**University of Calgary**
**Department of Communication, Media, and Film**

**Communications Studies COMS 363 L03**
**Professional and Technical Communication**

**Fall 2015**

**Mondays 12:00-14:45**
**September 14—December 7 (excluding October 12)**

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| **Instructor:** | Prof. Lisa Bryce |
| **Office:** | Social Sciences 216 |
| **E-Mail:** | bryce@ucalgary.ca |
| **Office Hours:** | Tuesdays: 2:00-4:00 and by appointment |

**Course Description**
This course will introduce you to the practical elements of professional and technical communication. You will learn how to produce documents appropriate for workplace and academic settings that encompass both written and oral forms of professional and technical communication. Class assignments include practice in writing and speaking. The out-of-class assignments will contribute to your understanding of the course principles.

**Objectives of the Course**
The objectives of this course are the following:
- Learning to communicate effectively through oral presentations and written documents
- Developing expertise in the mechanics of writing: spelling, grammar, and punctuation
- Preparing various forms of documents including reports, proposals, summaries, and cover letters
- Becoming competent in finding and analyzing reliable sources to be used for producing information for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Learning document design techniques to create documents and websites that look professional and enable users to find and use information easily.

**Textbooks and Readings**
The following textbook is required for this course. Please read the relevant chapters before beginning your assignments. A digital version of this textbook is available.

Alred, G.J., Brusaw C.T., Oliu, W.E. (2014). *The Business Writer's Companion* (seventh edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

**Internet and electronic communication device information**
You are welcome to bring and use your laptop for assignments and other course work for this class.

Cell phones must be put away during class: texting, twittering, emailing, and so on are **not** permitted during class time.  Please respect your classmates' right to hear class material.

*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.*

**Assignments and Evaluation**

Table 1, following, gives the assignments, due dates, and percentages worth.

Table 1: Assignments and Evaluation

| Assignment | Due Date | Percentage Worth |
|---|---|---|
| In-class group assignment 1 (group mark) | September 28 | 5% |
| In-class group assignment 2 (group mark) | October 19 | 10% |
| In-class group assignment 3 (group mark) | November 2 | 10% |
| In-class group assignment 4 (group mark) Groups assigned in class | November 16 November 9 | 10% |
| Individually graded proposal and work | October 19 | 10% |
| Individually graded literature Review | November 9 | 15% |
| Individually graded oral presentation on findings | November 23, 30 and December 7 | 15% |
| Individually graded recommendations report | December 7 | 25% |

**Assignment Descriptions**

*In-class collaborative assignments 1 to 4*

You will prepare a written piece on the technical topic of the day. For each of these assignments, you will be given time in class to prepare.

*Assignment 1:* understanding audience in professional correspondence
*Assignment 2*: creating an effective document design:
*Assignment 3*: writing a set of instructions
*Assignment 4*: creating effective presentations

These four assignments are done in class on the day assigned. **They cannot be "made up" at a later date.**

*Proposal*

Following the guidelines in the textbook and covered in class, you need to conduct preliminary research and write a three- to four-page (space and one spaced, not including References list) proposal describing your final project that includes a detailed work plan. The work plan needs to include both a schedule (in a table or Gantt chart) and a discussion of the tasks you will be doing to complete your report and presentation.

The proposal must be written in report format following the conventions of page design shown in the textbook and covered in class. Use whatever type of graphics will help your reader understand your content. For example, use a table or Gantt chart for your work plan.

*Individual Literature Review*

Write a short literature review (that is the equivalent to 4 pages double spaced) that explores and expands upon some aspect of your final recommendation report that you find intriguing. The paper should show what you have learned about compiling scholarly research, choosing and incorporating documentary sources, and presenting an argument in a clear, concise, and

engaging manner. This research brief will demonstrate to your reader one of the focuses of your whole project. This review will contribute to your final project's quality.

*The Recommendation Report*
Using the guidelines from the textbook and covered in class, choose a website from the list that will be provided.  Analyze this website using the resources suggested and those you have found yourself. After analyzing the website and discussing its strengths and weaknesses, describe ways that it can be improved upon.

Rather than trying to do a broad analysis of the website, focus on a particular part that needs improvement to make the website usable. For example, you could focus on the website's aesthetics, page layout, and so forth.

You must do secondary research for this report, which you have gathered from the library. To make the report stronger, I recommend that you also do primary research (an anonymous class survey on the website's usability). Your research findings will help you direct and organize your points. Assuming about 250 words per page, your report should be about 2000-2500 words or 8 to 10 pages. This page count does not include the transmittal letter, cover page, table of contents, or references.

*Presentation*
During the final weeks of term, you will present your report to the class in a 10-minute presentation. You are evaluated on the professionalism with which you present in addition to the content of the presentation.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: None**

**Completion of Assignments**
Except for Assignments 1 through 4, all assignments must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** No

All assignments excluding in-class assignments 1—4 must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

**Submission of Assignments:** 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.

**Please submit both a paper copy and a digital copy to D2L for all assignments, excluding in-class assignments 1-3.**

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. If circumstances prevent you from submitting your assignment on time, please provide appropriate documentation (such as a doctor's note) and email me as soon as possible.

**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 and Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film**
Final grades are reported as letter grades. In addition, assignments and other work in this course will be graded using letter grades.

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

| 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 https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436 . 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/resources/ethics

*For this course, I recommend that you conduct an anonymous usability study to get your classmates' opinions of the usability of your website. Only people registered in this section of this class may contribute to your study. This usability study is the exception to the ethics consent rule.*

**Important information, services, and contacts for students**

| For information about . . . | Visit or contact . . . |
|---|---|
| **ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)** | SS 102  403-220-3580  artsads@ucalgary.ca |
| **CAMPUS SECURITY**<br><br>• **Calgary Police Service**<br><br>• **Emergency Text Messaging**<br><br>• **Emergency Evacuation & Assembly**<br><br>• **Safewalk Program** | http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/   **403-220-5333**<br><br>**403-266-1234       Emergency: call 911**<br><br>http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage<br><br>http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints<br><br>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**<br><br>• **IT help line** | http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students<br><br>403-220-5555  or  itsupport@ucalgary.ca |
| **STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE**<br>• **Writing Support Services**<br>• **Student Services Mobile App** | http://ucalgary.ca/ssc<br><br>http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support<br><br>http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents |
| **STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS**<br>• **Faculty of Arts Reps**<br>• **Student Ombudsman** | https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/<br><br>http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds |
| **SU WELLNESS CENTRE**<br><br>• **Counselling Services**<br><br>• **Health Services**<br><br>• **Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE**<br><br>• **Online resources and tips** | **403-210-9355** (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm<br><br>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling<br><br>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health<br><br>**403-266-HELP (4357)**<br><br>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus<br><br>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**
The schedule of lectures and readings will be posted on D2L.