

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.



ST. JEROME'S
UNIVERSITY

Department of English
English 378 / Math Elective 300 (044):
Professional Communication in Statistics and Actuarial Science (Fall 2020)

Instructor: Mike Lesiuk (mlesiuk@uwaterloo.ca)

Office hours: Tuesdays, 10:30–12:00 p.m.
Thursdays, 2:00–3:00 p.m.
(By appointment via Webex)

This course introduces students to oral and written communication in the fields of statistics and actuarial science. With emphasis on the public presentation of technical knowledge, the ability to give and receive constructive feedback, and communication in a collaborative environment, this course helps students develop proficiencies in critical workplace skills. This course is writing intensive and includes extensive collaborative assignments.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- Represent highly technical, specialized knowledge to lay-people, both orally and in writing;
- Perform research, read and summarize peer-reviewed articles;
- Adapt specialized knowledge to a variety of audiences;
- Understand and express the limits of their knowledge;
- Write, revise, and design professional documents that meet industry standards;
- Understand the Actuarial Standards of Practice, and the ethical guidelines for statistical analysis;
- Work collaboratively in a professional context.

Required Texts

None! Everything should be available on LEARN.

Grading and Assignments

Main Assignments	1 - Writing for Non-Specialists	(20%)	Oct 9
	2 – Written Report	(20%)	Nov 20
	3 – Oral Presentation	(20%)	Nov 27
Discussion & Workshopping	Ongoing Weekly Discussion (10 x 2%)	(20%)	
	Rough Drafts (2 x 5%)	(10%)	Sep 25, Nov 6
	Peer Feedback (2 x 5%)	(10%)	Oct 2, Nov 13

How This Course Will Work

Since this is an online course, we won't have the chance to meet in-person twice per week, and so the course requirements and assignments have been designed accordingly.

In particular, I've organized this course on a weekly basis. Each week there will be the **Discussion & Workshopping** that will effectively replace our face-to-face class time, and which will complement and support the **Main Assignments**. Every week, there will be a few short videos and/or readings to do before submitting any of your weekly discussion responses. I will give you a checklist each week so you know what content there is to read, watch or check out, and where to post your responses.

Every week, all the lectures, content, discussion forums, and dropboxes for that week will become available on Monday morning. Anything you need to submit will be due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday.

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week						

things opens up

Everything for that week is due 11:59 p.m.

Main Assignments (60%)

This course — the videos, the discussions, the smaller weekly “to do’s,” and so on — will be organized around helping you complete the three “main” assignments:

1 - Writing for Non-Specialists

2 - Written Report

3 - Oral Presentation

These will be submitted via the dropboxes; the first two assignments should be in **.docx**, **.doc** or **.rtf** formats, and the third should be in **.mp4**, **.avi** or **.mov**. As we approach the due dates, I’ll include guidelines for the assignments and I’ll discuss the assignments in the course “lecture” videos I release week-to-week.

You will be able to pick your own topics, and I will also try to include a fair amount of options and choices in terms of genre and format. Assignments 2 and 3 will both be about the same topic of your choosing (but presented in different forms to different audiences). The rough draft is required, especially since one of the later weekly discussions will involve peer-editing someone else’s submission. I will organize that closer to the deadline.

Note: The first assignment due date is also a “final-for-now” grade. That is, at the end of the semester, you will be allowed to hand in a revision and I will re-grade it completely. The new grade will completely replace the old grade (minus any late penalties, which can’t be removed!) and you cannot get a lower grade on the revision, no matter what. This means you have nothing to lose in taking risks or trying something new with the assignment.

Discussion & Workshopping (40%)

Ongoing Weekly Discussion

Each week I’ll give you prompts, questions or topics for our weekly discussions. These will **always be due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday**. On the weeks where we *are* doing peer feedback, there is no weekly discussion grade.

They are “low stakes,” meaning that if you follow the *spirit* of the guidelines, you get at least an A-. (I’ll make the instructions or guidelines pretty specific in terms of word count and/or number of posts.) I’m doing it this way because I want to encourage you to experiment and take risks. Don’t worry about the mark — just engage honestly with the material. (f you don’t get something, that’s fine. Explain what you’re struggling with. (You still get the A!)

Many of our ongoing weekly discussions will also be geared toward helping you think about and work on the larger main assignments. Also, some of the prompts/questions for a given week might be less “discussion”-oriented (“what did you think of ____?”) and more workshop- or exercise-oriented (“give an example of _____ and explain why _____”). Again, you can still get these “wrong” or show you’re not understanding something, but if you’re engaging honestly with the material, the lowest grade you can get is A-. You only slip below that if you show you didn’t

follow the guidelines, didn't actually watch the videos or do any reading, and/or you're *really* stretching the definition of meeting the bare minimum guidelines. (Even then, you'll probably still end up with a B for that week.)

Rough Drafts

For the first and second assignments, you must submit a "complete" rough draft. Please note that by "complete" I do *not* mean "polished." I just mean complete. That is, I prefer an awful, terrible, no-good rough draft that has a beginning, middle and end over one that just has a really polished and amazing introduction—and only an introduction. Having a terrible, awful — but complete — rough draft will get at least an A-. Having only an amazing introduction or perfectly planned outline will get a B or even C. This is because getting to the "end" of a draft will teach you about structure and it will give you a better sense of what you're arguing, which will then help when you revise. (Also, it'll be important for peer feedback!)

Peer Feedback

The rough drafts will be used to provide peer feedback. This will be helpful because you will get a sense of how readers are responding to your work, and because you will get ideas by reading the work of your peers. Note that I'll go over how to give peer feedback in a way that's helpful and useful.

Course Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
September	Week 1	Sep 7	Sep 8	Sep 9	Sep 10	Sep 11	Sep 12 Sep 13	
	Week 2	Sep 14	Sep 15	Sep 16	Sep 17	Sep 18	Sep 19 Sep 20	
	Week 3	Sep 21	Sep 22	Sep 23	Sep 24	Sep 25	Sep 26 Sep 27	
	Week 4	Sep 28 Peer feedback replaces weekly discussion this week.	Sep 29	Sep 30	Oct 1	Oct 2 Peer Feedback	Oct 3	Oct 4
October	Week 5	Oct 5	Oct 6	Oct 7	Oct 8	Oct 9 Writing for Non-Specialists (final-for-now)	Oct 10 Oct 11	
	Week 6	Oct 12	Oct 13	Oct 14	Oct 15	Oct 16	Oct 17 Oct 18	
	Week 7	Oct 19	Oct 20	Oct 21	Oct 22	Oct 23	Oct 24 Oct 25	
	Week 8	Oct 26	Oct 27	Oct 28	Oct 29	Oct 30	Oct 31 Nov 1	
	Week 9	Nov 2	Nov 3	Nov 4	Nov 5	Nov 6	Nov 7 Nov 8	
	Week 10	Nov 9 Peer feedback replaces weekly discussion this week.	Nov 10	Nov 11	Nov 12	Nov 13 Peer Feedback	Nov 14	Nov 15
	Week 11	Nov 16	Nov 17	Nov 18	Nov 19	Nov 20	Nov 21 Nov 22	
	Week 12	Nov 23	Nov 24	Nov 25	Nov 26	Nov 27 Written Report	Nov 28	Nov 29
November	Week 13	Nov 30	Dec 1	Dec 2	Dec 3 Revisions			

Course Policies

Late Work: Please let me know if you will be unable to meet a deadline. Late work for the main assignments will normally be penalized 4% per day unless we have made other arrangements. I do grant extensions on a case-by-case basis. (Generally, my concern is that work does not pile up for you and that you are able to finish the semester.)

Accommodations and Accessibility: 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. Please also let me know if there's anything I can do to help.

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](#).