University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 363 L02
Professional and Technical Communication
Winter 2017
January 9 - April 12
(excluding February 20 and 22)

Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:15 PM

Instructor:        Prof. Bryce
Office:            Social Sciences 216
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Office Hours:      Wednesdays: 1:00-3:00 and by appointment

## Course Description
This course will introduce you to the practical elements of professional and technical communication. You will learn how to produce documents appropriate for the workplace and academic settings that encompass both written and oral forms of professional and technical communication. Our class assignments include practice in writing and speaking. The individual assignments will allow you to apply what you have learned to create quality documents.

## Objectives of the Course
The objectives of this course are the following:
- Learning to communicate effectively through oral presentations and written documents
- Developing expertise in the mechanics of writing: spelling, grammar, and punctuation, sentence structure, paragraphs
- Preparing various forms of documents including reports, proposals, literature reviews, summaries, and cover letters
- Becoming competent in finding and analyzing reliable sources to be used for producing information for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Learning document design techniques to create documents and websites that look professional and enable users to find and use information easily.

## Textbooks and Readings
Our textbook is available in the University bookstore both in hard copy and as an e-book.

Tebeaux, E. & Dragga, S. (2015). *The essentials of technical communication,* third edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

## Internet and Electronic Communication Device Information
To ensure everyone has equal opportunity to listen and learn without distraction, please put away your cell phone during class time: texting, twittering, emailing, and so on interferes with the learning environment, both for students and the instructor.  Please respect your classmates' right to hear class material.

You are welcome to bring and use your laptop for assignments and other course work for this class. Please do not use your laptop for purposes not related to the class material of the day.

Recording any part of any lecture in any form without permission is not permitted. Photographing lecture slides is not permitted. These restrictions are due to copyright and intellectual property issues and are strictly enforced.

## Assignments and Evaluation
Table 1, following, lists the assignments, due dates, and percentage worth.

| Assignment | Worth | Due Date | Individual | Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Correspondence | 5% | January 25 | | ✓ |
| Page design | 5% | January 30 | | ✓ |
| **References and citations** | 10% | February 15 | ✓ | |
| Prototype | 5% | February 15 | | ✓ |
| **Proposal** | 20% | February 27 | ✓ | |
| **Literature review** | 15% | March 8 | ✓ | |
| **Informative presentation** **Groups assigned** | 5% | March 13 & 15 **March 8** | | ✓ |
| **Report** | 25% | April 10 | ✓ | |
| **Report presentation** | 10% | March 22, 27, 29, April 3, 5, 10, 12 | ✓ | |

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** NO

## Assignment Details and Descriptions
This section gives an overview of the guidelines for each assignment for this course. Detailed guidelines for each assignment will be given out in class.

### *Correspondence*
Writing professional correspondence: you will write a letter on an assigned topic that reflects your ability to create appropriate content and organize information for a particular audience.

### *Page Design*
Designing and formatting a page: you will format a page or pages of a document according to the guidelines described in Chapter 4 of the textbook.

### *References and Citations*
Finding and citing scholarly sources: we will meet in the library on February 13. Our librarian will show you an efficient process for finding high quality sources that you can use in your proposal, literature review, report, and presentation.

This assignment has two parts:
1. A list of three journal articles (which *must* be peer-reviewed journal articles) that can be used for the literature review, and the analysis and recommendations sections of your report. This list must be organized and formatted as you would on a references page for a document in APA or IEEE style. For IEEE style, you must follow the guidelines from the handout you will be given.
2. A short paragraph in which you tell me why you have chosen the three sources on your references page. (That is, what do these sources have to do with the website you are analyzing?) In this paragraph, demonstrate your ability to do the following:

- Incorporate a direct quotation into your own sentence structure and cite the source (quote and cite correctly).
- Paraphrase one or two sentences from one of the sources and cite the source correctly.

Please submit a printed copy (hard copy) of this assignment to your instructor as well as to the D2L dropbox. Please print on both sides of the page.

This assignment will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- ☐ Uses specifically high quality, scholarly sources (especially peer-reviewed journal articles) that can be used for the literature review, and the analysis and recommendations sections of report
- ☐ Cites correctly all quotations and paraphrases in APA or IEEE format
- ☐ States ideas clearly
- ☐ Contains no spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors; uses scholarly tone and smooth transitions
- ☐ Is organized coherently

### *Prototype*
Creating a prototype/mock up for a business's home page. Using the website usability criteria you have found so far, prepare a prototype/mock up for a particular type of business. The list of possible business types will be handed out during class.

### *Proposal*
Following the guidelines in the textbook and covered in class, you need to conduct preliminary research and write a 3 to 5-page proposal (single spaced) describing your report and report/ project/final presentation. The proposal must include the website you have chosen to analyze and recommend changes for. You are writing for an audience that is made up of your instructor and your classmates. The page length does not include the references page or the appendices.

The proposal must do the following:
- Present a specific research question that you have narrowed down from your initial thoughts on your chosen website and that you have found scholarly support for
- Present a specific scope (boundaries) of your research
- Cite relevant, scholarly sources
- Describe the necessary tasks
- Present a sufficiently detailed work schedule for the report and presentation (includes tasks, estimated time to complete, and completion date)
- Describe your qualifications for this project
- Include your usability study questions

The proposal must be written in the form of a memo that follows the conventions of page design shown in the textbook and covered in class. Please separate the proposal sections with headings, use an appropriate amount of white space between sections and paragraphs, and number the pages. The proposal will be graded on format and writing, as well as content.

### *Literature Review*
Write a short literature review that is the equivalent in length to 4 pages single spaced. Your review should include *no fewer than eight peer-reviewed journal articles*. Beyond this constraint, there is no limit to the number of sources you include although no more than one can be by Jakob Nielsen. Please try to use the most recent articles you can find.

This review is your preparation for your research report; it will suggest how the review findings will lead to the analysis and recommendations about your website in your report and final presentation. You are summarizing, evaluating, and *comparing* and *contrasting* scholarly, high quality sources into one document to show where your research is heading and the areas on which you are focusing in the report and presentation.

Remember to divide the literature review into sections, each with a descriptive heading that identifies precisely what you are discussing in that section. Your review needs an introduction, main points, support points, and a conclusion. Remember to give each paragraph a topic sentence, supporting points, and a concluding sentence.

### *Informative Presentation*
Working with your assigned group, you will prepare an 8-to-12-minute presentation in which you inform the class on one of the presentation skills topics given by your instructor. The groups will be assigned on March 8: please make sure you attend class on this day.

### *Research and Recommendation Report*
Using the guidelines from the textbook and covered in class, write a recommendation report in which you analyze the same website you discussed in your proposal and literature review. The analysis should incorporate, build on, and add to the scholarly resources you found for your proposal and literature review. After you have analyzed the website and discussed its strengths and weaknesses, describe ways that it can be improved (recommendations).

Your research findings will help you direct and organize your points. The report should be 3500 words, single spaced, including graphics. This page count includes all the report elements (transmittal letter, title page, executive summary, table of contents, list of tables and figures) except the references and appendices.

To make the report stronger, I recommend that you also do primary research--an anonymous class survey on the website's usability. Please see the section on Research Ethics on page 7.

### *Presentation*
During the final weeks of term, you will present your report to the class in a 9-10-minute presentation. You are evaluated on the professionalism with which you present in addition to the content of the presentation.

### NOTE: Proposal, Literature Review, Report, and Presentation
The references and citation assignment, proposal, literature review, report, and presentation are focused on a particular type of website that you will choose from a list given out in class or from a website you have found yourselves and that has been approved by your instructor. You will want to take several screenshots and make detailed notes about the website in case it suddenly disappears. Having these available will help decrease the stress of no longer having your website available for your report and presentation.

All assignments and exams weighted more than 5% must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course.

## Submission of Assignments
Please hand in your assignments directly to your 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.
**For each assignment (when possible), please also submit a backup copy to D2L.**

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. 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 all students' 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 the file name may be useful.

## 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. In-class assignments cannot be "made up" later. These assignments are the correspondence, page design, instructions, prototype, and informative presentation.

## 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

## 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 Centre. Visit the website for more details:
http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support

## Grading and Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

All grades are reported as letter grades. 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, as shown in the final column of the table below.

| Grade Point Value | Description | Grade | Dept. of CMF 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** | 0- 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 https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436 . 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 (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

One approved exception is for usability studies in COMS 363 in which students may conduct anonymous online usability surveys to get their classmates' opinions on the usability of a website. This is what we will be doing for our course.

### 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<br><br>• Calgary Police Service<br><br>• Emergency Text Messaging<br><br>• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly<br><br>• Safewalk Program | http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/  403-220-5333<br><br>403-266-1234  Emergency: call 911<br><br>http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage<br><br>http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints<br><br>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<br><br>• IT help line | http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students<br><br>403-220-5555  or  itsupport@ucalgary.ca |
| STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE<br><br>• Writing Support Services<br><br>• Student Services Mobile App | http://ucalgary.ca/ssc<br><br>http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support<br><br>http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents |
| STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS<br><br>• Faculty of Arts Reps<br><br>• Student Ombudsman | <br><br>https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/<br><br>http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds |
| SU WELLNESS CENTRE | 403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm |

| Counselling Services | http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling |
|---|---|
| • Health Services | http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health |
| • Distress Centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE | 403-266-HELP (4357) |
| • Online resources and tips | 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. |

## Proposed Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

| Date | Assigned Readings | Pages |
|---|---|---|
| January 9 | Introduction to course | |
| January 11 | Chapter 1: Characteristics of writing at work | 3-8 |
| January 16 | Chapter 2: Writing for readers | 15-33 |
| January 18 | Chapter 3: Writing ethically | 38-55 |
| January 23 | Chapter 4: Achieving a readable style | 57-74 |
| January 25 | Review Chapters 1-4: in-class assignment | 151-174 |
| January 30 | Chapter 5: Designing documents | 85-108 |
| February 1 | Chapter 6: Designing illustrations | 151-174 |
| February 6 & 8 | Appendix B: Citing sources | 112-144 |
| | Chapter 9: Proposals | 233-269 |
| February 13 | Library day | |
| February 15 | Submission of refs and citations assignment | |
| | Prototype assignment done in class (no grade) | |
| February 20 | Reading week | |
| February 22 | Reading week | |
| February 27 | Proposal due | |
| | Literature review lecture | Lecture notes |
| March 1 | Chapter 7: Correspondence | 151-174 |
| March 6 | Chapter 7 continued | |
| March 8 | Literature review due | |
| | Preparation for informative presentation: Chapter 11 | 224-239 |
| March 13 | Chapter 11: Oral reports (informative presentations) | 224-239 |
| March 15 | Chapter 11: Oral reports (informative presentations) | |
| March 20 | Chapter 8: Writing reports | 74-124 |
| | Review Chapter 11: Oral reports | 224-239 |
| March 22 | Review Chapter 11: Oral reports | |
| March 27 | Review Chapter 11 and notes from in-class presentations | |
| March 29 | Review Chapter 11 and notes from in-class presentations | |
| April 3 | Review Chapter 11 and notes from in-class presentations | |
| April 5 | Review Chapter 11 and notes from in-class presentations | |
| April 10 | Review Chapter 11 and notes from in-class presentations | |
| April 12 | Review Chapter 11 and notes from in-class presentations | |