

Communications Studies (COMS) 201 L01
Introduction to Communications Studies
Winter 2014

Lectures: Monday and Wednesday 12:00-12:50
Required Tutorials: Friday (according to registration)

Instructor: Dr. Dawn Johnston
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 13:00 – 15:00 or by appointment (and if the door is open, drop by anytime)

Course Description

In this course, we will explore the question of what we are doing when we “communicate.” Are we simply transmitting information? Are we creating meaning? Are we participating in a social process? Are we persuading others? Are we supporting the social status quo? Are we voicing challenges to the “system?” Incorporating examples from popular culture, COMS 201 will facilitate you finding an answer to these questions for yourself.

Additional Information

Please be aware that much of this course deals with the artifacts, experiences, and products of popular culture. As such, some of the material we study manifests coarse language, sexuality, and violence. If this is a problem for you, please see the instructor or your TA.

Some components of this course may be offered as podcasts – short audio files that will be posted on Blackboard. You will be informed in class and by email if a podcast has been posted, and you will be expected to listen to the podcasts before the lecture in which we will discuss them. More information on the podcasts will be provided in class.

Objectives of the Course

Through readings, lectures, written assignments, and group discussions and activities, COMS 201 will introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of communications. Recognizing that communication is integral to all human activities and interactions, this course explores elements of communications studies that appeal to scholars from a variety of academic disciplines. Through an overview of the key concepts, methodological traditions, and major theoretical currents of the field, students will have an opportunity to experience the cutting-edge diversity that defines communications studies.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops are permitted for note taking only. **iPods, cellphones and gaming devices may not be used at all during class.** Please respect the lecturer, teaching assistants and your fellow students. Improper use of electronic devices will impact your participation grade.

Textbooks and Readings:

Wood, Julia T. Communication Theories in Action: An Introduction. Third Edition. Canada: Wadsworth, 2004.

Additional required readings to be posted on Blackboard at least two weeks in advance of our discussion of them.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation:	Weekly	10%
Early Test:	January 31	10%
Midterm Examination:	February 28	20%
Research Essay:	April 2	30%
Final Examination:	Registrar Scheduled	30%

Participation grades will be awarded on the basis of your active involvement in tutorial discussions and activities. Details of required tutorial activities will be provided in a separate "tutorial outline." In order to receive participation grades, you are expected to be in attendance for tutorials, contribute to the discussions, and complete required group work and presentations. Improper use of electronic devices, as well as other forms of inattentiveness, will impact your participation grade.

The early test (January 31) will be composed of multiple-choice questions, and is designed to provide early feedback on your comprehension of the course material so far. It will be useful preparation for the midterm exam (February 28), which will be also be composed of multiple-choice questions. The final exam (registrar scheduled) will be a combination of multiple choice and essay-style questions. You will be responsible for all material covered in the assigned textbook readings and additional required readings posted on Blackboard, as well as the content of lectures and tutorial discussions. **Lecture notes will not be posted on Blackboard.**

The research essay for this course gives you an opportunity to combine out-of-class research with the topics explored in lectures and discussions. You will be given a choice of several essay topics, and expected to write a 1500-1750 word research paper on that topic. More information on the term paper will be provided in class and on Blackboard.

Your term paper must be handed directly to your TA **at the beginning of lecture** on April 2. Unless prior written permission has been granted, assignments MAY NOT be submitted electronically or deposited in the drop box - all such assignments will be

considered late and will have marks deducted accordingly.

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: Yes

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade or point value (e.g.: A- to B+, or 25/30 to 23/30) 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

To be posted on Blackboard in the first week of classes