University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
COMS 463 (L01): Digital Rhetoric
FALL 2022: September 6 to December 6 (excluding Sep. 30, Nov. 7-11)
Lecture: WF 14:00 to 15:15

(In-person, with online synchronous exams)

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR ONLINE COURSE DELIVERY
Timed Online Final Exams: You will be allowed a minimum window of 24 hours to access online final exams, but there may be a time limit for completing the final exam once you open it. Read the description carefully. Timed final exams allow for an additional 50% extra time.

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Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 14:30 to 15:30 pm, Wednesdays 15:45 to 16:45 pm In-person

Course Description
Rhetorical theory, criticism, production and editing of professional communication in a range of digital media, including websites, social media and other collaborative and multimedia platforms. Experiential learning through team projects that critique and develop an organization's online content.

Additional Information
This course requires students to engage in a public web-based group project using the concepts and theories discussed in class. Some class time is provided for the group project, and the course emphasizes group collaboration throughout the semester.

Students will be required to obtain free accounts for official web-based communications platforms used in the course, including
- WordPress.com platform for the group website,
- Canva.com for images and infographics,
- Band app for project management and chat,
- Google Slides for group presentations, and
- Twitter for public social media.

Students are responsible for respecting ethics and copyright when publishing content.

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L. We will meet in person for classes, but online synchronous exams will be delivered via D2L > Assessments > Quizzes. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Apply rhetorical theories to the criticism of online public discourse, including verbal, visual and multimedia messages in a variety of technological platforms.
- Understand how various organizations and professionals can use online communication apps within their work processes and to communicate with the public and stakeholders.
- Understand how online discourse creates identity and community and can shape social, political, and economic attitudes and behaviors.
- Understand the basics of copyright and other content rights in new media.
- Use project management skills, online tools and messaging systems to work ethically and effectively for, with, or as an organization.
- Effectively contribute to a group while maintaining a collaborative, safe workplace environment.
- Use a content management system, WordPress, to collaboratively develop and manage a basic website with a blog.
- Design informative and persuasive visuals such as posters, infographics, brochures, and memes, using free drag & drop apps like Canva.com.
- Plan and deliver informative group presentations in front of an audience or online using presentation slides.
- Engage in holistic and productive peer review processes to enhance the quality, appropriateness and effectiveness of others' communication products.
- Edit written work for content, structure, style, correctness, and ethical citation of sources appropriate for particular rhetorical contexts, including APA citation style required for academic course work.

Textbooks and Readings

The course requires no purchase of a textbook. All materials are accessible online, via D2L, or through the UCalgary Library.

Selected chapters will be drawn from online textbooks at the UCalgary Library, including:

1) Rhetorical theory and criticism of digital media:

Stoner, M. (2019). Making Sense of Messages: A Critical Apprenticeship in Rhetorical Criticism (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://ucalgary.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UCALG_INST/46l39d/alma99102843 4587704336

The instructor will lecture on digital rhetoric and its criticism and practice, using examples of free online samples of rhetoric, i.e. YouTube videos, public websites, Twitter, and so on.

2) Texts on the practice of organizational digital rhetoric on websites, blogs and in social media:

Darics, E. (2016). Writing online: A guide to effective digital communication at work (First edition.). Business Expert Press. https://ucalgary.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UCALG_INST/46l39d/alma99102814 1064404336

Eggensperger, J. (2022). Strategic public relations writing: Proven tactics and techniques. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003248330

Mizrahi, J. (2016). Writing for public relations: A practical guide for professionals (First edition.). Business Expert Press. https://ucalgary.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UCALG_INST/46l39d/alma99102814 1062104336

Learning Technologies and Requirements

In order to complete courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for online synchronous courses only).

If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

During student presentations, no devices may be displayed or in use. Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones may be used in class and tutorials only for course-related purposes and only if their use is not distracting others or negatively impacting the learning environment.

Please familiarize yourself with the University's policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Media recording for lesson capture

The instructor may use media recordings to capture the delivery of a lecture. These recordings are intended to be used for lecture capture only and will not be used for any other purpose. Recordings will be posted on D2L for student use and will be deleted at the end of term. If recordings occur during online lectures, students are responsible for turning off their camera and/or microphone if they do not wish to be recorded.

Media recording for assessment of student learning

The instructor may use media recordings as part of the assessment of students. This may include but is not limited to classroom discussions and presentations that occur during the course. These recordings will be used for student assessment purposes only and will not be

shared or used for any other purpose. The recording will be destroyed as specified by [retention rule 2000.01](#) "Examinations and Student Assignments."

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
15%	**Participation.** Quantity and quality of engagement with instructor and with fellow students. In-class activities, responding to peers' presentations and workshops, group interaction quality, punctuality, and accountability. Instructor may collect in-class activity write-ups and/or attendance sheets, and review online individual and group participation.	Graded at end of term.
15%	**Individual rhetorical analysis.** 1200w essay. Using principles and concepts of digital rhetoric from our assigned readings and beyond, analyze and evaluate a non-profit social campaign that includes a public website and social media content.	Sept 23
10%	**Group proposal presentation video.** Delivered online. Groups of 4-5 students, 15 minutes + group size adjustment. Draft this as a group using a Google Slides presentation file shared with the instructor. Record your own individual PPT segment(s) with voice-over. Download to PPT and submit to D2L. Ensure presentation slides carry author and year citations on slides for all borrowed ideas and images, and final slide(s) contain all references. See "Group policies" below. The group's presentation will propose your group and individual contributions to the "Final group website & portfolio" assignment. The group project is to launch and create content for a small, non-profit online social activism campaign during the term. Your aim is to inform and persuade the public to support an existing non-profit OR to design an independent campaign to improve a small segment of our environment, society, or culture. Your group will launch its own free website & blog, social media posts, visual designs, and share well-researched and original persuasive and informative written content. The project must be executed using only the time and energy your group puts into the course, without any budget, material assets, or physical events.	Oct 14
10%	**Group-facilitated workshop.** 10 minute intro & instructions, 10-15 minute activity time. Project groups will co-design, introduce, and co-facilitate an in-class workshop that engages small groups of fellow students in creating and/or analyzing digital communications that organizations may use. The introduction should use presentation slides. Draw on material from assigned textbooks while developing skills and knowledge peers can use in course assignments and/or their digital professional lives. Develop a Google Doc or paper handout with instructions, resources, and questions to guide your peers in your activity that requires group collaboration and critical thinking. All	To be scheduled between Oct. 21 and Nov. 18

	members & instructor monitor the activity, offering encouragement and minimal assistance. See "Group policies" below.	
15%	**Exam, online, open book.** Based on course readings. Study your texts in advance and prepare to analyze and/or apply its content. It will be an online, open-book exam delivered asynchronously on D2L. It has an estimated time of 1 hour and 10 minutes plus 50% additional time for technical difficulties. However, it is an open book online exam, so you will have >24 hours to work on answers after it is made available. D2L will autosave as you make progress. Submit it on D2L before the end of our usual class time on the due date. The exam consists of multi-select and short-answer critical thinking questions designed to fit the open-book exam situation. Your set of questions will be randomly generated from a confidential question library so that each student will have a unique set of questions estimated to be at the same level of difficulty. No late submissions permitted. However, contingency plans for technology problems and other issues may include (but are not limited to) additional time for completion of the assessment, or an alternative time to complete the assessment for students that experienced issues. Contact the instructor in advance if you know you will encounter a problem. Contact the instructor immediately if you have a problem during the exam period, emailing relevant verifiable documentation when possible.	Available online: Tues Nov. 22 by noon Due: Wed. Nov 23 end of class 15:15pm
10%	**Individual draft consultation.** 10-minute commentary plus instructor discussion time. Submit to D2L hard copies of all your portfolio components to date, >1000w of written material and >1 audio/visual materials. This consultation will occur within the setting of a scheduled private group meeting, in-person or on Zoom, with some or all group members and the instructor present (only if necessary, scheduled separately). Group members are expected to pay attention and learn during their peers' consultation time. See "Group policies" below.	To be scheduled Nov 25-Dec 02
25%	**Final group website & portfolio.** Individual work includes >1500w plus >3 audio/visual components, plus a private 250w reflection on your learning experience and accomplishments. Group components involve use of a free WordPress.org website and a free collaborative project management platform that enables the instructor to observe participation. Groups are collectively responsible for the quality of the website's home page content, header and other shared visual designs, navigation, information architecture, and user experience. Back up your group's published work at https://web.archive.org/ frequently. Submit to D2L stable, non-editable copies of all your website's content and any other social media content and project management records. All co-authors must be credited in-text or in images. An Author Credits	Phase 1 website launch by Oct. 28. Phase 2, Social media launch by Nov 04.

	table summarizes each person's contributions and roles. See "Group policies" below.	Final website & portfolio due Dec. 07

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: You must complete the analysis, exam, and final website & portfolio in order to pass the course.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments in class or by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox and/or discussion forum. Include your name and ID number on all assignments (except omit ID number on materials to be shared with peers). Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version and file type requested.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Assignment Length

Time length of presentations and word length of essays are given as hard minimums. An assignment may be up to 10% longer without penalty. In writing assignments, official word length only includes your own original sentences within paragraphs in the main body, not 40+ word quotations, title pages, reference lists, or image captions. Drafts may be as long as the final version.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. If you must reschedule your presentation or a presentation-review date without a valid excuse, -5% per reschedule. Late take-home exams will receive -5% for every hour late.

Assignments that undergo peer review have no grace period for late submission. However, final versions to be viewed only by the instructor are due by 11:59pm on the scheduled date and will have a 24-hour grace period for late online submission without penalty. This is not a deadline extension. If it is submitted after the 24-hour grace period, the assignment is 2 days late.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting

documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html

Group policies

If a student has valid reasons for performing the group assignments as an individual, they must receive instructor approval before the deadline for group formation. After group formation, a group member may become ill, drop the course, not fulfill their share of responsibilities, or fail to meet internal group deadlines or course deadlines. Some students will inevitably make higher quality and quantity contributions than others. These factors are not fully within the control of the instructor or the group. Therefore, accommodations are built into the course.

Group assignments are structured in a modular fashion to separate individually-authored sections from group-authored sections. This structure also permits the individual sections of departing group members to be removed if a group change is necessary, while group material co-authored prior to a group split may be inherited by all its authors.

By default, everyone in the group receives the same grade based on assignment quality. However, based on quality of individual sections and group members' declared roles, an individual group member may receive a confidential grade adjustment after the assignment is graded and returned to the group. An individual's higher-quality contributions may be rewarded with a bonus so that they do not suffer an unfair penalty for the poorer-quality work of other group members, while another individual's poorer-quality work or late sections may receive appropriately lower individual scores and individual penalties.

Groups or individuals are permitted to make a request to the instructor to change their group composition by no later than 5 days before the final submission. There is no grade penalty for a group composition change, but penalties specified above apply to incomplete or late work. Handling a group change as responsibly and ethically as possible may be reflected in individuals' participation scores.

The instructor may make a change to group composition at any time. Decisions may involve the instructor's review of the process of collaboration. Full details of a decision may need to remain confidential because some reasons may be of a private nature, such as documented health problems.

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department. of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades will be used for all written assignments and presentations, while percentages will be used for exams and participation grades. However, letter grades on assignments will be entered and calculated as precise percentages (i.e. 78%, 88.5%, 90%) rather than as midpoints of letter grade equivalents.

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%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation
Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html). Students who use material protected by copy-right in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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
This course does not require or permit research involving human participants. Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal
For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html

Student Support Services and Resources
Please see https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For

resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

This is only a draft of the schedule. The official schedule will be kept up to date online on Google Sheets linked to D2L > Content > 463 Online Schedule

Date	Day	Deadlines	%	Readings, lecture topics
2022-09-07	Wed	Participation expected only if enrolled		Rhetorical concepts for digital rhet. Stoner Ch. 1 rhetorical messages (9p), Ch. 2 Criticism (11p)
2022-09-09	Fri	Participation expected only if enrolled		Rhetorical concepts for digital rhet. Stoner Ch. 9 Classical Rhet (27p)
2022-09-14	Wed	Participation expected only if enrolled		Stoner Ch. 3 Critical Thinking (18p)
2022-09-16	Fri	Participation expected only if enrolled		Stoner Ch. 7 Evaluation (12p); Stoner Ch. 8 Writing your ideas (14p)
2022-09-21	Wed			Eggensperger Ch. 15, key elements of a campaign (20p) and project design, co-leadership, phases
2022-09-23	Fri	Individual rhetorical analysis.	15%	Darics Ch. 7 Corporate comm in the digital age (16p); public-private, honeycomb model. Project management apps.
2022-09-28	Wed			Stoner Ch. 19, curating and analyzing multimodal mediated rhetoric (31p). Proposal & Portfolio instructions and Group setup time
2022-09-30	Fri	Stat Holiday, no class		National Day for Truth & Reconciliation
2022-10-05	Wed			Eggensperger Ch.1 The strategic PR professional (8p); Ch. 3 Persuasive writing (10p); Group planning time
2022-10-07	Fri			Darics, Ch. 5 Emails in digital professional comm (14p), Darics Ch. 6 Chat & instant messaging in prof comm (18p).
2022-10-12	Wed			Eggensperger Ch. 8 Letters to the editor, Op-eds, and Editorials (17p); Group planning time
2022-10-14	Fri	Group proposal presentation video	10%	Group time to finalize video. Instructor available 2-4:45 pm via zoom for drop in office hours.
2022-10-19	Wed	Due: participation, Response to a peer group's video	req	Eggensperger Ch. 13 Infographics and data displays (9p incl many visuals); Stoner, Ch. 17 Visual Communication (27p, many visuals)
2022-10-21	Fri	Group workshops begin, as scheduled	10%	Eggensperger Ch. 4 Words Matter (19p), 1 group workshop
2022-10-26	Wed	Launch websites by this date	Req	Mizrahi Ch. 07 Website content (14p). 1 group workshop

2022-10-28	Fri			Mizrahi Ch. 08 Social Media (16p). 1-2 Workshops
2022-11-02	Wed	Designated peer response to peer websites launched	Req.	2 Workshops
2022-11-04	Fri	Launch social media by this date	Req.	, 2-3 Workshops presented
2022-11-09	Wed	University break, no classes		Reading Week
2022-11-11	Fri			Reading Week
2022-11-16	Wed	Participate in 2 other groups' social media by this date	Req.	Stoner Ch. 18 Rhetoric of ignorance (31p), 2-3 Workshops presented
2022-11-18	Fri			Exam prep; 2 Workshops presented
2022-11-23	Wed	Exam. Class time is replaced with exam time, due 15:15pm	15%	Exam will be available for you to begin by Tuesday noon, estimated time. Will be announced by email and D2L.
2022-11-25	Fri	Individual draft consultations begin. Sign up as groups.	10%	Consultation time, and time to work on your final website and portfolio
2022-11-30	Wed	Individual draft consultations, cont'd. Required peer response to designated peer group website, new content	Req.	Consultation and project time, continued.
2022-12-02	Fri	Participation activity. Sharing what was learned from peer & instructor consultations.	Req.	Time for course evaluations
2022-12-07	Wed	Group website & portfolio due	25%	Instructor available for online office hours during class time and regular office hours, 2pm to 4:45pm