

University of Calgary  
Department of Communication, Media and Film

**COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES (COMS 591 S01)**  
**Senior Seminar in Communication**

**TOPIC: Fan Cultures**

**Spring 2016**

Tuesday May 10 – Thursday June 30 (excluding May 26 and June 02)

**Tuesdays & Thursdays 13:00 – 15:45**

**Instructor:** Angie Chiang  
**Office:** SS240  
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**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays at 12:00pm or by appointment

### **Course Description**

The topic of this senior seminar is fan cultures. Fans used to be seen as an overly obsessive portion of the audience, but as we enter the digital age, fan cultures and practices have seeped into the mainstream. More importantly, the discussion of fandom in communication studies has centered around the active role of the fan in shaping new media content. Much of the discussion in audience reception has focused on fan practices and what that means for conceptualizing the audience in the digital age. As media industries conglomerate and production and reception become increasingly intertwined, fan practices are on the radar of blockbuster studios as well as in the academy. In this seminar, we will analyze how fans and fan practices have evolved over the decades with specific attention to television and film, and what this reveals to us about audience reception scholarship for the millennium.

### **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, and think carefully about whether this particular section of COMS 591 is the best fit for you.

This is an inquiry-based seminar, where students will be responsible for participating in discussion, leading discussion, conducting independent research and working as part of a group. Regular attendance is expected and **participation will be crucial**. Readings must be completed in advance of class, and students are expected to participate fully in seminar discussions of all assigned readings.

## Objectives of the Course

COMS 591 has the following major objectives:

- To provide you with the opportunity to co-ordinate and integrate the knowledge, skills, and experiences you have acquired during your studies;
- To provide you with the opportunity to create a major research project drawing on course material and personal interests, which you will present to the class and expand into a formal research paper;
- To encourage you to think and research across disciplinary boundaries;
- To help prepare you for the expectations of graduate level study and professional work.

## Textbooks and Readings

Duffett, M. (2013). *Understanding fandom: An introduction to the study of media fan culture*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA. **(REQUIRED)**

Additional required readings will be posted on D2L; please consult schedule of readings available May 10, 2016.

Students are expected to have all readings completed **prior** to scheduled class times in order to contribute effectively during class discussions and activities. A detailed schedule of readings will be distributed at the first lecture.

Every week that there is a group presentation, there will be an additional assigned reading selected and posted by the presenting group. These additional required readings will be posted at least one week in advance of the class in which they will be discussed.

## 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:	Weekly	10%
Show & Tell	Throughout term (sign up)	5%
Group Presentation:	Throughout term (sign up)	25%
Research Proposal:	May 19	15%
Research Essay:	June 30	30%
Final Presentation:	June 28 & June 30	15%

## **Participation:**

Seminars are significantly different than lectures, and inherently require active participation. Participation is not measured solely by how often you speak up. Informed, thoughtful contributions to discussion are more important than frequent contributions. An ability to demonstrate familiarity with the required readings is also crucial. Attentive listening matters – students who interrupt others, distract their classmates, or use electronic devices in a way that distracts the instructor or other students will see an impact on their participation grade. Students are also expected to participate by engaging with the presentations of fellow students by attending presentations, asking questions, and offering thoughtful and constructive commentary. Each student will have to prepare at least one discussion question regarding the reading will be called upon at random to state their question. Participation rubric will be determined in class on May 10, 2016.

## **Show & Tell:**

To further facilitate group discussions, each student will be required to do a ‘show and tell’ presentation of a maximum of 10 minutes in which they discuss an object relating to their own fandom. A short discussion relating to the course topics and the presentation will follow. More details and a rubric will be provided in class.

## **Group Presentation:**

For our classes between June 7 to June 23, a group will be responsible for leading our seminar discussion each week. A signup sheet for presentation groups will be available on the first day of class – those who do not sign up will be assigned to a group. Each group will be responsible for one topic area based on reading. As a group, you will select a fan culture that speaks strongly to your topic, as well as a required reading for the class. The reading might be one of the unassigned readings from your textbooks, or it might be a book chapter or journal article that you have found in your research that speaks well to either your particular show or your specific topic. **You must provide the required reading to the instructor at least one week in advance of your presentation.** The instructor will approve your reading (both for content and copyright clearance) and circulate it to the class. As a group, you will be responsible for presenting the fan culture and its practices, analyzing the group’s connection to your topic (ideally by utilizing your selected reading), and leading the class in discussion. Groups are strongly advised to arrange a meeting with the instructor to discuss your plans for the presentation. Working together effectively will be crucial for this group project, as it composes a significant component of your course grade, and unless there is extraordinarily compelling evidence to indicate otherwise, all group members will receive the same grade.

## **Research Proposal:**

Your research proposal will outline the analysis you intend to undertake for your research essay. This proposal should be no more than 1000 words (excluding bibliography), and should identify your research question, its relevance to the course, and your plan for how to engage with your question (through primary research,

secondary research, or a combination thereof). Your proposal should also include a preliminary annotated bibliography of three scholarly sources that you expect to be useful in the preparation of your essay. More information on the research proposal will be provided in class and on D2L.

### **Research Essay:**

The research essay for this course gives you an opportunity to combine out-of-class research with the topics explored in the seminar. Please note: Topics pursued in the group projects CANNOT be discussed in the final paper. Papers should be 2000-2500 words in length, and should be double-spaced, in a 12 point font, with one inch margins. Citations must be in APA format. Word count should appear on the front page of your essay. More information on the research essay will be provided in class and on D2L.

### **Final Presentation:**

Your final presentation is an individual oral presentation on your research essay. You will have to present a summary of your research – your topic, your theoretical/analytical framework, your findings – followed by questions from your instructor and classmates. All presentations will take place in the final two classes of the semester, so the presentation time limits will be enforced!

### **Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course 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.)

### **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 will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework 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) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

## 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. 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 & Department of Communication, Media and Film

**Grade Scale** Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. Assignments will be marked with a numeric value (out of the weight stated above) and final grades will be converted to a letter grade. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF 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%

<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>	0- 49.99%	0%

\* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

\*\* 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.

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 <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. 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/resources/ethics>

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

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@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> 403-220-5333 <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="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</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 Topics and Readings

This schedule outlines the topics and readings for this course, along with the week in which you should complete those readings. Readings are available on D2L. You should have completed the readings **prior** to the classes in which we will be discussing them. You will notice numerous occasions on which a reading is TBA – these readings, like those from our textbooks, are **REQUIRED** and will be selected by the presenting group and posted on D2L at least one week prior to discussion of them. You will receive a D2L message informing you when each reading is posted – it is your responsibility to ensure that you are receiving the D2L emails and are keeping on top of the required reading.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings/Assignments</b>
May 10	Course Outline/Classroom Norms	No required readings
May 12	Introduction/History	Duffett: Chapter One
May 17	Fan Origins / Fan Practices	Duffett: Chapter Five
May 19	Textual Poachers	Jenkins: Textual Poachers
May 24	The post-television audience	Mittell: Complex TV
May 26	<b>Congress 2016</b>	<b>No Class</b>
May 31	<b>Congress 2016</b>	<b>No Class</b>
June 2	<b>Congress 2016</b>	<b>No Class</b>
June 7	Topic: Fandom and Gender	Duffett: Chapter Seven TBA (Group 1) Research Proposal Due
June 9	Topic: Fandom as Resistance	Hills: Chapter One Duffett: Excerpt TBA (Group 2)
June 14	Topic: Anti-fans	Gray: New Audiences Duffett: Excerpt TBA (Group 3)
June 16	Topic: Academics & Fans	Hills: Introduction TBA (Group 4)
June 21	Topic: Collective Intelligence	Jenkins: Interactive Audiences TBA (Group 5)
June 23	Topic: Place and Space	Couldry: Sopranos TBA (Group 6)



June 28

Final Presentations

No required readings

June 30

Final Presentations

No required readings  
Research Essay Due