

COMM 398: COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Last updated: Spring 2015

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Course Description

The focus of this course is on communication in a “digital age.” While you may increase your competence in how to communicate effectively in computer-mediated contexts, this is not the primary objective of the course. Nor, is this a class solely about *Facebook*, *Snapchat*, or *YikYak*. Rather, the objective of this course is to introduce you to theories and research on computer-mediated communication focusing on understanding how the “digital age” is shaping our personal (e.g., self-concept, identity expression) and communal (e.g., relationships, perceptions of social groups) experiences. In addition to readings, discussions (face-to-face and mediated), reflections, and other course activities, we will rely on reflection and discussion of personal experiences, current events or trends, and social commentary to achieve this objective.

Learning Outcomes

- Gain thorough understanding and application of computer-mediated communication theories, their inception, and how they will continue to develop and change through the advent of new technology and practices.
- Be able to apply course concepts, ideas, and frameworks to current events and trends.
- Understand how social technologies influence a myriad of contexts such as interpersonal relationships, intercultural and intergroup communication, business and professional identity and communication, and civic engagement.
- Through the final project, each student should demonstrate competence in academic research regarding some aspect of digital media/social technology and apply this knowledge in an academic research proposal or social technology application paper.

Course Accommodation

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate fully in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, (402) 472-3787 voice or TTY

Book/Reading Requirements

Baym, N. K. (2010). *Personal connections in the digital age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Additional readings such as academic articles, popular press articles, and more will be posted on Blackboard.

Technology & Blackboard Requirement

All assignments, grades, current schedule, and resources are located on our Blackboard page. It is your responsibility to check Blackboard continually to make sure you understand upcoming assignments, tasks, dates, etc. Many questions I get from students can be answered by browsing our Blackboard page. Since Blackboard requires an Internet connection, please consider all of your “back-up” Internet connections such as your smartphone, university Internet access, library, and friend’s Internet, etc.

In addition to accessing Blackboard, many assignments will require you to **use, engage** and **immerse** yourself into several different social technologies. It is recommended that you bring a smartphone and/or laptop/tablet to class, especially on class discussion days. Please see my technology in the classroom policy regarding appropriate usage.

Assignments

Assignment	Points
Google Form <i>Information sheet submitted through Google.</i>	10
Class Discussions Each regular class week will include a large class discussion. This is largely student-led with some led primarily by me. Discussions will primarily revolve around required readings, student chosen readings, and current events. These class discussions are a way for us to engage and immerse ourselves into concepts and new platforms. Students will be required to (a) lead a class discussion in a group and (b) write seven class discussion reflections. Student led topics in groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpersonal Communication/Relationships• Intercultural Communication/Relationships• Civic Engagement & Public Movements• Virtual & Online Communities	100

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business & Professional Communication • Identity Impression, Formation, and Maintenance <p>There will be approximately 10 class discussions. Therefore, you will only be required to complete reflections for seven class periods.</p>	
<p>Exams (2 @ 100 points) Exams will primarily cover class lectures and discussions as well as class readings.</p>	200
<p>Final Project <i>Option 1: Research Proposal</i> Includes a formal research proposal with literature review, research questions/hypotheses, and proposed method of inquiry. Recommended for students who are about to go into capstone or are interested in research.</p> <p><i>Option 2: Communication in the Digital Age Solution Paper</i> Choose a current problem existing on social media (e.g., problem within the social media channel itself, a company/business' usage of social media, OR a communicative act such as bullying. Engage in a solution utilizing academic and non-academic research, to clearly describe the existing problem as well as suggest a REAL and VALID solution. Recommended for students who wish to enter in a social media position or have more hands on experience with social media.</p> <p><i>Option 3: Computer-Mediated Communication Theory Paper</i> Choose a CMC theory and write a thorough literature review of the theory, apply the theory to a current context, and propose changes or alterations of the theory based on your argument. Recommended for students who are interested in academic research but do not have a concrete research proposal idea.</p> <p>Please note: I must approve your option selection as well as your topic.</p>	150
<p>460 total points in class A maximum of 10 extra credit points will be possible.</p>	

A = 93%+ A- = 90-92.9% B+ = 87-89.9% B = 83-86.9% B- = 80-82.9% C+ = 77-79.9% C = 73-76.9% C- = 70-72.9% D+ = 67-69.9% D = 63-66.9% D- = 60-62.9% F = <60%

Course Policies

Technology in the classroom

Since this is a class about communication in the digital age, you'd think this wouldn't be an issue. But we all know there are academic uses of technology and social/personal uses of technology. I ask that you only use technology in the classroom for academic purposes (academic purposes pertaining to this class). If I notice inappropriate usage, I reserve the right to deduct points from your class discussion for that week.

Attendance

You will not pass the class if you do not attend. Crucial information is provided during class lectures, activities, and discussions.

Late work

Any work submitted after the due date will incur a 20% per day penalty. Work is counted late the minute after the due date.

Grade change/dispute

I handle grade discussions in-person. Please do not e-mail me to change your grade because I simply do not do that. I also follow the 24/7 rule: Wait at least 24 hours after receiving a grade to discuss it and inform me of a grade inquiry within 7 days of that date. I also ask that you prepare thoughtful comments about why you feel your grade needs to be changed. I do not consider grade changes if students are points away from the next letter grade or because they are trying to earn points from previous assignments.

Missed exams

Exam make-ups will be accommodated to students with a **valid** reason AND with **documentation** (e.g., doctor's note). You must notify me (via e-mail) of your intention to make up an exam no later than 24 hours after the exam is administered. Documentation must be provided at the negotiated time of makeup.

Missed presentation and/or discussion days

Life happens. But please tell me as soon as you can. If a student has a **valid** reason AND **documentation** for missing a presentation or discussion day, then an alternative assignment or presentation day will be discussed. Please do not ask me for a makeup if you honestly know you missed class because of sleeping in, not feeling up to it, or going out of town for personal reasons.

Plagiarism

All course work should be original and unique for this class. Do not use work from other courses even if it is your own unless you have spoken to both instructors and have documentation that this has been approved. Plagiarism results in, at minimum, failure on the assignment, but can result in failure of the course and reporting to academic authorities at the university. If you have questions concerning what constitutes plagiarism, please discuss this with me. Not knowing the definition of plagiarism does not excuse you from the consequences.