

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

**Communication and Media Studies COMS 201 L01**  
**Introduction to Communications Studies**

**Winter 2018**

**January 9 – April 13 (no classes February 19-25)**

**Lecture: Tuesdays 14:00 – 15:50**

**Tutorials: Fridays 10:00-10:50 or 11:00-11:50**

**Instructor:** Dr. Monique Solomon  
**Office:** SS 254  
**E-Mail:** solomonm@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Monday 12 pm - 2 pm or by appointment.

### **Course Description**

What are we doing when we communicate? In this course, we explore this question as we map the field of communications studies and relate communication to issues of social and cultural change. We will examine how communication has been defined and theorized, by considering whether communication is simply the transmission of information or whether it creates meaning in society. Our exploration includes questions about how we participate in social processes as we communicate. Are we persuading others? Are we supporting the social status quo? Are we voicing challenges to the system? COMS 201 will guide you in asking and answering such questions, drawing on examples of communicative acts from popular culture and everyday experience.

### **Additional Information**

Students who register for this course are also required to register for a lab section. These labs (also referred to as tutorials) are not optional drop-in sessions – they are an integral part of the course, and active participation is expected. Some exams and graded assignments will be completed during the labs, so it is essential that you are available to attend the labs as well as the lectures.

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

### **Objectives of the Course**

- To introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of communications studies through readings, lectures, written assignments, group discussions, and activities.
- To provide an overview of the key concepts, methodological traditions, and major theories of the field.
- To provide students an opportunity to explore elements of communication studies that appeal to, and emerge from, scholars from a variety of academic disciplines.

- To introduce students to the methodological activity of scholarly communication by covering basic principles of academic research including: finding, using, and citing sources, developing arguments based in part on the arguments of others, and writing papers in the genre of academic research.

### **Textbooks and Readings**

Wood, Julia T. *Communication Theories in Action: An Introduction*. Third Edition. Canada: Wadsworth, 2004.

Additional readings will be made available via the COMS 201 D2L course website.

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

Laptops are permitted for 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 lecturer, teaching assistants (T.A.) and your fellow students. Improper use of electronic devices will impact your participation grade.

No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

### **Email**

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

Include **COMS 201** and a clear statement of purpose in the subject line of all email sent to your professor and your T.A. Include your name in the email as it appears in your university registration. Please use a respectful tone in correspondence with your instructor, your T.A., 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**

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

All tests and exams will be closed-book. Lecture slides will be posted on D2L after the lecture.

**Please note that tests and examinations will only be deferred in the case of documented illness, bereavement, or varsity team travel.** Tests and exams will not be rescheduled due to travel and vacation plans, work obligations, or other scheduling conflicts, so please ensure during the drop/add period for class that you are available for all scheduled tests and exams.

<b>Assignments and Exams COMS 201 W18</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Date</b>
<p><b>Participation</b> Participation grades will be awarded on the basis of your active involvement in tutorial discussions and activities. Details of required tutorial activities will be provided in a separate "tutorial outline" to be posted on D2L. In order to receive participation grades, you are expected to be in attendance for tutorials, contribute to discussions, and complete required group work and presentations. Improper use of electronic devices, as well as other forms of inattentiveness, will impact your participation grade.</p>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Weekly</b>
<p><b>Early Test</b> The early test will be composed of multiple-choice questions, and is designed to provide early feedback on your comprehension of the course material so far. It will be useful preparation for the midterm exam.</p>	<b>15%</b>	<b>February 9 (in tutorial)</b>
<p><b>Midterm Examination</b> The midterm exam will be composed of multiple-choice questions.</p>	<b>20%</b>	<b>March 13 (in lecture)</b>
<p><b>Research Essay</b> The research essay gives you an opportunity to combine out-of-class research with the topics explored in lectures and discussions. You will be given a choice of several essay topics, and expected to write a 1500-1750 word research paper on that topic. More information on the research essay will be provided in class and on D2L.</p>	<b>25%</b>	<b>April 3 (Due in lecture)</b>
<p><b>Final Examination</b> The final exam is registrar scheduled. It will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and/or essay-style questions. The final exam will be cumulative, with a heavy emphasis on material that comes after the midterm exam. You will be responsible for all material covered in the assigned textbook readings and any additional required readings posted on D2L, as well as the content of lectures and tutorial discussions.</p>	<b>30%</b>	<b>TBA</b>

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** Yes

### **Submission of Assignments**

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.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams 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 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>

### **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 Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

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

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in the course are graded using a combination of weighted raw scores for each individual assignment. This is 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* *
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	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.

### 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 (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>

### 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>• 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> 403-220-5333 <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> <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>

<p><b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Counselling Services</b></li> <li>• <b>Health Services</b></li> <li>• <b>Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</b></li> <li>• <b>Online resources and tips</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a></p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a></p> <p><b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b></p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a></p> <p>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.</p>
---	---

### Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Date	Topics	Readings
January 9	<b>Course Introduction</b>	
January 16	<b>Communication as a Field of Study</b> <b>Understanding Communication Theories</b> <b>Building and Testing Theory</b>	Chapter 1 Chapter 2 Chapter 3
January 23	<b>Communication and Symbols</b> General Semantics Symbolic Interactionism	Chapter 4 Chapter 5
January 30	<b>Communication and Symbols</b> Dramatism Narrative Theory	Chapter 5
February 6	<b>Review: Chapters 1-5</b>	<b>Early Test: Friday in tutorial</b>
February 13	<b>Communication as Performance</b> Dramaturgy Performance Ethnography <b>Communication and the Construction of Meaning</b> Coordinated Management of Meaning Constructivism	Chapter 6  Chapter 7
<i>February 20</i>	<i>Reading Break (no classes)</i>	
February 27	<b>Communication and Interpersonal Relationships</b> Dialectical Theory Social Exchange Theory	Chapter 8 (p.172-183 only) Chapter 9 (p.191-200 only)
March 6	<b>Communication and Community</b> Standpoint Theory Speech Communities	Chapter 10 (p.209-226 only)
March 13	<b>Midterm Exam (14:00-14:50)</b> <i>Discussion of Term Paper Guidelines</i>	No readings
March 20	<b>Communication and Persuasion</b> Rhetoric	Readings on D2L

March 27	<b>Communication and Mass Media</b> Technological Determinism Cultivation Theory	Chapter 11
April 3	<b>Critical Theories</b> <i>-- Research Essay Due (in lecture) --</i>	Readings on D2L
April 10	<b>Postmodernism</b> <i>Review for Final Exam</i>	Chapter 13