University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 363 L01
Professional and Technical Communication

Winter 2017

An on-line course on D2L: https://d2l.ucalgary.ca/d2l

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Course Description
COMS 363 is an introduction to professional and technical communication. **Note that this section of the course will be offered entirely online. There are no tutorials or formal classes for this course.**

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.

This class will not provide you with a cookie cutter approach to technical and professional writing. Rather it will help you develop general concepts and tools to help you make sense of the various workplace writing situations. Emphasis will be placed on audience and genre analysis to help determine the best possible technical or professional structure. COMS 363 will help you develop general concepts and tools to help you make sense of workplace writing situations as they arise

Additional Information
*Please note: Put COMS 363 in your subject line so that I don't miss your message. Please read the entire course outline for valuable tips and advice on how to manage an online course.

Marking Groups and Markers: There are no face-to-face tutorials in this class. However, all students will be in one of eight marking groups on D2L. These groups will be assigned at random after the drop/add date, but I may move some students later in the term either to balance marking loads or to bring together students who wish to collaborate on the final project. If you wish to change marking groups, please make your request as soon as possible.

If you wish to work as a group you must form your group by January 24 and submit your group members' names to me lstowe@ucalgary.ca.

Technical requirements & support:

TO DO (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 e-mail address in the system. Note that you must have an IT account in order to access D2L. If you already have an @ucalgary.ca e-mail address, you have the necessary IT account in place. Once you enter the D2L platform, check out the help resources located under the HELP button on the menu. As you'll see, these help resources include a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs). If you run into problems, please check this area first.

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

Be sure to check your e-mail often and to keep your e-mail box cleaned out. If your e-mail box is full, you may miss important messages and returned course work as messages bounced back to the instructor because of full e-mailboxes will normally not be resent. (Returned messages because of full e-mail boxes tend to be a particular problem with Hotmail accounts.)

TO DO (3): If you do not have PowerPoint and MS Word on your computer, please visit the Microsoft download centre to download the PowerPoint and Word viewers: http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/Search.aspx?displaylang=en

You must have composing software that can generate files readable in Microsoft Word 2000 or higher. If you are not using Microsoft Word, please save your files in a Word-compatible format. If you are using Microsoft Word 2007, please use the save as feature to save all files as .doc (2003-style) rather than .docx (2007- style). Markers may have difficulty reading .docx files

Objectives of the Course
This course will help you develop:

- 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.

- an understanding of current theories of genre and familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of written genres, including business correspondence, proposals, and reports.

- document design strategies to ensure that your documents look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and use visuals to communicate information effectively;

- writing strategies to keep your writing focused, coherent, and readable.

- a sound command of the mechanics of writing and the skills to edit effectively to eliminate common errors in sentence structure, grammar, word use, spelling, and punctuation.

- competence in the use of a standard style of documentation.

- familiarity with a range of resources for professional writers, including tools for online research, for online composing, and for collaborative writing.

- skills in conducting primary research (usability analysis, surveys).

- competence in preparing PowerPoint presentations.

Textbooks and Readings
Ewald, T. (2014). *Writing in the Technical Fields.* Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP.

Other readings and resources are located on D2L. Relevant readings are identified in each specific module.

Internet and electronic communication device information
N/A

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
15%	**Online Quiz Assignments** 3 quizzes at 5% each (15% of final mark) Quiz 1 (on Chs. 1,5 and 12) Closed: January 27 Quiz 2 (on Chs. 2, 3, 4, 9 and APA) Closed: February 17 Quiz 3 (on Chs. 6, 7, 8 and 10) Closed: March 10 Quizzes are open-book and are to be done 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 the same due dates as submitted assignments so use your time wisely. *Ensure that you complete all quizzes before they close as the instructor will not hear any appeals to re-open these quizzes.	Jan, 27, Feb. 17, March 10

15%	Process Description Assignment (Individual Assignment) Length: 750 words Objective: To understand how audience expectations inform a writer's style and execution, students will pick a technical topic they are familair with and write a process description of that topic for a general non-specfic audience. Process descriptions are not a set of instructions, rather they are descriptions of how something works. The focus of this assignment is on how things work not on how to use them. Essays will be evaluated on how well the stuident communicates the process to the audience. More details on this assignment can be found in D2L.	Friday, February 3 by 4:30pm.
15%	**Project proposal (Group Option or Individual Assignment)** **Length: 6-8 pages (8 absolute maximum) excluding appendices** Objective: Students must submit a project proposal which describes the focus of the proposed usability study of a website. The proposal will explain the 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. Drafts of interview questions or survey questions are included. Further details for this assignment will be posted on D2L.	Friday, February 17 by 4:30pm
20%	**Analysis of a Visual (Individual Assignment)** **Length: 750 words** Objectives: Students will locate and critically analyze a visual (bar chart, graph, diagram, schematic, etc.) pointing out and discussing any ethical or communication challenges of the selected visual. The analysis will be based on Ewald's discussion in Chapter 10 of effective and ethical technical visuals. Further details for this assignment will be posted on D2L.	Friday, March 3 by 4:30pm
10%	**Powerpoint Presentation (Group Option or Individual Assignment)** **Length: 12-15 slides (15 slides maximum) plus speaker notes** Objectives: 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.	Friday, March 24 by 4:30pm

25%	Final report (with letter of transmittal) (Group Option or Individual Assignment) Length: 12-15 single spaces pages (15 pages max, excluding appendices) Objectives: 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 past 13 weeks of instruction on audience, readability and style. Further details for this assignment will be posted on D2L.	Friday, April 7 by 4:30pm

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 4:30pm of the due date and will not be reopened. Students submitting after 4:30pm 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 courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

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. [Edit as you wish to reflect your own policy.]

Student Accommodations:
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) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.

- 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 another assignment or test.

- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-

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 Centre. Visit the website for more details: http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support

Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

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	**A+**	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	**A**	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		**A -**	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		**B+**	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	**B**	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		**B-**	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		**C+**	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	**C**	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		**C-**	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	**D+**	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		**D**	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to 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.

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 provided at https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436 . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, 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 (e.g., 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 which means student scan collect primary data by way of surveys, interviews, in-person testing and other methods suitable for usability testing. Ethics information and consent forms can be found in D2L.

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY • **Calgary Police Service** • **Emergency Text Messaging** • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • **Safewalk Program**	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 If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (**220-5333)**. For more

	information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
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** • **Student Services Mobile App**	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS • **Faculty of Arts Reps** • **Student Ombudsman**	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE • **Counselling Services** • **Health Services** • **Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE** • **Online resources and tips**	**403-210-9355** (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 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
Please see D2L for a detailed schedule of the course.