



ST. JEROME'S
UNIVERSITY

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of English
ENGL 378/MTHEL 300 (001)
Professional Communications in Statistics and Actuarial Science
Spring 2019
TTh 4:00-5:20, STJ 0003

Instructor Information

Instructor: Jesse Hutchison
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Office Hours: TTh 2:30-3:30pm
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Course Description

Clear and effective communication is a crucial component of any field, particularly in actuarial science. This course endeavours to provide you with the tools you will need in order to successfully deliver material to both experts and non-experts. This means improving on the basic fundamentals of writing. In the first part of the course, then, we will discuss various strategies to write in a way that is professional, critical, concise, and precise. You will learn how to craft information for different audiences, from specialists, with whom you can use more technical and specialized language, to non-specialists, to whom you will have to relay difficult concepts in a way that is accessible. We will also emphasize the importance of teamwork as your final assignment will be to produce a major group project on a subject of your choice. In working towards this final project, we will consider the significance of research, peer editing, and the necessity of strong public speaking skills.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Identify and synthesize arguments and relevant points from published material
- B. Be aware of different audiences who require statistical and/or scientific information and be able to communicate effectively to those different audiences
- C. Write critically, concisely, and persuasively
- D. Work collaboratively with a team to produce a well-organized and professional document

Required Text

There is no required textbook for the class; however, I will be putting up material on LEARN for you to read for your assignments.

Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Attendance and Participation		15%
Summary	May 23	5%
Critical Review	June 2	5%
Memo Assignment	June 9	10%
Blog Entry	June 18	10%
Oral Presentation	June 27	10%
Written Proposal	July 16	10%
Reflection Assignment	July 25	5%
Final Team Project	August 4	30%

Attendance and participation (15%): For this class, you will be evaluated in terms of your attendance as well as your contributions to the discussion. In order to participate to the full, you must be engaged in the ongoing conversation and contribute thoughtfully. Please come to the class on time and avoid any potential distractions (meaning no social media, texting or having off-topic chats with friends).

Summary (5%): For this assignment, you will choose one text from a provided selection of recent articles from an academic journal. This assignment will test your ability to read for the central argument or point, and also for the relevant details from the text. You will be asked to provide a concise version of those details in your own words. This assignment will be completed individually in class on **May 23**.

Critical Review (5%): You will be given an article to review and assess. I will provide some guide questions so that you may evaluate the validity of the article, the legitimacy of its sources, and the strengths of its presentation. This assignment will be started in class on May 30, and the final draft will be submitted to the Learn dropbox by 11:59pm on **June 2**.

Memo assignment (10%): For this assignment, I will give you a topic on which you will do a bit of research. Once you have completed the research on your topic, you will craft a memo to a potential boss or policy-maker to whom you will make a recommendation on the basis of your assessment of the evidence. More details will be provided. Memo will be submitted to the Learn dropbox by 11:59pm on **June 9**.

Blog Entry (10%): With a partner, you will choose a topic, for which there is already statistical data (or research work) and analysis. As an alternative, you can choose to examine a book or specialist in the field of mathematics and statistics. You will create a blog entry in which you publicize this information (or this book or specialist) for a broad, general non-specialist audience. Make sure to make your blog visually appealing; feel free to add pictures and links (though preferably no ads). This is an opportunity to be a bit more creative so while you still want to make sure that your writing is clear and grammatically correct (because poor grammar will lose a non-specialist audience too), you can experiment with a looser, informal style of writing. Both students who contribute to the blog will receive the same grade. The blog entry will be submitted to the Learn dropbox by one member of the team by 11:59pm on **June 18**.

Final Team Project (30%): Collaborating with team members, you will produce a research document or white paper related to actuarial science or statistics that is written for a semi-specialist or non-specialist audience. The proposal should make use of legitimate and authoritative sources and incorporate data from empirical studies. Each member of the group will contribute approximate 300-400 words of the document and you need to make it clear in the final project who wrote what section. You will also work together to review and edit the material so that it is consistent in terms of content, style, and formatting. The final grade will consider the application of the research and depth of analysis, the appropriateness of the style for the audience, and the overall clarity and concision of the writing. Because the work is collaborative in nature, the intention is that every student will receive the same grade. However, I will give the option if you wish to be graded independently. The project will be a work in progress from our formation of groups on June 13 to the final submission on August 4. You will give a group presentation on June 27 where you will pitch your topic (see more info below). You will submit an official written proposal on July 16 (see more info below). And there will be various classes devoted to working on the project with my guidance. A team member should submit the assignment to the dropbox by 11:59pm on **August 4**.

Oral Presentation (10%): You will give an informal 8-10 minute presentation on your topic on **June 27**. This presentation should allow time for everyone to talk for roughly a minute or two. This presentation is a pitch for your project to a semi-specialist and non-specialist audience where you describe the importance of your topic and how a research project on it might be useful. A team member will submit the presentation notes or slides as a single document on Learn on the day of your presentation.

Written Proposal (10%): Your team will submit a carefully written proposal. For this proposal, you are to include the focus of your topic as well as a description of the research work that you intend to include and how you intend to use it. This proposal is in many ways meant to be a helpful way to get you thinking about the final project. In that respect, you are not bound to what you write in the proposal. In fact, my comments will potentially allow you to re-consider various elements of the final team project. The proposal will be submitted by a team member on Learn on **July 16**.

Reflection Assignment (5%): For this assignment, you are asked to honestly and critically evaluate your experiences in this class. Discuss your own contributions to assignments, class discussions, and your team. What is something that you feel you improved on and what might be something you need to work on further? Consider as well whether the course has helped you beyond the confines of the class. Reflections should be between (350-500 words) and will be written in class on **July 25**.

Course Outline / Class Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments Due
1	May 7/May 9	Introduction/Objectives, Types of Scientific Writing	
2	May 14/May 16	Style and Concision/Audiences	
3	May 21/May 23	Identifying Arguments, Reading for Relevant Details/In-class summary	Summary Assignment, due May 23
4	May 28/May 30	Critical Thinking/Rhetorical Strategies	Critical Review, due June 2
5	June 4/June 6	Memos/Narratives	Memo, due June 9
6	June 11/June 13	Blogs/Discussion of final Report, white papers, forming groups	
7	June 18/June 20	Research, analysis, citations/Presentation tips	Blog entry, due June 18
8	June 25/June 27	Common Errors/Presentations	Group Presentations, June 27
9	July 4	Proposal Writing Tips	
10	July 9/July 11	Proposal Workshop/Peer Editing	
11	July 16/July 18	Academic Integrity/Project Workshop	Written Proposal, July 16
12	July 23/July 25	Final Common Errors, Proofreading Tips/Reflections	Reflection Assignment, July 25
13	July 30	Peer Editing for Team Project	

Late Work

The penalty for a late assignment is 2% per day, including weekend days. This will be incurred in all cases except certified emergencies. Papers more than ten days late will not be accepted, and a mark of zero will be given for the assignments.

A doctor's note is required to avoid a late penalty, and it should document serious illness on and for the period directly preceding the due date for assignments, or on the scheduled dates of exams. In cases of personal matters such as mental health concerns, I am very sympathetic but I am also unable to properly evaluate these cases. If you need an extension on work for such issues, it is crucial to go to AccessAbility and have them evaluate your case. They can then contact me if they believe you require alternate accommodations for assignments. At that point, I am always happy to help the student in any way that I can.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is crucial for both your attendance and participation grade. A doctor's note is required to avoid attendance marks being docked for an absence. Similar to the late work information, if there are personal issues such as mental health concerns that make attending class difficult, you will need to go to AccessAbility to have them evaluate your case and they can contact me if they believe you require alternate accommodations. If you miss a class for unavoidable circumstances, please connect with a classmate to discuss the material that was covered during your absence.

Important Information

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity](#) webpage [for more information](#).

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. [Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#).

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a

ground for an appeal should refer to the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

Note for Students with Disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.