

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
COMS 363 (L07): Professional and Technical Communication

SPRING 2021: May 5 – June 17 (excluding May 24)

Due dates fall on Tuesdays & Fridays

(Web-based & entirely asynchronous)

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR SPRING 2021:

This Spring 2021 course will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please read the outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate at the usual scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time).

Note that the time indicated on course outlines for all timed quizzes and exams in CMCL, COMS, and FILM courses includes 50% extra time to allow for technical difficulties.

Instructor:	Andrea Hanslip
Email:	arhansli@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Mondays and Thursdays, 1-2 pm (available on Zoom and by email)

Course Description

An introduction to professional and technical communication in diverse media. Examines 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

- The course is entirely online, with no scheduled lectures.
- The course involves a major group project and three related group assignments.
- Because our timeline for the course is shorter than it would be in either the Fall or Winter semesters, the pace is more intense. Note that the first few weeks contain a lot of reading and that assignments/tasks are due every week.
- To do well in this course, schedule at least 12 hours a week to complete readings and work on assignments.
- The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L.
- Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, students should know how to

- approach workplace communication rhetorically, considering not only their purpose in writing but also the needs and expectations of their audience and other relevant features of the writing context, including its ethical dimensions
- work collaboratively with others in an online environment and effectively use basic workplace genres, including informal and formal reports, proposals, letters, memos, emails, résumés, and instructions.
- design documents and PowerPoint slides using headings, lists, and visuals to make information clear and accessible.
- revise writing for clarity, conciseness, appropriate tone, and well focused paragraphs and edit to eliminate common writing errors.
- conduct secondary research and effectively use and cite information from sources using APA or IEEE documentation style. Depending on the focus of the report assignment, students may also learn know how to ethically conduct a usability test or other small-scale study involving an online survey.

Textbooks and Readings

Ewald, T. (2020). *Writing in the Technical Fields: A Practical Guide*. 3rd edition. Oxford UP.

Approximately \$78 for a hardcopy edition or \$30 for a 6-month digital copy rental via the U of Calgary Bookstore or

<https://redshelf.com/search/?terms=Writing+in+the+technical+fields>

The weekly syllabus also includes links to online readings; the links are also provided on D2L.

Learning Technologies and Requirements & Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

This is an online course. In order to complete online (or blended) courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone. If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact the university's IT department. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Instructors may arrange to record synchronous zoom class sessions for lesson capture; however, students are not to share recordings with others. Please carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Please see assignment guidelines on D2L.

Note that all assignments are due at 11:59 pm on the date indicated.

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
10%	Revision Task (individual) Revising sentences, paragraphs, short documents for conciseness, coherence, design, and clarity; handout under Content: Assignments in D2L	Tuesday, May 11
12%	Visual critique memo-email (individual) Short memo-email critiquing tables, graphs, and other visuals in an assigned report; instructions under Content: Assignments in D2L	Tuesday, May 18
15%	Proposal for usability study (with group contract) (3 to 4 pages, done in project groups of 4). This is the first of 3 assignments comprising the Group Project. This proposal will include an overview of the website chosen for analysis, a description of your research method, an overview of your evaluation criteria, a work schedule, a draft set of usability survey questions, and your group contract (in an appendix) Format: 3- to 4-page single-spaced memo (plus appendices); instructions for the Group Project under Content: Assignments in D2L	Tuesday, May 25
5%	Quiz 1 Editing quiz on D2L (individual) based on Ewald Appendix, editing handouts on D2L (20 questions, multiple choice). Quiz will open May 21.	Friday, May 28
18%	Heuristic evaluation memo report (2-3 pages, single-spaced, individual) Each member of your project group will submit an individual heuristic analysis of your target website focusing on an assigned criterion for analysis (as indicated in your group contract). Instructions under Content: Assignments in D2L	Tuesday, June 1
5%	Quiz 2 (individual) based on Ewald Ch. 11 & 12, Using PPT Intelligently (multiple choice, 20 questions). Quiz will open May 28.	Friday, June 4
5%	Participation. Complete up to 5 online surveys for other student group projects (1% each). Upload a list of completed surveys to D2L by the due date.	Tuesday, June 8
6%	PowerPoint (10-14 slides, group). This PowerPoint is based on your research project and will summarize research, findings, and recommendations. It will be collaboratively crafted by all group members. Instructions for the Group Project are under Content: Assignments in D2L	Friday, June 11
24%	Final recommendation report (group). This formal report with cover letter will present your group's usability study research, key findings, and recommendations. Format: 12- to 16-page formal report + 1-page cover letter. Instructions for the Group Project are under Content: Assignments in D2L.	Tuesday, June 15

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: You must complete all assignments worth more than 5% in order to pass the course. If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments electronically by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox (unless instructed otherwise in the assignment guidelines). **Please only submit .docx (or .pptx) file formats for assignments.** You may also submit a PDF if you are concerned about document appearance/formatting if you are converting from something like Google Docs.

- Include your name at the top of page 1 and in the file name (e.g., *Collins Chu Malor Proposal.docx*) for all assignments.
- For group assignments, please have only one group member submit group assignments to the group dropboxes. Marked assignments submitted to a group dropbox will be accessible for review by all group members.
- If you encounter difficulty submitting through D2L, please email the assignment to the instructor with “COMS 363 Temporary Submission” in the subject line. As soon as D2L becomes available, please resubmit the assignment in the designated drop box and leave a note in the comment box, indicating that you’ve submitted earlier by email to avoid late penalties.
- Keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Group Assignments

For the Usability Study project and assignments, students will work in the same groups of 4. Students will have until 11:59pm Tuesday, May 11 to form their own groups of 4 by using the group formation tool in D2L; students not in groups by then will be randomly assigned to groups. (Watch D2L for more information on this.)

Group assignments should only include the names of members who contributed to the work; including names of group members who did not contribute is a form of plagiarism. Normally, all members of a group will earn the same grade for group assignments, but the instructor may adjust individual group members’ grades based on formal or informal peer evaluations. The instructor may administer peer evaluations to any group; peer evaluations will also be administered to any group if any member of that group so requests. (The names of group members requesting peer evaluations will be kept confidential.)

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation 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) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that

a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, the revision task, online quizzes, and the participation grade will be graded using percentage or numerical grades, and all other assignments will be given letter grades.

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%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: 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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://success.ucalgary.ca/home.htm>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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

The course-based research ethics approval in place for COMS 363 covers only research (e.g., surveys) involving your fellow students *in this section of the course*. If you propose to do other research involving human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your

research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Please scroll to the next page for the weekly syllabus of course topics, readings, and due dates.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Course Work Spring 2021

Please enter due dates in your calendar and complete all readings during the specified week. After reading chapters from Ewald, review the corresponding chapter PPTs (on D2L)

Week	Topics, Readings, Activities	Work Due
May 5-9	<p>Introduction to course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read course outline (posted on D2L) • Watch Welcome video in D2L • Read about group formation in course outline; choose group project partners (optional) in D2L Groups area (see the class list under Communication to see other students in the course) • Configure D2L settings to ensure you are getting course announcements and course notifications and are receiving emails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your system's compatibility in D2L via My Tools→System Check • Email yourself from within D2L to ensure emails from D2L are not going to a spam folder or to an email account you don't regularly check. To change email settings, go to Communication →News →More actions →Notifications • Configure notifications in D2L to specify course updates be sent to your SMS (message system) or email. To do this, go to Communication →News →More actions →Notifications Instant Notifications <p>Introduction to technical and professional writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ewald, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-20) <p>Effective revising for sentences, paragraphs, & parallelism: preparing for Revision Task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ewald, Ch. 2, 3, & 4 (pp. 21-68) • Quickly look over Ewald, Appendix: Grammar and Usage Handbook (pp. 281-322) • Watch Revising video in D2L • Begin Revision Task worksheet (under Assignments on D2L) 	
May 10-16	<p>Writing correspondence and short reports: preparing for Visual Critique memo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ewald, Ch. 5 (pp. 69-80): Routine Correspondence • Read Assignment guidelines (posted on D2L under Assignments) for visual critique memo • Watch Visual Critique video • Draft & revise visual critique: use instructions as a checklist <p>Designing and using visuals: preparing for Visual Critique memo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Few, S. (2007). Save the pies for dessert. https://www.perceptualedge.com/articles/visual_business_intelligence/save_the_pies_for_dessert.pdf • Read Ewald, Ch. 10 (pp. 182-200) Technical Graphics • Look through the various pages in the Graphing Resources section here: North Carolina State University (NCSU). (2004). LabWrite Resources. Retrieved from http://labwrite.ncsu.edu/res/res-homepage.htm 	<p>Tuesday, May 11 Revision Task worksheet: submit to Dropbox in D2L</p> <p>Tuesday, May 11 Last day to self-select group members for group project</p>

	<p>Working in project groups and choosing a topic: preparing for Proposal, PPT and Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ewald, Ch. 8 (pp. 150-64) Intercultural Communication, Collaborative Writing, and Document Control • Look at sample proposal and reports on D2L (Content area) • Read Group Project Guidelines (under Assignments in D2L) • Email your group (all students will be assigned to a group by May 12) • Agree on a website to evaluate • Read Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University. (2020). <i>Group work</i>. https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/group-work 	
May 17-23	<p>Writing proposals & working in project groups: preparing for Proposal, PPT and Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read sample proposal in D2L • Watch Proposal video in D2L • Discuss group roles, and assign parts of the project to group members • Write group contract • Decide on your citation style: APA or IEEE • Draft proposal & revise (use Ewald Ch. 1 + Report-Writing Checklist) <p>Using and citing sources (in IEEE and APA styles)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read materials appropriate to your chosen citation style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ewald, Ch. 9 (pp. 165-178) ○ Murdoch University. (2019). IEEE Style: Citing in the text. A guide to IEEE referencing. https://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/IEEE/text ○ American Psychological Association. (2021). <i>Style and grammar guidelines</i>. APA Style. https://apastyle.apa.org ○ Purdue Online Writing Lab. (2020). <i>APA formatting and style guide (7th edition)</i>. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html • Watch citation videos in D2L <p>Designing surveys and usability tests: preparing for Proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Jerz, D. (2010). <i>Usability testing: 8 quick tips for designing tests</i>. http://jerz.setonhill.edu/design/usability/tips.htm • Read U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. (2020). <i>Usability evaluation basics</i>. https://www.usability.gov/what-and-why/usability-evaluation.html • Read U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. (2020). <i>Online surveys</i>. https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/online-surveys.html • Read SurveyMonkey. (2020). <i>Surveys 101</i>. https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/survey-guidelines/?ut_source=header (and check out the links at the bottom of the page; recommended: The Likert Scale Explained, Qualitative vs. Quantitative Questions, Survey Programming and Design, A Great Survey is Like a Great Conversation. 	<p>Tuesday, May 18 Visual Critique (individual assignment): submit to Dropbox</p>

	<p>Here's What We Mean!, A Little Bias is a Big Problem)</p> <p>Designing Effective Websites & Assessing Aspects of Usability: preparing for Proposal (deciding on criteria for evaluation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Garrett, J. J. (2000). The elements of user experience. http://www.jig.net/elements/pdf/elements.pdf • Scan Table of Contents in Lynch, P. J. & Horton, S. (2009). Web style guide, 3rd edition. https://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html • Scan Table of Contents in Lynch, P. J. & Horton, S. (2016). Web style guide, 4th edition. https://webstyleguide.com 	
May 25-30	<p>Editing for common errors: preparing for Quiz 1 on Editing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ewald, Appendix: Grammar and Usage Handbook (pp. 281-322) • Read Editing handouts (under Content on D2L) • Watch Editing videos in D2L <p>Writing short reports: preparing for Heuristic Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ewald, Ch. 6 (pp. 85-112) Short Reports, Proposals, and Technical Documents • Read Heuristic Evaluation instructions • Watch Heuristic Evaluation video in D2L • Draft Heuristic Evaluation & revise (use Ewald Ch. 1 + Report-Writing Checklist) 	<p>Tuesday, May 25 Proposal (group assignment, including group contract as appendix): submit to Dropbox in D2L</p> <p>Friday, May 28 Quiz 1 due</p>
May 31-June 6	<p>Other technical genres: preparing for Quiz 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ewald, Ch. 11 (pp. 201-219) Technical Definitions and Descriptions • Read Ewald, Ch. 12 (pp. 220-238) Instructions, Procedure, and Manuals • Take Quiz 2 <p>Conducting primary research, continuing group project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look over comments on marked proposal when received • Release your survey this week after making any changes necessary • Take surveys from other groups for participation marks • Begin to draft sections of report <p>Crafting presentations and PowerPoint slides: preparing for PPT; preparing for Quiz 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ewald, Ch. 13 (pp. 239-249, p. 253-4) Oral Presentations • Read Brent, D., & Andre, J. (2011). Using PowerPoint Intelligently [PPT on D2L] • Read PowerPoint assignment guidelines (on D2L) • Watch PPT video in D2L • Take Quiz 2 	<p>Tuesday, June 1 Heuristic Evaluation (individual assignment): submit to Dropbox in D2L</p> <p>Friday, June 4 Quiz 2 due</p>

<p>June 7-13</p>	<p>Writing formal reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ewald, Ch. 7 (p. 118- 149) Formal Reports • Read Report-writing Checklist • Review Report assignment guidelines (on D2L) • Watch Report video in D2L <p>Continuing group project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile results from surveys • Combine survey results with heuristic evaluation results • Write and revise all sections of report (use comments on returned heuristic evaluations to help with revision/editing) • Design visuals for report and PPT • Compile PPT and revise, edit & proofread carefully 	<p>Tuesday, June 8 List of Surveys taken (for Participation mark): submit to Dropbox in D2L</p> <p>Friday, June 11 PowerPoint (group assignment): submit to Dropbox in D2L</p>
<p>June 14-17</p>	<p>Continuing group project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final revision/editing of report (use Ewald Ch. 1 + Report-Writing Checklist) 	<p>Tuesday, June 15 Final Recommendation Report (group assignment): submit to Dropbox in D2L</p>