

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communications Studies (COMS) 363 - Lecture 01

Professional and Technical Communication

Fall 2015

Online Section

Tues., Sept. 8 – Tues., Dec. 8, 2015

Instructor: Dr. Tania S. Smith

Office Location: Social Sciences (SS) 326 (Office will be moved during spring term to SS302)

Office Phone: 403-220-7774

Email: tania.smith@ucalgary.ca -- please put "363" in the subject line.

Web Page: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/smit/>
View appointment availability at
<http://ucalgary.ca/smit/about/appointment-calendar> .

Office Hours: Email the instructor to request in-person, phone, or Skype appointment, with "COMS 363 appointment request: Your Name" in the subject line

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. Prerequisites: Completion of 4 or more full-course equivalents.

Additional Information

This section of the course will be offered entirely online. There are no face-to-face classes or tutorials in this course. Opportunities for student-teacher interaction and guidance are provided by online forums, email, Skype, telephone, face-to-face office hours, and appointments with the instructor. Students work in groups on the term project and are encouraged to study together.

While the instructor directs the course and handles all student communication, a small staff of professional markers grades and provides feedback on student assignments. Each student will be placed in a "marking section" of approximately 35 students assigned to each marker. The instructor and markers work closely together as a team, meeting before grading each assignment to discuss sample student papers and ensure consensus on standards. The instructor monitors grades and marking to ensure grading is fair across sections, and may occasionally add further feedback on assignments or collaborate with markers. Students communicate with the instructor (not their section's marker) about assessment.

Objectives of the Course

This course teaches students to adapt workplace communication to organizational contexts as well as broader social and cultural contexts and technologies. This course will help students develop:

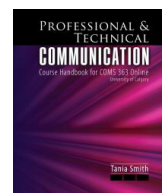
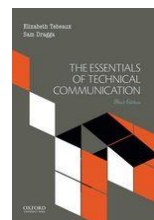
- a rhetorical approach to crafting documents--one which carefully considers purpose, audience, ethics, and relevant features of the organizational context, such as security and privacy.
- an understanding of conventions for a range of written genres, including business correspondence, proposals, reports, and public websites.
- an understanding of website navigation, usability and usability testing, since an increasing amount of professional communication needs to be produced for online users
- skills in conducting research and analyzing raw data on the usability of online communication products and their audiences (expert analyses, surveys).
- skills in the use of special or advanced features of programs and online technologies relevant to professional communication, such as Microsoft Office, Google Drive, and other applications
- skills involved in professional collaborative research and writing, and the effective use of online systems for collaborative file sharing and messages.
- document design strategies to ensure that documents look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and use visuals effectively.
- writing strategies to keep documents focused, coherent, and readable. This includes the skills to edit to eliminate common errors and style problems in written English, as well as the ability to organize ideas into sentences, paragraphs, and sections.
- a standard style of documentation for sources. Documentation systems vary across academic disciplines, professions and workplaces. APA Style will be used in this course.

Textbooks and Readings

1. **Tebeaux, E. & Dragga, S. (2015).** *The essentials of technical communication.* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. [Softcover: ISBN 978-0-1993-7999-6.

- Optional [online edition](#) via CourseSmart = approx. \$30
- NOTE: The THIRD edition (2014/2015) of the textbook is required to complete course quizzes. Students must refer to the textbook when completing assignments.

2. **Smith, T. (2015).** *Professional & technical communication: Course handbook for COMS 363 Online, University of Calgary.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt. [Softcover: ISBN 978-1-4652-7785-5]



Additional required and recommended readings will be linked to the course website.

Internet and electronic communication

Internet access: 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 new Desire2Learn (D2L) learning management system at <https://d2l.ucalgary.ca/>. Download a personal backup copy of this course outline and all online course materials in case you need them when 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.

Sending email: When initiating an email to your instructor from your own email program, send email to tania.smith@ucalgary.ca and put "COMS 363" anywhere in the subject line.

Email management: Students are responsible for ensuring they receive course email notifications and messages from the instructor, and receiving notifications they have subscribed to (i.e. email notifications of new messages from teammates in group discussion forums). Make sure course messages do not get filtered into spam or junk folders or get rejected by your mail server. By default, Desire2Learn will use the email address associated with your U of C ID. Configure your notification preferences in your D2L Settings, and then subscribe to desired discussion forums & threads.

Word processing software: The use of Microsoft Office software (ideally, 2007 or later) is highly recommended. Assignments require advanced features of Office programs (Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel) for professional formatting of tables, graphs, tables of contents, page numbering, headers, etc. MS Office is available to U of C Students at a special low price: see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/it/student/software> .

Free word processing programs such as LibreOffice <https://www.libreoffice.org/> or OpenOffice may suffice for certain tasks, but may cause document formatting problems and incompatibility with group members' programs, and all files must be properly converted to .doc or .docx format.

Assignments and Evaluation

40% Individual Open-book Online Quizzes

- | | | |
|-------|--------|---------------|
| • 10% | Quiz 1 | Sep 25 |
| • 10% | Quiz 2 | Oct 09 |
| • 10% | Quiz 3 | Oct 23 |
| • 10% | Quiz 4 | Nov 06 |

Each quiz consists of 10-20 selection-based or short-answer questions and may also include long answer questions submitted to a separate D2L drop box. Questions are based on the textbooks and online resources and activities. Each quiz is estimated to take approximately 2 hours to complete, but may take an individual more or less time depending on various factors. Students may work on their quiz and save their progress over a period of 1-2 weeks before it is due. Each quiz is due by 11:59 PM on the deadline stated, and there is no grace period for late submission. Therefore, students must verify submission in advance of the quiz deadline. Any quiz not submitted by its deadline will receive a grade of F (0).

- 15% Individual Report** **Oct 30**
1250-1800-word report, plus Memo of Transmittal and at least 1 Figure (i.e. screenshot) and References. This is a report on a website's aims, audiences, and development potential, and it offers a preliminary analysis of the website's context and selected aspects of content using rhetoric and usability sources and principles. This report does not depend on usability survey results.
- 15% Individual Data Analysis** **Nov 20**
1000 words report, plus 1 Table, 1 Graph, and References. This is an individual's contribution to the Group Report, which will be further edited and developed after being included in the Group Report Draft. Therefore, the contents and table/graph formatting must be coordinated in advance among group members. It includes at least 750 words for the Findings section (discussing survey results, rhetorical analysis findings, and employing at least 2 relevant secondary sources) along with at least 250 words for the group report's Methods, Conclusions, and Recommendations sections. The Findings section includes and discusses at least one table and one graph. The score on this assignment includes fulfilling one's online survey participation quota by the deadline: See "Research Ethics" below for details.
- 30% Group Report** **Group Draft: Nov 27**
Final: Dec 04
2500-3500 word formal Website Usability Report, plus Letter of Transmittal, Executive Summary, References, and Appendices. This document reports the findings of survey research and the group's website analysis. As soon as possible by Nov. 27, a Group Draft incorporating all members' individual analyses must be submitted to the Group Report dropbox or the group will receive a 2.5% penalty on the final Group Report grade. Each member of the group must actively participate in improving the quality of the group draft (i.e. review, editing, proofreading, formatting, coordinating), and these individual contributions to quality should be tracked in your D2L collaboration areas and summarized in an "Author Credits" Appendix. Participation in an optional, confidential online "group process survey" may occur no later than Tuesday, Dec. 08. After the Group Report receives a grade for its overall quality, insufficient or poor individual contributions to improving the Group Report Draft *may* result in up to a 15% individual penalty on the Group Report grade, while outstanding contributions *may* result in up to a 5% individual bonus on the Group Report grade (up to a maximum score of 100 on the assignment).

Detailed assignment guidelines will be available on the course website.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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

Assignment Submission

Do NOT email assignments. Submit all assignments to the assignment's designated area in Desire2Learn.

Submit written assignment files only in .doc or .docx format. This is the file type that markers use to provide feedback in the margins. Use the following format for naming your files. Instead of spaces, use hyphens:

- FORMAT: 363-assignment-lastname-firstname-.docx
- 363-IndividualReport-Brown-Sarah.docx
- 363-GroupReport-JonesT-NgoF-CarterB.doc (group assignment)

Identify your Group Report file as the DRAFT or the FINAL version:

- 363-GroupReport-JonesT-NgoF-CarterB-DRAFT.docx
- 363-GroupReport-JonesT-NgoF-CarterB-FINAL.docx

Verify your submission: After submitting your assignment, re-enter the assignment area to download and re-open your file(s) from Desire2Learn. It is the student's responsibility to verify successful upload and the intended version of the document. If a corrupted, empty or incorrect file is uploaded, you may receive a zero (0) or a late penalty.

Personal backup copy: It is the student's responsibility to save work often and to keep a secure, personal backup copy of each final submitted assignment. Consider using a free account on DropBox or Box.com to store your backup files where they can be reliably date-stamped and accessed or shared online.

Assignment length: Assignment word length may be 10% longer than the maximum or 10% shorter than the minimum. A truly excellent assignment fulfills all the content requirements and is not wordy or repetitive. The number of *words*, *not pages* is used for length guidelines since the number of words per page varies widely in professional writing. The word count is limited to the student's sentences within the body of the document, internal headings, short quotations, and in-text citations integrated within students' paragraphs. *Do NOT count words in long quotations (over 40 words), title page, table of contents, other "front matter," tables & figures, captions, footnotes, reference lists, appendices, page numbers, running heads.* To calculate word count in Microsoft Word, select the text to calculate and go to Review > Word Count. Alternatively, paste text into an online word counter:

<http://www.textfixer.com/tools/online-word-counter.php>

Group Policies: Students will be assigned to Groups of 4 students at the beginning of term. If necessary, students' well-reasoned requests for special group composition (with documentation attached if necessary) must be sent to the instructor by **Sep. 21** for consideration. Groups smaller or larger than 4 members will receive no adjustment in the length or requirements of the final Group Report. Groups work together on research, data analysis, draft review, and writing for the Individual Data Analysis and Group Report assignments, and their group participation is also assessed for potential individual adjustments to the Group Report score. Groups must use Desire2Learn to securely share and archive group files, messages, meeting notes, and other data that provides evidence of their contributions and teamwork. The instructor has access to monitor and contribute to Group areas. Each group must ensure that workload is distributed fairly among members and that all have had a chance to contribute to and review and improve the Draft and to approve the Final version before submission. Normally all members receive the same Group Report grade. If groups experience serious dysfunction or challenges they have not been able to resolve, contact the instructor in a timely manner. Consult the course handbook for advice on effective group coordination.

Policy for Late Assignments

Deadlines: All assignments are due online by 11:59PM Mountain Standard Time (MST) on their stated due date. Of course, you may submit work early at your convenience.

Grace period (except quizzes): For all written assignments, a submission grace period of 24 hours (until 23:59MST the next day) is allowed for technical difficulties, short-term illness, or scheduling challenges. This is not a deadline extension: if you submit after the grace period, late penalties will be calculated from the deadline date. For technical difficulties, see instructions for alternative submission in the "Assignment Submission" section below.

Quizzes do not have a submission grace period and must be submitted on or before their deadline date and time.

Late penalties: No late penalty will apply to written assignments submitted in the grace period noted above. After the grace period has expired, a late penalty of one letter grade level (e.g., from B to B-) may be applied for each calendar day it is late—including the grace period and weekend days. For example, an assignment due Friday but submitted the following Tuesday would receive a 4-level grade deduction. Verifiable documentation must be submitted to the instructor in order to request a reduction or waiver of late penalties.

Emergency temporary submission methods: If it is not possible, due to technical difficulty, to submit written assignments normally via Desire2Learn by the deadline, you may submit files by using one of the two submission methods before the end of the assignment's grace period:

- **OPTION 1:** Email your file attachments to the instructor's "COMS 363 Emergency temporary submission" folder on Box.com at upload.COMS363.v5w0oh7cyd@u.box.com. You will receive an email confirmation that your submission has been uploaded to the secure folder. **NOTE:** *As soon as Desire2Learn is accessible, resubmit your assignment normally AND leave the instructor and marker a note in your file submission area about using this temporary submission method, to avoid late penalties.*

- **OPTION 2:** Print out your assignment on paper and submit it to the Communication and Culture department office, making sure your name, the course number, and instructor's name are on the title page. A daytime assignment drop box is available in Social Sciences 320, where a date stamp and sign-in sheet is provided for your use. An after-hours drop box is also available near the door of SS320, where assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox. **NOTE:** *As soon as Desire2Learn is accessible, resubmit your assignment normally AND leave the instructor and marker a note in your submission area regarding your use of this temporary submission method, to avoid late penalties.*

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 14 days after the start of the course.

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. 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. 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. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using

- letter grades
- percentage grades
- raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)
- GPA values (using any value on the 0 to 4.0 scale, including, e.g., 3.2 or 2.8)
- a combination of the above. Quizzes will be given percentage grades. Written assignments worth more than 10% will be given a Letter Grade which will then be translated into a Percentage using the table below.

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%

4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

Grading timeline: Normally, assignments will be graded, marked and returned within two weeks (14 days), with some exceptions. A grading period may be extended to accommodate a holiday. If students submit an assignment late, it may be returned later than normal. Students are expected to carefully review and learn from markers' feedback to improve the quality of later assignments.

Grade concerns and appeals: All concerns about grades, marking, assignment expectations, late penalties, and progress in the course should be directed *to the instructor, not your section's marker*. Appeals should be made within 5 days of receiving a grade, should be well reasoned, and may require verifiable documentation of serious obstacles outside of one's control. Appeals involve careful review of the assignment and may result in a grade that is higher, lower, or the same. For appeals beyond the instructor of the course, refer to the university's Undergraduate Calendar.

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 (3rd 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 (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 <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

In this course, COMS 363 L01 & L02 Fall 2015, students are expected to participate in (or ethically recruit eligible participants for) at least 2 online usability surveys on other websites. An incomplete "survey participation quota" may result in a grade penalty on the *Individual Data Analysis* assignment score of one grade level (A to A-) for each incomplete survey. Survey participation quota must be completed by a strict deadline to enable the instructor to clean, compile, and distribute data required for students' upcoming assignments. In addition to providing report data, survey participation (or recruitment) performs an educational role of helping students understand the research methods from the participant's perspective, and thus better interpret the data. Students will be given access to their analyzed website's own survey's raw data, but they must securely store the data and respect participant anonymity while reporting results. All course assignments and drafts are confidential to their authors and the instructional team for the duration of the course. After the course, if students desire to share their reports with others, such as the owners of the website being analyzed, or as part of their professional portfolio, they may only do so with prior written permission of all co-authors.

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca

<p>CAMPUS SECURITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	<p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333</p> <p>403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</p> <p>If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</p>
<p>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	<p>http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</p> <p>403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca</p>
<p>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	<p>http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</p>
<p>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	<p>https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</p>
<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>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.</p>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

The course schedule will be provided on Desire2Learn.