

University of Calgary
Department of Communication and Culture

Communications Studies (COMS) 363, Lecture 07:
Professional and Technical Communication
Fall 2014

Tuesday, September 9 to Tuesday, December 2
T 15:30-18:15

Sept. 9, 16, 23, 30, Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov. 4, 18, 25, Dec. 2

Instructor: Kerry McArthur
Office: SS307
E-Mail: kjmcarth@ucalgary.ca
Office Hours: Wednesdays following class or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to professional and technical communication in the Canadian workplace. Students will learn to develop a number of standard workplace writing skills – including oral communication, proposals and presentations, and technical writing – for a variety of organizational audiences. The course will emphasize the importance of working in teams, interacting with diverse audiences, and writing/speaking with confidence in the workplace.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course, students will be well equipped to:

- Adapt generic documents to address specific organizational needs;
- Build and defend strong arguments for diverse workplace audiences;
- Deliver effective oral presentations (both impromptu and formal PowerPoint presentations);
- Edit their own writing, with attention to common errors in sentence structure, punctuation, word choice and grammar.

Textbooks and Readings

There is no required textbook for this course; we will use instead a series of academic journal articles based in empirical research on technical and business communication issues. Other recommended texts and style guides will be discussed in class.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Use of laptops and iPads is allowed in this class for the purpose of taking lecture notes. Cell phones and other Internet-connected devices are not to be used while lectures are in progress.

Assignments and Evaluation

Resume assignment: 5%, due September 30; two-page updated resume

Group reading presentation: 15%, ongoing from October 7 to November 4; 30-minute group presentation with slides summarizing salient points of selected scholarly reading

Proposal/business letter for final project: 10%, due October 14; four-page document (including business letter and three-page proposal) describing your group's proposed project

Grammar/punctuation exam: 15%, October 28; closed-book exam to test retention of grammar, punctuation and mechanics conventions

Final presentation with PowerPoint: 20%, November 25 and December 2; 30-minute group presentation with slides summarizing salient points of group final report

Group final report: 25%, due December 2; depending on your group's selected project, final reports may be anywhere from 14 to 16 pages, not including References

Participation/Professionalism: 10% (professionalism, teamwork, discussion, individual feedback)

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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

Submission of Assignments: 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.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. 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/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

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.

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 14 days after the start of the course.

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. 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. Sources used in 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 & Dept of Communication and Culture Grade Scale

Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in Communication and Culture:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%

1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

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 <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <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 (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 <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

If you choose for your final assignment the usability study option, your group may conduct anonymous online usability surveys to obtain classmates’ opinions on the usability of a website or other technical document. Otherwise, students will not be allowed to conduct or act as participants in primary research involving surveys, interviews or observations.

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 picarts@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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <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
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus 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.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

- Sept. 9: Introduction to course objectives
 Professionalism and the purpose of technical/business communication
 Personality assessment for business purposes

- Sept. 16: On plagiarism
Communication, career and the resume
On technical sentence structure
Group selection and developing a group contract
- Sept. 23: Rhetoric and business communication
On oral presentations
On technical paragraphs
- Sept. 30: On writing empirical business reports
Developing proposals and business letters
Devising visual strategies for technical/business purposes
****INDIVIDUAL RESUME DUE TODAY IN CLASS**
- Oct. 7: Introduction to library research
On punctuation in technical documents
Best practices in usability study design
****GROUP READING PRESENTATIONS BEGIN**
- Oct. 14: Best practices in website and portfolio design
On mechanics and conventions in technical reports
Professionalism in e-mail; group e-mail exercise
****GROUP READING PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE**
****PROPOSAL/BUSINESS LETTER FOR FINAL REPORT DUE TODAY**
- Oct. 21: Visual communication in the workplace
On technical reports and documents
Best practices in video design
****GROUP READING PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE**
- Oct. 28: Communication and conflict in the workplace; film screening
****GROUP READING PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE**
****GRAMMAR/PUNCTUATION EXAM IN CLASS**
- Nov. 4: On graphics in technical reports
Community consultation exercise
****GROUP READING PRESENTATIONS END**
- Nov. 18: On revising technical reports and documents
References and citations
Ethical issues in technical/business communication
- Nov. 25: ****FINAL PRESENTATIONS w/POWERPOINT BEGIN TODAY**
- Dec. 2: ****FINAL PRESENTATIONS w/POWERPOINT COMPLETE TODAY**
****GROUP FINAL REPORT DUE TODAY IN CLASS**