

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

**Communication and Media Studies COMS 591 S02**  
**Senior Seminar in Communication and Media: Web-Mediated Knowledge  
Dissemination**

**Winter 2018**

**January 10 - April 11 (excluding February 21)**

**Seminar: Wednesdays 14:00 - 16:45**

**Instructor:** Dr. Monique Solomon  
**Office:** SS 254  
**E-Mail:** solomonm@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm or by appointment

**Course Description**

Through the lens of a particular topic, each section of COMS 591 explores the ways communication builds social and cultural values. Students undertake independent and group research that will draw upon their understanding of communications theories and methodologies studied throughout their degree.

This senior seminar will be organized around the theme of “web-mediated knowledge dissemination”. In this senior undergraduate seminar students will critically examine emerging questions about web-mediated knowledge dissemination, most popularly recognized in the form of TED Talks. As an emergent genre of communication, this seminar gives students an opportunity to critically consider the discourse, form and content that characterizes web-mediated knowledge and its dissemination online. The seminar will be guided by questions such as whether and how web-mediated knowledge dissemination blurs the lines between presentations aimed at motivating, educating, and entertaining audiences.

**Additional Information**

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

The course material draws on artifacts, experiences, and products of popular culture. Wherever possible we will review positive examples, however, some material may include coarse language, sexuality, or violence. If this may be difficult for you, please see the instructor.

**Objectives of the Course**

- To provide students the opportunity to synthesize knowledge gained during their undergraduate studies and apply this to a topic of relevance to communication in contemporary society.

- To engage students to think critically about, and practice applying, various theoretical and analytical perspectives to the analysis of online communication.
- To provide students the opportunity to practice critical academic research, discussion, and writing in ways that will assist them in preparing for professional work and graduate level studies.

### **Textbooks and Readings**

The schedule of readings will be posted on D2L and additional readings will be posted as they are identified by presentation groups.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

Laptops are permitted for class related work and note taking only. Cellphones and all other electronic communication devices (iPods, gaming devices) should be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during class time. Please respect the instructor and your fellow students. Improper use of electronic devices will impact your participation grade.

PowerPoint slides and lecture notes will not be posted online for this course. No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor. The photographing of lecture slides with a cell phone or other device is not permitted. These restrictions are in place to respect copyright and intellectual property rights and will be strictly enforced.

### **Email**

Use email for short specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions about the course material or assignments, please meet with your professor during office hours.

Include **COMS 591** and a clear statement of purpose in the subject line of all email sent to your professor. Include your name in the email as it appears in your university registration. Please use a respectful tone in correspondence with your instructor and your fellow students.

Email will be answered weekdays during regular working hours, and usually on a first-come, first-served basis. You can generally expect an answer within 24 hours, but email will not normally be answered in the evening or on weekends. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read or replied to until the next working day.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Details for assignments will be discussed in class and posted on D2L.

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due</b>
Participation	15%	Throughout term (ongoing)
Group Presentation	25%	Weekly: Feb. 7 through March 21 (sign up for one date)
Research Proposal	15%	March 7
Research Presentation	10%	April 4 and 11
Research Essay	35%	April 11

**Participation:** Participation in this seminar will be evaluated with a combination of scheduled 15 minute in-class writing responses (January 17, 24, 31), and brief impromptu writing reflections or in-class activities during the remainder of the term. Further details will be provided in class. Participation in a seminar requires informed, thoughtful contributions to discussion. An ability to demonstrate familiarity with the required readings is essential – contributions to class discussions which reveal that the contributor has not completed the readings will not carry the weight of contributions clearly informed by the readings. Students are expected to participate by engaging with the presentations of fellow students by attending presentations, asking questions, and offering thoughtful and constructive commentary. 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.

**Group Presentation:** Between February 7 and March 21, a group will be responsible for leading the seminar discussion. A signup sheet will be available on the first day of class. Groups will select online material (written or video) as an example for discussion of the weekly theme. The group will also select a required reading for the class from a scholarly book chapter or academic journal article. The group must provide the discussion sample and the required reading to the instructor at least two weeks in advance of the presentation. The instructor will approve the reading for content and copyright clearance, and once approved, circulate it to the class via D2L. During the presentation, the group is responsible for generating discussion about the topic by highlighting key ideas in the readings and relating this to the sample material. Groups are strongly advised to arrange a meeting with the instructor to discuss 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. Further details about the group presentation will be provided in class and posted on D2L.

**Research Proposal:** The research proposal will outline the analysis you intend to undertake for your research essay. The proposal should be 400 words maximum (excluding bibliography), and should identify your research question, its relevance to the topic, and your theoretical and/or methodological plan for how to engage with your question. Your proposal should also include an annotated bibliography of five scholarly sources that you expect to be useful in the preparation of your essay. Proper APA citations are expected, accompanied by a 3-5 sentence annotation explaining the relevance of the source to your research. Please note: All research involving human subjects requires ethics consent – the instructor can support you in applying, but you must leave ample time to apply for and receive ethics approval.

**Research Essay:** The research essay for this course gives you an opportunity to pursue a topic of your choice related to course content. You may choose to research a topic related to material covered in the course, or you may choose to continue researching a topic you began exploring in your group presentation. Please note: If you pursue the topic used in the group presentation for your individual essay, you may use either the same online material or the same topic – not both, and it will be crucial that you not include in your individual paper any content from your group presentation that was created either by your group or by individuals other than yourself. The essay should be 2300-2500 words in length, times new roman 12-point font, double-spaced pages, with one inch margins. Use APA format for in-

text citations and the reference page. Word count should appear on the title page of your essay. Details will be discussed in class and provided on D2L.

**Research Essay Presentation:** The final presentation is an individual 7 to 10-minute oral presentation about your research essay. All presentations will take place in the final two classes of the semester. Details will be discussed in class and provided on D2L.

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**

Assignments are due in class, in hard copy, on the due date unless you are otherwise instructed. Some assignments may be due via uploads to D2L please follow assignment instructions carefully.

Please hand in your essays directly to your 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 marked final exams in SS 320. 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/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

### **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>

### Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments and other course work may be graded using a combination of weighted raw scores for each individual assignment. This will be converted into a percentage and letter grade for the assignment. The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media 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* **
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding performance	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent performance	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>	Approaching excellent performance	<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>	Exceeding good performance	<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good performance	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>	Approaching good performance	<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>	Exceeding satisfactory performance	<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory performance	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>	Approaching satisfactory performance	<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Failure. Did not 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.

### 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 support services in the Student Success Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

## 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>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <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 (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>

This course does not have course-based ethics approval, so any student wishing to undertake primary research involving surveys, interviews or observations is required to apply for their own ethics approval. This can be a time-consuming process, so students interested in pursuing research with human participants should begin planning early in the semester.

## 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>• <b>Calgary Police Service</b></li><li>• <b>Emergency Text Messaging</b></li></ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <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>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• <b>Safewalk Program</b></li> </ul>	<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 (220-5333). 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> 403-266-HELP (4357) <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 Lecture Topics and Readings

Below is the anticipated schedule of class topics. If there are any changes to the schedule they will be communicated via D2L. Required course readings will be posted on D2L. The readings selected by the weekly presenting group will be posted on D2L at minimum one week prior to the discussion. The group presentation selections are required readings. A message will be sent informing the class when a group reading is posted. It is a student's responsibility to ensure that D2L emails are received at the correct email address.

Date	Topic	Assignments
January 10	Introduction What is web-mediated knowledge dissemination?	No required readings
January 17	History, developments, and contexts	Writing Response 1
January 24	Virtual marketplace of knowledge	Writing Response 2

January 31	Constructing and performing knowledge online	Writing Response 3
February 7	Topic: Technology	Group 1
February 14	Topic: Education	Group 2
<i>February 21</i>	<i>Reading Break (no classes)</i>	<i>No required reading</i>
February 28	Topic: Design	Group 3
March 7	Topic: Business	Group 4
March 14	Topic: Science	Group 5
March 21	Topic: Global Issues	Group 6
March 28	Topic: TBA	Readings: TBA
April 4	Research Essay Presentations	No required readings
April 11	Research Essay Presentations	Research Essay Due