

COM 200: Communication Theory & Practice Syllabus | Fall 2014

Section D02: MW 3:35-4:50 - MH 174

Section D06: MW 1:25-2:40 - MH 174

Contact Information

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Merion Hall 322

[make an appointment here](#)

Overview/Catalog Description

This introduction to communication and digital media studies focuses on various ways people employ language, image, and more cinematic means for communicative purposes. Through a series of hands-on projects students learn to research and analyze contemporary issues and trends in the field of communications, with an emphasis on digital media. In doing so, students examine how communication technologies are impacting the relationship between media audiences, producers, and content.

Required Materials

Net Smart: How to Thrive Online. [Howard Rheingold](#). MIT Press. 2014.

wordpress.com, and your own domain and hosting

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will:

- Become familiar with digital media and how they operate
- Develop collaborative learning skills
- Gain experience with a range of digital tools for capturing, curating, producing, and transmitting media
- Build and participate in a Personal Learning Network

- Understand the larger issues and debates shaping the transformation of the media landscape and more importantly the society at large

Course Requirements

The final grade will be determined by your performance on the following projects. The specific details of each project will be included on the project's assignment sheet and discussed in class. You must complete each assignment to earn a passing grade!

Digital Writing Project (50%): You will study, in great depth, a specific topic, building a blog and using several digital tools to filter and curate information related to your topic. This project asks you to learn how to write online, how to manage many streams of information, and how to connect with and engage readers. Although the whole of this assignment adds up to half of the semester's points, it is built from many smaller assignments and weekly check-ins. (See the assignments page for more details.) These assignments will vary both in terms of length and content, but expect to work on this every week.

Midterm Exam (10%): The midterm will cover the theories and concepts from the reading material and class discussions.

Final Exam (10%): The final exam will build on the midterm and concepts discussed throughout the entire semester, asking you to demonstrate your knowledge of the course's major concepts.

Presentations (10%): During the final weeks of the course you will (either in groups or as individuals) give a brief presentation that discusses your digital writing project in the context of the Personal Learning Network you developed and the community you participated in.

Class Prep (10%): While I don't include participation as an assessment category, your performance in preparing for class will be evaluated. You will—through Google Documents—share your reading notes and class prep materials. I will evaluate these based on the thoroughness of your preparation.

COM Studio Sessions (10%): Throughout the course of the semester there will be studio sessions which cover some of the material discussed in class. These sessions are designed to help you gain some of the more technical digital literacies that we discuss in class and aid you in becoming comfortable with the technology. Several of these sessions are required, and several are optional. I will provide more detail, schedules, and specific direction as the semester progresses.

Attendance, Attention, & Participation

As this course is highly interactive and practice/discussion-driven, your success is absolutely tethered to your presence and participation. The course will move quickly, and each successive meeting will build upon the concepts of the previous. Missing a class puts you at a serious disadvantage in terms of the larger semester arc.

Please come to class on time, prepared, having completed the assigned reading and writing, and ready to contribute to class discussions, to listen seriously and respectfully to the thoughts of others, and to participate in all in-class activities. Missing more than three classes will affect your grade. More than five absences can result in failing the course. If you need to miss class for religious reasons, please speak to me ahead of time. Absences for religious purposes do not count against the permitted number (as long as prior notification is given). Lateness is also unacceptable; if you arrive late to class you can be marked as absent. Leaving early also will count as an absence. Your primary responsibility is to be in class and fully present.

Beyond mere presence, however, a successful course requires student participation. Students are expected to come to class on time, prepared, having completed the assigned reading and writing, and ready to contribute to class discussions, to listen seriously and respectfully to the thoughts of others, and to participate in all in-class activities. I strongly urge you to attend every class, as most of the work done in class is necessary for successful completion of the course.

Grading and Deadline Policies

A: 100-94%

A-: 90-93% “A” work exceeds basic assignment criteria in several ways.

B+: 87-89%

B: 84-86% “B” work meets and exceeds basic assignment criteria

B-: 80-83%

C+: 77-79%

C: 74-76% “C” work meets basic assignment criteria.

C-: 70-73%

D+: 67-69%

D: 64-66% “D” work fails to meet one or more basic assignment criteria.

D-: 60-63%/

F: 0-59%

“F” work is incomplete, not received, or fails to meet any basic assignment criteria.

Deadlines must be met in order to receive credit for your work. Life happens, however, and if you require extra time to complete your project, contact me prior to the assignment deadline if you would like to earn credit.

Course Website

The course website for this class can be found at www.stevenrhammer.com/com200. You should get in the habit of checking this regularly as I will post suggestions and thoughts about the readings here, as well as links to other things that might interest the class. The syllabus can be found here as well, and any changes to the syllabus will be posted here. Please note: The syllabus might change throughout the course of the semester, indeed it probably will as we adjust to meet the needs of the class, so please develop a habit of checking the class website.

A Note on Technology

Because at its core this class is about how technology changes our culture, we will necessarily engage with a range of computer tools and web based applications. You do not need any prior skill, however; you merely need a willingness to engage and learn. A majority of the tools we will be using in class are web-based, thus you will not need any special software.

One further note about technology. As much as technology makes life easier, at times it can also be difficult (computer crashes, deleted work, slow internet connection, etc.) Plan accordingly: “the computer ate my homework” or “the internet was down” are not reasons to forgo doing the assigned work. It is in your best interest to leave extra time, especially at first to ensure that technology does not get in the way of your work.

Inclusivity +& Collaboration

This course is a collaborative space, both in terms of exploring what digital media mean and how we work within digital environments as well as the execution and evaluation of major projects. Because we are a group of people with different identities, beliefs, goals, backgrounds, etc., we must be mindful and considerate of one another in speech, action, and interaction. If you encounter any problems in this course, including classroom interactions and group projects, contact me as soon as possible.

Additionally, many of the assignments throughout the semester will require participation in online spaces. Students should work to preserve the same atmosphere of respect and consideration that occurs in the classroom. Disagreements may arise and consensus is not always possible (indeed disagreements are productive). However, name calling, harassing, flaming, trolling etc. is antithetical to the goals of this course.

University Policies

Academic Honesty: Please familiarize yourself with the [University's Academic Honesty Policy](#).

Disability support: In accordance with state and federal laws, the university will make reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. If you have or think that you may have a disability requiring an accommodation (learning, physical, psychological), you should contact Services for Students with Disabilities, Room G10, Bellarmine, 610-660-1774 (voice) or 610-660-1620 (TTY) as early as possible in the semester for additional information and so that an accommodation, if appropriate, can be made in a timely manner. You will be required to provide current (within 3 years) documentation of the disability. For a more detailed explanation of the university's accommodation process, as well as the programs and services offered to students with disabilities, please see the [Student Resources Page](#). If you have any difficulty accessing the information online, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities at the telephone numbers above.

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A Final Note

Should any aspect of class confuse/concern/trouble you, or if you have questions about any of this, please see me.