

Communications Studies (COMS) 363 – Lecture 25
Professional and Technical Communication
Spring 2012
MW 6:00-8:50pm

Instructor: Dr. Michele Braun

Office Location: SS209

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Office Hours: M/W 4:30-5:30pm or by appointment

Course Description

An introduction to professional and technical communication, both written and oral. 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.

Additional Information

This course will be workshop-based instruction on the preparation of a number of technical documents, including memos, letters, proposals, reports, and instructions or descriptions of objects. The workshop means that your work will be presented in the class for critique aimed at improving the final written text, and you will in turn respond to the writing of your peers for the same purpose. The final report of the course will be a complete package of documentation about a specific problem and solution that each student has identified early on in the class.

Objectives of the Course

This course emphasises the principles and techniques used in technical communication, both written and oral. Students will learn how to write reader-friendly documents while examining the rhetorical concepts behind organizing and presenting technical information to specific audiences for specific purposes. They will acquire these skills by analyzing selected documents, discussing the writing and editing process, and problem solving that may result in memoranda, letters, technical descriptions, procedures, proposals, reports, and oral presentations.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Please refrain from using cell phones and other hand-held communication devices and ensure they are set to silent or turned off during classes and labs. If you must take an emergency call, please exit the classroom quietly to do so. The use of electronic devices such as laptops and tablets to take notes or to advance your understanding of the course material is acceptable. However, please refrain from using social media or websites unrelated to the course during classes and labs unless otherwise instructed to do so.

Textbooks and Readings:

MacLennan, Jennifer, *Readings for Technical Communication*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Coursepack for COMS 363: Professional and Technical Communication, Braun
Available through the bookstore

Note: You will require the Coursepack in order to complete assignments as assignment descriptions will not be distributed any other way. The in-class work and quizzes will be based on the readings in the MacLennan textbook.

Assignments and Evaluation

Topic Memo	5%
Proposal	15%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
In-class Object Description	10%
Report draft	10%
Report	20%
Presentation	10%
Quizzes, in-class exercises and peer review (2 x 5% each for peer review)	20%

The topic memo, proposal, annotated bibliography, presentation and report are linked assignments based on the topic chosen by the student at the beginning of the term.

Topic Memo (1-2 double-spaced pages)

The topic memo will outline your initial thoughts regarding a topic for the semester and the subsequent assignments.

Due: May 16th

Proposal (5-7 double-spaced pages)

The proposal describes in detail what report you intend to write and how you intend on going about doing so. A draft will be peer reviewed before the final version is required to be submitted.

Due: draft: May 28th; final version: May 30th

Annotated Bibliography (5 sources; 4-5 double-spaced pages)

The annotated bibliography presents the research you've gathered for your report in proper bibliographic formatting (APA or MLA citation style) with a description of each source and how it will be used in the report.

Due: June 4th

In-class Object Description (1 ½ hour midterm exam)

The midterm in-class object description will require students to describe in detail a provided object.

June 6th

Report draft (8-20 double-spaced pages)

The final recommendation report draft will be peer reviewed and assessed by the instructor to provide the student with feedback regarding the suitability of the report and its construction before the final version is to be submitted.

Due: June 11th

Report (15-20 double-spaced pages)

The final assignment of the course is a recommendation report based on a topic of the student's choosing. It will draw upon the previous assignments for its content and structure.

Due: June 20th

Presentation (4-5 minutes + Q&A)

A brief oral presentation accompanied by visual aids will require students to present the work in the recommendation report to an audience of their peers.

June 18th or 20th as assigned

Note: In-class work will be assessed through a ✓+/✓/✓- system. Students will be expected to do a lot of writing, some of which will be in the form of quizzes or exercises undertaken during the class period. The grade is calculated through a check/check +/check - system of assessment for in-class assignments, including quizzes, writing exercises and peer review. In these instances, all in class writing that is turned in to the instructor is assigned one of three "marks":

- ✓+ means the assignment exceeds expectations; A or high B range
- ✓ means the assignment is competent; low B or C range
- ✓- means the assignment fails to meet expectations; low C to F range

The check/check +/check - is the only grade that will be assigned to this kind of submitted work. Students wishing to discuss their work and receive further feedback on these kinds of assignments are encouraged to attend office hours or make an appointment to meet with the instructor.

Peer review will also be marked in this manner; each successful peer review will constitute 5% of the total grade in this category. Students may participate in peer

reviewing another's work only if they have brought a draft to share with others and are present on the day.

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

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

Policy for Late Assignments

All assignments are due **at the beginning** of the class for which they are assigned. Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day (or portion thereof) late. There will be no make-up opportunities for missed in-class exercises, quizzes or peer review without an appropriate reason, for example, illness or other unforeseeable events. An excused absence requires documentation and is granted at the discretion of the instructor.

Late Pass Policy

You have one free pass for one late assignment during the term for which you will not be penalized the late penalty, but only one. After that late assignment free pass is used, all other assignments will be docked regardless of the reason for the late assignment. The late pass cannot be used for in-class work (including peer review), presentations or exams. The assignment for which a late pass is used is due by the last day that our class meets; it will be graded, but will not receive additional comments.

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 on the reverse. 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://www.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: (Revised, effective September 2008)

	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 Digital Family 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 Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) 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.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

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/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

COURSE SCHEDULE

	Date	Monday	Wednesday
1	May 9		Introduction
2	May 14, 16	Project topic brainstorming Read chapter 2 “Why Communication Matters” and chapter 18 “Effective Writing”	Topic memo due Read chapter 25 “Making Them an Offer They Can’t Refuse: How to Appeal to an Audience”
3	May 21, 23	VICTORIA DAY	Read chapter 5 “Functional Communication: A Situational Perspective” and chapter 47 “Verbal Text: Electronic Communication in the Information Age”
4	May 28, 30	Proposal draft due Peer review proposal draft	Proposal due Read chapter 14 “What Connection Does Rhetorical Theory Have to Technical and Professional Communication?”
5	June 4, 6	Source Critique & Annotated Bibliography due Read chapter 34 “The World of Doublespeak” and chapter 40 “ <i>Ethos</i> : Character and Ethics in Technical Writing”	In class description assignment Read chapter 4 “First Flight”
6	June 11, 13	Report Draft Due Peer review report drafts Read chapter 19 “Clutter”	Read chapter 28 “Three Tricky Relationships to an Audience” and Chapter 48 “The Perils of Powerpoint”
7	June 18, 20	Presentations	Presentations Report due

Course schedule subject to change with notice.