

**University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Communication and Media Studies (COMS) 435 L01
Communications and Canadian Society**

Fall 2019

Monday - Wednesday 3:30PM - 4:45PM

Sep 9, 2019-Dec 4, 2019 (excluding Oct. 14 and Nov. 10-16)

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Course Description

This course introduces students to literature on various aspects of the Canadian media, including public policy questions such as the concentration of media ownership, Canadian content requirements, censorship, the role of the media during elections, and the problems and opportunities that might be brought by advances in technology. The course draws upon historical and contemporary examples to explore the unique relationship between Canadian citizens and the mass media.

Objectives of the Course

Through lectures, readings, class discussions, and course assignments, students will:

- Explore a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of mass communications and Canadian society.
- Develop critical and analytical skills through the interrogation of texts, media, policies, organizations, corporations, and events.
- Examine the social, political, and economic impacts of contemporary Canadian mass communications upon Canadian populations.

Textbooks and Readings

David Taras. *Digital Mosaic: Media, Power, and Identity in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 2015 (Required)

Students are expected to have all readings completed prior to scheduled class times in order to contribute effectively during class discussions and activities.

Additional required readings to be posted or linked on D2L throughout the semester.

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 instructor and your fellow students. Improper use of electronic devices will impact your participation grade.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation	(ongoing)	10%
D2L Short Writing (2 X 10%)	First by Oct 2	20%
	Second by Nov 27 (latest)	
Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography	Oct 28	10%
Reviewing the Acts Presentations	Nov 6	10%
Midterm (closed book)	Nov 20	25%
Final Essay	Dec 4	25%

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

Participation—10%: Due date—ongoing

Students are expected to not only be in attendance every week, but to contribute significantly to the class discussions via individual comments, in-class group work activities, and short presentations. Oral participation will help solidify concepts for yourself and others.

Desire2Learn Short Writing Assignment—20% (2 X 10%): Due date—various

Throughout the course, students will be required to write a total of two (2) responses to a prompted discussion question in the syllabus or an original

question posed by the student. The first assignment must be completed **within the first four weeks of class (by Oct 2)**. This assignment is about your ideas – therefore the responses are due before the class in which the reading will be discussed. Suggestions for topics are posted with the weekly readings but student may choose another perspective. Assignments will not be accepted after the class begins and the readings are discussed. The class on **Nov 27** is the final class to submit the second short writing assignment.

Each response must be between 500 and 750 words, equivalent to two (2) or three (3) pages double-spaced. Responses must have a thesis statement, a definitive argument, and conclusion. This assignment seeks to synthesize course material with experience from students' personal media engagement. **Responses must demonstrate sound analysis of the ideas from course readings and include specific quotes (this is primary, your personal reflections may be used to underscore the points raised in the readings)**. Other sources may be used if formally cited but are not required.

These assignments are to be uploaded to D2L.

Essay Proposal and Annotated bibliography —10%: Due date—Oct 28 (start of class, as two separate files on D2L)

Students must submit a two (2) page (500 word), double-spaced proposal regarding their final essay research project. Essay proposal submissions must include the following: a working title; a critical question about the relationship between mass communications and Canadian society; a possible thesis statement; and a rationale as to why you have chosen your critical question. Why is this area of research significant? Marks will be awarded for clarity of proposal and its relevance to the greater themes studied in the class. **(5 marks)**

In addition to the essay proposal, **in a separate file**, students must submit a list of eight (8) academic sources from a variety of resources (books, book chapters, journal articles, etc.) **from outside the course syllabus**. Sources that are not academic (ie news stories) may be used but only as an addition to the eight academic sources. Each academic source must include a brief annotation *in your own words* of three-to-five (3-5) sentences, as to its importance for your potential final essay research project. **(5 marks)**

Reviewing the Acts Presentation — 10%: Nov 6

In 2018, the government of Canada announced that it will be reviewing both the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act. This is the legislation that determines how Canadian mass media will be structured – it sets the rules. Students will work in groups of 3-5 to prepare a 15 – 20 minute presentation

on one or two elements of either Act that either must change or must be preserved in your view. Further details on this unique assignment will be provided in class.

Midterm—25%: Nov 20

A midterm examination will test knowledge on all course readings up to this point in the course and content presented in lectures. Readings for the week of Nov 20 will be included. Midterms must be taken in class unless documentation is provided for a legitimate absence. Possible testing formats include short answers, and/or essay questions. Students will have the full class to write the midterm. Exam is closed book.

Final Essay—25%: Due date — Dec 4 (start of class)

Students will submit a 2500 word (seven to eight page) research essay, excluding bibliography. The final essay must be printed in a double-spaced format (12 font), paginated, and with your name, course & professor, a title and a properly cited bibliography. Essays must have a clear thesis statement to be argued throughout the body of the text. Essays must demonstrate strong research in support of the thesis.

Students will ask one critical question about the relationship between mass communications and Canadian society. As such, each essay must include a critical analysis of a particular development in media and its impact, or potential impact, on Canadian society. The essay should build upon a theme identified in class discussion or in one or more of the articles/works under examination throughout the course. Your point must be unified throughout and introduced by a clear thesis statement in the first paragraph.

Students should strengthen and develop their original argument by drawing upon their own experiences while demonstrating clear applications of the resources cited. Sources outside the eight (8) scholarly works required may be used to support your thesis but must be from a credible source (if uncertain, ask Dr. Taylor).

All references must be properly and fully cited in a consistent format (APA or Chicago preferred). Essays must generally follow what was proposed in the preceding essay proposal assignment unless otherwise discussed with the instructor.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your final essay directly to your instructor.

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.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of*

Calgary Calendar section on writing across the curriculum:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Media, Communication and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by

copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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 (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Week 1 (Sept 9 - 11): Citizens and Publics

Readings:

Taras: Chapter 2, Identity and Citizenship in Canada.ca (page 39 – 67)

- Is there a difference between citizen and consumer in contemporary media? Does this matter?
- Does your personal media consumption constitute a “public sphere”?

Week 2 (Sept 16 - 18): the Historical Arch of Canadian Mass Media

Readings:

Knowlton Nash, *The Microphone Wars*, Chapter 3: “The Dream of National Public Radio” (65-89) Available via D2L

The Aird Report, 1929. Available via D2L (not required to read all appendices; don't worry – the report is 13 pages)

- What is unique about the challenge of national communication in Canada?
- Are the foundational principles of Canadian broadcasting as outlined in the Aird Report still valid?
- From a lobbying perspective, what lessons are to be drawn from the experience of Graham Spry and Alan Plaunt?

Week 3 (Sept 23 - 25): the Struggles of the CBC

Taras: Chapter 7, *The Ever-Shrinking World of Public Broadcasting*

DeCillia, B., & McCurdy, P. (2016). *The Sound of Silence: The Absence of Public Service Values in Canadian Media Discourse about the CBC*. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 41(4).

- How has new technology challenged the traditional role of the CBC? Is the “shrinking” irreversible?
- Why do the authors believe the discourse of neoliberalism is ill suited to the CBC? Do you agree?
- Should the CBC be advertising free?

Week 4 (Sept 30 – Oct 2): Canadian Television in the 21st Century

first short writing due Oct 2

Readings: One of two CRTC Let's Talk TV reports:

CRTC Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2015-86 (par 1-47; 163 – 225)

<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2015/2015-86.htm>

Or

CRTC Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2015-96

<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2015/2015-96.htm> (par 1-52; 122-144)

Bradshaw, J. (April 17, 2015). *Streaming Wars: How Disruptors are Shaking Up the TV Business*. *The Globe and Mail*. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/streaming-trouble-the-traditional-and-digital-tv-worlds-clash/article24015722/>

- Does globalization pose a problem or opportunity for Canadian television production? Argue one side, even if you see advantages to both.
- Does traditional television (cable, satellite, over-the-air) have a future? Will the CRTC 2015-96 proposals help?
- Are Canadian content regulations in media worth preserving?
- Would workers in the Canadian media creation industry be happy with CRTC 2015-96?

Week 5 (Oct 7 - 9): Elections and the Mass Media, Political Communication

Readings: Taras: Chapter 8, Are Journalists and Politicians Abandoning the Public?

Christopher Waddell. (2012) “Berry’d Alive: The Media, Technology, and the Death of Political Coverage” in *How Canadians communicate: IV, Media and politics*, ed. Taras, David; Waddell, Christopher Robb. Available in ebook via U of Calgary library.

- With reference to two points raised by Taras, do you feel the mainstream media provides a suitable range of coverage for the Canadian 2015 federal election?
- Do you think Waddell’s points are still valid post-2015 election?
- With reference to either reading, has the internet improved political discourse in Canada?

Week 6 (Oct 16): Ownership (No class on Thanksgiving Monday)

In Library

Readings: Taras: Chapter 3, The Ownership Juggernaut

Dwayne Winseck. The CMCR Project’s Growth and Development of the Network Media Economy in Canada, 1984-2016 Report
<http://www.cmcrp.org/the-growth-of-the-network-media-economy-in-canada-1984-2016/> (executive summary 1-7; introduction 1-17; concluding remarks 49-52)

- Who owns the key elements of your media consumption habits? Do you feel this impacts you as a consumer and citizen?
- Is direct government involvement in the media sector more acceptable than it might be in other industries?
- Using Winseck’s report, what patterns in the media industry concern you as a citizen?

Week 7 (Oct 21 - 23): Censorship and Communication Rights

Readings: (Macdonald and Butt count as one reading)

Neil Macdonald, Free Speech on the Run, Even in the Home of the Brave.

CBC.ca. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/free-speech-on-the-run-even-in-the-home-of-the-brave-1.3084507>

and

David Butt. "Canada's law on hate speech is the embodiment of compromise"

The Globe and Mail. Jan 19, 2015

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/canadas-law-on-hate-speech-is-the-embodiment-of-compromise/article22520419/>

Marc Raboy. "Media" in Media Divides: Communication Rights and the Right to Communicate in Canada (91-119). Available online via U of Calgary library.

- Hate speech or unlimited free expression? Which is better for democracy?
- Should anonymity on the internet be protected?
- How are Communication Rights different from traditional Freedom of the Press?

Week 8 (Oct 28 - 30): Advertising and the Print Industry

****essay proposal and annotated bibliography due Oct 28****

Readings:

Taras, Chapter 6: Falling Stars: The Future of Newspapers and Conventional Broadcasting.

Dallas Smythe. On the Audience Commodity and Its Work. From *Dependency Road* (230-256). Available via D2L

- The Smythe chapter was published in 1981. Is his thesis still valid?
- Do you think newspapers and/or conventional broadcasting will disappear like the telegraph or will they still play a role in the emerging media environment?
- What does fall of Gawker tell us about the future of journalism?

Week 9 (Nov 4 - 6): French and Aboriginal Media

****changing the Acts presentations Nov 6****

Readings:

Roth, Lorna. (2000). **Bypassing of Borders and Building of Bridges:** Steps in the Construction of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in Canada. *International Communication Gazette*. Vol. 62, Issue 3-4, pp. 251 – 269 (available via library)

Bailey, P. Sept 12, 2012. “Les Trash: Tawdry television offers a worm’s-eye view of la belle province” The Walrus. <http://thewalrus.ca/2006-02-television/>

- APTN is mandated to be accessible on every cable and satellite package in Canada. Should it receive this special treatment?
- Why does Quebec media remain far more popular than English Canada? Is it just a matter of language or are other factors at play?

******Nov 1 - 13 – Reading week. No class******

Week 10 (Nov 18 - 20): Radio and the music industry

****Mid term Exam Nov 20****

Sutherland, Richard and Will Straw. “The Canadian Music Industry at a Crossroads” in Taras et al. (2007) *How Canadians Communicate 2: Media, Globalization and Identity*. Calgary: U of Calgary Press (available via library as ebook).

- Should Canada maintain CanCon requirements for radio in 2015?
- Much has changed since 2007. Do Sutherland and Straw’s arguments still seem valid?

Week 11 (Nov 25 - 27): Labour and ‘new’ media

*****last class for short paper submissions Nov 27*****

Readings:

Andrew Ross, “In Search of the Lost Paycheck” in Scholz, T. (2012). *Digital Labor : The Internet as Playground and Factory*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis. (Ebook available via library)

Nicole S. Cohen. 2012. [“Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation.”](#) *tripleC: Cognition, Communication, Co-operation* 10(2): 141-155.

- Is the historic rationale for organized labour, as presented by Ross, challenged by technology?
- Compare your work experience with the results of Cohen’s study.
- How does technology enhance/hinder your own employment prospects?

Week 12 (Dec 2 - 4):

*****no class Dec 2*****

Victor Pickard (2017) *The Big Picture: Misinformation Society*

<http://www.publicbooks.org/the-big-picture-misinformation-society/>

****final essays due at the beginning of class Dec 4****