

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communications Studies COMS 363, L05
PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

FALL 2015

Thu., Sep. 10 – Thu., Dec. 3 (excluding Nov. 12)

R 18:30 - 19:30; Lab R 19:45 - 21:15

Instructor: Shane Halasz
Office: SS 301
Office Phone: N/A
E-Mail: sdhalasz@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: M 13:30 – 14:30; F 9:30 – 10:30; or by appointment

Course Description

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. Students will gain knowledge and skills in writing across genres and disciplines through inquiry-based learning strategies and collaborative research projects. This theory-driven class will teach students open-ended skills that can be applied to a variety of workplace situations.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course students will learn how to:

- Think and read critically
- Adapt to a given communication situation based on rhetorical analysis of audience, context, and purpose
- Communicate more effectively, both through oral presentations and written documents
- Research complex problems and situations individually and collaboratively
- Conceptualize and operationalize primary research
- Refine composition, revision, and editing skills, including organization, document design, peer review, style, grammar, and diction

Textbooks and Readings

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

Internet and Electronic Communication Device Information

Laptop computers may be used for the sole purpose of taking notes. Cell phones and all other forms of electronic communication must be turned off and put away during class.

Assignments and Evaluation

1. *Oral Presentation on Writing/Grammar (5%)* Scheduled throughout semester – sign-up to occur in first class
2. *Summaries of Peer Reviewed Journal Article for Technical Reader (Memo 12.5%) and Non-technical Reader (Newsletter Article 12.5%)* Due Sep. 24
3. *Group Proposal and Work Plan (10%)* Due by end of lab on Oct. 15
4. *Individual Literature Review (20%)* Due at beginning of lecture on Nov. 5
5. *Oral Presentations on Group Project Findings (10%)* Due Dec. 3
6. *Group Recommendations Report (30%)* Due on Desire2Learn by 11:59pm on Dec. 7

1. *Oral Presentation on Writing/Grammar (5%)* Scheduled throughout semester – sign-up to occur in first class

Students will sign up to present on a particular topic in grammar or punctuation. The goal of the 5-minute presentation is to teach the rest of the class accurate and useful information. The best presentations will link the discussion to other course concepts and issues related to professional and/or technical communication.

2. *Summaries of Peer Reviewed Journal Article for Technical Reader (Memo 12.5%) and Non-technical Reader (Newsletter Article 12.5%)* Due Sep. 24 at the end of lab

Students will locate a peer-reviewed journal article in any suitable discipline and then summarize its main content/findings in two different genres for two different audiences: first, as a technical memo addressed to your superior in the workplace (500 words), and second, as an organizational newsletter article (500 words) written for a non-technical reader.

3. *Group Proposal and Work Plan (10%)* Due Oct. 15 at the end of lab

As a group, students will conduct preliminary research and collaboratively write a 3-page (single-spaced, not including references list) proposal outlining your final group project as well as a 2-page (single-spaced) work plan (with a GANTT chart included as an appendix).

4. *Individual Literature Review (20%)* Due Nov. 5 at beginning of lecture

Each student will submit a short literature review (4-pages double-spaced) that explores and expands upon some aspect of his or her final group project that he or she finds interesting. The paper should demonstrate what the student has learned about assembling solid library (i.e., *scholarly*) research, selecting and integrating documentary sources, and presenting an argument in a clear, concise, and engaging manner. This research brief should bring the reader up to speed on one particular angle of the overall project and position the group to produce a robust final report.

5. *Oral Presentations on Group Project Findings (10%)* Due Dec. 3

As a group, students will deliver a ten-minute presentation using PowerPoint that summarizes the content from their group's recommendations report.

6. *Group Recommendations Report (30%)* Due on Desire2Learn by 11:59pm Dec. 7

The main deliverable of your group project is the recommendations report, in which you will select a website from a list provided that you will analyze and suggest ways to improve upon. Secondary (library) and primary (field) research will support your assessment of the chosen document and inform whatever recommendations are made for improvement. The final report should be substantive (approximately 4000 words) and be addressed to your client organization (whoever produced the document you're testing).

NB: At the end of the semester all students will fill out a peer evaluation form for everybody in their group (except themselves). Each student's group work scores will be adjusted based on peer evaluations so that those who contributed most and collaborated best will be rewarded accordingly, and those who contributed least or hindered collaboration will likewise receive less.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

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: 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. Some assignments will specify that they should be submitted to 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.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Please note:

1. Students seeking accommodations for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors directly. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
2. When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
3. For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

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 & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using

- letter grades
- percentage grades
- raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)
- GPA values (using any value on the 0 to 4.0 scale, including, e.g., 3.2 or 2.8)
- a combination of the above.

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>

In this class, students will conduct website usability tests during lab time, in which they act as participants for each other.

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 <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 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Ombudsman 	
<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>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.</p>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

To be posted on D2L.