

OKANAGAN COLLEGE
Department of Communications
CMNS 300: Advanced Written Communication

Course Description

Advanced written communication requires the knowledge and skills to write specialised texts aimed towards equally specialised readers. Such writing requires the ability to discursively adapt to the values and practices of that readership. This course will provide students a theoretical framework with which to analyse, understand, and manage the relationship between writers and readers.

Students will read and apply current theory to a variety of genres with the aim of replicating these texts. Students will investigate genres of their choice, an investigation involving corpus selection, analysis of both global and local discourse features, interpretation of the social function of such features, production of style sheets, and finally, production of the genre itself.

Prerequisite: 3rd year standing and the successful completion of six Arts credits.

Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop an understanding of advanced language theory
2. Develop an awareness of social context on communication
3. Learn how genres function in a range of contexts
4. Understand the relationship between form and situation
5. Understand how readers' needs and expectations operate in the production of texts and learn to anticipate them
6. Participate in document-cycling processes
7. Develop and apply advanced textual analysis skills to a range of genres

Topics

1. Definition of genre, genre sets, systems of genre
2. The relationship between form and situation
3. Situational influences on texts
4. Exigence, social and symbolic action
5. Discourse communities, enculturation, and organizational culture
6. Subjectivity, authorial "voice," and individual expression
7. Stabilizing characteristics of genre, antecedent genres, meta-genre
8. Discourse features, rhetorical forms, "jargon," and "plain language"

Method of Instruction

As a learner-centred course, students share responsibility with the instructor for the success of each class session. Having carefully read and contemplated the texts and topics under consideration in advance of a given class, students should be prepared for vibrant class discussion. Classes will feature a fluid combination of lectures, presentations, individual and collaborative work, workshops, and seminars.

Texts

Custom courseware will be developed for the course. Selections may include: Anne Beaufort, "Operationalizing the Concept of Discourse Community: A Case Study of One Institutional Site of Composing."; Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation."; Amy Devitt, "Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept."; Janet Giltrow, "Genre and the Pragmatic Concept of Background Knowledge."; James Kinneavy, "The Basic Aims of Discourse."; Carolyn R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action."; Anthony Pare, "Genre and Identity. "; Catherine Schryer, "The Lab vs. the Clinic: Sites of Competing Genres."; John Swales, "The Concept of Discourse Community."

Note: Course readings will be supplemented with articles directly relevant to students' coursework

Course Requirements

Short analysis	10%
Long analysis	20%
Style guide (collaborative)	25%
Production of genre (collaborative)	25%
Presentation	10%
Participation (including attendance, preparation, responses to study questions, informal group presentations, engagement in class activities, and low-stakes writing assignments)	10%

Evaluation and Assessment

Students will work with the instructor to determine detailed criteria for each assignment. The criteria will vary according to each assignment's audience, purpose, content, and communications medium. The criteria will be developed in advance of a given assignment's submission date. Students will also engage in reflective self-assessment as a means of better integrating evaluation with learning.

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Sample Assignment: Style Guide (collaborative)
Worth: 25%

For this assignment, students will work in groups to produce a style guide of a chosen genre.

Groups should begin by compiling a corpus of selected samples of the genre. The corpus should offer a representation of typical (or typified) instances of the genre.

Having chosen a corpus, groups must conduct analysis of the genre. The analysis should cover both global and local discourse features, including such features as the overall formal structure, use of graphics, sentence style, and diction. Analysis should also include discussion of the persuasive elements of the text and their impact on the intended reader and the genre's purpose.

Groups will then write a style guide (a writer's instructional manual), based on these findings and addressed to a novice writer. The style guide should offer a detailed explanation of the *how* of the genre as well as a discussion of the *why*.

Evaluation and Assessment

As a learner-centred course, students will work with the instructor to determine detailed criteria for the assignment.