

Communications Studies (COMS) 363 - Lecture 03
Professional and Technical Communication
Fall 2013
M 12:00-14:45

Instructor: Trang Pham

Office

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10.00-12.00 or by appointment

Course Description

The course provides an introduction to the fundamental practices of professional and technical communication. Students will learn the rhetorical dimensions of workplace settings as well as the process of planning, researching, composing, and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences. Emphasis is placed on how workplace communication is situated within distinct organizational or corporate cultures as well as broader socio-cultural contexts. Students will gain knowledge and skills in writing across genres and disciplines through inquiry-based learning strategies and collaborative research projects. This theory-driven class will teach students open-ended skills that can be applied to a variety of workplace situations.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the class, students should be able to:

- Apply a rhetorical approach to crafting documents that focuses on writing purpose, needs and expectations of the audience(s), and relevant features of the writing context.
- Convey professional and technical information in an easily understood manner for both expert and non-expert audience.
- Adopt document design strategies to ensure that your documents and websites look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and use visuals to communicate information effectively.
- Format some workplace genres such as formal reports, letters, memos, proposals.
- Use secondary sources effectively and document them using APA as a standard style.
- Prepare and deliver PowerPoint presentation(s).

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops and digital devices are permitted for note taking and class relating activities only. Improper use of electronic devices may impact your participation grade.

Textbooks and Readings:

MacLennan, J. (2009). *Effective Communication for the Technical Professions*, 2nd ed. Don Mills: Oxford.

The textbook is available for purchase at the University bookstore. As well, you have access to the online version via the University library.

Additional readings and materials will be posted on Blackboard in due course.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
Writing Sample 1	10%	September 23
Writing Sample 2	10%	September 30
Writing Sample 3	10%	October 21
Writing Sample 4	10%	October 28
Project proposal for a website or product usability study	5%	November 4
PowerPoint presentation	15%	November 18 or 25
Final report for a website or product usability study	30%	December 2
Ongoing Participation	10%	Through out

Writing samples are writing assignments covering 4 key examples of technical writing opportunities (no more than 750 words). They are designed to help you deliver different messages in a concise and coherent way. The styles and genres of your writing samples may include a critical assessment of a product, technical report or web content as well as job application and other professional correspondences.

The **Project proposal, PowerPoint presentation, and Final report** for a website or product usability study are linked assignments. These assignments will be completed in a small group.

- The **proposal** will summarize what the group is going to do to complete the final report. The 4 double spaced typed page paper should include the study purpose, introduction of the chosen subject, brief summary of the literature, and proposed methodology of the study.
- **PowerPoint presentation** is the summary and presentation of the final report. Presentations are due before the final draft of the report so that your instructor can supply further advice. Presentations should be about 20 minutes long and include no more than 15 slides. Each group member must present part of the presentation.
- **Final report:** The final report is a full featured, substantive report (2000 – 2500 words) on a website usability study. It will require you to conduct both secondary and primary research and integrate the results into a report.

Participation: The course is designed to reinforce student learning and mastery of material through active engagement and “doing”, and students can expect activities in class and online. Students are expected to do the assigned readings and contribute to class discussion. Your participation will help create a positive atmosphere and learning environment. Three percent of the participation mark is allocated on the days the guest lecturer and panelists come to the class and the rest seven percent is spread throughout the rest of the semester. Please discuss with the instructor any questions or concerns about the participation mark as soon as possible.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Normally, all assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Note: Written assignments will be submitted electronically via Blackboard. Detailed instructions will be provided.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. 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 System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

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. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:
<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

It will be provided on the first day of the class.