

**Communications Studies (COMS) 591 - S02**  
**Senior Seminar in Communication**  
**Issues and Topics in Professional Communication**  
**Winter 2014**  
**Tuesday 12:30 - 15:15**

**Instructor:** Dr. Mark Wolfe  
**Office**  
**Location:** SS 214  
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**Web Page:** Blackboard  
**Office Hours:** By Appointment

### **Course Description**

This senior undergraduate course uses a seminar format based on close reading of course materials to critically examine current issues and topics in professional communication. Topics include contemporary approaches to communications education, the evolving role of communication in leadership and professional environments, and examination of the dynamics of social media and emerging information infrastructures in shaping overall communications research and practice domains.

### **Objectives of the Course**

To provide students with theoretical, critical and practical perspectives on the growing strategic importance of professional communication; to underscore the value of a purely academic education in this field; to help prepare students to articulate that value in both workplaces and the world.

### **Internet and electronic communication device policy**

Laptops are allowed but students camped behind them and never/rarely contributing to class discussion are apt to perform poorly in the assignments and participation grading.

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

Wolfe, Mark (2010). *Say what? An ethical leader's guide to strategic communication in the 21st century*. Westword Publishing. Available as an inexpensive Kindle app download from [http://www.amazon.com/strategic-communication-Executive-In-flight-ebook/dp/B007GZF42G/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1350219772&sr=1-1&keywords=Mark+Wolfe+Say+what?](http://www.amazon.com/strategic-communication-Executive-In-flight-ebook/dp/B007GZF42G/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1350219772&sr=1-1&keywords=Mark+Wolfe+Say+what?)

Selected readings and external content sources made available through student reading presentations and/or Blackboard.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

- Reading response (written; individual) 15%
- Student lecture (verbal presentation; solo or with a partner) 25%
- In-class essay 25%
- Final research topic (presentation and/or paper) 35% (total)

Assignments may be submitted in hard copy form in class before the scheduled due dates or electronically by email before midnight of the day they are due. You do not need to complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in this course.

**Reading response (15%)** – Students will individually complete a critical assessment of one of the key readings in the course, drawing on external sources and just good argument in making sense of the author’s motives, intentions, context and other factors deemed relevant in supporting (or detracting) from its significance. These 3-5 page, 1.5 line spaced critiques are due February 14.

**Student lecture (solo or with a partner) 25%** -- Students early in the term will sign up to lead class discussion of a topic to be determined in collaboration with the instructor. Topics with a purely research or academic focus will be provided, but students will be encouraged to propose suitable topics reflecting their own experience in communications and non-communications workplaces. The lecture will augment an assigned reading with critical assessment of ideas and themes at play. Using a PowerPoint or other media to formalize the response is acceptable. Students particularly self-conscious about language abilities or speaking in public need to approach the instructor for guidance.

**Final group project proposal (10%)** – Comprising two or three pages, the proposal identifies the topic and uses course readings/themes to explain: why it’s relevant; what the specific interest or angle taken to explore it will be; what other literature has been consulted to frame and deepen understanding of the topic; and how the group will tackle the project, including rules of engagement for completing the work (who will do what) and resolving any conflicts that arise between group members and/or their expectations. The final group project proposal is due February 28.

**In-class essay (25%)** – This essay-format examination will be held on March 18 and cover course themes and discussions up to March 11. This is actually a combined take-home and in-class exam wherein study questions released to students one week before the exam are studied and then answered closed-book and in-class on the 18th. Students will have 90 minutes to complete the exam.

**Final group project (25%)** – Students will work individually (research papers) or in

groups (presentations) to complete a final project for submission by April 8. Final projects will be a deeper dive on a trend, technology, or some issue having an impact on how communications is perceived, practiced and valued in today's world and/or workplaces.

**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.

### **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 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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**

TBA first days of classes