

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 363 (L04) - Professional and Technical Communication

Winter 2020 - January 13 to April 15 (excluding term break Feb. 16-22 and April 10 and 13)

Lecture: Mondays (posted recordings; live forums TBD)

Instructor:	Vincent Brophy BA, MFA
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Email:	vincent.brophy@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours:	On campus Fridays from 1-3pm or by appointment (refer to D2L news feed for possible changes)

Course Description

COMS 363 - Professional and Technical Communication is an introduction to professional and technical communication in diverse media. The course examines the rhetorical dimensions of workplace settings as well as the process of planning, composing, and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences. Students will collect, summarize, and organize data in order to aid in critical decision-making processes. We will also explore professional presentation and communication skills to exchange data and information in an expert manner.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline and in announcements posted on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Recognize the importance of communicating effectively in writing
- Recognize the purpose, problems, and processes of written technical communications in the workplace
- Analyze and adapt to various technical writing situations
- Apply the key phases of project management communication
- Create documents that are grammatically and stylistically correct and effectively anticipate the audience's information needs
- Use the concepts of technical writing to self-assess your documents and critically evaluate others' work
- Meet deadlines similar to those found in technical workplaces
- Create and present professional presentations (PowerPoint or Google Slides)

Textbooks, Readings, and Required Software

Ewald, T. (2017). *Writing in the Technical Fields: A Practical Guide*. Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada. *(required)*

Strunk, William Jr., and E B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed., New York: Longman, 2000. *(recommended)*

Microsoft Office Suite (2010 or later), or Office 365 *(recommended)*.

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 U of C's Desire2Learn (D2L) learning management system at <https://d2l.ucalgary.ca/>.

It is strongly recommended that you download a personal backup copy of this course outline and all online course materials (assignment descriptions and rubrics) in case Internet access is temporarily unavailable. A PDF reader is required.

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. Check your system's compatibility in Desire2Learn via My Tools > System Check. Students are responsible for ensuring they have personal computer systems that are compatible with course technologies, or they must use on-campus computers provided in libraries or labs.

Assignments and Evaluation Details

The final grade for this course will be based on the following elements. For the course schedule and readings information, refer to the Reading Schedule section at the end of this document.

Assignments

#	Assignment or Component	Description
1	Participation Grading weight: 10%	Participation is based on your individual contribution to online activities (such as discussion forums) and the effort displayed in your assignments. Continued....

#	Assignment or Component	Description
2	<p>Introductions and Ethical Response</p> <p>Grading weight: <i>included as 5% of your participation</i></p> <p>Individual effort and group participation</p> <p>Due: January 20th</p>	<p>The Introductions and Ethical Response assignment is two parts:</p> <p>Briefly introduce yourself to the class within our online discussion board. You could tell us a little about yourself, where you grew up, where you are now, what you like to do for a hobby, or anything interesting you'd like to share.</p> <p>Respond to one of the ethical scenarios of your choice on pages 301-302 within your Ewald textbook (Exercises C.1-C.4). Review and objectively reply to at least two other responses.</p>
3	<p>Business Correspondence</p> <p>Email: 7.5% Formal letter: 7.5%</p> <p>Grading weight (combined): 15%</p> <p>Individual effort</p> <p>Due: February 3rd</p>	<p>Produce two standard examples of formal business correspondence: one in email format, and the other in formal letter format.</p> <p>Refer to Chapters 1 and 5 of your textbook for guidance, and consult the Editing Routine Correspondence checklist at the end of chapter 5.</p> <p>Correct formatting is important in business correspondence and will factor into your final mark, so pay close attention to the formatting guidelines for each message.</p>
4	<p>Technical Instructions and Procedures</p> <p>Grading weight: 15%</p> <p>Group Assignment (in teams of four)</p> <p>Due: March 2nd</p>	<p>Prepare technical instructions (3-4 pages – not including the title page) for an audience that has limited knowledge of the technical aspects of the task. Include detailed steps while keeping economy of expression in mind, and use illustrations, callouts, and tables in your instructions. Choose your own topic. You may consider something general (e.g., user interface software, or operating an electronic device).</p> <p>Your assignment will be evaluated for specific and detailed content, clear and effective organization, format and document design, effective graphics and illustrations, writing skills, appropriate style, and honest effort.</p> <p>Be sure to include a short summary introduction for the procedure you are about to explain (include the purpose and an explanation of what the task or device is). Include a clickable table of contents (TOC), list of figures, and list of tables.</p> <p>DO NOT view the actual manual for the device. Write it from scratch as if you were assigned the device for the first time (as you would in business). That said, you can consult other technical manuals or user guides to review and learn the</p>

#	Assignment or Component	Description
	Final Report Due: April 14th	<p>to ten text-based PowerPoint slides, or another approved medium (discuss with your instructor).</p> <p>Your presentation will be evaluated for appropriate and specific content, organization and delivery, appropriate visual aids, and effective presentation skills.</p> <p>Note: Here, your purpose is to present an abbreviated form of your final project.</p> <p>Assignment #3 – Final Report (20%) Write a 12 to 15 page single-spaced manuscript report presenting your findings on one of the research topics. The report should include a title page, an executive summary (abstract), a table of contents, a list of figures, an introduction, your research methods and findings, your conclusions and recommendations, a complete reference list of works cited, and relevant appendices.</p> <p>Note: The 12-15 page length includes the title page, table of contents, written report, and bibliography (appendices do not count towards the length).</p>
6	Test 1 -- Midterm (online) 15% On February 24th	Online exam with a two hour time limit. You can begin your exam at any time on the given exam day.
7	Test 2 -- Final Exam (online) 15% On April 10th	Online exam with a two hour time limit. You can begin your exam at any time on the given exam day.

Submission of Assignments

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments and upload your assignments to D2L drop-boxes unless otherwise instructed. If you ever have any questions regarding the requirements or evaluation criteria of assignments, please ask and your instructor will be happy to clarify.

It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

You will receive written electronic feedback on your graded assignments, usually within two weeks. If you would like additional feedback on any assignment, please make an appointment with your instructor(s).

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act**. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

All assignments are due by 11:59pm on the given due date. Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) 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 and Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, percentages will be used for all grades including tests and written assignments.

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%

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 your virtual 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 obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/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.

Reading Schedule

Week	Virtual Class Topic	Readings
Jan. 13	Introduction Why Technical People Need Not Fear Writing	Chapter 1
Jan. 20	Introductions and Ethical Response	Reading TBD
Jan. 27	Technical Sentences Technical Paragraphs Grammar Overview	Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Appendix A
Feb. 03	Business Correspondence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct messages • Indirect messages Parallelism, Lists, and Layout	Chapter 5 Chapter 4
Feb. 10	Presentations (covering online and in-person techniques)	

Feb. 16-22	Term Break	
Feb. 24	Test 1	
Mar. 02	Technical Reports Technical Definitions and Descriptions	Chapter 6 Chapter 12
Mar. 09	Formal Reports	Chapter 7
Mar. 16	Instructions, Procedures, and Manuals Oral Presentations	Chapter 13
Mar. 23	Instructions, Procedures, and Manuals Oral Presentations (continued) Technical Graphics	Chapter 14 Chapter 10
Mar. 30	Job Application Packages	Chapter 11
Apr. 06		<i>Online Presentations Due</i>
Apr. 10	Test 2	
Apr. 14		<i>Final Report Due</i>