

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

**COMS 601 S01**  
**Interdisciplinary Approaches to Communication Studies**

**Fall 2017**

**September 13 to December 6 (excluding November 15)**

**W 14:00-16:45**

**Instructor:** Tamara Shepherd  
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**Office Phone:** 403-220-6729  
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**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 12:45-13:45, or by appointment

### **Course Description**

Communication studies is an interdisciplinary field concerned with how messages are created, transmitted, and understood. There are hundreds of competing approaches to questions under this broad umbrella, divided into sub-fields that sometimes disagree and sometimes overlap. In this course, we will work toward mapping these sub-fields according to the interests of students in the class. Students will be steering the direction of the course, with the guidance of the instructor, to help them locate their own research interests within the diverse theories, problematics, and approaches of communication studies.

In the process of encouraging students to situate themselves within specific sub-fields, the course also considers the demands of graduate education. What does it mean to be a graduate student? We will explore this question by building up the reading, writing, analytical, presentation, and professional skills concomitant to membership within a scholarly community. As part of this community, students will be expected to develop their critical capacities as contributors to the production of knowledge within and beyond academia.

### **Additional Information**

This is a seminar course. That means students are active participants in building the course and the learning experience for yourselves and your peers. You will be expected to demonstrate familiarity with the required readings, listen attentively, and engage with others' presentations.

### **Objectives of the Course**

By taking this course, students will:

- explore and situate themselves within sub-fields of communication studies
- develop key reading, writing, analytical, presentation, and professional skills
- relate scholarly approaches to the history of ideas and contemporary social life

## Textbooks and Readings

There is no textbook for this course. Required readings will be posted to D2L.

## 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

### Overview

Reading response papers (x3)	Sept. 20, 27 & Oct. 18	15%
Annotated bibliography	Nov. 1	20%
Journal presentation	Nov. 8	10%
Conference talk (& abstract)	Nov. 29 (& Nov. 27)	15%
Literature review paper	Dec. 6	40%

### Reading response papers (Sept. 20, 27 & Oct. 18, 3 x 5% each): 15%

On September 20, 27 and October 18, at the beginning of class, submit a **2-3 page (600-900 word)** response to the readings. You can choose one or more of the assigned or supplementary readings to write about. Your response should show evidence that you: a) understand and can paraphrase the author's main argument(s); and b) have developed a critique. The critique doesn't have to be critical or negative. It can be an application of the approach to a real-world example or news story. It can be an assessment of the contribution of the reading to a sub-field of communications and media studies. It can be a comparative analysis of two or more of the readings. What's important about the critique is that you demonstrate your own thinking and analysis in relation to the reading. Finally, each reading response paper should end with a properly formatted reference list and a set of 3 discussion questions. These questions will be used to facilitate class discussion each week. Reading responses will be reviewed by your peers at the beginning of each class – students will be asked to read and comment on each other's responses with constructive suggestions for improvement. We will also produce a course blog where you will have the opportunity to publish revised versions of the reading responses.

### Annotated bibliography (Nov. 1): 20%

One of the first steps in researching a topic is to read widely; creating an annotated bibliography is essential for managing the reading process. For this assignment, students will consult with the instructor to create an annotated bibliography of **3 books and 10 articles (MA), or 5 books and 15 articles (PhD)**. This means starting with a general topic of study or sub-field, and choosing a list of sources that you believe reflect the most significant contributions to that area. **For each source, write 1-2 paragraphs (150-300 words)** that summarize the author's main argument and (depending on the source) describe: the methodology used; the main findings; the structure of the article/book; a particular detail you found useful; an element you found problematic or lacking. Basically you are adding your own take on each source. Sources should be listed alphabetically, according to a recognized formatting style.

Journal presentation (10 minutes, Nov. 8): 10%

The creation of a sub-field in communication studies typically proceeds with the founding of a dedicated journal. For this assignment, students will choose a particular journal to present to the class (ideally, a journal chosen from the sources in the annotated bibliography). The 10-minute presentation should offer a critical account of how the journal frames its sub-field, an assessment of the types of articles it publishes, and an interrogation of its publishing practices. For example, describe the journal's relation to academic associations (Is there a particular association that supports the publication of the journal? How has this shaped the character of research it represents?), the makeup and changes in its editorial board (who are the key players? Over time, how have changes in the board influenced the journal?), its status as a scholarly or commercial venture (is the journal funded by a community of scholars or it is a niche product of a commercial publisher? Does that make any difference?), the quality of debates associated with it, and its overall contribution to the field of communications.

Conference talk & abstract (10 minutes, Nov. 29, abstract emailed by Nov. 27): 15%

The class will hold a workshop-style conference for students to be able to present initial ideas for their final papers. Each talk will be 10 minutes, organized within panels of four papers each. Each panel session will include a brief discussion period after the four talks, when students will be expected to give each other feedback. Individual conference talks can be organized in a number of ways: as an initial sketch of the literature review; as a summary of the annotated bibliography that helps inform the literature review; or as an extension of the journal presentation that compares one journal to others. The goal of this conference talk is to build on the previous assignments and prepare students for writing the final paper by sharing and workshopping their ideas with the class. The talk also gives students the opportunity to model how a conference talk works in preparation for future conference presentations. To that end, **students will be required to submit an abstract for their talk (150-300 words)** to the instructor via email, no later than midnight on Monday, November 27.

Literature review paper (Dec. 6): 40%

A literature review demands careful consideration of the key texts in a particular sub-field or topic area. For this assignment, students will write a literature review of **12-20 pages (3600-6000 words)** that either: a) offers an account of a specific sub-field; or b) positions a specific thesis topic or research question among sub-fields. Ideally, the literature review will build on both the annotated bibliography and journal presentation assignments, by integrating the sources mentioned there into a narrative. The goal is not only to summarize the contributions of each source to the sub-field or topic area, but to place different authors in dialogue with each other. By relating texts in this way, you should be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses within the existing literature. Elements in a literature review might include: major debates or controversies in your sub-field; key findings that have shaped the area; typical research methods used; formative theoretical frameworks; and recent research trends. Throughout this assessment, work to position yourself as a scholar and/or set up the context for your own thesis topic and research questions.

**All assignments 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 instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS 320; 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, ID number, and instructor's name on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments 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\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf).

Please note:

1. Students seeking accommodations for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors directly. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
2. 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.
3. 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>

## Support Services

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, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://commfilm.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>. 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

Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Faculty of Graduate Studies:

Grade	Grade Point Value	Graduate Description
A+	4	Outstanding
A	4	Excellent - superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.
A-	3.7	Very good performance
B+	3.3	Good performance
B	3	Satisfactory performance
B-	2.7	Minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies
C+	2.3	All grades below "B-" are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted toward Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements. Individual programs may require a higher passing grade.
C	2	
C-	1.7	
D+	1.3	
D	1	
F	0	

## 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/research/research-ethics>

## Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES</b>	<a href="http://grad.ucalgary.ca/home">http://grad.ucalgary.ca/home</a> or <b>403-220-4938</b>
<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> <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> <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>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	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>GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<a href="http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/">http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/</a> <a href="http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/ombudsperson">http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/ombudsperson</a> (403) 220-6420 or <a href="mailto:ombuds@ucalgary.ca">ombuds@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html">http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html</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 Lectures and Readings

Please see D2L for the full course schedule and list of required and supplementary readings.