

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 363 L01 Professional and Technical Communication

FALL 2019: Thurs., Sept. 5 to Thurs., Dec. 5 (excluding Nov. 12 & 14)

Virtual Thursdays (an online course)

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Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours:	Wednesdays 1:00 to 3:00 pm or by appointment any afternoon.

Course Description. An introduction to professional and technical communication in diverse media. Examines the rhetorical dimensions of workplace settings as well as the process of planning, composing and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences.

Additional Information. The course is entirely online, with no scheduled lectures. The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline. This course involves some group work. To do well in this course, schedule at least 5 hours a week to complete readings and work on assignments.

Objectives of the Course. By the end of this course, students should know how to

- approach workplace communication rhetorically, focusing not only on their purpose in writing but also on the needs and expectations of their audience and considering the ethical dimensions and other relevant features of the writing context.
- format basic workplace genres, including formal and informal reports, proposals, letters, memos, emails, and, optionally, résumés, instructions, technical descriptions, and websites.
- write and design effective print and online documents, using headings, lists, well-crafted paragraphs, figures, tables, and white space, as appropriate.
- conduct secondary research (locating relevant sources using the U of C library search tools online). Depending on the focus of the recommendation report assignment, students may also be expected to know how to construct and interpret and present results from a simple empirical study (e.g., a small-scale usability study involving testing, interviews, or surveys).
- effectively use and correctly cite information from sources using a citation style appropriate to the course audience, ideally APA and/or IEEE style.
- edit documents to eliminate common writing errors.
- design effective PowerPoint slides.

Textbooks and Readings

Ewald, T. (2017). *Writing in the Technical Fields: A Practical Guide*. 2nd edition. Don Mills ON: Oxford University Press. (Note: used copies should be available on campus.)

Please refer to the following free online sources as assigned or for further reference:

Lynch, P. J., & Horton, S. (2017). *Web Style Guide* (3rd edition). Available at <http://webstyleguide.com/index.html>

Murdoch University. (2019). *IEEE Style: Citing in the text. A guide to IEEE referencing*. Retrieved from <https://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/IEEE/text>

North Carolina State University (NCSU). (2004). *LabWrite Resources*. Retrieved from <https://labwrite.ncsu.edu/res/res-homepage.htm> *This resource includes a tutorial on using Excel and offers detailed information on designing and using tables and graphs. It includes numerous examples of various types of graphs.*

Simon Fraser University Library. (2019). *General notes: APA (6th ed., 2010) citation guide*. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/cite-write/citation-style-guides/apa>

SurveyMonkey. (2019). 10 Best Practices for Creating Effective Surveys. Retrieved from https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/survey-guidelines/?ut_source=header

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2019). Usability.gov. Retrieved from <https://guidelines.usability.gov>

U.S Federal Plain Language Guidelines--part of the site Plainlanguage.gov. Retrieved from <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/guidelines/FederalPLGuidelines/index.cfm?CFID=1908094&CFTOKEN=ae5fd6ab3da64c89-6C57445D-ED66-FA5E-03033CCF05DCAF6A&jsessionid=B4306E5189D7F0661E6804317ABD3728.chh>

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices.

Students must have frequent, regular access to the Internet and email. Supported technologies: Course technologies usually work with all the major browsers (i.e. Firefox, Internet Explorer, Chrome, Safari) and operating systems (Mac, Windows, etc). However, compatibility problems may occur with outdated browsers, plugins or apps, and usability issues may occur on mobile devices.

Before the course begins, please

- check your system's compatibility in D2L via My Tools > System Check
- send an email to yourself from within D2L to ensure that emails from D2L are not being directed to a spam folder or going to an account not linked to D2L. To change your email settings, go to Communication → News → More actions → Notifications
- configure your message notifications to specify what course news items you would like sent to your SMS (message feed) or Email by going to Communication → News → More actions → Notifications → Instant Notifications
- visit the following link for information on campus WiFi, computer labs, Office 365, eLearning tools, and IT help: https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it?id=kb_article&sys_id=86e7438013753ac06f3afbb2e144b031

Assignments and Evaluation

Please see assignment guidelines on D2L.

Note that all assignments are due at 11:59 pm on the date indicated.

Weight	Assessed Components	Due (Thurs.)
7%	Discussion board posting (1 para.) based on Ewald Appendix C, Q C1, C3, or C4.	Sept. 12
8%	Editing quiz on D2L based on Ewald Appendix A and editing handouts on D2L. (20 questions, multiple choice, randomized). Opens noon Sept. 16	Sept. 19
12%	Revision exercises (submitted in a single file, based on Ewald Ch. 2, & 4).	Sept. 26
15%	Proposal for final project study (with group contract) (<i>3 to 4 pages, done in groups of 2 or 3</i>). In your proposal, you will outline a problem or opportunity related in some way to environmental sustainability on campus or to the communication of sustainability initiatives on a website or in a set of related documents available online from a university or other organization; your research for this project (and final recommendations) will become the basis for your final recommendation report and PowerPoint. Your proposal should (1) clearly describe the project or research to be studied; (2) make a case for why it's important or should be funded; (3) explain your proposed research process and deliverables (i.e., a final recommendation report and PowerPoint presentation); (4) provide a timeline and hypothetical budget; and (5) include a group contract as an appendix.	Oct. 17
18%	Visual critique memo (2-3 pages, single-spaced, individual) Memo critiquing tables, graphs, and other visuals in an assigned report	Oct. 31
10%	Online quiz based on Ewald Ch. 12 & 13 (multiple choice, 20 questions)	Nov. 7
23%	Final recommendation report (<i>12 to 15 pages, completed in project groups</i>). In this report, you will present the results of your research project and provide recommendations for either implementing a sustainability project on campus or improving a website (or set of documents available online) related to sustainability, as outlined in your proposal. Note on grace period: You may hand in this assignment by 11:59 pm Sat., Nov. 30 with no late penalty.	Nov. 28
7%	PowerPoint (<i>8 to 10 slides, completed in project groups</i>). This Powerpoint is based on your final research project and recommendation report. It must be collaboratively crafted by all group members.	Dec. 5

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Note: You must complete all assignments and exams worth 10% or more in order to pass this course. If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Group assignments:

For the Usability Study project and related assignments, students will work in the same groups of 3. Students will have until 11:59 September 26 to form their own groups of 3 by using the group formation tool in D2L. Students not in a group at that point will be randomly assigned to a group of 3. (Watch D2L for more information on this starting next week.)

Group assignments should only include the names of members who contributed to the work; including names of group members who did not contribute is a form of plagiarism. Normally, all members of a group will earn the same grade for group assignments, but the instructor may adjust individual group members' grades based on formal or informal peer evaluations. The instructor may administer peer evaluations to any group; peer evaluations will also be administered to any group if any member of that group so requests. (The names of group members requesting peer evaluations will be kept confidential.)

Submission of Assignments: Please use .docx and .pptx (or .rtf) file formats for assignments. Do not use .pdf file formats as we cannot add comments to them. Include your last name(s) in your file names (e.g., *363 proposal Collins, Chu, & Malor.docx*). Please include your name 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/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Please submit all written assignments to the designated D2L drop box. Only one person should submit group assignments to the group dropboxes. Marked assignments submitted to a group dropbox will be accessible for review by all group members.

If you encounter difficulty submitting through D2L, please email the assignment to the instructor with "COMS 363 Temporary Submission" in the subject line. As soon as D2L becomes available, please resubmit the assignment in the designated drop box and leave a note in the comment box, indicating that you've submitted earlier by email to avoid late penalties.

If you are unable to submit your assignment via D2L or email, please use the drop box 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. **Note:** It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments in SS 320. Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter 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); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation 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.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In this course, all work except for online quizzes and the revision exercises will be graded using letter grades. Online quizzes and the revision exercises will be graded using percentage grades or numerical scores.

Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

- * If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.
- ** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course content created by the instructor is the instructor's intellectual property. As such, it should not be shared publicly or sold without the instructor's consent. Intellectual property is protected under Canadian copyright laws.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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

The course-based research ethics approval in place for COMS 363 covers only research (e.g., surveys) involving your fellow students in this section of the course. If you propose to do other research involving human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your

instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Course Work

Please enter due dates in your calendar and complete all readings by the date specified. After reading chapters from Ewald, review the corresponding Ewald chapter PPT (on D2L)

	Topics & readings	Work due (Thurs.)
Sept. 5	Introduction to course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read course outline (posted on D2L) See Nov. 26 note below in Column 3 on group formation. 	Configure D2L settings as instructed in this outline above.
Sept. 12	Introduction to technical and professional writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ewald, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-16) Ewald, Appendix C (pp. 297-302) 	Discussion board posting (1 para.) in response to Ewald Appendix C, Q C1 or C3, or C4.
Sept. 19	Editing for common errors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ewald, Appendix A & B (pp. 269-296) plus glossary (pp. 303-310) Editing handouts (under Content on D2L) 	Editing quiz on D2L based on the readings for this week (20 Qs, multiple choice, randomized). Quiz opens noon Sept. 16.
Sept. 26	Effective revising for sentences, paragraphs, & parallelism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ewald, Ch. 2, 3, & 4 (pp. 20-68). <p><i>Revision exercise details (please do all the following questions from Ewald, number your questions responses clearly, and submit this all in a single file):</i> Ch. 2 (Sec. 2.1: Qs 2, 4, 5, 6, 9; and Sec. 2.2: Qs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6) Ch. 3 (Sec. 3.2: Qs 2, 5, 6, 8) Ch. 4 (Q 4.5 – revise this email to make it more effective by incorporating a grammatically parallel bulleted list and editing for clarity and conciseness. Use your judgement in deciding what level of detail to include.) Grading: Q 4.5 is worth 5%; all others are .5% each (total = 12%)</p>	Revision exercises. See column 2 for details. Sign up for a group on D2L by this date, or you will be randomly assigned to a group of 3.
Oct. 3	Writing correspondence and short reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ewald, Ch. 5 (pp. 69-83) Ewald, Ch. 6 (pp. 84-113) 	
Oct. 10	Writing proposals & working in project groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal assignment guidelines (on D2L). 	If you haven't already met with your assigned group, do so this

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample COMS 363 reports posted on D2L • Ewald, Ch. 8 (p. 144-157) + PPT for Ch. 8 – Intercultural Communication, Collaborative Writing, & Document Control • Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University. (2010). <i>Working in groups: A note to faculty and a quick guide for students</i>. Retrieved July 5, 2018, from https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/working-groups 	<p><i>week. You have a group assignment (the proposal) due next week.</i></p>
Oct. 17	<p>Designing Effective Websites & Assessing Aspects of Usability</p> <p><i>IMPT: The readings listed below are optional but recommended if you will be proposing to do a website usability study as your final project</i></p> <p>Overview & Universal Usability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1 & 2, Lynch, P. J. & Horton, S. (2009). <i>Web Style Guide</i>, 3rd ed. Retrieved July 5, 2018, from http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html; • Ewald, Ch. 13 Section on usability (p. 242-244) <p>Organization of information & navigation tools and links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3, 4, 5, Lynch, P. J. & Horton, S. at http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html <p>Page layout, design elements, typography, headings, & visuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6, 7, 8, 11,12, Lynch, P. J. & Horton, S. at http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html <p>Content (clarity, helpfulness) & usability of interactive features (e.g., membership forms, contact links)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 9, 10, Lynch, P. J. & Horton, S. at http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html • Morkes, J. & Nielsen, J. (1997). Concise, scannable, and objective: How to write for the web. At http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/writing.html <p>Designing surveys and usability tests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jerz, D. (2010). Usability testing: 8 quick tips for designing tests. Retrieved July 5, 2018, from http://jerz.setonhill.edu/design/usability/tips.htm • U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. (n.d). Sections on Usability Evaluation Basics. Retrieved July 5, 2018, from http://www.usability.gov • SurveyMonkey. (2019). 10 Best Practices for Creating Effective Surveys. Retrieved from https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/survey-guidelines/?ut_source=header 	<p>Proposal (including a group contract as an appendix)</p>
Oct. 24	<p>Using and citing sources (in IEEE and APA styles)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ewald, Ch. 9 (pp. 160-176) plus scan the citation resources provided on D2L, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Murdoch University. (2019). <i>IEEE Style: Citing in the text. A guide to IEEE referencing</i>. Retrieved from https://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/IEEE/text ○ SFU Library. (2018). General notes: APA (6th ed., 2010) citation guide. https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/cite-write/citation-style-guides/apa 	<p><i>From now to the end of term, you should be working on your research and final report with your group.</i></p>
Oct. 31	<p>Designing and using visuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ewald, Ch. 10 (p. 177-190) & PPT on Ch. 10 – Technical Graphics • Few, S. (2007). Save the pies for dessert. Retrieved from https://www.perceptualedge.com/articles/visual_business_intelligence/save_the_pies_for_dessert.pdf • North Carolina State University (NCSU). (2004). LabWrite Resources. Retrieved from http://labwrite.ncsu.edu/res/res-homepage.htm 	<p>Visual critique memo: Memo critiquing visuals in an assigned report.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wainer, H. (1992). Understanding graphs and tables. <i>Educational Researcher</i>, 21(1), 14-23. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1176346?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents Assignment guidelines for the visual critique memo) on D2L 	
Nov. 7	Other technical genres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ewald, Ch. 12 & PPT for Ch. 12 – Technical Definitions and Descriptions Ewald, Ch. 13 & PPT for Ch. 13 – Instructions, Procedure, and Manuals 	Online quiz (20 questions, multiple choice) based on Ewald Ch. 12 & 13. (Quiz opens Nov. 5)
Nov. 14	Reading week (No readings. Office hours cancelled this week.)	
Nov. 21	Writing formal reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ewald, Ch. 7 (p. 114- 142) Assignment guidelines with report-writing checklist (on D2L) 	
Nov. 28	Work on final report with your group (no readings)	Final recommendation report
Dec. 5	Crafting presentations and PowerPoint slides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brent, D., & Andre, J. (2011). Using PowerPoint Intelligently [PPT on D2L] Ewald, Ch. 14 (pp. 252-268) PowerPoint assignment guidelines (on D2L) 	PowerPoint based on final project