

## CMNS 490 Directed Studies in Communication

### CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:

This course provides students with supervised practical applied experience in professional writing and speaking. Students will have an opportunity to practice skills gained in prerequisite courses and will receive feedback about their competencies. Students will meet for a monthly feedback seminar with the instructor and will be expected to contribute weekly to an online discussion forum. Before starting practicum placements, students must sign a practicum agreement.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply the principles of creating effective documentation for a specific audience.
- Apply the principles and processes of determining end-users' needs.
- Apply end-users' needs to selection of content and design.
- Apply documenting procedures.
- Apply the principles of structured documentation for online and/or print documents.
- Apply the principles of layout and document design learned in previous communications courses.
- Demonstrate the principles of and considerations required for document production.
- Apply in work-specific communications contexts the design, formatting, and composing of messages according to the function and interaction of purpose, audience, media, and message as they apply to specific organizational goals and users' needs.

### PROJECT DETAILS:

This section will be run as a directed studies course from September to December 20\_\_.

The proposed project follows from successful fundraising activities completed in conjunction with a CMNS 490 Directed Studies course. Funds raised will be used to develop a web site to promote the Xa:ytem Longhouse Cultural Interpretive Centre.

The student's research question is this: How can First Nations culture be presented and communicated online in a way that that would be useful and satisfying to First Nations audiences? The project will include a discussion of the relative importance of orality and literacy within First Nations culture, and explore the consequences for web-based information sources geared to First Nations audiences. Leading from theoretical questions about orality and literacy, the proposed project will develop a web site that will combine images, text and audio in an effort to address different responses to media due to cultural biases.

The proposed web content would:

- promote Coast Salish cultural events
- offer a traditional Indigenous perspective on current events in B.C.
- satisfy a First Nations audience with an informative and accurate representation of their culture
- advocate for First Nations people and their causes

During the practicum the student will seek to address a number of technical and rhetorical questions, including:

- How can one evoke in reader/listeners an *experience* of First Nations culture as opposed to simply delivering information?
- What standards might be borrowed from Anthropology and/or Journalism to create web content with high standards of professional integrity?

- How can cultural information be presented online without offending First Nations people who don't want their culture publicized?
- How can timeless cultural themes be explored in the context of writing about topical events?
- Which multimedia communication tools would work well for helping First Nations people tell their own story online?
- How can one advocate for First Nations rights in way that acknowledges stories of victimization but looks as well to new story possibilities involving transformation, adaptation, revitalization, etc.?
- To what degree can the wisdom and subtlety of a First Nations story be discerned when it's disconnected from the breath and body of its storyteller and removed from the time and place of its speaking?

## READINGS

Virtual Museum of Canada — Dane-za Exhibit:

[http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Vmc\\_Linkcount/vmclinkcount.cgi?Landmark=Exhibits&Language=English&Id=VMCVE&Field=url&Section=1624](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Vmc_Linkcount/vmclinkcount.cgi?Landmark=Exhibits&Language=English&Id=VMCVE&Field=url&Section=1624)

Sacred Headwaters: <http://sacredheadwaters.com/home>

Robin Ridington: *When You Sing it Now, Just Like New*

Hugh Brody: *The Other Side of Eden; Maps and Dreams*

Robert Bringhurst: *The Tree of Meaning*

## METHOD OF EVALUATION

In consultation with the instructor the student has developed a list of assignments related to the project:

- 1) September 30: A customized Wordpress blog tailored to meet the needs of the Xa:ytem Longhouse Interpretive Centre (10%)
- 2) October 15: A report of approximately 2000 words identifying the limitations of textual communication within the First Nations context and exploring alternatives (20%)
- 3) October 30: Completed document templates for use with press releases, articles and interpretive material to appear on the proposed Xa:ytem Longhouse Interpretive Centre website (15%)
- 4) November 15: Three sets of questions developed to serve in interview situations, along with a 2-page rationale memo that describes the consultation process followed by the student in arriving at the questions (15%)
- 5) November 30: Sample press release, article and interpretive document prepared using templates developed for these purposes (20%)
- 6) December 10 (approx): Oral presentation to a panel of three UFV instructors outlining project purpose, progress and future goals (20%)

## COURSE STRUCTURE

The instructor and student will be in contact during the term by email and telephone. In addition, face-to-face meetings will be scheduled at the end of each month. The student will present an overview of the project and his results to a panel of three or four UFV instructors in the second week of December.