

University of Calgary Faculty of Arts, Department of Communication and Culture
Communications Studies (COMS) 363, Lecture 23
Professional and Technical Communication

Spring 2012

TR 12:00 - 14:50

Class dates: May 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 29, 31 & June 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21

Instructor: Kerry McArthur
Office location: SS 209
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After class Tuesdays and
Office hours: Thursdays or by
appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to professional and technical communication in the Canadian workplace. Students will learn to develop a number of standard workplace writing skills – including oral communication, proposals and presentations, and technical writing – for a variety of organizational audiences. The course will emphasize the importance of working in teams, interacting with diverse populations, and writing/speaking with confidence in the workplace.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course, students will be better equipped to:

- Adapt generic documents to address specific organizational needs;
- Build and defend strong arguments for diverse workplace audiences;
- Deliver effective oral presentations (both impromptu and formal PowerPoint presentations);
- Edit their own writing, with attention to common errors in sentence structure, punctuation, word choice and grammar.

Internet and electronic communication device/professionalism information

Students will be asked to vote on the class's communication and participation/professionalism policy on May 10th. This means you as a group will decide on: technology etiquette (i.e., when/if laptop use during class is appropriate); how classroom discussion will contribute to your final participation grade; and how diverse students (i.e.,

those whose first language is not English, or students who suffer stage fright when speaking in class) may be equitably graded for their participation.

When contacting me by e-mail, please use the tag "COMS 363" in your subject line.

Textbooks and readings

There is no required textbook for this course; we will use instead a series of academic journal articles based in empirical research on technical and business communication issues. These articles will be posted on Blackboard as per University of Calgary library guidelines. Other recommended texts and style guides, many of them online, will be discussed in class.

Assignments and evaluation

- **Resume assignment:** 5%, due May 22; one- to two-page updated individual resume
- **Oral group reading presentation:** 15%, ongoing (to be scheduled first class); 30-minute group presentation with slides summarizing salient points of selected scholarly reading
- **Proposal/business letter for final project:** 15%, due May 29; four-page document (including business letter and three-page proposal) describing your group's proposed project
- **Oral progress report with annotated bibliography:** 10%, due June 12; 10-minute oral progress report to be delivered in class; three- to four-page annotated bibliography to be delivered following the oral progress report
- **Oral presentation with PowerPoint:** 20%, June 19 & 21; 30-minute group presentation with slides summarizing salient points of group final report
- **Group final report:** 25%, due June 21; depending on your group's selected project, final reports may be anywhere from 14 to 16 pages, not including References
- **Participation/Professionalism:** 10% (professionalism, teamwork, discussion, individual feedback)

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.

Registrar-scheduled final examination: No

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.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. 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

The following grading system is used in the Faculty of Communication and Culture (Revised, effective September 2008):

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99

C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes; F will be converted to zero.

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. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Digital Family Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link; <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

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

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site: <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

Schedule of lectures and readings

Note: The chapter readings mentioned above are drawn from a variety of research sources, including engineering and business journals in the U of C library. Entries marked by a double asterisk (**) indicate assignments due in class that day.

May 10: Introduction to course objectives; group selection
Classroom discussion of participation/professionalism grade
Audience, purpose, and genre in technical/business communication

May 15: Communication, career and the resume
Developing a group contract (due in class this day)

- May 17: Defining communication objectives
On writing empirical research reports
- May 22: Developing proposals and business letters
****INDIVIDUAL RESUME DUE TODAY IN CLASS**
- May 24: Designing outlines for technical/business purposes
Creating documents and page layout
- May 29: Devising visual strategies for technical/business purposes
****PROPOSAL/BUSINESS LETTER FOR FINAL REPORT DUE TODAY IN CLASS**
- May 31: Writing technical prose
Designing memos
- June 5: Researching and writing an annotated bibliography
Presenting technical information orally
- June 7: Reporting technical/business information
Revising report drafts
- June 12: Creating reader-centred websites
****ORAL UPDATE/PROGRESS REPORT WITH ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE TODAY IN CLASS**
- June 14: Ethical issues in technical/business communication
Devising a project management plan
Rhetorical strategies in technical/business communication
- June 19: ****ORAL PRESENTATIONS w/POWERPOINT BEGIN TODAY IN CLASS**
- June 21: ****ORAL PRESENTATIONS w/POWERPOINT COMPLETE TODAY IN CLASS**
****GROUP REPORT DUE TODAY IN CLASS**