

**Communications Studies (COMS) 363 L21**  
**Professional and Technical Communication**  
**Spring 2013**  
**MW 12:00 - 13:00 ES 054; Lab MW 13:15 - 14:45 SS 020**

**Instructor:** Shane Halasz  
**Office Location:** SS 304  
**E-Mail:** sdhalasz@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** <http://blackboard.ucalgary.ca>  
**Office Hours:** Monday and Tuesday 10:00 - 11:00 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 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
- Conceptualize and operationalize primary research
- Refine composition, revision, and editing skills, including organization, document design, peer review, style, grammar, and diction

### **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.

## **Textbooks and Readings:**

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

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

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 (Newsletter Article 12.5%)* Due May 27, 2013 at the end of class

Students will locate a peer-reviewed journal article in any suitable discipline and then summarize its content 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 June 5, 2013 at the end of class

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 June 17 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 June 26, 2013

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 Blackboard June 28, 2013

The main deliverable of your group project is the recommendations report, in which you will select a 'primary' document (or object of analysis) that you will analyze and suggest ways to improve upon. This may consist of a brochure, a procedures manual, a set of instructions, or another similar document. 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 3000 words) and be addressed to your client organization (whoever produced the document you're testing).

You and your group members will receive the same grade on all components unless your work plan/group contract provides grounds for doing otherwise. Any case for one or more group members receiving a lower grade due to unsatisfactory performance will have to be thoroughly documented.

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

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**

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://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:

	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 (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Taylor Family Digital

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.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

### **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/ethics/cfreb>

### **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

Please read Chapter 1 in the course textbook in preparation for the first lecture. A detailed schedule of readings and lectures will be distributed in the first class.