



# ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

**St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo**  
**Department of English**  
**ENGL 378**  
**Professional Communications in Statistics and Actuarial Science**  
**Spring 2022**

## Instructor Information

Instructor: Jesse Hutchison

Office: Sweeney Hall, Room 2114

Office Hours: MW 11:30-12:30 (see Office Hours section below for details)

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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 and editing.

## 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 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.

## Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Participation/Attendance		10%
Citation Assignment	May 9	5%
Grammar Assignment	May 16	5%
Reviewing a Scholarly Article	June 1	10%
Cover Letter Assignment	June 8	5%
E-Mail Assignment	June 15	10%
Video Presentation	June 22	10%
Written Proposal	July 11	15%
Reflection Assignment	July 18	5%
Final Project	July 29	25%

**Participation/Attendance (10%):** A vital component of workplace or academic communication is interpersonal, and it is advantageous to be able to communicate with your colleagues. Consequently, part of your grade will assess your attendance and participation. When grading attendance/participation, each class students will receive an automatic 7.5/10 for on-time attendance (this mark will be lowered depending on the degree of lateness). If students meaningfully participate in class (meaning at least one “more-than-one-word” contribution to the class discussion), the attendance/participation mark will be bumped up to 10/10 for the day. Please also avoid any potential distractions (meaning no social media, texting or having off-topic chat with friends).

If we are not in class and learning shifts online, I will create a forum on LEARN where I will place a weekly question for you to respond to. To find the forum, click the Connect

tab and then click on Discussions. In this online format, your participation/attendance grade will be an assessment of your contributions to these topics. If we are online, I will put up a new thread every Monday, so if you are contributing to that week's thread, you will need to respond by the Sunday evening before the next thread is due to go up. Your contributions to a thread will only be marked if you contribute to the discussion the week it has been made available. Write a paragraph or two (paragraphs should be between 100-250 words) where you address the question. Just remember to be kind, courteous, respectful and friendly even if disagreeing. This will only receive a mark if you follow these instructions.

**Citation Assignment (5%):** For this assignment, I will place a text on Learn that you will examine in order to determine what is cited properly and what is cited improperly, as per our class discussions. The citation assignment will be submitted to the LEARN dropbox by 11:59 on **May 9**.

**Grammar Assignment (5%):** This assignment asks you to point out the grammatical errors (sentence fragments, comma splices, misuse of semi-colons, etc.) in a text that I will place on Learn. The grammar assignment will be submitted to the LEARN dropbox by 11:59 on **May 16**.

**Reviewing a Scholarly Article (10%):** There are three articles posted on LEARN in a tab titled "Articles for Reviewing a Scholarly Article Assignment." Choose ONE of the articles and in 150-200 words, identify 2-3 features (and give supporting quoted evidence along with a page number from the article where required) that adhere to the formal requirements of a scholarly article written for specialist audiences. I will discuss the features of scholarly papers on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Provide quotations from the essays that demonstrate the features. Along with the quotations, you want to also explain how this quoted material is a demonstrable example of a feature of a scholarly article. Remember that while the IMRAD structure and an abstract are features, these will not count as features to discuss for this assignment. This element of the assignment will be worth 4 out of 10 points.

Then in 300-400 of your own words, write a critical analysis of the article (worth 6 out of 10 points). We will discuss Critical Thinking on May 25<sup>th</sup>. In creating your analysis, consider the following possibilities: why the author(s) approach is sensible (or not), why their analysis is appropriate (or not), and why the communication of their findings is effective (or not). What might be the potential gaps where researchers can further this analysis? You do not have to consider all of these things, and in fact you can even focus in on one, but they may be helpful in motivating your critical analysis. The assignment will be submitted to the LEARN dropbox by 11:59pm on **June 1**.

**Cover Letter (5%):** For this assignment, I will upload a couple of job opportunities on LEARN. You will choose one of these and write a 200-300 word one page cover letter for the job. You will be assessed on your use of information from the lecture on cover letters as well as for structure, clarity, and consideration of audience. The assignment will be submitted to the LEARN dropbox by 11:59pm on **June 8**.

**E-mail Assignment (10%):** For this assignment, I will upload an e-mail response of an actuarial manager who works at a life insurance company to a policyholder. You will critique the response in 200-250 words and write a more appropriate response in roughly 200 words. The response should also consider the rhetorical elements we discussed as well. You will be assessed on the strength and clarity of your critique and response (based on our discussions in lecture) as well as your techniques of persuasion. The assignment will be submitted to the LEARN dropbox by 11:59pm on **June 15**.

**Video Presentation (10%):** At some point in your career, you may have to explain technical ideas to non-specialists in person, either in presentations or in one-on-one meetings. For this assignment, you will create a short (between 3-5 minute) video, using your phone or computer camera in which a suitably technical (university level) mathematics concept (anything related to your field) is explained/simplified in non-math terms (no jargon or equations). This presentation might take the form of an informal presentation like a TED talk or a 3-minute thesis speech. Ultimately though, you should be the one on-screen. If you have the technical know-how to incorporate visual elements, you may do that, but it is not required. I will be assessing how well you have simplified your concept, how well you have applied the strategies discussed in the videos on both narratives/storytelling and oral presentation, clarity, use of time, and enthusiasm for the subject. The more enthusiastic the better. Videos should be uploaded to LEARN by 11:59pm (or a file with a link to the video should be submitted on LEARN) on **June 22**.

**Written Proposal (15%):** Roughly halfway through the term, I will place you into a group if we are online or you will join a group of four or five if we are in class. As a group, you will submit a carefully written proposal for your final group project (see description below). For this proposal, you will answer three key questions: what will be done, how will it be done, and why should it be done? The proposal will also include a literature review, meaning you will need to have done research into three legitimate sources for this project. Overall, the proposal should be structured as follows: introduction, literature review, methodology, conclusion, and bibliography. As is the case with many proposals, a major goal should be to demonstrate to your reader that this is a project worth greenlighting, since the reader of proposals tends to be in a position to do so. In

that case, you want to really try and sell your project here by demonstrating that you have an idea that is unique, that is worth doing, and that is using the best methods to deliver the goods. Moreover, this proposal is in many ways meant to be a helpful way to get you thinking about the final project – in other words, the information in it should be what you genuinely intend to do for the final project (do NOT, for example, make up methods that you will not be actually undertaking). However, because I will give you feedback to strengthen your final project, you are ultimately not bound to what you write in the proposal. Proposals should be between 1000-1200 words (not including the bibliography). Each group member should contribute roughly 200-250 words and take part in the editing process. Taking part of the editing process meaning that each member reads through the entire finished project and makes necessary changes or additions. Because your individual word count is not substantial, there should be an emphasis placed on the editing process, to make sure that the overall proposal is clear, cohesive, and that it avoids issues of academic integrity. I will assess the proposal in terms of its clarity, cohesion, the strength of the idea, the persuasiveness of the pitch, and the appropriate use of each section. Remember to also submit the Group Assignment Checklist (see description below). Proposals are due in the LEARN dropbox on **July 7**.

**Reflection Assignment (5%):** For this assignment, you are asked to honestly and critically evaluate your experiences in this class. Discuss 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 (300-400 words) and will be completed in class on **July 18** and ideally submitted to the dropbox in LEARN or completed in an exam booklet.

**Final Project (25%):** 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 project should make use of at least five legitimate and authoritative sources. This means that you will not just list these sources in a reference section but that you will also demonstrate engagement with them within the body of the project. Each member of the group will contribute approximately 600-650 words of the document. You will also work together to review and edit the material so that it is consistent in terms of content, style, and formatting. Much like the proposal, there should be an emphasis placed on the editing process, to make sure that the overall proposal is clear, cohesive, consistently formatted, and avoids issues of academic integrity. The final grade will consider the appropriateness and 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. Remember to also submit the Group

Assignment Checklist (see description below). 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 final project should be uploaded to LEARN on **July 29**.

### **Alternate Arrangements for Online Learning**

If we end up switching to online, we will stick to our Monday/Wednesday routine and keep to the schedule outlined below. Rather than meet in class, I will upload a video on the topic that is scheduled that day. You will be responsible for viewing the video in a timely fashion. The method for assessing your participation/attendance grade will also change. I describe this change in detail in the participation/attendance section. If we remain in class, you will be choosing your own groups for the two projects due closer to the end of term. If we are not in class, I may have to organize you into groups of four or five myself. If you are self-isolating at any point that we are in class, I can provide you with videos on the topic that we are discussing that day.

### **Late Work**

All assignments are to be handed in on LEARN by 11:59PM of the due date. Microsoft Word documents are preferred over PDF and Pages (the latter I am unable to open on my computer). Marks will be returned on Learn. Late papers will be subject to a late penalty of 2% per day. Assignments more than 20 days late will not be accepted.

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.

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 connect with AccessAbility Services, who are still available by phone or online during this period 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.

### **Rules for Group Work in Assignments**

When working on a group assignment, a [Group Assignment Checklist](#) must be completed and submitted with the assignment.

### **Attendance Policy**

If we are meeting in class, attendance will be mandatory unless you provide documentation that excuses you from class or unless Accessibility Services contacts me to provide alternate arrangements. If you are unable to attend due to COVID-like symptoms and required self-isolation, you will need to self-declare your illness by filling

out the University of Waterloo Verification of Illness form:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/quest/help/students/how-do-i/self-declare-my-illness>

### **Office Hours**

I will be available for office hours on Mondays and Wednesday 11:30AM-12:30PM. You can book an appointment but you can also feel free to drop-by during that hour whenever you would like.

### **Email**

I respond to my emails every week day until 4:30PM. I may not be able to respond right away, or I may be looking into the matter on your behalf, but I will get back to you as soon as possible. Remember though that if you send an email regarding an assignment the day that assignment is due, that I may not see it until the following morning. If you have not received a response after 24 hours, or roughly 48 hours on a weekend, please email me again. Please note that mail from some external email servers, such as Hotmail or Yahoo, may be bounced by the university server.

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Check [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information.

**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.](#) When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. Check [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information. 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 instructor, 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 offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**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:** [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, 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 AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

**Mental Health Support:** All of us need a support system. The SJU faculty and staff encourage students to seek out mental health support if they are needed.

On Campus:

- SJU Wellness Coordinator: Lindsay Thompson ([lindsay.thompson@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lindsay.thompson@uwaterloo.ca))
- Counselling Services: [counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca) / 519-888-4567 x32655
- **MATES**: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

Off campus, 24/7:

- **Good2Talk**: Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-4300 x6880
- **Here 24/7**: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- **OK2BME**: set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 x213

Full details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts [website](#).

Download [UW and regional mental health resources \(PDF\)](#)

Download the [WatSafe app](#) to your phone to quickly access mental health support information

**Diversity:** It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, and that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class. We recognize the immense value of the diversity in identities, perspectives,

and contributions that students bring, and the benefit it has on our educational environment. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let us know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In particular:

- We will gladly honour your request to address you by an alternate/preferred name or gender pronoun. Please advise us of this preference early in the semester so we may make appropriate changes to our records.
- We will honour your religious holidays and celebrations. Please inform of us these at the start of the course.
- We will follow AccessAbility Services guidelines and protocols on how to best support students with different learning needs.

**Course Outline/Class Schedule:**

May 2: Introduction

May 4: Academic Integrity

May 9: Grammar

**Citation Assignment due May 9**

May 11: Style, Voice, Concision

May 16: Audience

**Grammar Assignment due May 16**

May 18: Reading: "Are the Dead Taking Over Facebook?"

May 25: Critical Thinking

May 30: Rhetoric

June 1: Cover Letters

**Reviewing a Scholarly Article Assignment due June 1**

June 6: Emails

June 8: Readings: "Using narratives and storytelling to communicate science with non-specialist audiences,"

**Cover Letter Assignment due June 8**

June 13: Oral Presentations

June 15: Research Tips

**Email Assignment due June 15**

June 20: Reports

June 22: White Papers, forming groups,

**Video Presentation due June 22**

June 27: Written Proposals

June 29: Workshop for Proposal

July 4: Integrating Quotations

July 6: Peer Review for Proposal

July 11: Common Errors on Final Project

**Project Proposal due July 11**

July 13: Discussion of Reflection assignment, Workshop for Final Project

July 18: In-class Reflections, **Reflections due July 18**

July 20: Workshop for Final Project

July 25: Final Thoughts and Peer Review for Final Project

**Final Project due July 29**