

University of Calgary
Department of Communication and Culture
Communications Studies (COMS) 363, Lecture 05
Professional and Technical Communication
Summer 2014 (July 2 – August 14th)
Tuesday/Thursdays 18:00-20:45

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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursday, 11 am- noon or by appointment

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the rhetorical dimensions of professional and technical communication. It emphasizes a practical approach to concise, clear and effective written communication for a broad range of professional contexts and purposes.

Objectives:

Through the course's lectures, discussions, activities and assignments, students will develop skills in the following areas:

- rhetorical approaches to crafting documents
- an understanding of the conventions for a range of written genres and contexts
- skills involved in group and collaborative research and writing
- document design strategies that ensure professional and effective communication
- writing skills that promote clear, concise, relevant and persuasive communication

Textbooks and Readings

The following required text is available at the University of Calgary bookstore: *The Essentials of Technical Communications* (2012: 2nd edition) by Elizabeth Tebeaux & Sam Dragga

From time to time, students may be required to read additional material posted on D2L.

Evaluation Breakdown (Total = 100%)

Quiz #1: July 22 **2 x 5%**

Quiz #2: August 5

The purpose of the quizzes is to assess understanding and retention of core concepts covered in the text and class lecture. The format will be primarily multiple choice and short answers.

3 minute grammar presentation **5%**

July 15-July 29

Working in groups, students will present on a common grammar problem. The presentation must offer clarity, instruction and practical application.

In class participation assignments **10%**

Short assignments are completed and submitted *in class*. These assignments are not graded but count towards participation. There will be no opportunity to make up these marks.

Resume and cover letter **10%**

Due July 15

For this assignment students will write a resume and cover letter based on their own work experiences and employment goals. Your resume and cover letter must be for the same position. Resume must be no longer than 2 pages and cover letter must be 1 page. Documents must demonstrate persuasive and appropriate language as covered in course materials. A peer-reviewed draft must be submitted along with the final documents.

Memo/Letter **10%**

Due July 22

This assignment requires students to compose a letter or memo consistent with the features of professional correspondence discussed in the course.

Option A: claim letter that documents a problem with a specific product or service and uses persuasive means to request for specific action to solve the problem.

Option B: memorandum that outlines a specific workplace issue related to the adherence of the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

Annotated Bibliography **10%**

Due July 29

Students must prepare an annotated bibliography of 10 articles relevant to their group's final project. This assignment must be done individually; however, there must be no overlap with articles selected by other group members. This assignment is designed to help students develop research, documenting, and collaborative skills.

Final Project **35%**

Draft August 7/ Final due August 14

Working in groups, students will prepare a research-based technical report (15-20pgs) that comprehensively applies the principles and techniques for effective professional communication covered in the course.

This project requires: primary and secondary sources, original data, a survey, visual aids (tables, graphs, images, diagrams etc.), and bibliography (see annotated bibliography). Primary research must only be conducted among students in the course (COMS 363:L05) in order to comply with the Faculty of Arts ethics in research. Students must not only thoroughly evaluate and research a particular issue but also provide research based recommendations.

Option A: Usability study

Write a report on the usability and effectiveness of a website designed by either a government or public educational institution.

Option B: Recommendation report

Write a report comparing two similar products or services and recommend one.

Option C: Campus problem

Write a report on a problem facing the U of C community

Oral Presentation:**10%****August 12-14**

Each group must prepare an 8-10 min presentation on their final project

All assignments need to be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

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.

Late Policy

If students are unable to submit assignments in class, then assignments must be submitted to the communication undergraduate office, SS320. Assignment submitted at SS320 will receive a date stamp which is then used to calculate late penalties. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission.

Weekend exception: Assignments handed in over the weekend will be penalized for 2 late days. If students expect their assignment to be considered as a “true” Friday submission, it must be handed in BEFORE the office closes at 4:30pm.

Late assignments will be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Sickness and other personal circumstances must be accompanied by documentation in order to be considered for an exception to the late policy.**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>

Research Guidelines

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>

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

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.

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>.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Electronic devices in the classroom: Students may use electronic devices (laptops, notepads etc.) for class-related activities only (i.e. note-taking, group projects, research etc.). Electronic devices for non course-related activities are not allowed as they are distracting to the instructor as well as other students. The instructor reserves the right to request electronic communication to be turned off at any time.

Recording lectures: Recording any part of any lecture in any form without permission is not permitted. Photographing lecture slides is not permitted. These restrictions are due to copyright and intellectual property issues and are strictly enforced.

E-mail Policy: Important announcements and course information will often be sent via D2L (previously Blackboard). It is your responsibility to make sure D2L has the correct email address and, of course, that you are reading these emails carefully.

Response time to student emails is 24hrs. If you have not received a response in 24hrs, then please send a reminder email. Please clearly state your first and last name in any correspondence.

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 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 Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) 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.

Course Schedule

Date		Topics and Due Dates
1. TH	July 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to syllabus and each other • Chapter 1: Characteristics of professional writing. • Chapter 2: Audience • Assign groups for 3 min. grammar lesson
2. T	July 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 4 & 5: Achieving readable style • Chapter 12: Job application documents • Power Points (pp. 273-302)

3. TH	July 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editing resumes and mock interviews • Group work for grammar presentations
4. T	July 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DUE: Resume & Cover Letter • Group 1, 2, 3 “grammar” presentation • Ethical considerations
5. TH	July 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Correspondence • Group 4, 5, 6, “grammar” presentation • Work on Memo/Letter assignment • Group work
6. T	July 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QUIZ: #1 • Due Memo/Letter • Chapter 8: Technical Reports • Research skills and annotated bibliography • Groups 7, 8, 9
7. TH	July 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups 10, 11, 12 • Group work
8. T	July 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DUE Annotated bibliography • Chapter 8: Surveys
9. TH	July 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group work on proposal
10. T	August 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz #2 • Visual Aids
11. TH	August 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Project DRAFT • Peer Review of draft projects
12. T	August 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on final project (8 mins) Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
13. TH	August 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on draft project (8 mins) Groups 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 • Final Project DUE