Communication Studies (COMS 463) Lecture 01
Rhetorical Communication in Online Environments
Winter 2014
Lecture W/F 12:00-12:50; Tutorial W/F 13:00-13:50

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Course Description

This course will explore the theory and criticism of professional communication. Using rhetorical perspectives, the course will cover social-cultural perspectives on professional communication. Students will read a selection of articles outlining the history, ethics and theoretical approaches to professional communication. Students will critique samples of professional communication arising from a variety of organizational contexts in a variety of media and genres. Students will also engage in hands on analysis of an organization's web content to understand how effective online communication develops strong ethical accountability. The course may also incorporate some degree of experiential learning and professional communication practice.

Additional Information

The Lecture section of this course will be on Wednesdays from 12-1:40 in ES054. The Lab section of this course will take place Fridays from 12-1:40 in the Arts Computer Lab SS018.

All assignments (with the exception of the two in-class exams), correspondence and group work will take place online in either Blackboard or another online collaborative program, such as Google docs or Zoho. Students are encouraged to become familiar with one of these platforms before the first computer lab.

Objectives of the Course

To understand socio-cultural and rhetorical perspectives on professional communication

To apply theories to the criticism and production of professional discourse

To learn the specific knowledge, technologies and skills needed to collaboratively construct and analyze effective online professional communications.

To learn how to work in a group that simulates a workplace environment.

Students will learn in a collaborative and safe environment.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops and other computer devices are welcomed in the course and are to be used only for class activities and note taking. Please be respectful of your fellow classmates while using them.

Textbooks and Readings:

Eiola-Johnson, J & S. Selber (2004). *Central Works in Technical Communication.* Oxford UP: New York.

Additional readings to be provided in class.

A good dictionary and grammar handbook.

Knowledge and familiarity with an online collaboration system.

Assignments and Evaluation

Reading Presentation
Weight: 20%
Due Date: Ongoing

Description
In groups of 5, students will present on two readings from the text book. Presentations will be 45 -60 minutes in length and will offer an overview of the main concepts of the readings. The group will also submit 3-4 discussion questions to the class ahead of the scheduled presentation and will facilitate discussion during the presentation. Presentation notes are to be handed into the instructor following the presentation.

Communications Portfolio Proposal
Weight: 15%
Due Date: Friday, February 14

Description
Groups will submit a 5-7 page proposal outlining their final communications project. Proposals should include a project description and justification, a short literature review that outlines the theoretical concepts anchoring the project, a short methods section with

preliminary data collection questions or surveys, a break down of individual duties with a Gannt chart, and an explanation and justification of the online collaboration system to be used.

Two In-class Exams
Weight: 20% each (Total 40%)
Due Date: Wednesday, February 26 and Wednesday April 2

Description
Students will complete two in-class exams that will last 60 - 90 minutes. There will be a variety of questions such as matching, multiple choice, short answer and fill in the blanks. Questions will be based on course readings and class discussions.

Communications Portfolio
Weight: 25%
Due Date: Friday, April 11

Description
Students will submit a portfolio (length will vary) characterizing an organization's online communication strategy. The portfolio will contain a number of documents including, visual analysis, information architecture assessment and content analysis of the organization's web presence, an overview of the online ethical characteristics of the organization, and explanation and examples of the variety of genres within this organization, interviews with the organizations' technical writers and web developers, and a synthesis of how the course concepts and theories support or challenge the organization's online presence, and each group members' reflective evaluation on the process of working as a group on this project.

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

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

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

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 zer0.

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

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

TBA and posted on Blackboard before the semester begins.