

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COURSE NUMBER & SECTION: Communication and Media Studies COMS 363 L02
COURSE NAME: Professional and Technical Communication

TERM & YEAR: Winter 2020

Start & end dates (& dates excluded)

Monday Jan. 13, 2020 to Wednesday, April 15, 2020 (Feb. 16-23, April 10-13 excluded)

Lectures, days, and time:
Fully online

Instructor: Dr. Katherine (Katie) Crossman
Office: EDT 946/ Zoom <https://zoom.us/j/5471184268>
Office Phone: n/a
E-Mail: kecrossm@ucalgary.ca (include COMS 363 in subject line)
Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:00-1:00 PM or by appointment
Office hours will take place remotely, via Zoom by appointment

Course Description

An introduction to professional and technical communication in diverse media. Examines 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

The course is entirely online, with no scheduled lectures. The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline. This course involves some group work. To do well in this course, schedule at least 5 hours a week to complete readings and work on assignments.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- approach workplace communication rhetorically, focusing not only on their purpose in writing, but also on the needs and expectations of their audience and considering the ethical and dimensions and other relevant features of the writing context;
- format basic workplace genres, including formal and informal reports, proposals, letters, memos, emails, and, optionally, résumés, instructions, technical descriptions, and websites;
- write and design effective print and online documents, using headings, lists, well-crafted paragraphs, and white space;

- effectively use, design, and present figures and tables;
- conduct secondary research (locating relevant sources using the U of C library search tools online). Depending on the focus of the recommendation report assignment, students may also be expected to know how to construct and interpret and present results from a simple empirical study (e.g., a small-scale usability study involving testing, interviews, or surveys);
- effectively use and correctly cite information from sources using a citation style appropriate to the course audience, ideally APA (6th or 7th Edition) and/or IEEE style; and
- edit documents to eliminate common writing errors.

Ideally, students who complete COMS 363 will also have engaged in critically evaluating professional and technical writing and will know how to

- design effective PowerPoint slides and
- work effectively and cooperatively in groups.

Required Textbooks and Readings

Gross, A., Hamelin, A., Merck, B., Rubio, C., Naas, J., Savage, M., & Desilva, M. (nd). *Technical Writing*. Open Oregon Educational Resources.
<https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/technicalwriting/>

Supplementary and Recommended Readings

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th Ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

Lynch, P. J., & Horton, S. (2017). *Web Style Guide* (3rd edition). Available at <http://webstyleguide.com/index.html>

This excellent resource covers all aspects of web design and offers many helpful examples.

Murdoch University. (2019). *IEEE Style: Citing in the text. A guide to IEEE referencing*. Retrieved from <https://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/IEEE/text>

North Carolina State University (NCSU). (2004). *LabWrite Resources*. Retrieved from <https://labwrite.ncsu.edu/res/res-homepage.htm>

This resource includes a tutorial on using Excel and offers detailed information on designing and using tables and graphs. It includes numerous examples of various types of graphs.

Simon Fraser University Library. (2019). *General notes: APA (6th ed., 2010) citation guide*. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/cite-write/citation-style-guides/apa>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2019). Usability.gov. Retrieved from <https://www.usability.gov/>

This helpful resource offers in-depth advice on designing and testing for usability.

U.S Federal Plain Language Guidelines--part of the site Plainlanguage.gov. Retrieved from http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/guidelines/FederalPLGuidelines/index.cfm?CFID=190_8094&CFTOKEN=ae5fd6ab3da64c89-6C57445D-ED66-FA5E-03033CCF05DCAF6A&jsessionid=B4306E5189D7F0661E6804317ABD3728.chh

This site outlines plain language guidelines and offers numerous examples of documents using plain language, including before-and-after examples.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students must have frequent, regular access to the Internet and email.

Supported Technologies

Course technologies usually work with all the major browsers (i.e. Firefox, Internet Explorer, Chrome, Safari) and operating systems (Mac, Windows, etc). However, compatibility problems may occur with outdated browsers, plugins or apps, and usability issues may occur on mobile devices.

Before the course begins, please

- check your system's compatibility in D2L via My Tools > System Check
- send an email to yourself from within D2L to ensure that emails from D2L are not being directed to a spam folder or going to an account not linked to D2L.
- To change your email settings, go to Communication > News > More actions > Notifications.
- Configure your message notifications to specify what course news items you would like sent to your SMS (message feed) or Email by going to Communication > News > More actions > Notifications > Instant Notifications.
- Visit the following link for information on campus WiFi, computer labs, Office 365, eLearning tools, and IT help: https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it?id=kb_article&sys_id=86e7438013753ac06f3afbb2e144b031

Assignments and Evaluation

Please note that all assignments are due by 11:59 PM (MST) on the date indicated. A more detailed weekly class schedule can be found on the final page of this outline.

Weight	Course components	Due
5%	Introductory Discussion Board Post (<250 words, completed individually). You will respond to the questions on D2L and introduce yourself.	Jan 19, 2020
12.5%	Correspondence Assignment 1 (<250 words, completed individually). In this assignment, you will write a short professional email. Topics are provided on D2L.	Feb 2, 2020
5%	Quiz 1 (20 multiple choice questions) Open book, timed, to be completed on D2L.	Feb 29 - Mar. 2, 2020
15%	Proposal for final project study (with group contract) (3 to 4 pages, done in groups of 2 to 4). In your proposal, you will outline a problem or opportunity related in some way to environmental sustainability on campus or to the communication of sustainability initiatives on a website or in a set of related documents available online from a university or other organization; your research for this project (and final recommendations) will become the basis for your final recommendation report and PowerPoint. Your proposal should (1) clearly describe the project or research to be studied; (2) make a case for why it's important or should be funded; (3) explain your proposed research process and deliverables (i.e., a final recommendation report and PowerPoint presentation); (4) provide a timeline and hypothetical budget; and (5) include a group contract as an appendix.	Mar 1, 2020
12.5%	Correspondence Assignment 2 (<250 words, completed individually). In this assignment, you will write a short professional email. Topics are provided on D2L.	Mar 15, 2020
15%	Cover Letter (<250 words, completed individually). For this task, you will submit a professional cover letter that would accompany a resume when seeking employment. Do not provide your resume.	Apr 5, 2020
20%	Formal Recommendation Report (12 to 15 pages, completed in project groups). In this report, you will present	Apr 9, 2020

	the results of your research project and provide recommendations for either implementing a sustainability project on campus or improving a website (or set of documents available online) related to sustainability, as outlined in your proposal.	
5%	Quiz 2 (20 multiple choice questions) Open book, timed, to be completed on D2L.	Apr 14-15, 2020
10%	PowerPoint Presentation (8 to 10 slides, completed in project groups). This PowerPoint is based on your final research project and recommendation report. It must be collaboratively crafted by all group members.	Apr 15, 2020

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: N/A – There is no final exam in this class.

All assignments and exams weighted more than 10% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Grades for all course components will be recorded as percentages, and your final letter grade will correspond to the grade scale on page 6 of this document.

Group Work: You will work with the same small group (of 2-4 members) throughout the semester. The proposal, formal recommendation report, and PowerPoint presentation will be completed with this group. Group assignments will be given a common grade for the group. However, individual students' grades on group assignments may be adjusted upward or downward by up to 15% at the instructor's discretion, as informed by peer reviews of group work. The peer reviews will take into account the group contract you create and how well individual group members fulfill their responsibility to the team.

Submission of Assignments: Please use the appropriate folder in Dropbox on D2L to submit all documents. Ensure that you have followed the **Assignment Submission Checklist** (available under Content in our D2L), in particular for file naming conventions and the inclusion of marking criteria. Submit all documents as editable files (i.e. .docx).

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments and be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments in SS 320. 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>

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 10% for each day late.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation 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 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, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades, although individual assignments will be assigned grades in percentages.

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.

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

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be

allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

All deadlines are 11:59 PM (MST) on the date noted.

Week	Topic	Assignments & Due Dates
Jan 13-19	Chapter 1: Professional Communications	Introductory Discussion Board Post Jan 19, 2020
Jan 20-26	Chapter 2: Audience Analysis	
Jan 27-Feb 2	Chapter 3: Proposals	Correspondence 1 Feb 2, 2020

Feb 3-9	Chapter 4: Information Literacy	
Feb 10-16	Chapter 5: Citations & Plagiarism Chapter 9: Ethics in Technical Writing	
Feb 17-23	Semester Break No classes	n/a
Feb 24-Mar 1	Chapter 6: Progress Reports	Proposal (Group project) Mar 1, 2020
Mar 2-8	Chapter 7: Outlines	Quiz 1 (Chapters 1-7, 9) Open -Feb 29 - Mar 2, 2020
Mar 9-15	Chapter 8: Creating and Integrating Graphics	Correspondence 2 Mar 15, 2020
Mar 16-22	Chapter 10: Technical Reports	
Mar 23-29	Chapter 12: Employment Materials	
Mar 30-Apr 5	Chapter 11: Basic Design and Readability in Publications	Cover Letter Apr 5, 2020
Apr 6-9	Chapter 13: Communicating Across Cultures	Formal Recommendation Report (group project) Apr 9, 2020
Apr 10-13	Good Friday and Easter Monday No classes	
Apr 14-15	Course Wrap Up (no readings)	Quiz 2 (Chapters 8, 10-13) Open Apr 14-15, 2020 PowerPoint Presentation (group project) Apr 15, 2020