University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 363 L03
Professional and Technical Communication

Summer 2019

Online

July 2 – August 13 (Excluding Aug. 5)

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Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours:	By appointment; communication primarily through email

Course Description
COMS 363 is an introduction to professional and technical communication. 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 experiential learning strategies and collaborative research projects. This is a performance-driven class intended to teach students skills that can be applied to a variety of work settings. The class will help you to develop general concepts and tools to help you make sense of workplace writing situations as they arise.

Additional Information
Note that this section of the course will be offered entirely online. There are no tutorials or formal classes for this course. Students can expect to put in the same amount of work (in hours) as they would if the course met face-to-face. Students should read the assigned chapters and online material. Each chapter includes power points to assist in understanding ideas. Furthermore, students will participate in online discussions of case studies applying course content to professional communication contexts. Students will also participate in usability study research both as the researcher and as study participants.

Technical Requirements and Support
  1. Before the course begins, please visit the e-learning student help page: http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students. Here, you will find helpful resources for D2L plus links to information about obtaining an IT account, changing your password, and updating your email address in the system. Note that you must have an IT account in order to access D2L. If you already have an @ucalgary.ca email address, you have the necessary account in place. Once you enter the D2L platform, check out the help resources located under the HELP icon on the menu. As you'll see, these help resources

include a list of frequently asked questions. If you run into problems, please check here first.

2. Before the course begins, please log into the D2L site and send an email to yourself. If you do not receive the email, it is your responsibility to update your email address in the system (at the link provided on the e-learn page. If you neglect to update your email address in the system, you will miss important messages related to this online course.

3. Be sure to check your email often and to keep your email box cleaned out. If your email box is full, you may miss important messages and returned course work as messages bounced back to the instructor because of full email boxes will normally not be resent. (Hotmail accounts are particularly prone to this type of problem).

4. If you do not have Power Point and MS Word on your computer, please access your U of C Office 365 account. Alternatively, you can visit the Microsoft download Centre to download the Power Point and Word viewers: http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/search.aspx?displaylang=eng. You must have composing software that can generate files readable in Microsoft Word (at least 2007 or later) and Power Point.

Objectives of the Course

Students will learn about the process of planning, composing, and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences. This course is designed to help you develop the following:

- A rhetorical approach to crafting documents—one in which you critically consider your purpose in writing, the needs of your audience(s), and relevant features of the context in which you are writing;
- Writing strategies to keep your writing focused, coherent, and readable;
- Familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of written genres, including business correspondence, proposals, and reports;
- Familiarity with a range of resources for professional writers, including tools for online research, for online composing, and for collaborative writing;
- Document design strategies to ensure that your documents look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and use visuals to communicate information effectively;
- Skills in conducting primary research (usability analysis, surveys);
- Competence in the use of standard style of documentation;
- Competence in preparing visual and oral presentations.

Textbooks and Readings

Meyer, C. (2017). *Communicating for results: A Canadian student's guide, 4th ed..* Ontario: Oxford University Press.

Other readings and resources are located on D2L.

Internet and Electronic Communication Device Information

Students must have frequent, regular access to the Internet and email. A high-speed Internet connection is highly recommended. The course will be held online via the university's D2L learning management system at https://d2l.ucalgary.ca/. I strongly recommend that you download a personal backup copy of this course outline and all online course materials such as

assignment descriptions and rubrics in case you need them when Internet access is temporarily unavailable. A PDF reader is required for this.

Supported Technologies
Course technologies usually work with all the major browsers (i.e. Firefox, Internet Explorer, Chrome, Safari) and operating systems (Mac and Windows). However, compatibility problems may occur with outdated browsers, plugins or apps, and usability issues may occur on mobile devices. Check your system's compatibility in D2L via My Tools > System Check. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have personal computer systems that are compatible with course technologies, or they must use on-campus computers provided in libraries or labs.

Sending Email
When initiating an email to your instructor from your own email account, send the email to jmfelt@ucalgary.ca and please put 'COMS 363' somewhere in the subject line.

Email Management
Students are responsible for ensuring they receive course email notifications and messages from the instructor, and receiving notifications they have subscribed to (i.e. email notifications of new messages from teammates in group discussion forums). Make sure course messages do not get filtered into spam or junk folders or get rejected by your mail server. By default, D2L will use the email address associated with your U of C ID. Configure your notification preferences in your D2L Settings, and then subscribe to desired discussion forums and threads.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
15%	Forum Discussions (Individual)	At the completion of each chapter
10%	Resume and Cover Letter (Individual)	July 5
10%	Power Point with Speaking Notes (Individual)	July 11
10%	Proposal for Group Term Project: Usability Study	July 29
30%	**Online Quiz Assignments** 3 open-book quizzes at 10% each for 30% of final mark Quiz 1 (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 10, & 13) Closed May 17 Quiz 2 (Chapters 4, 5, 9, 11, & 12) Closed June 5 Quiz 3 (Chapters 6, 7, 8, & 14) Closed June 17	Open until Q1: July 15 Q2: July 31 Q3: Aug. 13
25%	Group Term Project: Usability Study	August 13

Forum Discussions (50-500 words each, 15 total)
Because this course does not meet together, forum discussions take the place of in-class discussions. Each chapter includes case studies and/or questions designed to engage students in applying the concepts of the chapter to professional communication contexts. You are not required to answer all of the questions posed for each chapter. However, you are graded on

participating in the discussion for each chapter. For some weeks, this may involve responding to one or two of the several questions posed. Your participation may also come in the form of a response to something other students have posted. Be sure, however, that you are adding your thoughts and contribution to at least one of the prompts for each of the chapters. Typical responses will be less than 500 words. Responses should be submitted during the assigned two-day period for each chapter, according to the course calendar. Pay attention to the class timeline. Submit Case Study responses by 11:59 p.m. on the date listed on the course calendar as the due date. Once the discussion thread closes, you will not be able to contribute a submission.

Resume (Scannable) and Cover Letter (1 page each)
This assignment requires students to create a resume and cover letter crafted for a specific job in mind. It is highly recommended that students search for a specific job opening that they might hope to apply for one day (perhaps once their degree is completed). Prepare a targeted letter of application. Include specific contact information with the cover letter and craft it in a manner that makes the specific job opening clear. Be certain to address what qualifications you have that make you well-suited for the specific position. Do not exaggerate or list qualifications you have not yet earned. Choose the resume style most appropriate for your education, skills, and experience: chronological, functional, or combination. Prepare a traditional resume targeted to the posting. *The resume should be capable of being scanned into an electronic resume-tracking system or electronic resume database.* This is a specific resume style, one explained in chapter 10. Please refer to best practices conveyed in chapter 10, specifically pages 332-354 in completing this assignment.

Power Point with Speaking Notes (12-15 slides plus speaker notes)
This assignment will test students' skill at reducing their report findings to a concise presentation that would effectively highlight the key points for an intended audience. Assessment will be based on slide design as well as slide content. Speaker notes must complement the slides, not replicate the material on the slides. Further details for this assignment will be posted on D2L.

The focus of this presentation is on effective group work and collaborative writing for a student audience. Refer to http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/group-work as well as information on teamwork from chapter 1 (pp. 18-21), collaborative writing from chapter 3 (pp. 100-104), and other appropriate content.

Group Proposal for Term Project
(1000-1500 words, approx. 4-6 single-spaced pages, excluding appendices)
Students must submit a project proposal which describes the focus of the proposed usability study of a website. The proposal will explain the object of analysis and criteria for analysis, offer a short literature review section that provides a scholarly overview of the theories and concepts that will be used in the report, set out proposed research methods in some detail and show that ethics considerations are taken into account before any primary research is conducted.

Appendices should include drafts of interview or survey questions. Another appendix should include a 1-2-page group contract for the usability study. This should outline your group rules and expectations as well as how group problems will be dealt with. The contract should specify which group members will be responsible for which tasks. Further details for this assignment will be posted to D2L.

Quizzes

The quizzes are open-book and are to be completed individually, without collaboration. Quizzes will remain open from the beginning of the semester until the due dates posted above. Once quizzes are closed, they will not be reopened. Please be reminded that some quiz due dates are in close proximity to or overlap with the due dates for other submitted assignments, so use your time wisely.

Ensure you complete all quizzes before they close because the instructor will not hear any appeals to reopen them after the closing date.

Group Term Project: Usability Study
(2000-3000 words, approx. 8-12 single-spaced pages, plus appendices and cover letter)
By completing this assignment, students will use both primary and secondary research techniques to gather material for a professional report and then prepare a report using accepted conventions of report layout. There is an expectation that students will bring together the content of the course in the delivery of this final report.

This formal report should include a cover letter. It will present your group's usability study research of a specific website, key findings, and recommendations. At a minimum, the usability study should explore the following heuristic analysis: (1) organization of information, navigation tools and links; (2) page layout, design elements, typography, headings, and visuals; and (3) content clarity and helpfulness and usability of interactive features such as membership forms and contact links. Further details for this assignment will be posted in D2L.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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

Submission of Assignments

All assignments must be submitted to the D2L dropbox by the deadline. Dropboxes will close at 11:59 p.m. on the due date and will not be reopened. Students submitting after the due date will be docked late marks.

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in this course which requires electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

Policy for Late Assignments
Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) or the percentage equivalent of a letter grade for each day late. No assignments will be accepted more than 3 days after the due date. The final Group Term Project: Usability Study will not be accepted after Aug. 13.
Group Assignments
For the proposal and term project, students will work in the same groups of 3-4. Students will have until Monday July 22 to set up groups of 3-4 on D2L. Students not in groups by then will be randomly assigned.

For group assignments, only one person should submit the assignment to the D2L dropbox. Marked assignments submitted to a group dropbox will be accessible for review by all group members.

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).

Student Accommodations and Deferrals
Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework 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 for 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, please see the following:

- Section N.1 of the *University Calendar*: https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html

- FAQs for Students at https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq

Note that when accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to that of another assignment or test.

For information on deferrals, see the following sections in the *University Calendar:*

- Section G.7 Deferral of Term Work at http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html

- Section G.6 Deferral of Final Exam at http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale
Final grades are reported as letter grades. All assignment grades will be reported as numerical grades. The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

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.

Writing Skills Statement
Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will 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. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support

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

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links at https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support. Research and citation resources are also available on the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/ If you have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support.

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
Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations, as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics

This course has course-based ethics approval. This means that students may collect primary data by way of surveys, interviews, in-person testing and other methods suitable for usability testing. All usability research in this course is to involve only COMS 363 students from this course section as research participants. Students must securely store the data and respect participant anonymity while reporting results. Students must abide by the research ethics guidelines posted on D2L.

In this course, COMS 363, students are expected to participate in at least one usability survey on a designated website. Survey participation (or recruitment) performs an educational role of helping students understand methods from the participant's and the researcher's perspective while interpreting the data.

All course assignments and drafts are confidential to their authors and the instructional team for the duration of the course. After the course, if students desire to share their reports with others, such as the owners of the website being analyzed, or as part of their professional portfolio, they may only do so with the prior written permission of all co-authors.

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 https://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising
CAMPUS SECURITY **& Safewalk Program** • **Calgary Police Service** • **Emergency Text Messaging** • **Emergency Evacuation & Assembly**	 http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ **403-220-5333** 403-266-1234 **Emergency: call 911** http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support • **IT help line**	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE • **Writing Support Services** • **Events & Info for Students**	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS • **Faculty of Arts Reps** • **Student Ombuds**	 https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE • **Health Services** • **Mental Health Services** • **Distress entre 24/7 CRISIS LINE** • **Online resources and tips**	**403-210-9355** (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling **403-266-HELP (4357)** http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Date	Focus & Readings	Due
July 2	Ch. 1: Issues and Trends	
July 3	Ch. 1: Issues and Trends	Case Study (CS) 1: Making Waves at Work
July 4	Ch. 10: Communication for Employment	CS 22: Resume and Cover Letter Editing
July 5	Ch. 10: Communication for Employment	**Resume and Cover Letter**
July 8	Ch. 2: Getting the Message Across	
July 9	Ch. 2: Getting the Message Across	CS 4: Know Your Audience
July 10	Ch. 13: Oral Communication	CS 15: Too Much Information
July 11	Ch. 13: Oral Communication	**Power Point and Speaker Notes**
July 12	Ch. 3: Planning, Writing and Revising	CS 17: I Don't Understand What You Want
July15	Ch. 3: Planning, Writing and Revising	**Quiz 1**
July 16	Ch. 4: Word Choice, Conciseness and Tone	
July 17	Ch. 4: Word Choice, Conciseness and Tone	CS 5: The Style that Confuses
July 18	Ch. 5: Sentences and Paragraphs	
July 19	Ch. 5: Sentences and Paragraphs	CS 6: Toy Pigs and Poor Sentence Structure
July 22	Ch. 9: Persuasive Messages	Groups Selected
July 23	Ch. 9: Persuasive Messages	CS 11: Ask Not What the Company Can Do for You
July 24	Usability Studies	CS: Usability Studies Report Review
July 25	Usability Studies	
July 26	Ch. 12: Proposals and Formal Reports	CS 13: Am I Repeating Myself?
July 29	Ch. 12: Proposals and Formal Reports	**Group Proposal**
July 30	Ch. 11: Informal Reports	CS 12: It's a Matter of Form
July 31	Ch. 11: Informal Reports	**Quiz 2**
Aug. 1	Ch. 6: Memorandums, Email and Routine Messages	
Aug. 2	Ch. 6: Memorandums, Email and Routine Messages	CS 7: Thanks, I Guess, and Thanks Again
Aug. 5	Heritage Day – No Class	
Aug. 6	Ch. 7: Routine and Goodwill Messages	CS 8: Is Anyone Listening?
Aug. 7	Ch. 7: Routine and Goodwill Messages	
Aug. 8	Ch. 8: Delivering Unfavorable News	CS 9: I Regret to Inform You
Aug. 9	Ch. 8: Delivering Unfavorable News	CS 20: Tweets and Secrets
Aug. 12	Ch. 14: Social Media and Mobile Communication	
Aug. 13	Ch. 14: Social Media and Mobile Communication	**Quiz 3** **Group Term Project:** Usability Study