

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 363 L02
Professional and Technical Communication

Fall 2018

An on-line course on D2L: <https://d2l.ucalgary.ca/d2l>

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Office Hours: Monday 10-11 and Thursday 10-11

Note that this section of the course will be offered entirely online. There are no tutorials or formal classes for this course.

COMS 363 is an introduction to professional and technical communication. This class takes a rhetorical approach to understanding professional and technical communication. Emphasis is placed on how workplace communication is situated within distinct organizational or corporate cultures as well as broader socio-cultural contexts.

This class will not provide you with a cookie cutter approach to technical and professional writing. Rather it will help you develop general concepts and tools to help you make sense of the various workplace writing situations. Emphasis will be placed on audience and genre analysis to help determine the best possible technical or professional structure. COMS 363 will help you develop general concepts and tools to help you make sense of workplace writing situations as they arise.

Objectives of the Course

This course will help you develop:

- a rhetorical approach to crafting documents--one in which you critically consider your purpose in writing, the needs of your audience(s), and relevant features of the context in which you are writing.
- an understanding of current theories of genre and familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of written genres, including business correspondence, proposals, and reports.

- in document design strategies to ensure that your documents look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and use visuals to communicate information effectively; writing strategies to keep your writing focused, coherent, and readable.
- a sound command of the mechanics of writing and the skills to edit effectively to eliminate common errors in sentence structure, grammar, word use, spelling, and punctuation. Competence in the use of a standard style of documentation.
- familiarity with a range of resources for professional writers, including tools for online research, for online composing, and for collaborative writing.
- and skills in conducting primary research (usability analysis, surveys).

Additional Information *Please note: Put COMS 363 in your subject line so that I don't miss your message. Please read the entire course outline as well as the User Guide posted on D2L for valuable tips and advice on how to manage an online course.

Marking Groups and Markers: There are no face-to-face tutorials in this class. However, all students will be in one of eight marking groups on D2L. These groups will be assigned at random after the drop/add date, but I may move some students later in the term either to balance marking loads or to bring together students who wish to collaborate on the final project.

Technical requirements & support:

TO DO (1): Before the course begins, please visit the e-learning student help page: <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. Here, you will find helpful resources for D2L plus links to information about obtaining an IT account, changing your password, and updating your e-mail address in the system. Note that you must have an IT account in order to access D2L. If you already have an @ucalgary.ca e-mail address, you have the necessary IT account in place. Once you enter the D2L platform, check out the help resources located under the HELP button on the menu. As you'll see, these help resources include a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs). If you run into problems, please check this area first.

TO DO (2): Before the course begins, please go into the D2L site and send an e-mail to yourself. If you do not receive the e-mail, it is your responsibility to update your e-mail address in the system (at the link provided on the e-learn page. If you neglect to update your e-mail address in the system, you will miss important messages related to this online course.

Be sure to check your e-mail often and to keep your e-mail box cleaned out. If your e-mail box is full, you may miss important messages and returned course work as messages bounced back to the instructor because of full e-mailboxes will normally not be resent. (Returned messages because of full e-mail boxes tend to be a particular problem with Hotmail accounts.)

TO DO (3): If you do not have MS Word on your computer, please visit the Microsoft download centre to download the Word viewers:

<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/Search.aspx?displaylang=en>

You must have composing software that can generate files readable in Microsoft Word 2000 or

higher. If you are not using Microsoft Word, please save your files in a Word-compatible format. If you are using Microsoft Word 2007, please use the save as feature to save all files as .doc (2003-style) rather than .docx (2007- style). Markers may have difficulty reading .docx files

Textbooks and Readings

Ewald, T. (2017). Writing in the Technical Fields. Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP.

Other readings and resources are located on D2L. Relevant readings are identified in each specific module.

Internet and electronic communication device information

N/A

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
15%	<p>Online Quiz Assignments 3 quizzes at 5% each (15% of final mark)</p> <p>Quiz 1 (on Chs. 1,5 and 12) Closed: September 28 @ 4:30 Quiz 2 (on Chs. 2, 3, 4, 9 and APA) Closed: October 19 @ 4:30 Quiz 3 (on Chs. 6, 7, 8 and 10) Closed: November 16 @ 4:30</p> <p>Quizzes are open-book and are to be done individually without collaboration. Quizzes will remain open from the beginning of the semester until the due dates posted above. Once quizzes are closed, they will not be reopened. Please be reminded that some quiz due dates are the same due dates as submitted assignments so use your time wisely.</p> <p>*Ensure that you complete all quizzes before they close at the designated times on the due dates. Quizzes will not be re-opened once they are closed.</p>	Ongoing
10%	<p>Email Memo Assignment (Individual Assignment) Length: 300-350 words</p> <p>Objective: Professional tone is important in workplace correspondence and to practice this, students will write a clear and concise recommendation memo using the case study located on D2L. Memos will be evaluated on how direct and clear the memo is written as well as how professionally it is formatted using the technical writing elements explained in the textbook.</p>	October 12

20%	<p>Process Description Assignment (Individual Assignment) Length: 850-1000 words</p> <p>Objective: To understand how audience expectations inform a writer's style and execution, students will pick a technical topic they are familiar with and write a process description of that topic for a general non-specific audience. Process descriptions are not a set of instructions, rather they are descriptions of how something works. The focus of this assignment is on how things work not on how to use them. Essays will be evaluated on how well the student communicates the process to the audience. More details on this assignment can be found in D2L.</p>	October 26
15%	<p>Project proposal (Group Option or Individual Assignment) Length: 6-8 pages (8 absolute maximum) excluding appendices</p> <p>Objective: Students must submit a project proposal which describes the focus of the proposed usability study of a website. The proposal will explain the criteria for analysis, offer a short literature review section that provides a scholarly overview of the theories and concepts that will be used in the report, set out proposed research methods in some detail and show that ethics considerations are taken into account before any primary research is conducted. Drafts of interview questions or survey questions are included. Further details for this assignment will be posted on D2L.</p>	November 9
15%	<p>Analysis of a Visual (Individual Assignment) Length: 750-900 words</p> <p>Objectives: Students will locate and critically analyze a visual (bar chart, graph, diagram, schematic, etc.) pointing out and discussing any ethical or communication challenges of the selected visual. The analysis will be based on Ewald's discussion in Chapter 10 of effective and ethical technical visuals. Further details for this assignment will be posted on D2L.</p>	November 23
25%	<p>Final report (with letter of transmittal) (Group Option or Individual Assignment) Length: 12-15 single spaces pages (15 pages max, excluding appendices)</p> <p>Objectives: By completing this assignment, students will use both primary and secondary research techniques to gather material for a professional report and then prepare a report using accepted conventions of report layout. There is an</p>	December 7

	expectation that students will bring together the past 13 weeks of instruction on audience, readability and style. Further details for this assignment will be posted on D2L.	
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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: All assignments are digital and the instructor will not accept any hard copies. Please hand in your essays directly to the appropriate dropbox in D2L.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams 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 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/.

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>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades. All assignments will be graded on a numerical scale.

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.

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 support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

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>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <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>

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
CAMPUS SECURITY	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints 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/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds

<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>
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Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Please see D2L for a detailed schedule of the course.