Instructor: Dr. Ashley Rose Mehlenbacher
Class hours: 11:30 am - 12:50 pm, Mon. and Wed.
Office hours: 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm, Mondays
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm, Wednesdays

Email: ashley.mehlenbacher@uwaterloo.ca
Classroom: Hagey Hall, room 227
Office: Hagey Hall, room 146

Course Description

Communicating expert knowledge to a diverse range of audiences is central to professional communication. For technical communication, the subject-matter-expert is a central resource as we craft technical documents; for the scientific popularizer, the expert researcher helps us craft messaging about key findings; for health communicators, medical and health professionals help shape complex information we deliver to patients and shape public health messaging; and so continues the important role of experts in all areas of professional communication. Becoming an expert on experts is part of the required repertoire of the professional communicator. In this course we explore how to theorize expertise, how to assess the credibility of experts, and where to locate expert knowledge relative to our needs as communicators of technical, scientific, health, and other forms of professional communication. We also examine the expertise of professional writers and how one establishes credibility in their professional life.

Learning and Course Objectives

Leaving this course students should be able to:

- Identify key theorists and theoretical traditions in the study of expertise
- Recall and describe theoretical issues that have emerged in studies of expertise
- Describe theories of expertise as they relate to professional communication
- Apply scholarship on expertise to problems in professional communication

Reading and Resources

You can find all of the readings in LEARN. I have provided links to articles, and if you have trouble finding the source, do not hesitate to email me. No textbook for the course. Complete readings by the Monday of the relevant week.

LEARN

This course will use UW LEARN for announcements and the distribution of readings. Please familiarize yourself with this website and visit it regularly.

Territorial Acknowledgement

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 ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.
Course Assignments and Requirements

- Contribution – 15%
- Project proposal – 25%; due Oct. 21st, 2019
- Project presentation – 25%; weeks of Nov. 18th and Nov. 25th
- Final project – 35%; due Dec. 6th

Contribution Evaluation Guidelines

A special topics course, as an advanced undergraduate course, demands more engagement than lecture-based courses. Our goal here is to foster a learning environment where we are all contributing together to help one another build a compelling project. Accordingly, you are evaluated on your engagement in that learning environment. There will be multiple opportunities and ways to show contribution, from small group feedback to discussion with the entire class, and your contributions will be evaluated using the following criteria:

100 points–Exceptional: Frequent, substantive, formative, and original contributions to class discussions; consistently engaged and participatory demeanor; helpful and engaged peer review during presentations
90-99 points–Excellent: Only minor exceptions to the criteria described above;
80-89 points–Good: Regular contributor to discussions; consistent engagement; attend most presentations and offer some peer review feedback
70-79 points–Satisfactory: Occasional contributions and inconsistent engagement; attend some presentation days
60-69 points–Marginal: Minimal contributions and/or significant lack of engagement; miss multiple presentation days and offer no feedback
< 60 points–Failure: Repeated disruptive, inappropriate, or unethical behaviour; behaviour disrespectful to others; consistent lack of commitment and/or effort.

Project proposal

Word count: 500-700 words
References: Identify 3-6 scholarly references beyond what we have read in class.
Citation style: Open, but use one (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)
Due: October 21st, 2019
Submit through Learn

You will develop a project of about 2,000 words (or equivalent) for this course. Before beginning the project, however, you will write a proposal outlining your topic and plan. As you are now upper-division students, the expectations for your work are higher and in this course you must produce a high quality project. However, you likely still need some help determine the best way to frame that project and find resources to support your efforts. By first drafting a proposal, we will have the chance to refine your topic, questions, and sources for your project.

The exact nature of your project is rather open to your interests. We will work together, in class, to develop your project over the first several weeks. You may complete a traditional research paper. Or you may develop a kind of portfolio project to showcase your own expertise as you turn toward your future cultivation of expertise through your first job, graduate or professional programs, etc. Whatever option you choose, we will work together to develop clear expectations for your final project, and the steps to get you going.

You should consult John Swales’ "Create a Research Space Model” as you prepare your proposal. See: https://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/creating-research-space

In your proposal, you should first outline the topic/issue that you want to study. When you outline a topic you are refining the scope of your project. Then you should identify a gap or problem that you wish
to address. Your gap, or in Swales’ terms, “niche,” should be sufficiently well defined that you will be able to address it in a short 2,000 word essay or equivalent project. Finally, you will outline how you plan to “occupy the niche,” again borrowing from Swales, in your research essay.

In your proposal you must also identify some of the scholarly references you might use to support your arguments. You do not need to have read the articles in full at this stage, but rather have read some of their introductions and findings to determine if they are potentially helpful to your efforts. You should identify more resources than you will use for the final project as they may prove to be less central to your argument than your initial assessment suggests.

You should also provide a timeline detailing how you plan to complete your work. Work backwards from the final deadline to include your research efforts (how much time will it take you to read an article), your plan for outlining the draft, your first draft, and when you will complete edits. I strongly recommend that you identify peers in the course to provide a peer assessment of your work, and if time permits, we may review your work in class.

**Project Presentation**

Your presentation will introduce your peers to your project. At this point in the term, your project should be well underway. In your presentation, you should report the focus of your project, the goal of your project, important background information, the current status of your project, and identify 1-2 areas where you would like some help or feedback.

You can think of this as the kind of presentation you would need to give as part of a team in a workplace updating one another rather than an overly formal presentation.

You can use slides or handouts to help everyone follow along. Your presentation should be 5-6 minutes, leaving time to discuss your problems, for a total of 10 minutes inclusive of the Q&A. We’ll also plan to accept written feedback from anyone who has some helpful advice.

**Final project**

Word count: 2,000 words or equivalent (as discussed with Prof. Mehlenbacher).

References: 2-3 scholarly references.

Citation style: Open, but use one (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)

Due: December 6th, 2019

Submit through Learn

Your project is the largest percentage of your grade and your efforts should reflect that weighting. Your project proposal, which you will have completed earlier in the term, is your opportunity to refine your argument and outline your project before you begin writing.

Your projects will take various forms. You should choose an issue or topic you wish to examine through the lens of expertise. You may choose from the different areas of scholarship we are studying throughout the term, but you will need to draw from additional scholarship, which you will have identified in your proposal.

You might, for instance, write a traditional academic essay about developing expertise to write effectively as a science communicator by understanding the epistemic work of science and how to identify scientific experts. Or, you might develop a portfolio project where you showcase your work during co-op or other employment as a technical communication expert. You may even choose to analyze a theory of expertise and translate that into a training program. The nature of your project will be developed based on your interests and goals, and shaped by the learning objectives we have in the course.
## Becoming Expert – Fall 2019 Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 5th</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
<td>No readings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of September 9th</td>
<td>Introduction to the course, to rhetoric, to Aristotle</td>
<td>Aristotle, <em>Nicomachean Ethics</em>, book VI.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week of September 16th</td>
<td>Definitions of Expertise</td>
<td>Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of September 23rd</td>
<td>Psychological Mechanisms of Expertise</td>
<td>Ericsson, Prietula, and Cokely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of September 30th</td>
<td>Educational Understanding of Expertise</td>
<td>Bereiter and Scardamalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of October 7th</td>
<td>Social Mechanisms of Expertise</td>
<td>Majdik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of October 14th</td>
<td>No class meeting.</td>
<td>Thanksgiving and reading week break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work on your final projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of October 28th</td>
<td>Politics of Expertise</td>
<td>PEW Research Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of November 4th</td>
<td>Bogus Experts and Confidence Tricksters</td>
<td>Lowe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week of November 11th</td>
<td>Death of Expertise</td>
<td>Nichols.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No class on Nov. 14th (Prof. Mehlenbacher away at National Communication Association meeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of November 18th</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>No readings. Participation counts toward contribution grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of November 25th</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>No readings. Participation counts toward contribution grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of December 2nd</td>
<td>Project wrap</td>
<td>No class. Prof. Mehlenbacher in her office to discuss last minute project issues.</td>
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Course Policies

Course policies are essentially based on respectful communication and setting clear expectations. If something about the course, be it an assignment or policy, is not clear to you please write me and we will sort the issue. The following information is not only syllabus boilerplate and I hope you will take the time to read it carefully and ask me questions if you have them.

Attendance

In keeping with the University of Waterloo’s attendance policy, students are “expected to attend all meets” of the course and may be required to “present documentation proving the reasons for non- attendance” (UG Calendar). Students who miss more than two classes without providing reasonably adequate documentation may, at the discretion of the professor, be penalized on their final grade.

Emergencies and Absences

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor’s control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructor via email. You are expected to read your @uwaterloo.ca email on a frequent basis.

Personal emergencies should be communicated to me as soon as possible, but attend first to you and your family’s well-being. Such absences might be related to physical or mental illness. Whatever happens to be your particular situation is not my business and all I need to know is there was a medical emergency. You do not need to provide any details.

Grade Concerns and Incompletes

Should your grades concern you then you must speak with me as early as possible to allow time for corrective measures. Near the end of the term is simply not enough time to address any major problems. I will not grant an incomplete in the course; if you have concerns about completing your term please write to me as soon as possible.

Missed or Late Work

I will not accept late assignments if you were not granted an extension. To be granted an extension you must have a compelling reason. If you know you will need an extension, speak with me at least 48 hours prior to the due date. If you faced an emergency situation, of course address that first, and then let me know so we can make an accommodation.

Additional Information

Accommodations & Support

Note for students with disabilities: AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall, Room 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 AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

Mental Health Support

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health support if they are needed.

On Campus

- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
- MATES: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek form 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 ext. 6880
- 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 extension 213

The Writing and Communication Centre
The Writing and Communication Centre works with students as they develop their ideas, draft, and revise. Writing and Communication Specialists offer one-on-one support in planning assignments, synthesizing and citing research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-and-communication-centre. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

Please note that communication specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not change or correct your work for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.

Academic freedom at the University of Waterloo
Policy 33, Ethical Behaviour states, as one of its general principles (Section 1), “The University supports academic freedom for all members of the University community. Academic freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base teaching and research on an honest and ethical quest for knowledge. In the context of this policy, ‘academic freedom’ refers to academic activities, including teaching and scholarship, as is articulated in the principles set out in the Memorandum of Agreement between the FAUW and the University of Waterloo, 1998 (Article 6). The academic environment which fosters free debate may from time to time include the presentation or discussion of unpopular opinions or controversial material. Such material shall be dealt with as openly, respectfully and sensitively as possible.” This definition is repeated in Policies 70 and 71, and in the Memorandum of Agreement, Section 6.

Cross-listed Courses
Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Academic Integrity
In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Check the Office of Academic Integrity website for more information.
Turnitin

Turnitin.com and alternatives: Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students’ submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit the alternate assignment.

Discipline

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity 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 undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline. For typical penalties, check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

Grievances

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals

A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals.