

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

**COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES (COMS) 481- LECTURE 01
ADVANCED TOPICS IN NEW MEDIA & SOCIETY:
Understanding Social Media
Fall 2014 (Block Week)
TuWeThFrSa 9:00AM-5:00PM.
Class dates: 2014/09/02 - 2014/09/06**

Instructor: Dr. Maria Bakardjieva
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Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: By appointment

Pre-session Study

(1) Read the Required Textbook: van Dijck, Jose (2013) *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(2) Choose one of the social media platforms discussed in the book (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube or Wikipedia) as your presentation topic.

(3) Log into the COMS 481 space in *Desire2Learn* (the learning platform that replaced Blackboard) and follow these steps:

- **Go to the *Communication* section and choose *Groups*. There you will find five groups, each corresponding to a presentation topic.**
- **Enroll yourself in the group corresponding to your chosen presentation topic. The first 8 people to enroll will be included in each group.**
- **If you find that 8 people have already enrolled in the presentation group for the topic you have chosen (i.e. eight people have signed up for this presentation topic already), please select a different topic and enroll yourself in the respective presentation group. Note that the system will not allow more than 8 students to enroll in each group.**
- **There are discussion spaces, lockers and drop boxes associated with each presentation group/topic. Please figure out how to use them and feel free to start organizing your work on your presentations through D2L before the class starts. Make sure that all students enrolled in the group are aware of the activities taking place online by e-mailing them.**

Don't worry if these instructions do not sound very clear. You will understand what they mean when you get into *Desire2Learn*.

The signing up for presentation topics has to be done ASAP. A final list of topics and presenters will be posted by the instructor by July 31.

Working in groups, the students who have signed up for each presentation topic will prepare and deliver a presentation in class offering a comprehensive examination of the respective social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube or Wikipedia). In your presentation, you will (1) clearly outline the facts and arguments put forward by the book author, Jose van Dijck; (2) offer your understanding and interpretation of these facts and arguments (3) discuss additional aspects and issues that you find important (4) discuss your own experience with that platform in light of van Dijck's arguments (5) initiate and moderate class discussion on the benefits and problems posed by that social media platform. Reference to additional publications (statistics, media reports, academic articles, etc.) in your presentations is encouraged. All groups will be given time to put together their presentations on Day 1 of the course, however, the thorough review of the respective book chapter as well as the search for relevant additional materials need to be performed by each student before the class starts. You have the option to start communicating with other members of your presentation group through D2L before the class starts (see above).

Important: All students are expected to have read the whole book, not only the chapter on which they will be presenting.

Course Description

This course introduces a number of critical approaches to the study of social media. It investigates the social history, the organization, and the cultural implications of platforms and practices related to social media. Evolving forms of interpersonal, group and public communication based on social media will be assessed in terms of the role they play in identity formation, cultural belonging, political participation, commerce and work. Students will be presented with theoretical frameworks that encourage critical engagement with the dynamic changes in the contemporary media environment. They will conduct research focused on particular social media platforms such as social networking sites, content-sharing sites, collaboration sites and others. The political economy underlying these platforms as well as the role and responsibility of users in their social shaping will receive special attention.

Additional Information

There is a major pre-session study component to this course that should be completed to ensure successful participation in class work. Students should have reliable access to the Internet as well as valid UofC e-mail addresses. The course will involve regular use of Desire2Learn. Research will be conducted on the Internet during and outside of class time. The use of a laptop in some parts of the class will be required. Students are expected to attend all classes on all days of the course (attendance will be taken). Absence from half a day of the course will result in a participation grade of zero.

Objectives of the Course

The overall objective of the course is to provide a solid basis of knowledge and critical skills that would allow students to critically understand and reflexively navigate the social media ecology as users, researchers and creators. Such a basis is a necessary condition for the successful performance of every communication practitioner nowadays.

Internet and electronic communication device information

The use of laptops in class will be required for research and writing assignments. iPods, cell phones and other electronic devices should only be used in case of emergency. Cell phones should be turned off or on 'silent' if you expect an urgent call. The visual slides and notes of student presentations will be posted on Desire2Learn.

Textbooks and Readings

The main required text for the course is:

van Dijck, Jose (2013) *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This text should be purchased and read by all students before the start of classes. (Check for availability the University Bookstore and online vendors). In-class group presentations and discussions based on the book will constitute a substantive part of class activities.

Additional required readings (journal articles and book chapters) covering topics introduced in lecture will be made available through Desire2Learn, the Internet or library databases. These readings will be used by students in their preparation for and completion of the take-home final exam to be held at the end of October. Additional sources will be suggested by the instructor to individual students and working groups depending on their specific interests.

Assignments and Evaluation

- In-class participation (15 %)
- Three short quizzes (5% each, total of 15%) – Sept. 3, 4, & 5
- Group presentation (30 %)
- Final exam (40%) – due Mon., Nov. 3 (11:55 am)

Participation includes: Contributing to in-class discussion on each day of the course, or posting responses and comments to the readings or to the class discussion in the designated Desire2Learn discussion forum. Online responses will only be counted when they address the topics and readings of the day on which they are posted. The evaluation of participation will be done in four categories: 'inadequate' (0 points), 'adequate' (5 points), 'good' (9 points) – student contributed substantive comments,

their comments were informed (demonstrated familiarity with course readings) and insightful, 'very good' (13 points) – participation was regular, informed, enthusiastic, original and strongly beneficial to the learning process. In exceptional cases some students may be given 15 points for outstanding participation and contribution to class discussion.

Short quizzes (on days 2, 3 and 4): These quizzes will pose basic questions referring to the content to be discussed on these respective days. The questions will be based on the required text (van Dijck, 2013). Note that the quizzes will be administered via D2L. Hence, students have to be equipped with laptops and working access to the platform on these days of the course.

Group presentation: Students will form groups and prepare a presentation as specified in the pre-session instructions. Each group will work together to conduct research on its chosen topic and to prepare a presentation incorporating (a) the respective chapter of the required text (b) additional material, examples and reflections by students. Time for organizing the group presentation will be set aside on Day 1 of the course. The group presentations will be given on Days 2 (Facebook), 3 (Twitter and Flickr) and 4 (YouTube and Wikipedia) of the course. The notes and visuals pertaining to the presentation should be posted in the designated D2L Discussion space by 10 pm on that day. These materials will constitute course content to be covered by the final exam.

The final (take-home) exam will comprise two short essays (3 to 5 pages double-spaced, 12 p, Times New Roman each). Five essay questions addressing topics and issues covered in the course will be offered by the instructor. Students are required to select and answer two of these questions in their essays. The time frame for completing the take-home exam will be one week (**Monday, October 27 to Monday, November 3, 2014**). The instructor will post the essay questions in D2L by 9 am on October 27. Students will submit their short essays by 11:55 pm on November 3 through the Dropbox in D2L (Please bring a paper copy to the instructor's office on the following day, November 4).

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

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.)

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.

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 percentages. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in Communication and Culture:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%

2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

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. 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 (3rd 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 . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 picarts@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus 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

TBA