

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Communication and Media Studies COMS 463 L01**  
**Rhetorical Communication in Online Environments**

**Fall 2017**

**Monday, September 11 – Monday December 4 (excluding Monday, November 13)**

**(L: 12:00-1:50/ T: 2:00-3:50)**

**Instructor:** Dr. Lisa Stowe  
**Office:** SS206  
**Office Phone:** 403 220 4840  
**E-Mail:** lstowe@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** T: 10-11/Th: 1-2

**Course Description**

This course will explore the theory and criticism of professional communication. Using rhetorical perspectives, the course will cover social-cultural perspectives on professional communication. Students will read a selection of articles outlining the history, ethics and theoretical approaches to professional communication. Students will critique samples of professional communication arising from a variety of organizational contexts in a variety of media and genres. Students will also engage in hands on analysis of an organization's web content to understand how effective online communication develops strong ethical accountability. The course may also incorporate some degree of experiential learning and professional communication practice.

**Additional Information**

This course requires students to complete a major web based group project using the concept and theories discussed in class. There is allotted class time for the group project and there will be an emphasis on group collaboration throughout the semester.

**Objectives of the Course**

To understand socio-cultural and rhetorical perspectives of professional communication.

To apply theories to the criticism and production of professional discourse.

To learn the specific knowledge, technologies and skills needed to collaboratively construct and analyze effective online professional communications.

To learn the specific rhetorical skills, knowledge and technologies to effectively construct a variety of web based documents.

To practice presentation skills

To learn how to work in a group that simulates a workplace environment. To create and learn in a collaborative and safe environment.

### Textbooks and Readings

MacLennan, J. (2008). *Readings for technical communication*. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford UP.

Other readings will be posted on D2L.

### Internet and electronic communication device information

Because of the themes and objectives of this course, laptops and other computer devices are welcomed in class but are to be only used for class activities and note taking. Please be respectful of your fellow classmates while using computers.

### Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
3%	<b>Group Contract</b> (1-2 pages): Each student group will develop and post in D2L a group contract outlining their expectations for effective group collaboration throughout the semester	Sept. 25
2%	<b>Personal Goals assignment</b> (½ page): Each student will submit 3-4 learning goals for the semester	Oct. 2
10% (5% each)	<b>Individual Reflection</b> (500 words): Each student will submit two individual reflection essays that will synthesize their project experience in the course with the theory discussed in class.	Oct. 16 and Dec 4
15%	<b>Project Proposal</b> (5-7 pages): Each group will submit a project proposal outlining their website development plan. Proposals will include a description of the organization that is the subject of the website; project description and justification or why this organization needs a web presence; a short literature review that outlines the theoretical concepts anchoring the project; an explanation and justification for which website construction platform they will be using; a breakdown of individual duties with a Gantt chart or other task table format; an explanation and justification of the online collaboration system, like google docs or zoho, that will be used as the main form of communication for the group; a list of possible challenges the group might face throughout this process; and a copy of a group contract that is agreed to and signed by all group members.  Length: 1200-1500 words	Oct 23
25%	<b>Midterm Exam</b> (Closed Book)  The exam will cover all the reading and class material to date. Students will complete a variety of questions which may include multiple choice, fill in the blanks, matching, short answer and a longer answer essay  Time allowed 2 hours	Nov. 6

20%	<b>Critical Reading Response</b> (850-1000 words): Students will respond in a critical, well written essay to two articles from course assigned material. Reading responses will address assigned questions and will show an understanding and synthesis of the article's main ideas and how they relate to the overall objectives of the course. More details will be posted in the assignment guidelines in D2L.	Nov. 20
10%	<b>Website Launch</b> (10 minute presentation): Students will present or "launch" their web based project to the rest of the class, highlighting their creative and decision making processes and walking us through the website. This launch can take the format of a ppt, prezi or another presentation strategy.	Dec 4
15%	<b>Process ePortfolio</b> (15 pages max, excluding appendices): Students will digitally submit a process portfolio, using the eportfolio tool in D2L. This portfolio will highlight and paint a picture of the process of creating a website for a specific organization. The portfolio will contain a variety of documents including a justification for visual and graphic design with screenshot images; an information architecture assessment and rhetorical justification for content; an overview of the online ethical characteristics of the organization; an explanation with examples of the variety of genres within this organization; and a synthesis of how the course concepts and theories support or challenge the organization's online presence.	Dec 4

**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:** Please upload all assignments to the appropriate dropbox in D2L. The instructor will not accept any hard copies of any assignments.

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 a 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 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/](http://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-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

### 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. Assignments will be graded with a combination of number and pass/fail grading schemes. The group contracts and learning goals assignments will be marked pass/fail. Submission of those assignments will be pass while no submission will result in a fail and must be submitted by the due date to receive a pass. All other assignments will be graded by numbers.

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* *
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>		<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>		<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>		<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>		<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%

	matter.			
<b>1.70</b>		<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>		<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	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 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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>

## Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Police Service</li> <li>• Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• Safewalk Program</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a> If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>
<b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Health Services</li> <li>• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</li> <li>• Online resources and tips</li> </ul>	<b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a> 403-266-HELP (4357) <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a> 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	Topic and Readings	Activity/Assignment Due
Monday, September 11	Introduction to course  Group Set Up	Organizing groups
Monday, September 18	<p><b>What is Technical Communication?</b></p> <p>MacLellan, J. (2008). Why communication matters. In MacLennan, J. (Ed.). (2008). <i>Readings for technical communication</i>. (pp.4-10). Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Bitzer, L.F. (2008). Functional communication: A situational perspective. In MacLennan, J. (Ed.). (2008). <i>Readings for technical communication</i>. (pp. 29-39). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.</p>	Google Drive and online collaboration systems
Monday, September 25	Strengths Quest	<p><b>Group Contracts (3%) (Group)</b></p> <p>Upload your group contract to your D2L group page by Friday, September 29.</p>
Monday, October 2	<p><b>History of Technical Communication</b></p> <p>Connors, R. J. (2004). The rise of technical writing instruction in America. In Johnson-Eilola, J., &amp; Selber, S. A. (Eds.). (2004). <i>Central works in technical communication</i>. (pp. 3-19). Oxford University Press. D2L</p> <p>Rutter, R. (2004). History, rhetoric and humanism: Toward a more comprehensive definition of technical communication. In Johnson-Eilola, J., &amp; Selber, S. A. (Eds.). (2004). <i>Central works in technical communication</i>. (pp. 20-34). Oxford, UK: Oxford University</p>	<p>Using Wix</p> <p><b>Personal Goals Assignment (2%) (Individual)</b></p>

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Monday, October 9	<b>No Class: Thanksgiving</b>	
Monday, October 16	<p><b>Perspectives on Audience and Context</b></p> <p>Elbow, P. (2008). Three tricky relationships to an audience. In MacLennan, J. (Ed.). (2008). <i>Readings for technical communication</i>. (pp. 208-218). Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Miller, C.R. (2008). What's practical about technical writing. In MacLennan, J. (Ed.). (2008). <i>Readings for technical communication</i>. (pp. 219-228). Oxford University Press.</p>	<b>Individual Reflection (5%)</b>
Monday, October 23	<p><b>Ethics and Technical Communication</b></p> <p>Campbell, C.P. (2008). Ethos: Characters and ethics in technical writing. In MacLennan, J. (Ed.). (2008). <i>Readings for technical communication</i>. (pp. 300-310). Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Dombrowski, P.M. (2008). Can ethics be technologized? Lessons from Challenger, philosophy and rhetoric. In MacLennan, J. (Ed.). (2008). <i>Readings for technical communication</i>. (pp.330-318). Oxford University Press.</p>	<b>Project Proposal Due (15%) (Group)</b>
Monday, October 30	<p><b>Ethics and Technical Communication Cont'd</b></p> <p>Katz, S. B. (1992). The ethic of expediency: Classical rhetoric, technology, and the Holocaust. <i>College English</i>, 255-275. D2L</p> <p>Rice, J. A. (2014, October). A rhetorical reboot: Technical writing ethics in the age of digital media. In <i>Professional Communication Conference (IPCC), 2014 IEEE International</i> (pp. 1-4). IEEE.</p>	



	D2L	
Monday, November 6	<b>Mid-term exam</b>	<b>Mid-term exam (25%) (Individual)</b>
Monday, November 13	Reading Days. No class	
Monday, November 20	<p><b>Communication in a Technological Society</b></p> <p>Kelsey, S. &amp; Prankl, E (2008). Verbal text: Electronic communication in the information age. In MacLennan, J. (Ed.). (2008). <i>Readings for technical communication</i>. (pp. 358-364). Oxford University Press.</p>	<b>Critical Reading Response (20%) (Individual)</b>
Monday, November 27	Professionalization Panel	
Monday, December 4	Website Launch	<p><b>Website Launch Presentation (10%) (Group)</b></p> <p><b>Process ePortfolio (15%) (Group)</b></p> <p><b>Individual Reflection (5%)</b></p>