Ron & Jane
GRAHAM CENTRE
for the Study of Communication

COURSE OUTLINE

COURSE TITLE: **Effective Professional Communication**
COURSE CODE: **RCM 300**
TERM: **Winter 2017**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to prepare students to negotiate the rhetorical, political, ethical, and interpersonal challenges of communicating in a professional environment. Although it addresses the practical demands of writing technical correspondence and reports, the primary focus of the course is on the development of the student's communicative judgement. Students will be asked to assess and respond appropriately to a variety of case studies and to present their analyses in acceptable oral and written formats. This course is also intended to provide a foundation for further study in communication through the Certificate in Professional Communication.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, you should be able to demonstrate the ability to do the following:

1. Articulate the communicative purpose of professional messages
2. Assess the constraints of the communicative situation
3. Balance the sometimes competing needs of audience, message, and speaker
4. Establish and maintain professional credibility through appropriate tone, content, and format
5. Address audience appropriately at all times in a variety of written and oral media
6. Employ a standard documentation method

Attribute Mapping:

Level of Performance[‡]

Learning Outcome	Attribute[†]											
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12
1		4					4	3				
2		4					4	3				
3		4					4	3				
4		4					4	4				
5		4					4	4				
6		4					4	3		4		

[†]Attributes:

A1 A knowledge base for engineering
A2 Problem analysis
A3 Investigation
A4 Design
A5 Use of engineering tools
A6 Individual and team work
A7 Communication skills
A8 Professionalism
A9 Impact of engineering on society and the environment
A10 Ethics and equity
A11 Economics and project management
A12 Life-long learning

[‡]Levels of Performance:

1 - **Knowledge** of the skills/concepts/tools but not needing to directly apply them to solve problems.

2 - **Using** the skills/concepts/tools to solve directed problems. (*"Directed" indicates that students are told what tools to use.*)

3 - **Selecting** the skills/concepts/tools to solve non-directed, non-open-ended problems. (*Students have a number of S/C/T to choose from and need to decide which to employ. Problems will have a definite solution.*)

4 - **Applying** the appropriate skills/concepts/tools for open-ended problems. (*Students have a number of S/C/T to choose from and need to decide which to employ. Problems will have multiple solution paths leading to possibly more than one acceptable solution.*)

METHODS AND REQUIREMENTS

The course will combine lecture, class discussion, recorded lessons, in-class exercises, and written and oral assignments. Because the material covered in this course is new to most of you, you will need to keep up with your reading and attend classes regularly**.** All course material, including required readings from the textbook and required downloads from Blackboard, will be covered on examinations.

You are encouraged to do the following:

- Consult Blackboard regularly for assignment information, required downloads, course supplements, announcements, and recorded lessons
- Attend class regularly
- Complete the appropriate research, writing, and reading prior to class
- Ask questions about anything you do not understand
- Participate in class discussions

All RCM 300 sections will cover the same topics, require the same major assignments, and grade using the same standards and expectations. We will do our best to keep the sections consistent, but with multiple sections operating simultaneously, absolute identity between them is impossible to ensure and, given the nature of communication, not even desirable. Thus, the sequence and emphasis of topics covered may vary slightly from section to section, as each instructor draws upon his or her particular experience with professional communication. However, unless you are advised otherwise, readings and assignments are due when specified on the schedule. All sections will write common midterm and final exams.

ATTENDANCE

Because this is a course in communication, participation in classroom discussion is important. If circumstances require that you miss classes, please speak to your instructor. This is your chance to practise professional communication skills that you will need in your career. Remember that a portion of your final grade is based on the professionalism you exhibit in your conduct.

For the oral part of the course, part of your involvement is contributing to the discussion and analysis that follow each speech; everyone is expected to participate. You will be expected to provide a critical and supportive audience for your classmates' speeches. **For the public speaking portion of the course, attendance is mandatory; a minimum of 10% will be deducted from your oral presentation grade for arriving late on a speech day, missing speeches, or missing a speech-day class.**

MIDTERM EXAM

All sections of RCM 300 will write a common midterm exam. Please check your course schedule to determine when the exam will be written.

If you have an appropriate academic conflict with the scheduled writing time, you must inform your instructor at least **one week** in advance of the exam in order to be considered for an alternate writing of the exam.

A missed midterm will be given a grade of "0" unless prearranged approval from the instructor is given in writing, or an adequate reason for the absence is supplied with supporting documentation. Declaration of Absence forms are available at the Engineering Student Centre.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Please turn off your phones when you enter the classroom. Remember that an important aspect of professionalism is knowing when to multi-task and when not to. If you are expecting an emergency call, work out an appropriate way to handle the situation with your instructor.

No portion of a class may be recorded electronically.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (Plagiarism)

This course has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating. What this means is that all work submitted for this course – both written and oral – must be the result of your own effort and be created for this specific section of the class. A confirmed plagiarism will result in your case being handled according to university policy.

Instructors will be scrutinizing assignments carefully for evidence of undocumented use of source material. If you are feeling overwhelmed about any required assignment, see your instructor or the course coordinator. There are always better solutions than risking the loss of the course or expulsion from the university. If you do not understand what academic dishonesty and plagiarism are, you should acquaint yourself with the university's policy and definition, available on-line at
http://www.usask.ca/secretariat/student-conduct-appeals/resources.php

Unless otherwise instructed by your instructor, all assignments must be submitted both electronically using BlackBoard and in hardcopy in class. Assignments not submitted electronically will receive a grade of Zero.

EXTENSION POLICY

Late assignments will be deducted 10% for each day they are late. Any assignment more than five days late (without an approved extension) will not be accepted for grading. Extensions are not granted as a matter of course and will only be considered if you have made arrangements with your instructor prior to the due date. If you are having a problem with your assignment, please see your instructor before the work is due. **Remember that this is a class in professional communication; handle your issues with deadlines in a professional manner.**

TEXTS (You can buy these two texts at the bookstore bundled for a reduced price.)

MacLennan, J. 2009. *Effective Communication for the Technical Professions.* 2nd ed..
     Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

(The first edition of this textbook is acceptable, but some of the material is missing. However, there are copies of the new edition of the textbook on the Reserve shelves of the Engineering and Natural Sciences libraries.)

Messenger, William E., Jan de Bruyn, Judy Brown and Ramona Montagnes. 2012. *The Canadian Writer's Handbook: Essentials Edition.* Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Your final grade will be calculated on the basis of the following:

ASSIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION	VALUE
Job Application Package	Résumé, cover letter, CACEE form, oral interview	10%
Regular Term Assignments	Assignment 1 Bitzer and the Axioms Assignment 3 Speech Planner	5% 5%
Midterm Test	**Tuesday, February 28** **6:15 – 7:30 pm** **Health Sciences 1150**	15%
Professionalism	Contribution to class discussion and environment; management of deadlines; interactions with instructor	5%
Oral Presentation	Extemporized delivery of a persuasive speech	10%
Report	Presentation of research findings	15%
Final Exam	**You must pass the final exam to achieve a passing grade in this class**	35%

GRADING SCALE

90 – 100	Exceptional
80 – 89	Excellent
70 – 79	Good
60 – 69	Satisfactory
50 – 59	Minimal Pass

More information on the descriptors for grading at the University of Saskatchewan can be found at https://students.usask.ca/academics/grading/grading-system.php

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Assignment 1: An Analysis Using Bitzer and the Nine Axioms   5% of final grade

The purpose of this assignment is to give you practice using the rhetorical theory you are learning to analyze a rhetorical situation and to design a message to report your findings.

Using Lloyd F. Bitzer's definition of a rhetorical situation found in his essay "The Rhetorical Situation," analyze the following scenario. What exigence would Gregory be trying to remediate with a message? In what way is it a rhetorical exigence? Refer to the scenario for evidence to support your claim. This discussion should take about one paragraph.

Then, using the axiom that states that "communication is the principal way by which we establish credibility" and at least one other of the nine axioms found in chapter one of *Effective Communication for the Technical Professions*, describe at least two issues that Gregory must consider as he designs a message. How do these axioms help Gregory understand what he should say next? Again, refer to the scenario to support your claims. Dedicate at least one paragraph to each axiom you discuss.

Present your answer in memo format addressed to your instructor. Use the following guidelines in designing your memo:

- Make sure that your "Re" line (subject line) clearly **summarizes** the content of your memo.
- The **introductory** paragraph should state the purpose of your memo and forecast the main ideas to be discussed. The **discussion (body)** part of the memo will consist of your analysis. The **conclusion** should bring together the information you have discussed and present a main idea that you conclude from your analysis.

- Remember that this is not an essay. Feel free to use design elements (headings, bolding, bullets, etc.) to help your reader more easily grasp the organization of your memo.
- You will need to refer to Bitzer's essay and to MacLennan's text. Provide references both within your own memo (parenthetical references) and in a page attached to your memo (References page).

The Scenario

When Gregory graduates, he is thrilled to be offered a permanent job with Prairie Innovative Systems. While he was pursuing his degree, all his summer jobs were in the field, but now that he has graduated Gregory is pleased to have an office position.

Six months into his new job, Gregory is adjusting to the expectations for proper business etiquette in an office and is feeling that he fits into the corporate environment. He is beginning to make contributions to projects, and he is starting to become friends with his co-workers. He is trying his best to become part of the team.

One morning, Gregory receives an e-mail that has been sent to all employees announcing that the annual corporate retreat in Hawaii has been cancelled and that individual departments will have meetings in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, instead. Gregory is disappointed, of course, that he won't be going to Hawaii, but he is surprised at how angry his co-workers in his department are. One office mate sends an e-mail to everyone in his department, suggesting that Prairie Innovative Systems obviously doesn't care about its employees. Over the next hour, several more people "Reply All" to the e-mail, adding their own thoughts. One suggests that all members of the department should refuse to work overtime; another suggests that she is so disappointed that she may not be able to get her part of a big project done on time.

After reading about ten similar additions to the e-mail chain, Gregory decides that he should join in. He adds a message to the chain, suggesting that he is sorry that he decided to accept a permanent position with Prairie Innovative Systems, since they obviously are not concerned about taking care of their employees, adding that he should have accepted an offer from their major competitor instead. Fifteen minutes after adding his angry message to the e-mail chain, Gregory finds a new message has been added to the chain by one of his co-workers in the department, George.

Hi Everyone. This is such an important issue and everyone has such strong feelings, that I think it is important that leadership of the company understand how we feel. I have added the president of the company to this e-mail chain so that he can see exactly what we each think. Sincerely George.

Gregory is appalled; the president of Prairie Innovative Systems now has received his e-mail message saying that he is sorry he is working for the company. Gregory has to decide what to do now.

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Assignment 2: The Job Application Package   **10% of final grade**

The purpose of this assignment is to give you a chance to put the theory you have been learning to work in a concrete situation. Make sure that your job application package is designed to address the particular exigence, audience, and constraints of your situation.

Find an advertisement for a job for which you are qualified to apply. Create a job application package that is *targeted specifically for that position*. Include in the package that you hand in to your instructor the following:
- job ad
- cover letter (in full block format)
- resume (targeted)
- CACEE form (use the modified form available to download from Blackboard)

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Assignment 3: Persuasive Speech Strategy Form Report   **5% of final grade**
             for a Five-minute Speech

The purpose of this assignment is to help you to prepare for your upcoming speech by analyzing your purpose and your audience. Save the "Persuasive Speech Strategy Form Report" available on Blackboard to a file available to your word processing program. Do not print the form and fill it out in pen because you will not have enough room to adequately answer the questions.

Answer all the questions fully and specifically, using the theoretical principles discussed in class and in the text. Your strategy report must be detailed, thorough, thoughtful, and specific. Give concrete examples of the strategies that you intend to use.

In order to understand and assess the constraints that you face in giving your persuasive speech, read the following:
- Description of the speech in Assignment 5
- The "Persuasive Speech Evaluation" form available on Blackboard

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Assignment 4: Formal Research Report   **15% of final grade**

Topic

You will prepare an 1800-2400 word formal research report that provides credible information about a topic of your choice. Your instructor, who will provide guidance in class for how to choose an appropriate topic, must approve your report topic. Choose a subject that interests you; however, you must be able to develop a clear research question and find sufficient scholarly research to prepare your report. You must also be able to re-position the information from your report to support doing a specific action in your speech (see Assignment 5).

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to allow your instructor to assess your ability to synthesize material coherently to support your argument, and to document information clearly and correctly in a standard report format. Your main goal is to present a convincing overview of the research in a manner that establishes your credibility, competence, and thoroughness.

This report is not meant to be an explicitly persuasive document; it is a research report that will be informative about an issue, based on the research you have done. Your job is to synthesize information from many sources into a cohesive argument. The report is a research project. You must organize the research you have collected into a form that accurately presents a cohesive argument, effectively synthesizes information from a variety of credible sources to support that argument, clearly acknowledges the ideas of others, and correctly cites sources.

Audience

The report should be written for your instructor. This is a **non-expert audience** in the sense that your instructor has not done the research that you have done on your topic, and therefore doesn't have the expertise you have gained through your research.

Format

Your information should be presented in **formal report format** and should be about 6-8 pages, double-spaced (1800 – 2400 words). Information about formal report format can be found in Chapter Seven of *Effective Communication for the Technical Professions.* Your report should include all of the following:
- cover page
- transmittal document
- title page

- table of contents
- reference page
- appropriate appendices (if any)
- SIDCRA elements present in every report

Put the report in a report cover.

The discussion, or body, of your report should be organized in the order that best supports your focus and that best serves the needs of your intended reader. **Use appropriate section headings** for each part of the body of the report. The report will be assessed on the quality of your synthesis of information from a number of sources; your integration of ideas; and the expression of those ideas in your own words.

Your report may be supplemented with appendices where appropriate; you may also provide visual support in the form of diagrams, charts, tables, graphs, or photos wherever they will enhance understanding or clarify information. Do not use graphics simply to "decorate" your report or to make it look fancier. **The purpose of visuals is to clarify the text.** If you use a visual from one of your sources, be sure to provide documentation.

Research and Referencing

Although some of your research may come from web-based sources, a minimum of half of your research must be based on reliable scholarly sources. Your instructor will apprise you of the appropriate formal documentation style. Use it correctly and consistently. You can find links to citation information on the Library tab in PAWS.

In your paper, **you must refer to all the sources that appear on your reference page, and you must refer to at least <u>seven</u> different sources. All research must be properly documented** using both parenthetical references in your report itself and in a correctly written "References" list. You must also document graphs, tables, or images. If you are not sure what "properly documented" means, or if you are in doubt about how to paraphrase or quote from secondary sources, please talk to your instructor.

Although it will incorporate research from many sources, the report itself is entirely **your own original written work**. It must also be based on work done specifically for this project, and not on work completed for another class.

As you know, unacknowledged "lifting" or "borrowing" verbatim from any source, as well as paraphrasing extensively from any source, is considered plagiarism. This means you must **develop your own line of argument and support it with your sources**. Research based on a single source will also be treated as plagiarized, whether or not you have borrowed "word for word." We remind you again to be aware of the university's policy on plagiarism and the penalties associated with it. This information is included in

your course outline.

NOTE: If your report does not cite its sources using both parenthetical references and a separate page listing all sources used, you will have plagiarized. Plagiarized work will be dealt with according to university policy.
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Assignment 5: Five-Minute Persuasive Speech   **10% of final grade**

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to give you practice harnessing the power of your personal presence as a persuasive tool. In addition, this assignment, combined with the formal report, allows you to practice positioning information for different purposes: persuasion to an action in the case of the speech and synthesizing research to inform in the report.

The five-minute persuasive speech must incorporate some of the research you have conducted for your formal research report. Your goal for this assignment is to prepare and present, in **extemporaneous** form, a five-minute proposal speech in which you ask your audience to take some specific action, based on your research findings.

While your final report is an informative message, your speech must be persuasive. You must persuade the audience to take an action, not just agree with a point of view or adopt a particular attitude.

Audience

The action that your speech asks the audience to do must be one that they can do in the near future. You are expected to address the audience that is in front of you; don't ask your audience to "role play" or pretend that they are some other group that they are not (a specialized professional group, for example). You should make your appeals as specific and immediate as possible to **this** audience. Obviously, if you are to influence their attitudes and behaviour, you must focus your topic so that they can be seen to be an appropriate rhetorical audience. Identify a problem in the lives of your audience and then show how doing the action will begin to remediate that exigence.

In presenting your speech, you will need to employ strategies that will attract and hold your audience's attention, communicate the significance of the issue, and show them how they will benefit from performing the action you ask them to perform. Do not assume that your audience will be moved to an action simply because you have placed some information before them. You must work to persuade them that what you are saying is credible, reliable, valid, and that the action you ask them to take is beneficial to them.

Delivery

Insofar as delivery is concerned, please remember that **the speech must be delivered extemporaneously, from an <u>outline</u> written on a single note card no larger than 3" x 5." Extra cards or other written materials will be confiscated.** The speech must not deviate from the time limit by more than 10 seconds either way (that is, it must not be shorter than 4:50 nor longer than 5:10).

Constraints

The constraints of the assignment, though limiting, also provide clearly defined guidelines that can help you to focus your speech effectively. Identifying your primary constraints – the five-minute limit, the requirement that the speech be persuasive, the necessity to anchor your speech in research, the complexity of the material itself, the interests of the audience, the extemporaneous delivery requirement -- will assist you in making the appropriate choices. *Your speech grade will be based on the extent to which you accommodate these various constraints.*

Attendance

Because there is limited time for the presentations, **missed speeches can't be made up**, so you must be prepared to speak on the day you've chosen. Also, because public speaking requires an audience, you must be present in class for other people's presentations. (Your instructor will take attendance each day and will deduct marks from your overall speech grade appropriate to the number of speeches you miss.) Once you have committed to a speaking date and order, that's your time unless you can find someone else who is willing to trade with you, and you must clear any such schedule change with your instructor.

Procedure

On each day of presentations, the class will hear five speeches (for TR schedules) or three speeches (for MWF schedules). Each speaker will be allotted a total of 15 minutes, of which **only the first 5** will be spent on the presentation. Five minutes will be allowed for questions, and the remaining time will be devoted to an oral evaluation by one student critic, general oral commentary by class members, and comments by your instructor. Be sure to download and bring the Persuasive Speech Evaluation Form to class on the day of your speech.

Non-Graded Exercises

There are also four assignments that are not graded. Be sure to consult the course schedule so that you are prepared to participate in these exercises. Your participation in and preparation for these assignments will be reflected in your professionalism mark for the course.

Exercise 1: Self-Introduction Memo

The purpose of this non-graded assignment is to help your instructor get to know you and learn something about your communication experience. In a memo of no more than a page, provide a brief introduction of yourself.

Make sure you are using memo format.

Address the following issues:

> ➢ Provide a brief introduction of yourself to your instructor; remember that you are writing in a professional, academic context.
> ➢ What academic program are you in? Why have you chosen this area of study?
> ➢ Where have you developed the writing and speaking skills that you already possess?

Make your introductory memo as detailed as possible given the length constraints, and make sure that you are assessing yourself as a communicator.

Exercise 2: Impromptu Speech

You will present an informal self-introductory speech to your instructor and classmates. The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to public speaking, to allow you to gain experience standing in front of your class, and to help you to begin to understand how to gauge time when giving a presentation.

Please keep in mind the following guidelines:
- Do not memorize your speech. On the day of the self-introductory speeches, your instructor will offer guidelines for content.
- Your goal is to speak for two minutes; try to come as close to this time as possible.
- This is a class in professional communication. Think about how what you say about yourself will or will not establish your credibility as a student of Effective Professional Communication.

Exercise 3: Documentation

The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to basics of documenting sources. You will become familiar with the author-date option of the Chicago documentation system, learn where to look for help with referencing, and begin to search databases for scholarly articles. Watch Library Module 1, available on Blackboard, to help you navigate databases, and then complete a References page that includes the sources listed below. **Bring it to class where we will mark it together.**

We will use the Chicago Manual of Style author-date system because most disciplines in the agriculture and engineering professions use a documentation system similar to it. (The IEEE system is entirely different.) However, most disciplines require variations particular to the needs of the discipline. When you are preparing work for your professors and employers, be sure that you are aware of their expectations. In RCM 300, you will learn when to document and the basics of how to document. When you have these basics down, you will be able to easily adapt to the particular system you will use in your profession.

Using the Chicago Manual of Style author-date system, create a References page that contains the following sources. Be careful if you choose to use the References tool in Microsoft Word 2007; the Bibliography citation this program creates is not the same as a References entry.

1. The textbook for this class

2. The article "The Rhetorical Situation" by Lloyd F. Bitzer on pages 18 - 21 of the textbook for this class

3. The article "Integrity defined" found at http://www.usask.ca/secretariat/student-conduct-appeals/resources.php. Click on the link for Class Handout on Student Academic Misconduct – *Integrity Defined.* **Print this article, read it, sign it to attest that you have read it, and then append it to your References page.**

4. A scholarly article about COOL regulations in the United States. To find an article, follow these steps:

    ➢ Click on the *Library* link on the left side of the PAWS homepage and then on *Find Library Resources*
    ➢ Click on *Articles & Databases*
    ➢ Find and select the database named *Academic Search Complete (ASC)*

➢ Search for a **full text** article from a **scholarly (peer reviewed) journal** about COOL regulations in the USA

➢ Pick an article from the list generated by the database search to include on your References page. Remember to include the name of the database in your reference as well as the date you retrieved the information. (The system will automatically generate a References entry for you if you click on the title of a work and then click *Cite* under *Tools* on the right hand   side of the screen. Be sure to pick the Chicago Author-Date System.)

Information about the Chicago documentation system can be found on the U of S library main page by clicking *Cite Sources* in the *Get Help* box on the left side of the page.

Exercise 4: Mock Job Interview

The purpose of this assignment is to help you to learn to respond to a rhetorical exigence with an appropriate message that establishes your credibility.

You will take part in a mock job interview that your instructor will conduct, either individually or in groups, in front of the class. During the interviews, the class will analyse and discuss the responses and develop strategies for handling typical interview experiences.

Prepare for the mock interview by reading Chapter Ten of *Effective Communication for the Technical Professions.* As you prepare, think carefully about the audience for a job interview and what that audience requires from you. If you are unprepared for your job interview, the overall mark for your Job Application Package will be affected.