

University of Calgary

Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 363 L01 PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

WINTER 2019

Thurs., January 10 – Fri. April 12 (Excluding February 18-22)

Online Section

Instructor: Dr. Tania S. Smith

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E-Mail: smit@ucalgary.ca Please put “363” in the subject line.

Web Page: D2L (Brightspace) through MyUofC portal

Office Hours: Tues. 15:30-16:30, Thurs. 15:30-16:30, and by appointment.
To schedule an appointment, use this calendar [LINK](#)

Course Description

An introduction to professional and technical communication in diverse media. Students will learn the rhetorical dimensions of workplace settings as well as the process of planning, composing and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences.

Additional Information

This section of the course will be offered entirely online. There are no face-to-face classes or tutorials in this course, and no requirement to be present on campus. Student-teacher interaction and guidance are provided by online forums, email, Skype, YouTube videos, telephone, face-to-face office hours, and appointments with the instructor. Students may work in groups on the term project and are encouraged to study together, either online or in person as convenient. Because of the lack of regular face-to-face communication, this course outline includes more detailed requirements and information. Assignment instructions also include as much instruction as possible in writing.

Objectives of the Course

Understand and use communication concepts

- Understand and adapt conventions for a range of written professional genres, including correspondence, proposals, reports, public websites, and surveys.
- Understand how rhetorical theory and website usability and user experience (UX) theory apply to effective, ethical and efficient technical and professional communication both on websites and in written documents.

Develop technical writing and research skills

- Write and edit language effectively to ensure documents are focused, coherent, and readable. This includes the skills to edit to eliminate errors and style problems in standard written English, as well as the ability to organize ideas into sentences, paragraphs, and sections.
- Conduct well-designed usability research on real websites (via user surveys and expert reviews) and analyze the data in light of usability and rhetorical principles.
- Design a document's formatting and layout to look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and effectively integrate visuals such as images, graphs and tables.
- Integrate borrowed ideas and materials from other sources with clarity, accuracy, and ethical attribution, using APA Style 6th edition for in-text citations and references.

Develop technological skills necessary for professional communication

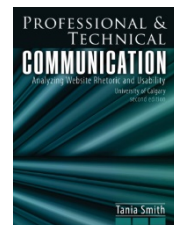
- Navigate and use various online applications useful in professional communication
- Use advanced features of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel) to design figures, tables, and the overall layout and formatting of professional documents.

Textbooks and Readings

Purchase this textbook:

Smith, T. (2019). Professional and Technical Communication: Analyzing Website Rhetoric and Usability (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

- NOTE: Available from the U of C bookstore and online at the Kendall Hunt website. Do NOT purchase the old edition because content is entirely new and revised. The correct edition has a GREEN cover.



Additional FREE online readings will be inked to D2L according to U of C copyright policy.

Internet and electronic communication device information

The course is online via the Brightspace / Desire2Learn (D2L) course management system. Students must have reliable access to the Internet. A high-speed Internet connection is recommended. The course requires the use of Google Forms for a survey.

Computer hardware: Students must use computers that is compatible with course technologies. A laptop or desktop computer is necessary for access to all tools within online applications. On-campus computers are also provided in libraries and labs.

Computer software: Microsoft Office (Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel) version 2015 or later is required. If you use any other word processing program, it will not work for all required features of assignments, and it can cause incompatibility with group members' programs. MS Office is available to U of C Students at a reduced cost at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/it/services/software>

Email management: Students must ensure they are receiving all course-related email messages and D2L notifications from their instructor and term project group. Prevent course emails from being tagged as spam or junk. By default, Desire2Learn will use the email address associated with your U of C ID. Configure subscriptions and notifications in D2L.

Assignments and Evaluation

%	Course component	Due
15%	Participation activities. Every 2 weeks, students participate in online discussion posts and replies, homework quizzes, and optional activities led by our course's undergraduate "peer mentors." Participation also includes filling out additional website surveys beyond one's quota. Scores are given in two phases: Jan 14 to Mar 02 (7.5%) and Mar 03 to April 12 (75%)	Throughout the term as scheduled
25%	Open-book Reading Exams (Individual, Online). Each exam, delivered through D2L's Quizzes portal, consists of a unique set of multi-select, matching, and/or short-answer questions. Readings should be completed as scheduled in advance. Students have at least 5 days to work on the exam and save their answers before submission. Estimate 2 hours per exam, plus reading time.	Feb. 01 = 10% Mar 01 = 7.5% Apr 01 = 7.5%
10%	Proposal: 750 words plus tables and appendices. As a group or single author (see "Group Policies" below), address the marker and instructor about your plans. The week after submission, all students must participate in at least 3 other groups' website surveys to meet their website survey quota and avoid a -10% penalty on proposal.	Feb 08 Fulfill survey quota by Feb 15
50%	Term project. Group and Single-author term projects have slightly different requirements and deadlines, as shown below.	
Group	15% Individual Report: Each member submits a report evaluating their group's website's rhetoric, 1000-1500w plus tables, figures, front and back matter.	Mar 08
	35% Group Report: Rhetoric and Usability. Includes the best of each member's revised Individual Reports, plus new content on website usability and additional report sections.	Draft Mar 25 Final April 12

		DRAFT must be complete and on time or -10% penalty on final. FINAL: 1200-2000w per member within the body, plus tables, figures, front and back matter. Group reports include authorship notes, author credits appendix, and require quality group participation.	
Single	15%	Single-author Report 1: Website Rhetoric 1000-1500 words plus tables, figures, front and back matter. Draft and Peer Review (PR) must be complete and on time or -10% each from the total assignment score.	Draft Mar 04 PR1 Mar 01 Final Mar 13
	35%	Single-author Report 2: Website Rhetoric and Usability. Includes the best revised material from Report 1, new content on usability, and additional report sections. 2500-3500w within body, plus tables, figures, front and back matter. Draft & Peer Review or -10% each.	Draft Mar 25 PR 2 Mar 29 Final April 05

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Both reports must be submitted in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Submission of Assignments

NO email submission: Submit each assignment to its designated area in D2L / Brightspace.

Privacy: Include your name and ID number on the first page of all assignments EXCEPT assignments that are viewable by peers. Personal information is collected in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Assignment Length: Penalties up to 10% may apply to assignments below or above length. If a range is specified (1200-1500), stay within it. If a target length is specified (i.e. 800 words), length may go above or below by 10%.

- **Length includes** your original sentences in the body of an assignment from the opening of the introductory paragraph to the end of the conclusion.
- **Length excludes** title pages, memo headers, references, tables, figures, captions, page headers and footers, and quotations longer than 40 words.

To easily calculate word count, select only the document's body text in MS Word, click the "Review" menu and then select "Word count." Then subtract any block quotes longer than 40 words and other items that do not count.

File format: Submit documents only in .DOC or .DOCX format, or in the alternative format specified in the assignment instructions. The marking team uses Microsoft Office.

File Names: Standardized file names are part of assignment quality. Follow this pattern:

- Individual: "363-AssignmentName-Surname,Firstname.docx."
- Group: "363-AssignmentName-Surname,A-Surname,B-Surname,C.docx."
- To distinguish drafts from final versions, end with ...DRAFT.docx or ...FINAL.docx

Verify your submission: You are responsible for verifying your file's content immediately after upload by re-opening it from D2L. Empty, missing, or corrupted files may receive 0/F.

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. Consider using automatic backup to an online file storage service.

Policy for Late Assignments

All assignments submitted online are due at 11:59 pm on their deadline day.

Exams and quizzes must always be submitted before their deadlines. After the deadline, access to your unfinished exam or quiz will end, and you may receive 0%. If you require an extension, email the instructor in advance so that the deadline can be edited in D2L.

The FINAL versions of Term Project assignments (proposals and reports) have a 24-hour grace period for late submission. This is not a deadline extension. It is for short-term illness, personal responsibilities, or unforeseen scheduling challenges. After 24 hours, penalties count from the original deadline (>2 days late).

In case of technical difficulty, follow these 3 steps: 1. Either a) Submit in print to the Communication, Media and Film department, Social Sciences 320 by the following morning, or b) Upload your file to a service such as Google Drive or Dropbox that will date-stamp it. 2. Email the instructor to inform her. 3. submit normally when Internet / D2L is available.

FINAL writing assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of one letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

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

During the term, assignment grades will be recorded as follows:

- **Proposals and reports** will be given letter grades and their percentage equivalent. Letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the range (B+ = 82.5), as shown in the table below. Borderline grades may also be given, i.e. B/B+ = 80.
- **For exams and participation**, raw percentage grades will be maintained, i.e. a score of 32.5% will not be changed to F/0 but will remain 32.5 in calculations.

When calculating final grades in this course, each component's percentage score will be weighted and added to the total. The total percentage will then be converted to a letter grade. Final grades are reported as letter grades.

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film.

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.

Group Policies

Single vs. group. By default, students will be placed in a group of 4 students to complete the term project assignments (Proposal, Individual Report, Draft, Final Report).

Students require the instructor's permission to work with members of their choice or with a smaller group of 2 or 3 members. Submit your request as indicated by the deadline.

Single authors require the instructor's permission to work alone. They follow the alternative pathway of Proposal, Report 1 and Report 2, with additional drafts and peer reviews.

Group conduct

1. Collaboration and technology. Each member is expected to use their group's shared communication forum to document their participation in decision making, sharing ideas, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. Official group emails, online records, and online written communications are not private, because members may forward them to the instructor as evidence in case of group conflict.

2. Responsibility for planning, peer review, and co-authorship: Each group must write their fair share of group-authored documents and improve the quality of the document by reviewing, editing and checking details. All group members must have the opportunity to review the final version prior to submission. If a group member did not participate in co-authoring, do not include their name in the file name, remove their name from the document contents, and inform the instructor immediately.

3. Conflict resolution: Make every reasonable effort to resolve group conflict and to contact non-participating members. If it is necessary to appeal to the instructor, provide as much evidence as possible. The instructor's decision about group composition is final.

Group dissolution

All changes to group membership must be pre-approved by the instructor. Decisions by the instructor are final. The instructor may remove an individual from a group or dissolve a group. Reasons for group changes may be kept confidential, but may include:

- Not co-authoring the group's Proposal
- Earning an F/0 on the Individual Report
- Individual Report was more than 5 days late without documented excuse
- Individual contributions not included in a group's Draft by its submission deadline
- Group members provide valid evidence that a member should be removed

If you become a single author, you must follow the single-author assignment deadlines and requirements for the remainder of term, including drafts and peer reviews.

Students cannot submit a former group member's ideas, written material, figures or tables.

Students may still use the website survey data collected by their former group.

Individual grade adjustments on the Final Report

Normally all students who co-author a final report receive the same final score for the report. However, the instructor may make individual grade adjustments by as much as 15% higher or lower, based on solid evidence: 1) the quality and quantity of contributions identifiable in the draft, footnotes and Author Credits. 2) Any submitted correspondence and file sharing data. 3) An optional group participation survey may provide corroborating evidence.

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/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. 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>.

NOTE: This course requires APA style. The instructor will provide APA instructions on D2L.

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 received course-based ethics approval from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. All website survey research in this course must involve only Coms 363 students from this course section. Students must abide by research ethics guidelines posted on D2L.

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	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calgary Police Service• Emergency Text Messaging• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly	http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IT help line	403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc

- **Writing Support Services** <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>
- **Events & Info for Students** <http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents>

STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS

- **Faculty of Arts Reps** <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/>
- **Student Ombuds** <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

SU WELLNESS CENTRE

403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm

- **Health Services** <http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health>
- **Mental Health Services** <http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling>
- **Distress entre 24/7 CRISIS LINE** 403-266-HELP (4357)
- **Online resources and tips** <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

This is the preliminary, abbreviated schedule. The official schedule will be online at this link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12iW9OXJwMpKo7_i2rLbW3rzl7OxKu72h1Cq_nsqr34/edit#gid=0

Week starting	Major Deadlines	Topics covered in readings
2019-01-07	(Class begins Thurs Jan. 10)	NOTE: Buy main TPC textbook when available in bookstore or online.
2019-01-14	01-18 Dr. Smith's Survey #1: Term Project Setup	Introduction to technical and professional communication, rhetoric and usability analysis
2019-01-21		Rhetorical concepts, rhetorical analysis, and analytical arguments
2019-01-28		Usability overview, research methods, and survey design
	02-01 Exam 1	NOTE: The exam will be easier if you have been doing the readings.
2019-02-04	02-08 Term Project Proposal AND submit your survey's links	Proposals, project planning, audience adaptation, document formatting
2019-02-11	02-15 Survey participation quota: Complete at least 4 different surveys on other websites than your own	Macro-level website structure and interface
2019-02-18	Reading Week	
2019-02-25	03-02 Phase 1 participation ends	Report writing, various types of arguments

	03-01 Exam 2	NOTE: The exam will be easier if you have been doing the readings.
2019-03-04	03-04 Single author: Report 1 DRAFT	Web style, description; sentence structure.
	03-08 Individual peer reviews due	
	03-08 Group members each submit Individual Report FINAL - FRIDAY	
2019-03-11	03-13 Single-author Report 1 FINAL	Web graphic design, tables and figures, style: voice
2019-03-18		Web typography, style: point of view, draft preparation
2019-03-25	03/25 Single-author Report 2 DRAFT	Web images and video, data visualization, commas
	03/29 Single-author Peer review 2	
	03/25 Group Report DRAFT	
2019-04-01	04-05 Single-author Report 2 FINAL	Sentence mechanics
	04-01 Exam 3	
2019/04/08	04-12 Group Final Report	
	04/12 Phase 2 participation ends	

NOTE: Deadlines are color-coded for Groups, Single authors, and Exams.