

Communication & Culture (CMCL) 503 - Lecture 1
Contours of Contemporary Culture
Fall 2013
Monday and Wednesday 15:30 – 16:45

Instructor: Dr. Mark Wolfe
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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

This course is an interdisciplinary engagement with the major ideas, concepts and themes that underscore the twentieth as a particularly pivotal century. The primary focus in the first half of the course on mass society and technology from historical, existential, cultural and creative perspectives provides the context for focus in second part of the course on the emerging dynamics, pressures and opportunities facing the world today -- such as globalization, shifting economic and political power, and sustainability.

Individual student reading and lecture responses throughout the term add perspective/insight and drive seminar discussions as guided by both the primary course themes – life and death, good and evil, freedom and slavery, and the role of science, art and spirituality in contemporary culture – as well as secondary themes that tend to emerge when students engage course readings and make sense of them in their own lives and contexts. Emphasis in this course is placed on primarily Western writings but inter-cultural perspectives, particularly those sourcing from China and India, will also be considered.

Additional Information

This is a reading-heavy course in which active participation is an absolute requirement. Students will be challenged to keep up with readings in order to engage in class discussion and carry its seminar format. Clear guidelines and grading criteria are provided for all assignments and class participation components.

Objective of the Course

To enrich students' intellectual perspective on how the events and factors at play in the 20th century have shaped the world we now experience in the 21st.

Internet and electronic communication device policy

Laptops are allowed. However, students camped behind laptops or on tablets/handhelds and never or rarely contributing to class discussion are apt to perform poorly in the exams, in participation grading and in the final group project where students may be graded individually for poor performance.

Textbooks and Readings:

Donald S. Gochberg, ed. *Classics of Western Thought, Vol. IV, The Twentieth Century*. Michigan State University: Wadsworth, 2003.

Selected readings and external content sources made available through student reading presentations and/or Blackboard.

Assignments and Evaluation

- Reading response (written; individual) 15%
- Lecture response (verbal/presentation; with a partner) 25%
- In-class essay 25%
- Final group project proposal 10%
- Final group project (presentation/skit/video/website/etc. OR paper) 25%
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You do not need to complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in this course.

Reading response (15%) – Students will individually complete a critical assessment of one of the key readings in the course, drawing on external sources and just good argument in making sense of the author’s motives, intentions, context and other factors deemed relevant in supporting (or detracting) from the significance of the reading then and now. These 3-5 page, 1.5 line spaced critiques are due October 16.

Lecture response (with a partner) 25% -- Students early in the term will sign up to lead class discussion of one key reading to be lectured on during the term. Working in pairs, and in coordination with the instructor, students will augment their close reading of the assigned text with external sources, complementary or contradicting viewpoints and perspective, and their own critical value add in deepening the overall understanding of the concepts, ideas and themes at play in the original work. Using a PowerPoint or other media to formalize the response is acceptable. Students particularly self-conscious about language abilities or speaking in public need to approach the instructor for guidance as soon as possible.

Final group project proposal (10%) – Comprising two or three pages, the proposal identifies the topic and uses course readings/themes to explain: why it’s relevant; what the specific interest or angle taken to explore it will be; what other literature has been consulted to frame and deepen understanding of the topic; and how the group will tackle

the project, including rules of engagement for completing the work (who will do what) and resolving any conflicts that arise between group members and/or their expectations. The final group project proposal is due November 4.

In-class essay (25%) – This essay-format examination will be held on November 13 and cover course themes up to and including November 6. This is actually a combined take-home and in-class exam wherein study questions released to students one week before the exam are studied and then answered closed-book and in-class on the 13th. Students will have the entire class on the 13th to complete the exam.

Final group project (25%) – Students will work individually (research papers) or in their groups (presentations) to complete a final project for submission by Dec. 4. Final projects can take many forms, as long as the emphasis on the quality of the thinking and analysis relating to the topic is maintained. Projects in the past have included skits, videos, debates, mock UN reports, presentations and papers. Performative projects, such as skits and videos, will get ample class time during the final days of classes in December to make their presentations but these must also be accompanied by a short written synopsis of the work, including references and solid argumentative sections. Non-performative projects such as formal papers, reports, etc. have until Dec. 11 to submit but must do a short (5 minute) verbal overview of their topics and findings to the rest of the class during the final days of classes in December. There is no minimum or maximum number of pages that written submissions must meet.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see

<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

TBA first days of classes