in place. Once you enter the D2L platform, check
out the help resources located under the HELP button on the menu. As you'll see, these
help resources include a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs). If you run into
problems, please check this area first.

TO DO (2): Before the course begins, please go into the D2L site and send an e-mail to
yourself. If you do not receive the e-mail, it is your responsibility to update your e-mail
address in the system (at the link provided on the e-learn page. If you neglect to update
your e-mail address in the system, you will miss important messages related to this
online course.

Be sure to check your e-mail often and to keep your e-mail box cleaned out. If your e-
mail box is full, you may miss important messages and returned course work as
messages bounced back to the instructor because of full e-mailboxes will normally not
be resent. (Returned messages because of full e-mail boxes tend to be a particular
problem with Hotmail accounts.)

TO DO (3): If you do not have PowerPoint and MS Word on your computer, please visit
the Microsoft download centre to download the PowerPoint and Word viewers:
http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/Search.aspx?displaylang=en

You must have composing software that can generate files readable in Microsoft Word
2000 or higher. If you are not using Microsoft Word, please save your files in a Word-
compatible format. If you are using Microsoft Word 2007, please use the save as
feature to save all files as .doc (2003-style) rather than .docx (2007- style). Markers may
have difficulty reading .docx files.

Assignments and Evaluation

Online Quiz Assignments Close Dates and Weight:

3 quizzes at 5% each (15% of final mark)

Quiz 1 (on Ch. 1,5 and 12) Closed: September 26

Quiz 2 (on Ch. 2, 3, 4, 9 and APA) Closed: October 10

Quiz 3 (on 6, 7, 8 and 10) Closed: November 21

Quizzes are open-book and are to be done individually without collaboration. Quizzes will remain open from the beginning of the semester until the due dates posted above. Once quizzes are closed, they will not be reopened. Please be reminded that some quiz due dates are the same due dates as submitted assignments so use your time wisely.

Ensure that you complete all quizzes before they close as the instructor will not hear any appeals to re-open these quizzes.

Submitted Assignments with weight, due dates, length and objectives. More details about the assignments can be found in the assignment guidelines posted under Assignments in D2L:

Reading Response (Individual Assignment)
Weight: 10%
Due: October 3 at 4:30pm
Length: 750 words

Objective: Students will understand the complexities of shifting genres as they write a reading response to the article Andre and Schneider (2004),"The Transition from Academic to Workplace Writing: Students Talk about their Experiences." Responses should reflect on students' experiences in writing for academic and workplace audiences.

Project proposal (Group or Individual Assignment)
Weight: 20%
Due: October 24 at 4:30pm
Length: 6-8 pages (8 absolute maximum) excluding appendices

Objective: Students must submit a project proposal which describes the focus of the proposed usability study of a website. The proposal will explain the criteria for analysis, offer a short literature review section that provides a scholarly overview of the theories and concepts that will be used in the report, set out proposed research methods in some detail and show that ethics considerations are taken into account before any primary research is conducted. Drafts of interview questions or survey questions are to be included.

Online Collaboration Recommendation Memo (Individual Assignment)
Weight: 15%
Due: November 7 at 4:30pm
Length: 750-1000 words

Objectives: Students will write a memo recommending an online collaborative project management system to bring a modest amount of secondary research to bear on a problem and to formulate a reasoned position based on that secondary research. Students will gain an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of collaborating online.

PowerPoint presentation & notes (Group or Individual Assignment)
Weight: 15%
Due: November 21 at 4:30pm
Length: 12-15 slides (15 maximum) plus speaker notes

Objectives: This assignment will test students' skill at reducing their report findings to a concise presentation that would effectively highlight the key points for an intended audience. Assessment will be based on slide design as well as slide content. Speaker notes must complement the slides, not replicate the material on the slides.

Final report (with letter of transmittal) (Group or Individual Assignment)
Weight: 25%
Due: December 5 at 4:30pm
Length: 15-18 single spaces pages (20 pages max, excluding appendices)

Objectives: By completing this assignment students will use both primary and secondary research techniques to gather material for a professional report and then prepare a report using accepted conventions of report layout. There is an expectation that students will bring together the past 13 weeks of instruction on audience, readability and style.

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

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.

Assignment Information and FAQ

Assignment submission, return, & important technical information

- Please submit all assignments (including the quizzes) via the links provided in the Dropbox options of D2L. Each assignment will have its own dropbox option. **Do not email your assignments to the marker or to the instructor.**

- Keep a copy of all assignments submitted. Consider using Box.net or Google.docs to store assignment copies so that they can be accessed from anywhere.

- Normally, assignments will be returned within two weeks. Retrieve your marked assignment via the assignment dropbox folder.

Assignment file formats & file names

- Please use .docx and .pptx (Microsoft 2007) files unless your marker prefers a different file format. A good alternative is .rtf file format.

- Avoid .pdf files as markers cannot add comments to them; however, you may submit a .pdf copy of your final report along with a .docx or .doc version, so your marker can check the .pdf in case formatting appears to be lost in translation using other formats.

- To minimize the chance of a file mix-up, please use the following format for naming your files: 363 proposal Jones.doc or if working in a group; 363 proposal Smith, Ngo, & Carter.doc

A note on word count:

- A supervisor who asks for a two-page memo either will not read a four-page response, or will not be in the best frame of mind when doing so. However, if it leaks a little onto the third page, and has enough real meat to make it worth reading, few supervisors will complain. With this in mind, then:

- All assignments should stick as closely as possible to the assigned length. A truly excellent assignment nails the question exactly and is the suggested length.

- However, there is a 10% grace in length. Therefore a 500-word assignment would not be actively penalized until it reached 550 words. Over 550, no assignment, however brilliant otherwise, would receive a clear A.

- Note that the report assignment specifically allows for more than the suggested page length if it contains bulky visuals. Otherwise the same rules apply to pages as well as number of words.

- Don't try to keep down to the required length by using narrow margins and teeny font. Your markers have all seen that trick before.

Due dates and late penalties

- Assignments are due on Friday at 4:30pm MST. There will be a two day grace period up until Sunday, at 4:30pm MST. If submitted after the grace period the assignment will be considered late and will be deducted one half letter grade per day. So if you score an A on an assignment but are three days late submitting that assignment, you will receive a final grade of B-.

- Please note that if you submit an assignment during the grace period then the makers will also have a grace period and your assignment will be marked after all other assignments submitted by the Friday deadline are marked and returned. If

you require an extension you must submit a 'request for extension memo' to the instructor, Lisa Stowe, before the deadline of Friday at 4:30.

Revisions and Grade Appeals

- Students (or groups) who earn a D or D+ on the reading response, proposal, recommendation memo, powerpoint presentation or final report may revise and resubmit the assignment to the instructor (by email) **within 15 days.** Successful revisions may earn a grade increase to the C- level.

- **Within 15 days** of the return of a marked assignment, students may request a reassessment of an assignment. Such requests should be directed to the instructor (by email), they should be professional in tone formatted as a memo, and they should clearly explain the grounds for the reassessment. (The tone should reflect the tone one would take if requesting a similar request of a supervisor in a workplace environment.)

- Note that grades may be increased or lowered on appeal. As explained in the University Calendar (p. 46), reassessed grades may be further appealed at the department level **within 15 days.**

Group project option

- The proposal, PowerPoint presentation and final report may be done individually or in a group of up to four members. Let me know who you are working with so that I can make sure you end up in the same marking group and are all marked by the same marker.

- **Note on group grades:** All group members will normally receive the same grade on group assignments. It is up to each group to ensure that the group's workload is distributed fairly among members and that all group members have a chance to review the final draft of any group document before it is submitted. Note that if a group member's name appears on an assignment, but that group member did not contribute to the document, he or she is guilty of plagiarism. Group assignments should include only the names of members who contributed to the document.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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

Submission of Assignments: All assignments are submitted electronically via D2L.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. 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

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (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 submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

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

Grading System & Dept of Communication and Culture Grade Scale
Work in this course will be graded using letter grades, except for online quizzes which are graded numerically, out of 5. 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%

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

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 a course based ethics certificate which means students can complete primary research using anonymous or non-anonymous online surveys, in-person testing methods and in-person interviews. Please consult the Ethics module in D2L to read more about the ethics protocols for COMS 363.

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 · **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 · **IT help line**	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE · **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 · **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 · **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.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings
Please see D2L for a comprehensive explanation of the course schedule and readings.