

**Faculty of Arts, University of Calgary
Department of Communication and Culture**

**Communications Studies
COMS 363: Professional and Technical Communication (L02)
Fall 2010**

Wed., Sept. 15 – Wed., Dec. 8, 2010 (Online course)

Instructor:	Dr. Tania S. Smith	Office Location:	SS 326
Office Phone:	(403) 220-7774	Email:	smit@ucalgary.ca
Blackboard Log-in:	https://blackboard.ucalgary.ca/webapps/login/		
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 1:00 to 3:00 pm or by appointment		

Additional information

- There will be no virtual or in person class meetings. The course will be available online through Blackboard. Please check the course site regularly.

Course description & objectives

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

The course will help you develop

- a rhetorical approach to crafting documents--one in which you critically consider your purpose, the needs of your audience(s), and relevant features of the context
- a familiarity with the conventions and composing strategies for a range of written genres, including 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
- skill in editing to eliminate common errors in sentence structure, grammar, word use, spelling, and punctuation
- competence in the use of a standard style of documentation (e.g., APA);
- familiarity with a range of resources for professional writers, including tools for online research and collaborative writing
- competence in preparing PowerPoint presentations.

The course will also give you the opportunity to develop your collaborative writing skills in an online setting. However, students have the option of completing the final project individually.

Internet and electronic communication device information

The course is delivered entirely online via Blackboard. Groups of 3 or more who collaborate on group-option assignments are required to use online collaboration technologies with certain features. See *Group Technology Policy* and *Group Technology Options* below.

Required materials

- Graves, H. & Graves, R. (2007). *A strategic guide to technical communication*. Peterborough ON: Broadview Press.
- Additional readings and resource materials will be posted on the course Blackboard site attached to the Clickable Schedule.

Assignments & due dates

All the following (except the quizzes) must be completed in order to pass the course:

--	Practice quiz on APA (for no grades)	(individual)
3%	Quiz 1 (on Ch. 1, 3, 9, & 10)	Wed., Sept. 29* (individual)
20%	Literature review & annotated bibliography on web design & usability research	Wed, Sept. 29 (individual)
3%	Quiz 2 (on Ch. 4 & readings for Oct. 13 wk)	Wed., Oct. 13* (individual)
10%	Project proposal	Wed., Oct. 20 (group or indiv)**
3%	Quiz 3 (on Ch. 5 & 8)	Wed., Oct. 27* (individual)
3%	Quiz 4 (on Ch. 2 & readings for Oct. 27 wk)	Wed., Nov. 3* (individual)
15%	Critique of two visuals	Wed., Nov. 10 (individual)
3%	Quiz 5 (on Ch. 7, 11, & PPT on PowerPoints)	Wed., Nov. 24* (individual)
10%	PowerPoint presentation & notes	Wed., Dec. 1 (group or indiv)**
30%	Final report (with letter of transmittal)	Wed., Dec. 8 (group or indiv)**

* see information on Quizzes below. All quizzes will remain open until Dec. 10.

** see Group Project Option below.

Registrar-Scheduled Exam: No.

Course Information and Policies (A to Z)

- **Assignment file formats & file names.** Markers may have difficulty reading .docx (Microsoft 2007) files. Except where noted, submit all your assignments as .doc files (MS Word 2003) or in .rtf. Use the following format for naming your files: **363L02_assignment_LastnameFirstInitial_CoauthorName_.doc**
i.e. *363L02_proposal_BlochA_CurransD_SangoB.doc*
- **Assignment submission & return.** Do NOT email your assignments or attempt to use the digital drop box in Blackboard. Submit all assignments online via the assignment links in the ASSIGNMENTS area of Blackboard. This associates it with your name and ID number and delivers it directly to your marker's grade

book. Follow guidelines on file formats and file names (above). Assignments will be returned via Blackboard. Normally, assignments will be returned within two weeks. Keep a copy of all assignments you submit. Group-authored assignments must be submitted individually as an identical file submitted by each author.

- **Ethics in research.** If your final project will require interviews, surveys, or usability testing on other people, then you must comply with research ethics guidelines. It is essential that your research proposal clearly explain exactly how you plan to comply with the research ethics guidelines. These guidelines, along with a template for a participant consent form and for information to include in anonymous surveys, will be posted in under the ETHICS DOCS button in Blackboard. Do NOT begin any research with human subjects until you have received your marked proposal back. Failing to provide evidence of ethical procedures within 3 days of an instructor's request may result in a grade penalty of 10%. Falsification of research data is a form of academic misconduct.
- **Grade appeals.** If you wish to appeal your marker's grade on an assignment, e-mail the instructor explaining exactly why you are appealing. Please do so within 5 days of receiving your grade so that it can be resolved promptly. An appointment may be required. Note that grades may be lowered as well as increased on appeal. The university's grade appeal procedures can be found in the Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>.
- **Grade penalties.** As described in course policies, grade penalties may be applied to assignment grades for lateness, not meeting length requirements, and for failing to provide proof of following ethics guidelines. Any additional assignment-specific penalties will be noted at the end of assignment instructions under the heading *Marking Guidelines*.
- **Grades:** The following system is used in the Dept. of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale	Midpoint (used for calculations)	
A+	96 - 100.00 %	98.0%	<p>Note: Except for F grades, the midpoints of the percentage ranges will be used for calculating final grades.</p> <p>Quiz grades will be counted as raw scores rather than as letter grade values.</p> <p>F grades will be converted to zero.</p>
A	90 - 95.99	93.0	
A -	85 - 89.99	87.5	
B+	80 - 84.99	82.5	
B	75 - 79.99	77.5	
B-	70 - 74.99	72.5	
C+	65 - 69.99	67.5	
C	60 - 64.99	62.5	
C-	55 - 59.99	57.5	
D+	53 - 54.99	54.0	
D	50 - 52.99	51.5	
F	0 - 49.99	0.00	

- **Group project option.** In a completely online course, groups can provide important benefits to student learning, such as keeping each other focused and on task and learning together. The proposal, final report, and PowerPoint

assignments may all be done individually or all done in a group of up to five members. Groups must submit their information by **September 27** as instructed in the Groups area of Blackboard. A class-wide discussion board and spreadsheet will help you find group members. For groups of 3 or more, the use of an online collaboration technology is required to support ethical and effective teamwork online; see the *Group Technology Policy and Options* below. Normally, all group members will receive the same grade on group assignments. Groups are responsible for ensuring that the workload is distributed fairly. Assignment title pages should include only the names of members who contributed to the assignment in a substantial way. Members who did not contribute but whose names appear on an assignment are guilty of plagiarism. Grade appeals for group-authored assignments may take into account grade penalties students have agreed to in their team contracts submitted with the Proposal assignment.

- **Group technology policy.** Groups of 3-5 members must use a technology that offers these 5 basic features for effective, efficient and ethical online collaboration and project management:
 1. It protects group members' private information (such as email addresses and private subject matter) from public view.
 2. It offers internal transparency and immediate access. All team members and the instructor have easy access to the tools being used and all the information housed on them. (All team members should be aware that when they communicate using their designated group forums, what they say and do may be observed by the instructor invited to be a member of the forum, or it may be forwarded to the instructor by another group member.)
 3. It keeps a history of document versions that is reliably date-and time-stamped, such as versions of a proposal draft.
 4. It has a discussion forum that allows viewing of messages by "thread" and date order (it helps if replies are under messages, usually indented)
 5. It offers email notification/subscription for new messages or files or alterations

Beyond any face to face group meetings, groups of 3 or more must NOT rely on private email or texting or telephone as their main communication and file sharing method; these are only to be used only for non-project related private messages between group members, and when urgently needed. If your team has face to face or online voice/video meetings, or you have had to use unrecorded, private communication methods for urgent reasons, promptly write summaries, minutes or post audio files on group forums so that there is a stable, shared record.

- **Group technology options.** For any students choosing the *Group Project Option*, there are three recommended collaboration technologies that fit the *Group Technology Policy* for this course: **1) Blackboard** Group Pages (default choice supported by U of C), **2) Google** applications, and **3) Zoho** applications. A chart comparing their collaboration features as of August, 2010 is provided in this online [Google Spreadsheet](#).

Groups of any size that are NOT using Blackboard Group Pages must accept the following risks and terms of use:

- Technical Support for your chosen service will be provided externally, not by the University of Calgary. Google and Zoho provide online guides and help forums.
 - Set the privacy settings for any services you use so that they conform to the course's policy. Some Google services make information publicly accessible and searchable by default unless you use privacy options.
 - Whenever necessary or upon request, the instructor must be granted access to any or all group forums and information (i.e. a student's request for assistance, grade appeal, research ethics audit, etc.).
 - Always back up your important information. Use Google's "beta" or "labs" apps with caution. Each service requires you to agree to its own terms of service. Free online services are usually subject to change or stop at any time without notice.
 - Allow time in your schedule to learn new applications. There are many help forums and resources available online. Although it may take time, you will be building skills that will serve you well in other contexts and over the longer term. For example, the use of Google apps to manage projects will look good on your resume and will be an advantage in many workplaces.
- **Late Policy.** Assignments are due **7:00 pm** MST on the due date. You will be allowed a 48-hour grace period with no late penalty (i.e., until 7:00 pm Fri. for assignments due Wed.). For each day late beyond the grace period, one letter grade level (e.g., from B to B-) will be deducted (including Saturdays and Sundays). If you require an extension, please e-mail the instructor, explaining your reason. Quizzes are not subject to the late penalty.
 - **Length requirements.** Assignments may be within 10% below and 25% over the required length with no penalty. (Appendices are not counted in length requirements.) Generally, assignments should stay as close as possible to the assigned length. Assignments below or beyond this length allowance will be penalized at least one grade level.
 - **Marking groups.** After all project groups have been formed in late September, each individual student or project group will be assigned to one marker (assignment grader) who will grade all your assignments for the term. The markers for COMS 363 L02 are **Gina Grosenick, Marjorie Mather, Colin Martin, Jani Krulc, and Carmen Mihu**. Staff contact information will be provided within Blackboard.
 - **Questions.** Questions of general interest (such as expectations for assignments, questions about readings, etc.) should be posted on Blackboard Discussion Forums where they may be answered by the instructor, markers and/or fellow students. Direct all personal inquiries, all problems and concerns about the course, grade appeals, and urgent matters to the instructor in an email with "363" in the subject line.

- **Quizzes.** The quizzes will be done through Blackboard. All quizzes will remain open to Dec. 10 (with no penalty for late completion), but you are strongly encouraged to complete the quizzes close to the suggested date. The course readings and related quizzes have been scheduled to reinforce information and skills you will require for upcoming assignments. Note that quizzes are individual work; sharing answers or otherwise cheating on a quiz will be considered academic misconduct.
- **Technical requirements & support.** If you are a new Blackboard user, please look under the HELP button on the course menu for helpful information about Blackboard and advice on information technology (IT) issues. If you encounter technical problems, please phone the IT support desk (403-220-5555) or e-mail itsupport@ucalgary.ca. If your group chooses to use non-Blackboard technologies, support is provided externally by those companies and their help forums.
- **Time management.** Try to schedule at least five hours every week for reading and work on this course. Break your assignments down into manageable chunks and set a plan for completing them. Your success in this course will reflect your ability to be a well-organized and self-directed learner, a skill that you will bring with you into the workplace.

Plagiarism & Cheating

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 your own corrections and revision. However, using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is considered plagiarism. All of the following practices constitute plagiarism:

- using wording, ideas, information, graphics or media from published material or from the internet without acknowledging the source.
- borrowing wording from published or online material without using quotation marks (or formatting long quoted passages according to documentation conventions)
- passing off the work of others as your own OR 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

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are serious offences: they can result in failure on an assignment, failure of the course, or even suspension or expulsion from university (see *Academic Misconduct*, below). These requirements also apply to assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such formats.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas *where they appear in your text*. For all quotes and paraphrases, include a page number (if a paginated source) right after the sentence(s) that contains it. 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. Do this for borrowed images and media as well. If you integrate self-created media, cite yourself to

prevent doubt about its source. Information about APA documentation is included in your required readings and is also available at <http://efwr.ucalgary.ca>

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 Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

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 -- 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

See "Ethics in Research" under *Policies* above. 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/cfreb>

Weekly Schedule

See the Clickable Schedule in the *Schedule* area in Blackboard. It includes all deadlines for assignments and quizzes, a schedule of textbook readings, and links to additional online required readings.