

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication and Culture**

**COMS 381**

**Communications History**

**Fall 2014**

Monday, Sept 8 – Friday, Dec 5 (excluding Nov. 8-11)

Lectures M 12:00-13:50;  
Tutorials R 9:00-9:50 or R 10:00-10:50

**Instructor:** Dr. Samantha Thrift  
**Office:** SS 210  
**Office Phone:** 403-220-5320  
**E-Mail:** [samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca](mailto:samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca)  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** W 15:00-17:00 (or by appointment)

**Course Description**

This course provides a general survey of how various communication systems and practices developed through history, and of the social contexts within which they emerged, transformed, and adapted through time. Within this framework, the course examines major technological developments in the history of human communication and uses theory to understand their origins and impacts on social organization and everyday life.

**Additional Information**

This is a reading and writing intensive course.  
Students must register in either Lab 01 or Lab 02.  
Prerequisite or co-requisite: COMS 201.  
Restriction: Credit for both COMS 381 and COMS 380 is not allowed.

**Textbooks and Readings**

Crowley, David and Paul Heyer, eds. *Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society*, 6th ed. Montreal: Allyn & Bacon, 2011.

Any additional readings will be made available via the COMS 381 D2L course website.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

The in-class use of computers for activities other than note taking purposes will not be tolerated. Therefore, cell phones and other electronic communication devices must be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during class time. If you engage in non-course related online activity during class, the professor will confiscate the device for the duration of that class.

No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

### **Email**

When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course number (COMS 381) and a clear statement of purpose in the subject line. If you do not include the course number in your email's subject line, your email may get lost in your instructor's overflowing inbox and go unread! Please maintain a respectful tone in your correspondence with course instructors (including your T.A.).

Email correspondence is most useful for short specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions on the course material or assignments please visit me during office hours.

I will return emails during the week, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read or replied to until the next working day.

NOTE: I do not accept email submissions of work.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

In summary, the course work will be evaluated as follows:

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Participation	10%	Lectures & Tutorials
Reading Responses (2 x 5%)	10%	September 22, 29, October 6 (2 of 3)
Midterm Exam (in class)	20%	October 27
Research Essay (5-7 pages)	25%	November 24
Final Exam	35%	TBA

## **Participation (10%)**

Tutorials take place Thursday mornings. They are an opportunity for you to ask more questions in a smaller group size and to collectively explore in further depth the assigned readings for the week. Your tutorial leader is entirely responsible for assessing this portion of your grade.

It is essential that you come to every tutorial with a copy of your readings.

Participation in lecture and tutorial begins with being prepared. This means you should come to class having read and taken notes on all the assigned readings. Participation means being prepared to engage with your classmates and professor/tutorial leader by speaking in class, listening attentively and actively taking notes. Your effort to ask questions, respond to questions, and engage in a conversation about the topics on hand is a key determinant of your participation grade. Participation in lecture is just as important as participation in tutorial (ie., sleeping, talking, or other irritating behaviours throughout lecture will be noted and will end up affecting your grade). Participation also includes being actively engaged in whatever assignments or exercises your tutorial leader has prepared. Students are expected to be collegial, respectful and tolerant of peers, teaching assistants, technical instructors and professors. The best learning experience will occur with courteous and engaged participation and interaction with each other, the work, the discussions and debates.

Of course, not everyone will have an opportunity to speak every week; nor are all people equally comfortable speaking out. As such, you are permitted to submit to your tutorial leader a COPY of your notes from the readings (not your lecture notes) in order to demonstrate that you are completing and critically thinking about the assigned readings. Ensure that you provide him/her with a copy and not your original. Your tutorial leader may also devise more specific mechanisms for evaluating participation.

If you miss more than 3 tutorials, you will receive 0 on your participation.

## **Reading Responses (2 x 5%) Due: Sept. 22; Sept. 29; Oct. 6**

These assignments are designed to be low-stakes (not worth very much individually), but aim to help you gain a deeper understanding of the readings. You are responsible for completing 2 assignments, each worth 5%. You choose the week that you want to hand in the assignment: Sept. 22; Sept. 29; Oct. 6. Two of these three weeks are a must.

These assignments are very straightforward. Your professor will assign a passage from a reading, or indicate a specific concept of critical importance. Your job, in two pages, is to explain the passage and/or concept to the best of your ability, making links where you can to other ideas/theories covered in the course. From time to time, your professor might ask you to consider the differences across concepts. Regardless of the format, the objective of this assignment is to help you to focus in on one element of the reading so that you might begin to develop close reading skills that are essential to both critical reading and thinking skills.

BONUS: Since this class is less about getting theory right or wrong as it is about teaching you how to read carefully and critically and how to link together ideas, you are free to write a third. Your lowest mark will be dropped.

**Midterm Exam (20%) Due: October 27**

The in-class midterm exam will cover all course material from the start of the class to October 27. The exam will be distributed at the beginning of class and will last 90 minutes.

The format of the midterm exam will be confirmed in class, but the questions be drawn from readings, lectures, screenings, and tutorial discussions. (Attendance and participation in tutorials are important for your success in this).

**Research Essay (25%) Due: November 24**

Students will write a 5-7 page research paper that addresses the complex relationship between media, culture, and society as well as the currents of thought that have emerged to account for them. The paper will focus its discussion around a specific communication technology, such as the printing press, the phonograph, film, television, the Internet. Some brainstorming questions include: Is the electric light a communications medium? How has the microphone altered our experience of the human voice? Are social media a revolutionary social force or a repressive one?

The research essay will draw on both class readings and additional secondary sources. More detailed guidelines will be provided in class.

**Final Exam (35%)**

The final exam will cover material from the entire course. Details about content and form will be provided in class. The final exam is scheduled by the university and is beyond the control of your professor. Ensure you are available for the entire exam period. Only students with a valid medical reason (with documentation) will be permitted to write at an alternate time.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: Yes**

All assignments and exams weighted more than 20% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

**Submission of Assignments:** 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.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

### **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.

Late work will not be accepted one week past the original deadline without appropriate documentation (i.e., doctor's note). Late work will not receive written feedback.

### **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 14 days after the start of the course.

### **Writing Skills Statement**

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, 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. Sources used in 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 & Dept of Communication and Culture Grade Scale**

Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in Communication and Culture:

<b>Grade Point Value</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Department grade scale equivalents</b>	<b>Letter grade % equivalent for calculations</b>
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>		<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%

<b>3.30</b>		<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good—clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>		<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>		<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>		<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>		<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	00 - 49.99%	0%

### 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. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people’s words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

### Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### Research 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 <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

### Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:picarts@ucalgary.ca">picarts@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Police Service</li> <li>• Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• Safewalk Program</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a> If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort ( <b>220-5333</b> ). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html">http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>
<b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Health Services</li> <li>• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</li> <li>• Online resources and tips</li> </ul>	<b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a> <b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a> If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

### Schedule of Lectures and Readings

The Schedule of Readings will be posted to D2L before the first class.