

Communications Studies (COMS) 363 - Lecture 03
Professional and Technical Communication
Winter 2014

Wednesdays 18:30-21:20

Class Dates: Jan. 8, 15, 22, 29, Feb. 5, 12, 26, Mar. 5, 12, 19, 26, Apr. 2, 9

NOTE: The course outline posted in October 2013 has been revised. If you have any concerns about these changes, please contact the instructor to make necessary arrangements.

Instructor: Rebecca Carruthers Den Hoed
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 17:15-18:15
Tuesdays 10:00-11:00

Course Description

An introduction to professional and technical communication. Students will learn the rhetorical dimensions of workplace settings and the process of planning, researching, composing, and delivering professional and technical communication for various audiences.

Additional Information

Course projects will focus on professional and technical communication for a variety of industries. Students should be prepared to research and communicate about topics beyond their own technical/professional expertise. However, students can select the topic of their group project and are encouraged to choose a topic associated with their area(s) of study.

Objectives of the Course

The course will help you develop:

- a rhetorical approach to crafting documents in which you critically consider your purpose, the needs of your audience, and relevant context;
- a familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of technical and professional genres, including professional correspondence, proposals, reports, and presentations;
- document design strategies to ensure documents look professional, promote easy information retrieval, and use visuals effectively;
- writing strategies to keep writing focused, coherent, and readable;
- skill in editing to eliminate common errors in sentence structure, grammar, word use, spelling, and punctuation;

- familiarity with tools for online research and competence using a standard style of documentation (e.g., IEEE, APA, MLA).

Internet and electronic communication device information

Electronic devices in the classroom: Students are welcome to use electronic devices in class (laptops, tablets, phones) for course-related communications. Students who use electronic devices for non-course-related reasons during class will be asked to leave the room while doing so, to avoid distracting students and the instructor.

Recording lectures: Recording any part of any lecture in any form without permission is not permitted. Lecture slides will not be posted on the web. Photographing lecture slides is not permitted. These restrictions are due to copyright and intellectual property issues and are strictly enforced.

E-mail Policy: When emailing the instructor, make sure COMS 363.L04 is in the subject line and your name is in the “from” line. You can expect a response from your instructor within 48 hours.

Blackboard E-mail: Announcements are sometimes emailed to students *via* Blackboard. It is your responsibility to make sure Blackboard has an up-to-date email address for you. To update your email address in the University of Calgary (and Blackboard) system, follow the instructions at <<http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/blackboard/email>>.

Textbooks and Readings

Tebeaux, E. & Dragga, S. (2012). *The Essentials of Technical Communication*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [AVAILABLE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY BOOKSTORE.]

Barnum, Carol M. (2010). *Usability Testing Essentials: Ready, Set ... Test!* Elsevier Science & Technology. [AVAILABLE ONLINE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY LIBRARY.]

Assignments and Evaluation

Correspondence	(15%)	Jan. 22nd, 2014
Editing for Readability/Design	(20%)	Feb 5th, 2014
Group Work Contract	(P/F)	Feb. 12h, 2014
Usability Test	(15%)	Feb. 26, 2014
Proposal	(15%)	Mar. 12th, 2014
Slideware Presentation	(15%)	Apr. 9th, 2014
Formal Report	(20%)	Apr. 9th, 2014

Correspondence (solo): Write one letter and one memo (200-500 words each) regarding an organizational change, addressing each to a different audience.

Editing for Style/Design (solo): Edit four short passages: two for writing style and two for document design & graphics. Insert all *writing style* revisions into the documents using track changes.

Usability Test (solo): Draft a usability test for a website usability study. The test should effectively integrate features of a questionnaire & set of instructions. Your usability test should include (1) 6+ scenario-tasks for test participants to complete, (2) 2-3 follow-up (post-task) questions for each scenario-task, (3) 2+ pre-test questions, and (4) 2+ post-test questions. This assignment is linked to the group usability study (below) and should focus on the website chosen for the group study.

Proposal, Formal Report, Slideware Presentation (group): These are linked assignments to be completed in groups of 2-3. Each group will write a proposal (500-600 words/ group member) that responds to a request for a *website usability study*. The proposal should outline the group's plan to conduct the requested usability test. After the usability test has been conducted, each group will write up a formal report of their usability findings and recommendations (900-1000 words / group member, not including letter of transmittal, references, or appendices). Each group will also present key findings and recommendations in an oral report (a "slideware" presentation clocking in at 3-5 min. / group member). Each group will also write and sign a group work contract: students who fail to fulfill the terms of their group contract will be subject to penalties agreed upon in advance by the group.

All assignments should be handed in *on paper directly to the instructor*. If it is not possible to hand in an assignment in person, a daytime drop box is available at 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. Do not email assignments to the instructor unless you have been given *explicit permission* to do so.

Graded assignments will be returned within 2 weeks of the date they were submitted.

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments are due by 6:30 pm on the due date. Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

If you need an extension, please email the instructor to ask for an extension at least 5 days before the assignment due date.

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. 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://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:

	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 Family Digital 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 Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) 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.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

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/ethics/cfreb>

Your instructor has applied for course-based ethics approval for COMS363. However, she must review and approve of your research plans, as set out in your proposal. If your instructor has any concerns, she may direct your proposal to the faculty research ethics committee.

- For COMS363, the research ethics requirements are explained in the assignment guidelines, and templates for letters of consent and anonymous surveys are available on Blackboard.

In your usability study proposal, you must clearly explain exactly how you plan to comply with the research ethics guidelines for your usability study project. If you have questions about the requirements, please contact the instructor. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see the Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site: <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

January 8

Lecture: Workplace Writing; Ethics

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapters 1 & 3

January 15

Lecture: Writing for Readers; Correspondence

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapter 2 & 7

January 22

Due: Correspondence assignment

Lecture: Writing Style & Readability

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapter 4

January 29

Lecture: Document Design & Graphics

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapters 5 & 6

February 5

Due: Editing assignment

Lecture: Collaborative Writing; Usability

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapter 8 (pp. 185-191 only)

Usability Testing Essentials Chapters 1, 3, 4

February 12

Due: Group Work Contracts

Lecture: Usability Tests; Instructions/Questionnaires

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapter 10

Usability Testing Essentials Chapters 5 & 6

February 19

NO CLASS

February 26

Due: Usability Test assignment

Lecture: Proposals

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapter 9

March 5

Lecture: Proposals

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapter 9

March 12

Due: Proposal assignment

Lecture: Usability Testing

Readings: *Usability Testing Essentials* Chapters 7 & 8

March 19

IN CLASS USABILITY TEST

March 26

Lecture: Written Reports

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapter 8

Usability Testing Essentials Chapter 9

April 2

Lecture: Oral Reports

Readings: *The Essentials of Technical Communication* Chapter 11

April 9

Due: Slideware Presentation & Formal Report assignments