Communications Studies COMS 363 – Lecture 64
Professional and Technical Communication
Summer 2011

Time: Tuesday/Thursday, 18:30 – 21:15 /
Location: TBA
Instructor: Colin Martin
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Office hours: By appointment
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Course description

This course provides an introduction to professional and technical communication, both written and oral. Every workplace calls for different conventions of writing and different generic forms. This course is not intended to provide a cookbook of all the different recipes you might need; rather, it will help you develop general concepts and tools to better make sense of workplace writing situations as they arise.

Course objectives

• 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 write;
• an understanding of current theories of genre and familiarity with the conventions of and strategies for a range of written genres, including business correspondence, proposals, and reports;
• 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 (APA);
• familiarity with a range of resources for professional writers, including tools for online research, for online composing, and (potentially) for collaborative writing;
• skills in conducting primary research (usability analysis, surveys);
• competence in preparing and performing oral presentations.

The course will also give you the opportunity to develop your skills as an effective member of a collaborative writing team. However, completing your final project with a group is optional, not mandatory.

Internet and electronic communication device information

This course is conducted in a seminar format, meaning that the instructor will deliver lessons based on the readings and material, while engaging the class in discussion and feedback on that material. This means that any communication with people outside the class, who are not part of this conversation, is an interruption and should be conducted elsewhere. Turn your phones off and put them away during class time, use your laptops for notes only, and expect to be called on to join the

conversation in class. During those classes where we use the computers in the Tri-lab to write essays, internet use is strictly limited to the essay assignment at that time.

Required materials & academic support

Tebeaux, Elizabeth and Sam Dragga (2010) The Essentials of technical communication. New York, NY. Oxford UP. (Specific edition with access code for Symtech liquid book)

*Additional readings and resource materials will be provided in class or posted on the course Blackboard site.

Assignments and evaluation

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. All assignments are due in class and will not be accepted via email unless expressly indicated in the assignment. Please hand in your essays directly to your 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.

This class has no registrar-scheduled final exam.

20%
Five minute papers (FMP). Of five papers, you will receive a grade for your top four (5% each)
Due: unscheduled, in class

10%
Introductory paper, written in class
Date: July 7

10%
Final project proposal
Due: Beginning of class, July 19

10%
Graphic analysis paper
Date: Beginning of Class, July 28

20%
Oral presentation & notes
Due: In class, August 9-16

30%
Final report with letter of transmittal
Due: Beginning of class, August 9

A note on word count

A supervisor who asks for a two-page memo either will not read a four-page response, or will not be in the best frame of mind when doing so. However, if it leaks a little onto the third page, and has enough real meat to make it worth reading, few supervisors will complain. With this in mind, then:

1. All assignments should stick as closely as possible to the assigned length. Your instructor has a clear idea what can be achieved within a specific length and a truly excellent assignment nails the question exactly, at the suggested length.
2. There is, however, a 10% grace in length. Therefore, a 500-word assignment would not be actively penalized unless it came in under 450 words or over 550 words. No assignment, however brilliant otherwise, would receive a clear A without falling into the 10% word count range. Note that the report assignment does specifically allow for more than the suggested page length if it contains bulky visuals. Otherwise the same rules apply to pages as well as number of words. Do not try to keep down to the required length by using narrow margins and teeny font. You will be caught.

Group project option:

The proposal, presentation, and final report may be done individually or in a group of up to four members. If you know someone with whom you would like to work, you may form a group.
If you form a group and would like your group space enabled on Blackboard, please email the instructor with the names of all your group members. Group spaces include a private discussion board, a file exchange tool, and a group email feature.

Note on group grades:

All group members will normally receive the same grade on group assignments. It is up to each group to ensure that the group's workload is distributed fairly among members and that all group members have a chance to review the final draft of any group document before it is submitted. Note that if a group member's name appears on an assignment but that group member did not contribute to the document, he or she is guilty of plagiarism. Group assignments should include only the names of members who contributed to the document. See the instructor early in the term if you would like help with group contracts (which are helpful but not necessary for the course).

Due dates, late policy, and return of assignments

• Extensions will be granted only by the instructor and only with good reason.
• Assignments will normally be returned within two weeks.
• All assignments are due at the beginning of class unless written in class. Anytime later that day the assignments will be considered one day late; late assignments will be
penalized a part grade (i.e. from B+ to B) per day.

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 the U of C Research Ethics "Information for Applicants," sections 3.0 to 9.0, inclusive:

http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/research/html/ethics/info_undergrad.html

Ethics forms and information specific to COMS 363 will be posted on the course Blackboard site. Students must be prepared to provide survey information for other students' work in the class.

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. You will also 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 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: www.efwr.ucalgary.ca.

Grading system

Work in this course will be numerically graded and assigned a letter grade:

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

Feel free to discuss your ideas with others and to have someone review your written work to point out weaknesses and typos. These practices are common in the workplace and do not constitute plagiarism as long as you do the corrections and the rewriting. All of the following, however, constitute plagiarism:

• passing off the work of others as your own;
• submitting work that you have done previously (or that you are now doing for another course) as if it were new work done for this course;
• borrowing wording from published or online material without using quotation marks (or formatting long quoted passages according to documentation conventions);
• using wording, ideas, information, or graphics from published material or from the internet without acknowledging the source. In other words, using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is considered plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a serious offence: it can result in failure on an assignment, failure of the course, or even suspension or expulsion from university. (See the University of Calgary Calendar.)

Note that 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. These requirements apply to assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such formats. Information about documentation styles is included in your textbook and in the course documents posted on Blackboard. If you need further guidance about whether or how to document a source, please contact your instructor.

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 Communication and Culture see www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/su

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 phone # 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.