

Communications Studies (COMS 363) LEC 28
Professional and Technical Communication
Spring 2012
Saturdays 8:00 am – 12:30 pm

Instructor: Calvin Seaman
Office Location: SS 209
E-Mail: cbseaman@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: Blackboard
Office Hours: Saturdays 12:30 – 1:30 (after lab)

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 critically 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
- Refine composition, revision, and editing skills, including organization, document design, peer review, style, grammar, and diction

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students will utilize a U of C computer lab for a portion of class. All assignments will be submitted via Blackboard.

Textbooks and Readings:

Graves, H. & Graves, R. (2011). *A strategic guide to technical communication*. Peterborough: Broadview Press. (2nd Edition recommended)

Assignments and Evaluation

1. *Class and lab participation (10%) Ongoing*

Students are expected to actively participate in lectures, plus complete small revision exercises in labs that apply to lecture content via the discussion board.

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

Students will sign up to present five minutes on a particular topic in grammar, punctuation, or style. The goal of the presentation is to teach the rest of the class accurate information with respect to the definition and usage of each topic.

3. *Writing in the new genre: reading response – 500 words (10%) Due May 13, 2012*

Write a brief response in which you discuss a time when you had to learn to work in a new genre. If you have had experience of a workplace (even a summer job) in which you had to use a new written genre (even something as simple as filling in forms in a particular way), use that experience. If not, discuss an experience of learning another new genre -- perhaps learning the conventions of a History paper when you are more used to writing Chemistry lab reports, for instance.

4. *Group Proposal and Work Plan (10%) Due May 27, 2012*

Research and write a 2 to 3 page (single-spaced) proposal for the final group project (recommendations report and oral presentation), as well as a 2-page (single-spaced) work plan (with a GANTT chart included as an appendix).

5. *Summaries of Peer Reviewed Journal Article for Technical Reader (Memo – 300 words 12.5%) and General Reader (Newsletter Article – 500 words 12.5%) Due June 3, 2012*

Find an academic (peer-reviewed) journal article in some field with which you are familiar/conversant/interested and summarize it for a technical audience (specifically, for your workplace supervisor, who has a background similar to yours) in the form of an e-mail memo. Summarize the same academic (peer-reviewed) journal article, but this time for a general (non-technical) audience in the form of a newsletter article.

6. *Oral Presentations on Group Project Findings (10%) Due June 16, 2012*

Prepare a 10 minute presentation for your classmates and me on the findings from your final recommendations report. The challenge here is to revise your report for a listening audience, rather than merely to read from your report.

7. *Group Recommendations Report (30%) Due June 17, 2012*

Groups will conduct a usability test on a Calgary based not-for-profit website. Groups will submit a 11-16 page (single spaced) report that presents their research, findings, and recommendations. By completing this assignment successfully, you will learn to:

- use both primary and secondary research techniques to gather material for a professional report
- prepare a report using accepted conventions of report layout
- bring together the past 13 weeks of instruction on audience, readability and style
- hone your ability to follow instructions to produce a product as requested

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your assignments via blackboard. 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

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

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 Department 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

Please see blackboard for a current schedule of readings.