

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 463 (L01): Rhetorical Communication in Online Environments

WINTER 2020: January 13 to April 15 (excluding Feb. 17-21 and Apr 13)

Lecture: Mondays & Wednesdays 15:30 to 16:45

Instructor:	Tania S. Smith
Office:	SS 302
Office Phone:	(403)-220-7774
Email:	smit@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal (delete or edit)
Office Hours:	Wednesdays 1:00-2:00 pm drop in, or schedule an appointment. Appointment calendar: https://ucalgary.ca/smit/about/appointment-calendar -- email to suggest an available time 11a-5pm weekdays. Remote learning March 17-April 15: office hours and appointments will be held via Zoom, Skype, telephone, or D2L chat.

Course Description

Rhetorical theory, criticism, production and editing of professional communication in online environments (organizational websites and blogs, professional uses of social media, project management applications, collaborative writing applications, corporate and community discussion forums and intranets). Experiential learning through team projects that critique and develop an organization's online content.

Additional Information

This course requires students to engage in a public web-based group project using the concepts and theories discussed in class. Some class time is provided for the group project, and the course emphasizes group collaboration throughout the semester.

Students will be required to obtain free accounts for official web-based communications platforms used in the course, such as WordPress.com, Canva.com, and Facebook and/or Twitter. Students are responsible for respecting ethics and copyright when publishing content.

The schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Apply rhetorical theories to the criticism of online discourse, including verbal, visual and multimedia messages in a variety of technological platforms.
- Understand how various organizations and professionals use online communication within their work processes and to communicate with publics and stakeholders
- Understand how online discourse creates identity and community and can shape social, political, and economic attitudes and behaviors.
- Understand the basics of copyright and other content rights in new media.
- Use project management skills, online tools and messaging systems to work ethically and effectively for, with, or as an organization.

- Have basic skills to use a content management system to develop and manage a basic website with a blog.
- Have basic skills to design informative and persuasive visuals such as posters, infographics, brochures, and memes, using Canva.com or similar easy online drag & drop apps.
- Effectively deliver informative group presentations in front of an audience using presentation slides.
- Effectively contribute to a group while maintaining a collaborative, safe workplace environment.
- Engage in holistic and productive peer review processes to enhance the quality, appropriateness and effectiveness of others' communication products.
- Edit written work for content, structure, style, correctness, and ethical citation of sources appropriate for particular rhetorical contexts, including APA citation style required for academic course work.

Textbooks and Readings

The course requires no purchase of a textbook. All materials are accessible online, via D2L, or through the UCalgary Library.

Selected chapters will be assigned from free online textbooks such as the following:

Felder, L. (2012). *Writing for the web: Creating compelling web content using words, pictures, and sound*. Berkeley, CA: New Riders. (Available online through the UCalgary Library)

Fenton, N. & Kiefer Lee, K. (2014). *Nicely said: Writing for the web with style and purpose*. O'Reilly Learning (Ebook), Peachpit Press. Retrieved from <https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/nicely-said-writing/9780133818444/>

Marshall, C. (2018). *Writing for social media*. O'Reilly Learning (Ebook): BCS Learning & Development. Retrieved from UCalgary Library at <https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/writing-for-social/9781780174501/>

Additional free readings & resources: Journal articles from the UCalgary library. Online public samples. Support websites for WordPress, Canva.com and other platforms.

Policy on the use of Electronic Communication Devices

During student presentations, no devices may be displayed or in use unless you are a designated respondent. Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones may be used in class and tutorials only for course-related purposes and only if their use is not distracting others or negatively impacting the learning environment. No audio or video recording is allowed in any class without the instructor's permission.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
10%	<p>In-Class Participation. 5% per phase, as scheduled. Regular quality contributions to in-class discussion and activities. Each student will be assigned to 2 others' presentations as a "respondent." Graded for quality, quantity and regularity.</p> <p>During Remote learning Mar. 18 to April 15, classes will be delivered virtually at the registrar-scheduled hours via Zoom and/or via recordings posted to D2L. During live Zoom sessions, students will perform class activities, class-wide discussion, and</p>	Feb. 26, Apr 06

	presentation responses. Class activities may involve D2L Discussion replies due 2 business days after the live Zoom session is held or files are posted.	
10%	Online participation. 5% per phase, as scheduled. Timely quality contributions to your group's project management portal, D2L class discussion, and any course project-related email correspondence outside these media.	Feb. 26, Apr 06
10%	Group Proposal presentation. Groups of 4-5 students. 7 min+2 min per member. Propose a short-term startup online activism project that aims to improve a small segment of society or culture with its messages and online resources. The project must be executed without any budget, material assets, or physical events. You may recruit community or faculty advisor(s) to mentor and co-advise you in collaboration with the course instructor. The project will launch its own website & blog, social media posts & presence, visual designs, and share well-researched and original persuasive and informative written content. All borrowed sources and images cited & referenced. Each individual's separate grade will holistically reflect both group and individual contributions.	Feb 5 or Feb 10
15%	Group Proposal. Group sections 800w plus appendices (contract, bios, schedule table) & individual sections 500w each. Describe individual skills and knowledge assets, aims, processes and deliverables that meet criteria. All borrowed sources and images cited & referenced. Grade broken down as overall quality 10% and individual contributions 5%.	Feb 26
10%	Workshop. In groups of 2-3 students, co-design, introduce, and co-facilitate an in-class workshop that engages students in creating and/or analyzing online communications that organizations use. It must draw on course concepts and cite additional research you did to create the workshop. Each individual's separate grade will holistically reflect both group and individual contributions. During Remote learning Mar. 18 to April 15, students will deliver presentations either a) within live Zoom class sessions, or b) may post presentation audio/video + slides to a D2L Discussion thread. The presentation file(s) are still due before class begins.	Scheduled Feb 24 to March 25
10%	Final Project presentation. Groups of 4-5 students. 7 min+2 min per member. Feature the best work of all group members, analyze its rhetorical methods and strengths, and explain how you overcame some challenges individually and together. All borrowed sources and images cited & referenced. Each individual's separate grade will holistically reflect both group and individual contributions. During Remote learning Mar. 18 to April 15, students will deliver presentations either a) within live Zoom class sessions, or b) may post presentation audio/video + slides to a D2L Discussion thread. The presentation file(s) are still due before class begins.	March 30 or Apr 01
25%	Final Portfolio. Stable copies of all your website's content and any other social media content, project management app stats, and critical group reflections on them. All co-authors must be credited in-text or in images, and an Author Credits table summarizes each person's contributions and roles. Grade broken down as overall quality 15% and individual contributions 10%	April 08
10%	Individual reflection. 1000w. A research-based critical, narrative, and self-evaluative reflection on your learning processes and outcomes this term, referring to specific elements of your submitted assignments and messages.	April 15

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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

Note: You must complete the following course components in order to pass the course: Group proposal, Final portfolio, Individual reflection. If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Assignment Length

Time length of presentations and word length of essays are given as hard minimums. An assignment may be up to 20% longer without penalty. In writing assignments, official word length only includes your own original sentences within paragraphs in the main body.

Submission of Assignments

All drafts, essays (docx) and presentation slide files (pptx, pdf) or images (.jpg, png) must be submitted online via D2L in the assigned locations by the deadline. Use the course's standard file name format: 463-AssignmentName-SurnameT-SurnameW.docx/pdf.

To submit stable website material, save your current pages to Archive.org/web/ "Save page now." Submit the archived URLs in a document via D2L.

To submit stable social media posts and stats, submit screenshots (.jpg or .png) to D2L or compile them into a folder on a file service shared with the instructor.

If you are unable to submit via D2L, you may submit via two alternative methods by the deadline, and later submit to D2L later along with proof of your timely submission:

- 1) EITHER save your work to an online file sharing service such as Dropbox, Office365, or Google Drive to date & time stamp your official submission
- 2) OR print your assignment and use the drop box 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.

Note: It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version. Verify your D2L file submission by opening your file from D2L after it has been uploaded.

Please include your name and ID number on all individual assignments submitted only to the instructor. Do NOT put ID numbers on materials shared with other students.

Be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments in SS 320. 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.

All deadlines for items posted to D2L online are due by 11:59pm on the scheduled date.

Final presentation slides are due by the time class begins on the day they are scheduled.

Note the additional penalties for late or incomplete draft and peer review components.

The Persuasive Essay's final version has a 24-hour "Grace period" for late submission; no permission required. This is not a deadline extension; it is 2 days late after the 24h ends.

Online Exercises may be posted late with penalties until that phase's discussion board is automatically LOCKED by D2L on the Saturday 11:59pm following the deadline. At that time, later posts and replies are not permitted.

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, letter grades and their percentage equivalents will be used for the presentation and essay. Borderline letter grades are possible (A-/A= 90%). All other course components will be scored as percentages without being converted to a letter grade equivalent.

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://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

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

In this course, no human-participant research methods are permitted.

Whenever you perform research with 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.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

This is a preliminary schedule only. The official schedule is online linked to D2L > Content

Date	Day	Deadlines	%	Readings for homework, lecture topics	Tasks to do
2020-01-13	Mon			Rhetorical concepts for online comm: Situation, appeals, evaluation	Self-introductions
2020-01-15	Wed	Sign up for online accounts		Rhetorical concepts for online comm: Canons, genres, stases, review processes	Online self-intro; Consider themes and groups
2020-01-20	Mon			Online rhetorics of NGO/activist organizations; Carolyn Miller's updated "Genre as social action" 2014	
2020-01-22	Wed			Project management apps and project design, co-leadership, phases	Jan 24 last day to add / change courses

2020-01-27	Mon	Form groups & choose topics		Proposal instructions, proposal writing strategies, table design	
2020-01-29	Wed	Sign up for presentations & workshops		Organizational uses of Canva.com, Facebook, Twitter; Copyright and content rights	
2020-02-03	Mon			WordPress overview and basic how-to	
2020-02-05	Wed	Proposal Presentations begin	10%	3 group presentations & responses to them	
2020-02-10	Mon			3 group presentations & responses to them	
2020-02-12	Wed	Proposal document due	15%	Rhetorical genre theory	
2020-02-17	Mon	Reading week- No classes			
2020-02-19	Wed				
2020-02-24	Mon	Workshop co-leading begins	10%	Website content: About us pages	
2020-02-26	Wed	Phase 1 Class participation ends	5%	Website UX and Usability - WordPress Navigation	
		Phase 1 Online participation ends	5%	Blog post writing: Giving advice and tips	
2020-03-02	Mon			Memes: Ads for events, membership, petitions, volunteers	
2020-03-04	Wed			Online petitions, petition sites vs. political petitions	
2020-03-09	Mon			Infographics	
2020-03-11	Wed			Memes: Attitude persuasion	
2020-03-16	Mon	Classes cancelled by university		Blog post writing: Research says...	

Remote learning phase

2020-03-18	Wed	Online delivery		"personal branding on social media	
2020-03-23	Mon	Online delivery		Blog post writing: Stories	
2020-03-25	Wed	Online delivery		Blog post writing: Persuasive writing, changing behavior or policy	
2020-03-30	Mon	Final presentations, Online delivery	10%	Group presentations & responses to them	
2020-04-01	Wed	Final presentations, Online delivery		Group presentations & responses to them	
2020-04-06	Mon	Phase 2 Class & online particip. ends	10%	Group presentations & responses to them. Reflective writing, self-evaluation. Class evaluations	

2020-04-08	Wed	Final Group Portfolio	25%	Group presentations & responses to them
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