

Communication Studies (COMS) 591 – Seminar 03
Senior Seminar in Communication
Winter 2014
Thur 14:00-16:45

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Feng
Office Location: SS 308
Office Phone: 220-6819
E-Mail: pfeng@ucalgary.ca
Office Hours: Thursdays 11:00-12:00
or by appointment

Course Description

This capstone seminar is an opportunity for Communication Studies students to review, synthesize, and integrate the knowledge they have gained during their studies and apply this to real-world problems. Through seminar discussions, close reading of texts, and independent research, students will gain a greater appreciation for how communication shapes and is informed by society.

The theme of this seminar is sustainability. We will examine key issues and debates as a way to explore and critically assess the relationship between communication and society. Independent research, both individually and in groups, is a major component of this course. Students are expected to engage with texts and arguments at a more sophisticated level than they have in the past.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Review and critically evaluate key concepts, issues, and debates within the field of communication studies;
2. Apply these concepts to real-life issues and problems;
3. Complete independent research that synthesizes ideas from their undergraduate studies and applies these to a topic related to the seminar theme.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students are welcome to bring laptops and other devices to class so long as these are used to aid student learning. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, answer email, surf the web, or engage in other non-class activities. Cell phone use is not permitted at any time. Inappropriate use of technology not only affects you, but it also distracts other students and undermines our goal of creating a respectful learning environment.

Textbooks and Readings:

No textbook is required for this class. Instead, readings will be made available online through the U of C library (linked via Blackboard).

Assignments and Evaluation

Students will be graded based on following components:

1. **Lead seminar discussion (20%)**

Each week, a group of students will be selected to lead a class discussion based on the assigned readings. Seminar leaders should summarize the main points of each reading and provide insightful analysis. You will be judged on the quality of your summary and your ability to guide the class discussion.

2. **Group presentation (35%)**

Working in groups, students will conduct research related to the seminar theme and present their findings to the class. Presentations will be 20-30 min in length. Along with their presentation, each group will submit a brief report (~10 pages) summarizing their work. Presentations will take place in March.

3. **Research paper (35%)**

Each student will write a research paper on a topic related to the seminar theme. The paper can expand on work the student did as part of their group presentation or can be on a new topic. Length: about 2000 words. Alternatively, students can choose to present their research in a non-traditional format such as a poster, video, website, or wiki. Papers are due on April 10.

4. **Participation (10%)**

Seminars require active participation on the part of students. Participation is not measured solely by how often you speak; informed, thoughtful contributions carry more weight than frequent babble. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings ahead of class, listen attentively in class, and actively participate by engaging with their fellow students and by offering thoughtful and constructive commentary during class discussions.

Detailed instructions for each of the assignments will be provided on the first day of class.

There is no final exam in this course.

Note: All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: 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.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

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 (3rd 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

A detailed schedule will be handed out on the first day of class.