

**Communications Studies (COMS) 717.89 S03**  
**PhD Theory Seminar**  
**Winter 2011**  
**Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:50**  
**SS 307**

**Instructor:** Dr. David Mitchell  
**Office**  
**Location:** SS 320  
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**Office Hours:** By appointment

### **Course Description**

This course is restricted to doctoral students in either the *Communications Studies* or the *Culture and Society* programs. The seminar is intended to assist students in gaining competence with the one or more theoretical frameworks respective to their thesis interest.

At the beginning of the course, an historical overview will be provided that maps out some of the more prominent traditions in jointly communications and cultural theory.

For example, some of the traditions that may be covered include:

- Talk: (speech acts, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis)
- Text: (structuralist & post-structuralist semiotics, critical discourse analysis)
- Background of Meaning: (phenomenology, hermeneutics, social cognition)
- Communication History: (transformation theory)
- Communicative Action (Habermas)
- Structuration (Giddens)
- Complex Social Systems (Luhmann)
- Science/Technology/Society (social construction of technology, actor network theory, constructive technology assessment, risk)
- Culture: (popular culture, ideology, gender)
- Modernity / Post-Modernity: (knowledge, self & social identity, globalization)

Subsequently, the seminar will be developed around those particular traditions related to the individual interests of the students in the seminar. In each case, students will become familiarized with the various intellectual historical roots involved; and then proceed to analyze and critically engage current issues.

## Objectives of the Course

The course is intended to help students to identify and deepen their understanding of the one or more theoretical frameworks relevant to their prospective thesis research. It is understood that students entering the course will bring with them a draft of their thesis research proposal that they developed in COMS 615 (or a related methodology course). In the course of the PhD Theory Seminar, it is anticipated that each student will deepen their understanding of the theoretical issues involved in their particular area of research. It is hoped that a course of this kind will provide each student with a strong footing on which to prepare for their candidacy examinations.

## Internet and electronic communication device information

Please turn off your cell phones during class. 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 emails, surf the web or engage in other non-class activities.

## Textbooks and Readings:

Course readings will be made available on the course's Blackboard site.

## Assignments and Evaluation

The course will be run on a seminar basis. Each student will be expected to:

- read all of the required readings
- take an active role in seminar discussions; 20 %
- give one presentation 30 %
- prepare a proposal for a research paper (due: **Feb. 16**) 10 %
- prepare a research paper (25-30 pages typed, dble spaced less bibliography and footnotes) (due: **April 13**) 40 %

**Total: 100 %**

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

## 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. You will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up any assignments or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.

## Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.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: [www.efwr.ucalgary.ca](http://www.efwr.ucalgary.ca)

**Grading System** - The following grading system is 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
		Note: The grade point value (3.0) associated with this grade is the minimum acceptable average that a graduate student must maintain throughout the program as computed at the end of each registration anniversary year of the program.
B-	2.7	Minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies
		Note: A student who receives a B- or lower in two or more courses will be required to withdraw regardless of their grade point average unless the program recommends otherwise. Individual programs may require a higher minimum passing grade.
C+	2.3	
C	2.0	All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted toward Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements. A student who receives a grade of F will normally be required to withdraw unless the program recommends otherwise.
C-	1.7	
D+	1.3	
D	1.0	
F	0.0	

## **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. 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 (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, [efwr.ucalgary.ca](http://efwr.ucalgary.ca)) 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 Graduate Calendar at the following link:

<http://grad.ucalgary.ca/files/grad/UC%20Graduate%20Calendar%202010-2011%20July%206-10.pdf>

## **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) 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 [www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/su](http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/su)

## **Graduate Students' Association**

For details on the Graduate Students' Association, please see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/GSA/>

## **Student Ombudsman**

For details on the Student Ombudsman, please see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/GSA/services/ombudsperson.html>

## **Emergency Evacuation and Assembly Points**

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and assembly points, please 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 (ie. surveys, interviews, observation) as a 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:

Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

**Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

This will be developed in the first class in response to the particular research interest of the students.

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