

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

**COMS 363: Professional and Technical Communication (L01)  
Fall 2010**

Wed., Sept. 15 – Wed., Dec. 8, 2010

**An on-line course on the Blackboard system**

<b>Instructor:</b>	Jo-Anne Andre, M.A.	<b>Office Location:</b>	SS 350
<b>Office Phone:</b>	(403) 220-7429	<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:andre@ucalgary.ca">andre@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>Blackboard Log-in:</b>	<a href="https://blackboard.ucalgary.ca/webapps/login/">https://blackboard.ucalgary.ca/webapps/login/</a>		
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Fridays 2:00 to 3:00 pm or by appointment		

**Additional information**

- There will be no virtual or in person class meetings. All course materials will be posted online on the course Blackboard website. Please check the Blackboard 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.

**Required materials:**

Graves, H. & Graves, R. (2007). *A strategic guide to technical communication*. Peterborough ON: Broadview Press. Note: An online copy is available here for U of C library users:

<http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/calgarypublisher/docDetail.action?docID=10282796>

Additional readings and resource materials will be posted on the course Blackboard site.

## 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)**
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)**
30%	Final report (with letter of transmittal)	Wed., Dec. 8 (group)**

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

\*\* students may opt to work individually rather than in groups for these assignments

There will be no registrar-scheduled final exam in this course.

## Course Information and Policies (A to Z)

- **Acceptable document formats & file names.** Markers may have difficulty reading .docx (Microsoft 2007) files. Except where noted, please **submit all your assignments as .doc files** (MS Word 2003-style) or in .rtf To save your marker extra work, please use the following format for naming your files: *363 proposal Smith, Curran, & Sango.doc*
- **Assignment submission & return.** Please submit all assignments via the assignment links in the clickable schedule. (When you submit via the links provided, your assignment will show up in your marker's grade book.) Assignments submitted via the BB assignments portal will be returned the same way; normally, assignments will be returned within two weeks. Please keep a copy of all assignments you submit.
- **Clickable schedule on Blackboard.** This will include the weekly syllabus along with links to the quizzes, online readings, and assignment guidelines and submission portals.
- **Grade appeals.** If you wish to appeal your marker's grade on an assignment, please e-mail the instructor explaining exactly why you think the grade should have been higher. Note that grades may be lowered as well as increased on appeal.
- **Group project option.** The proposal, final report, and PowerPoint assignments may be done individually or in a group of up to five members. A discussion board will be set up through which you may find group members. All group members will receive the same grade on group assignments; groups are responsible for ensuring that the workload is distributed fairly. Note that assignments should include only the names of members who contributed to the assignment in some way. Members who did not contribute but whose names appear on an assignment are guilty of plagiarism.
- **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). Quizzes are not subject to the late penalty. If you require an extension, please e-mail the instructor, explaining your reason.

- **Length requirements.** Assignments may go up to 25% over the required length with no penalty. (Appendices are not counted in length requirements.) Generally, assignments should stick as closely as possible to the assigned length. Assignments over the grace allowance for length will be penalized at least one grade level.
- **Marking groups.** Students will be assigned to one of the following marking groups in L01:
 

Group 1: Andrea Hanslip	email: <a href="mailto:andreamarker@mac.com">andreamarker@mac.com</a>
Group 2: Jeremy Leipter	email: <a href="mailto:jkleiper@ucalgary.ca">jkleiper@ucalgary.ca</a>
Group 3: Sarah Lockwood	email: <a href="mailto:slockwoo@ucalgary.ca">slockwoo@ucalgary.ca</a>
Group 4: Calvin Seaman	email: <a href="mailto:cbseaman@ucalgary.ca">cbseaman@ucalgary.ca</a>
Group 5: Christine Sopczak	email: <a href="mailto:cmsopcza@ucalgary.ca">cmsopcza@ucalgary.ca</a>
- **Questions.** Please direct all queries about the course to the instructor, and include “363” in the subject line of all emails. Q & A’s of general interest will be posted on BB.
- **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.
- **Research ethics.** If your final project will require interviews, surveys, or in-person usability testing, 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 BB. Do not begin any research with human subjects until you have received your marked proposal back.
- **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](mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca)
- **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.

### Grades:

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale	Midpoint (used for calculations)	
A+	96 - 100.00 %	98.0%	<p><b>Note:</b> 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	

## 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 the corrections and the rewriting. All of the following, however, constitute plagiarism:

- using wording, ideas, information, or graphics 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

In other words, using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is considered plagiarism. **Note that 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. These requirements apply to assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such formats. Information about documentation styles is included in your textbook and is also available at <http://efwr.ucalgary.ca> (under the Writing Resources – Using and Citing Sources). If you need further guidance about whether or how to document a source, please contact your instructor.

**Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are serious offences: it can result in failure on an assignment, failure of the course, or even suspension or expulsion from university.** (See the *University of Calgary Calendar*.)

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**Tentative Weekly Syllabus** (Readings and assignments to do by these dates)  
*See Blackboard for the Clickable Schedule, with links to course materials, quizzes, etc.*

- Sept. 15, 2010 Read the Course Outline AND the Introduction to Coms 363 online  
Read Ch. 1: Thinking about audience, purpose, and genre  
Read "Writing Effective Emails" at <http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/EmailCommunication.htm>
- Sept. 22 Read Ch. 3: Researching technical subjects  
Read Ch. 9: Testing and reporting document usability  
Read Ch. 10: Taking technical communication online  
Read materials posted on APA formatting  
**Do Quiz on APA** (for practice only; worth no marks)  
*Read the assignment guidelines for the Lit Review assignment due Sept. 29*
- Sept. 29 **DUE Literature review & annotated bibliography (20%)** (an individual assignment)  
**DUE Quiz 1 on Ch. 1, 3, 9, & 10 (3%)** (individual)
- Oct. 6 Read Ch. 6: Writing winning proposals  
*Read the guidelines for the proposal assignment due Oct. 20*  
Read Ch. 4: Writing technical prose
- Oct. 13 Read Plain Language Guidelines at <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/guidelines/bigdoc/TOC.cfm>  
Read 4 handouts: Apostrophes; Punctuation Basics; Pronoun Use; & Parallelism

Read "Editing your Writing for Content, Coherence and Cohesion," School of Business,  
University of New South Wales: <http://www.docs.fce.unsw.edu.au/fce/EDU/educoncohcocoh.pdf>  
View PowerPoint: Revising for Style & Coherence (by J. Andre)  
**Complete Quiz 2 on Chapter 4 + readings for Oct. 13 (3%)** (individual)

Oct. 20 **DUE Project proposal (10%)** (individual or group)

Oct. 27 Read Ch. 5: Designing documents and page layout  
Read Ch. 8: Writing how-to documents  
**Complete Quiz 3 on Ch. 5 & 8 (3%)** (individual)

Nov. 3 Read Ch. 2: Leading and misleading the reader  
Read Few (2007) "Save the Pies for Dessert": <http://www.perceptualedge.com/articles/08-21-07.pdf>  
Scan LabWrite resources at <http://222.ncsu.edu/labwrite/res/res-homepage.htm>  
**Complete Quiz 4 on Ch. 2 & readings for Oct. 27 (3%)** (individual)  
*Read guidelines for Critique assignment due Nov. 10*

Nov. 10 **Due: Critique of two visuals (15%)** (individual assignment)

Nov. 17 Read Ch. 7: Reporting technical information  
*Read guidelines for the Final Report assignment*

Nov. 24 Read Ch. 11: Presenting technical information orally  
View PowerPoint: "Using PowerPoint Intelligently"  
**Complete Quiz 5 on Ch. 7, 11, & "Using PowerPoint Intelligently" (3%)** (individual)  
*Read guidelines for the PowerPoint assignment*

Dec. 1 **DUE PowerPoint presentation & notes (10%)** (individual or group)

Dec. 8 **DUE Final report with letter of transmittal (30%)** (individual or group)