

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 363 L01
PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

WINTER 2018

Online Section

Mon., January 8 – Fri. April 13 (Excluding February 19-23)

Instructor: Dr. Tania S. Smith
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Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Tues. 12:30-14:00, Wed. 14:30-15:30, and by appointment.
Appointment calendar [LINK](#)

Course Description

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

Additional Information

This section of the course will be offered entirely online. There are no face-to-face classes or tutorials in this course, and no requirement to be present on campus. Student-teacher interaction and guidance are provided by online forums, email, Skype, YouTube videos, telephone, face-to-face office hours, and appointments with the instructor. Students may work in groups on the term project and are encouraged to study together, either online or in person as convenient. Because of the lack of regular face-to-face communication, this course outline includes additional requirements and information. Assignment instructions are also quite long in order to include as much instruction as possible in writing.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, students should understand and be able to do the following:

Understand and use communication concepts and skills

- Take a rhetorical approach to crafting documents--one which carefully considers ethics, adapts to the rhetorical situation (identity, audience, purpose, genre, occasion, timeliness), and employs effective strategies to inform and/or persuade
- Understand and adapt conventions for a range of written professional genres, including correspondence, proposals, reports, and public websites.
- Understand website usability concepts and usability testing methodologies.

- Write and edit language effectively to ensure documents are focused, coherent, and readable. This includes the skills to edit to eliminate errors and style problems in standard written English, as well as the ability to organize ideas into sentences, paragraphs, and sections.
- Design documents' formatting and layout to look professional, promote easy retrieval of information, and effectively integrate visuals such as images, graphs and tables.
- Integrate borrowed ideas and materials from other sources while respecting copyright, privacy, and with ethical attribution, using APA Style 6th edition for in-text citations and references.

Use professional communication technologies

- Collaborate efficiently, professionally and respectfully while using online systems for planning, file sharing, peer review, and discussion among students and the instructor.
- Use advanced features of programs to design professional communication, such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel), Google Drive, and research applications.
- Conduct well-designed usability research on real websites (via user surveys and expert reviews) and analyze the data in light of usability and rhetorical principles.

Textbooks and Readings

- **Required textbook.** Lannon, J. M., Klepp, D. & Kelly, S. (2018). *Technical Communications*, Seventh Canadian Edition (**7th Ed**). North York, ON: Pearson.
 - **NO EARLIER EDITIONS** are acceptable. This edition's exact contents, page numbering and wording is required for exams and assignments.
- **Required MyWritingLab access card.** A single-use access card included when you purchase a new copy of the correct edition of the Lannon, Klepp & Kelly textbook. We will be using online MyWritingLab assignments.
- **APA Reference and Citation Handbook (free, online).** All assignments in this course require APA style for source citation and references. All the information you need will be available at <http://blog.apastyle.org/> and/or in the instructor's free APA handbook on our course's D2L site.

Internet and electronic communication device information

- The course is online via the U of C's Desire2Learn (D2L) course management system and Pearson's MyWritingLab.
- Students must have reliable ongoing access to the Internet and email.
- A high-speed Internet connection is highly recommended.

Download a personal backup copy of this course outline. Print assignment instructions and the course outline in case you need them when Internet access is temporarily unavailable.

Supported technologies

- A laptop or desktop computer is necessary to use advanced features of programs such as MS Word and Excel. A tablet or mobile app will not give you access to the features you will need.
- CHECK your system's compatibility in D2L: While logged in, 1) Click on your name in the top toolbar and in the drop-down menu select Account Settings. 2) Click "My Tools" in the red top toolbar. 3) Select "System Check" in the drop-down menu. Students are responsible for access

to computer systems that are compatible with course technologies. On-campus computers are provided in libraries or labs.

- A PDF reader is required. (However, do not submit your writing in PDF files, but as .docx files).
- For technical help please contact U of C IT support, or Pearson MyWritingLab IT support.

Email management

- You are responsible for ensuring you can receive all course email notifications and messages from your instructor and group. Prevent course emails from being tagged as spam or junk.
- By default, Desire2Learn will use the email address associated with your U of C ID. Configure your notifications in D2L Settings, and subscribe to important forums and threads.
- **To email your instructor**, send email to smit@ucalgary.ca OR tania.smith@ucalgary.ca and put “363” anywhere in the subject line. Specify the topic of your email in the subject line.

Word processing software

- Obtain a recent version of Microsoft Office (Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel) for professional formatting of tables, graphs, tables of contents, page numbering, headers, etc. MS Office is available to U of C Students here: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/it/services/software> .
- If you use a different word processor, it will probably not work for all assignments, and it may cause formatting problems and incompatibility with group members’ programs.
- All assignments must be submitted as .doc or .docx files.

Assignments and Evaluation

Below is a summary; more detailed assignment guidelines will be available via D2L.

Weight	Course components	Due
20%	2 Open-book Reading Quizzes (Individual, Online) 10% each. Each consists of multi-select and/or short-answer questions based on the textbook & online course materials. Students may save their progress during 1 week before it is due. Estimated 2h each.	A) Feb. 9 B) April 13
15%	Online Learning and Participation Optional and required components vary from person to person, so they are combined and scored holistically. 1) MyWritingLab (MWL) . The MyWritingLab personalized learning plan and assigned test are due by deadline A. Your MWL exercises, optional components, and the final test are due by Deadline B. 2) Survey participation . Our writing assignments will analyze survey data collected from COMS 363 students. By deadline C, students working in groups participate in at least 2 surveys, at least one on a different website from their own. Students working individually participate in at least 3 surveys on three different websites. 3) Textbook chapter exercises . Timely completion of exercises or questions about assigned chapters (see schedule).	A) MWL January 26 B) MWL March 9 C) Take surveys Feb. 5-10

10%	<p>Research and Writing Proposal</p> <p>750-1000 words plus tables and appendices. This memo addresses the marker and instructor with a persuasive, detailed, unique, and feasible plan for their Individual and Final Report assignments. Appendices include their completed website usability survey and a GANTT chart of their project tasks and deadlines. (See Group Policies below.)</p>	January 31
20%	<p>Individual Report</p> <p>1500-2000 word report body, plus at least two Figures and two Tables. The report will include both a "Website rhetorical analysis" and a "Survey data analysis." Within groups, students must focus on different components or sections of the website being analyzed. Continued group membership is based on the timely submission and quality of this individual report. (See Group Policies below.)</p>	February 15
5%	<p>Draft (Group or Individual)</p> <p>Group Draft: For students working in groups of 2-4, this draft includes all members' individual reports and further contributions to date, well organized within the framework of the Final Report assignment.</p> <p>Individuals who do not contribute sufficiently to the group draft or submit it late without documented excuse forfeit their entire 5% score and are removed from their group. (See Group Policies below.)</p> <p>Individual Draft & Individual Peer Review: In addition to submitting an individual draft, students working as individuals also submit a Peer Review of another student's draft (as assigned by the instructor) due one week after the draft. Peer review substitutes for review and collaborative learning that would normally occur within a group.</p>	<p>All Drafts: March 16</p> <p>Individual Peer Review: March 23</p>
30%	<p>Final Report (Group or Individual)</p> <p>The report includes and further develops students' revised Individual Report assignments. Group size determines report length. For a group of 4 students, 3500 word report body (From Introduction to Recommendations). Also required: Letter of Transmittal, Executive Summary, Appendices, Tables and Figures. Grades may be adjusted for individual members based on group participation evidence. (See Group Policies below).</p>	April 5

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

All assignments and exams weighted more than 10% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Assignment Submission

NO email submission: Email is NOT an acceptable method of assignment submission. Submit all assignments to their designated area in Desire2Learn. The instructor cannot submit assignments for you under your login.

Privacy: Include your name and ID number on the first page of all writing assignments EXCEPT group-authored assignments. For all D2L online quizzes and MyWritingLab, your login will identify you as you submit files or complete tasks. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of*

Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

File format: Submit written assignment files only in .DOC or .DOCX format. Markers must use Microsoft Word to comment and cannot grade assignments submitted in any other file format. If the formatting is distorted by conversion to .docx, you may submit a 2nd file as a PDF and note this within your .docx file.

File Names: When submitting files, always name them in the format “363-AssignmentName-Surname-Firstname.docx.” This enables us to find your file easily after we download it. For example:

- 363-ResearchPlan-SurnameA-SurnameB-SurnameC.docx
- 363-IndividualReport-Surname-Firstname.docx

Verify submission: D2L submission receipts can NOT verify that your file’s content is not corrupted, empty, or consists of an earlier draft. Verify your file’s content after upload by re-opening it from D2L.

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful. Consider using automatic backup to an online service.

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.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework 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) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

In this course, letter grades will be used for written assignments, while raw percentage grades will be used for tests and quizzes.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range (B+ = 82.5), as shown in the final column of the table below. Borderline letter grades may also be given for writing assignments, i.e. a B/B+ grade will be 80.

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%

* Grades on quizzes will be percentages when they are weighted during final grade calculation. For example, a score of 32% will not be converted to F/0%. It is also possible to earn more than 98%.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Group Policies

Group formation. The research and writing assignments in this course are usually completed as a group (Proposal, Individual Report, Draft, Final Report). Maximum group size is 4, and the final report is customizable to smaller group sizes. Students may email the instructor by January 19 with a well-reasoned request to be in a group with named individuals (cc. the email to all individuals named), or to work individually. After January 22 (the deadline to add a course), the instructor will randomly assign students to groups of 4 students each for the major writing assignments in the course. Groups are then placed in “marking sections” of ~35 students assigned to a 363 marker.

Individual Drafts and Final Reports: Students who are not collaborating on the final report are expected to make up for the lack of group collaboration in other ways: 1) They must complete at least 3 surveys by the deadline. 2) They must submit a Peer Review of another designated student’s draft by the deadline.

Group participation and communication:

1. Collaboration and use of technology. Groups must submit a contract attached to their proposal and hold one another to fulfilling its terms regarding meetings, emails, and the use of technologies. Each member is expected to use their group’s shared communication forum to document their participation in decision making, sharing ideas, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. Official group communications on the topic of the course project assignments are not private to the group; members may forward them to other members of the group and/or the instructor as evidence in case of group conflict (see #3). For this reason, keep personal/private communication among peers separate from official group communication. If the instructor requests, groups must give the instructor immediate access to collaborative areas beyond D2L.

2. Responsibility for co-authorship: Each group member is responsible for writing their fair share of group-authored documents and improving the quality of the document as a whole. Ensure all vital sections have co-authors so that they get completed in case one person becomes ill. All group members must have the opportunity to review the final group draft prior to submission in order to ensure the content is acceptable and to check for final errors. If a group member did not participate sufficiently in co-authoring document content, do not include their name in the file name, remove their name from the document wherever author names are listed, and inform the instructor when this decision is made. Whenever group documents are submitted by individuals, normally the file name and content must be identical and any copy may be chosen for grading. If your file is not identical to the rest of the group, email an explanation to the instructor and marker at the time of submission and make a note in the dropbox submission area.

3. Conflict resolution: Make every reasonable effort to resolve intra-group misunderstandings and conflict and to contact non-participating members. If appealing to the instructor to have a group member removed, provide as much evidence as possible. The instructor’s decision is final

Removal from group, or group split. All changes to group membership must be pre-approved by the instructor. Decisions by the instructor are final. The instructor may remove an individual from a group

whenever it is necessary. The reasons for a group membership change may need to be kept confidential. These are some of the reasons an individual may be removed from their group:

- If the student does not submit or co-author a group's Research and Writing Plan
- If the student earns an F/O on the Individual Report or fails to submit an Individual Report within 1 week after the deadline
- If the student's work is not included in a group's Draft by its submission deadline.
- If at least half the members of the group request that a non-participating or disruptive member be removed (latest request to instructor: three days after the group's Draft deadline).

Option to leave a group: Three days after the Report Draft deadline, the instructor will check grades to date within groups. If one member has a cumulative grade to date that is considerably higher than all other members, and if their individual report was of considerably higher quality (i.e. by 15% or more), the instructor may confidentially invite that individual to submit the final report as an individual. This option permits the student to avoid the extra labor of improving group members' work and to avoid the temptation to complete others' work for them (a form of academic misconduct).

If a student is removed from a group, students are NOT permitted to use their former group member's ideas, drafts, figures or tables in their own final report (doing so would be considered plagiarism). However, students will still be able to use survey data collected by their former group.

Individual grade adjustments on the Final Report: Normally all students who co-author a final report receive the same final score for the report. However, the instructor may make individual grade adjustments by as much as 15% based on sufficient evidence: 1) In group-authored reports, footnotes will identify names and roles of each section's authors and editors. 2) An optional confidential group participation survey is also available. 3) Group areas on D2L or beyond may also supply evidence.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will 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. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

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. 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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>. If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

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

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

This course has received course-based ethics approval from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. All usability research in this course is to involve only Coms 363 students from this course section as research participants. Students must abide by the course’s research ethics guidelines posted on D2L.

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT help line 	403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
<p>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing Support Services Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
<p>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty of Arts Reps Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselling Services Health Services Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

This was the preliminary schedule as of January 15. Subject to change. The official schedule is online at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tD88O2w85wDTJKmWT1v05Y48dcrG04jLx17j5SpUKAw/edit?usp=sharing>

Week starting	Deadlines	Textbook	Other readings	Tasks
2018-01-08		Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 (Intro, Audience, Purpose, Writing efficiently, Collaborating)	All assignment instructions	Buy textbook with MyWritingLab access card.
2018-01-15	01/19 Group requests.	Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 (Writing persuasively and ethically; Gathering info; Recording & reviewing research findings)	Rhetoric & Usability Part 1, Research Ethics Guidelines, COMS 363 Survey design	Optional email to propose group members or individual report.
2018-01-22	01/26 MWL Deadline A	Chapter 9, 18 (APA, Proposals)	Rhetoric & Usability Part 2. APA Citation & Reference	Complete MWL plan & test. Meet with group to prepare proposal.

2018-01-29	01/31 R&W Proposal	Chapter 22, 25 (Correspondence, Electronic Media)	Skim your website's content, structure, style, and research its context.	Complete your proposal, Prepare for Quiz A
2018-02-05	02/9 Quiz A	Chapter 21 (Short reports)	Analyze your website's selected features or sections	Complete Quiz A
	02/8 Survey Participation	Chapter 11, 12, 13 (Organizing, Visuals, Page design)	APA Tables and Figures.	Do assigned surveys, Write rhetorical analysis sections of Individual Report
2018-02-12	2/15 Individual Report		Compile, analyze, and report your survey data.	Complete Individual Report
	02/16 Non-participating students may be removed from groups. (Email instructor if necessary.)			
2018-02-19	Reading Week			
2018-02-26		Chapter 19, 20 (Formal Reports, Document Supplements)	Re-read Draft and Final Report Instructions	Group meeting, further website data analysis, revisit plans for draft and final report
2018-03-05	03/09 MWL Deadline B	Chapter 10, 14 (Summary, Definition)		Complete MWL mastery & final test. Compile the Draft content within the Final Report structure.
	03/09 Students may be removed from groups based on Individual Report and grades to date.			
2018-03-12	03/16 Report Draft			Complete the Draft
2018-03-19	03/19 Non-participating students to be removed from groups based on Draft (email instructor).			
	03/23 Peer Review (If not in a group).	Chapter 15, 16, 17 (Description; Processes, instructions, procedures; Manuals and usability testing)		If not working in a group, complete Peer Review. Meet internal deadlines for report writing. Draft new sections of final report.
2018-03-26	(03/30 Easter Friday)			Meet internal deadlines for report writing
2018-04-02	(04/02 Easter Monday)			Final reviewing, proofreading, formatting
	04/05 Final Report			Complete and submit the Final Report
2018/04/09	04/11 Group Survey	Chapter 23, 24 (Job search, Oral presentations)		Do optional Group Participation Survey
	04/13 Quiz B			Complete Quiz B
NOTE 1.	It normally takes up to 2 weeks to return writing assignments with feedback. It may take longer if holidays are included in the grading period, or if an assignment is submitted late.			
NOTE 2.	The instructor will usually send "Weekly update" emails on Tuesdays.			