

Communications Studies 381 – Lecture 01
Communications History
Winter 2012

Lecture – Wednesday 10:00 – 11:50 SB 144
Lab 01 – Friday 11:00 – 11:50 EDC 278
Lab 02 – Friday 12:00 – 12:50 EDC 278

Instructor: Dr. Doug Brent
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Office Hours:

Wednesday 1:00 – 3:00 or by appointment (I realize that you may not be available during my regular office hours but I will always make time to see you.) Note: it is often easiest to make appointments by e-mail to avoid the after-class scrum. **Please place the words COMS 381 in the subject line** to avoid getting mixed up with administrivia – I always try to get to student e-mails first.

Course Description

A general survey of how various communication systems and practices developed through history, and of the social contexts within which they emerged, transformed, and adapted through time. Within this framework, the course examines major technological developments in the history of human communication and uses theory to understand their origins and impacts on social organization and everyday life.

Additional Information

Labs: Lab periods are not optional, nor are they intended simply for students who need extra help of some kind. They are integral to the course and afford an opportunity to engage in discussion in a smaller setting than is possible in a large lecture. Your participation grade will be largely determined by brief, ungraded assignments completed and handed in during lab periods. Please respect your teaching assistant and fellow students by coming to labs prepared and having done required readings.

Objectives of the Course

Marshall McLuhan believed that, unless we understand the innate properties of media and how they affect not only our way of living but our way of thinking, we are powerless to resist their influence. This course surveys the history of communication as it evolved

from orality through various modes of technologized media, including writing, printing and electronic media, in order to contextualize the relationship between technology and the social world.

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

- Understand the media that surround them against a larger context of social and cognitive effects
- Understand some of the more important thinkers on the subject of media effects
- Relate the social trends discussed in this course to their work in other courses and to their lives
- Write accurately and persuasively about their own view of these thinkers and the media context in which they live

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops are permitted for note taking only. Please respect the lecturer, teaching assistants and your fellow students by not using computers for other purposes during classes or tutorials. iPods, cellphones and gaming devices must be off during class. If you are expecting an emergency call, please let me know at the beginning of the class.

Textbooks and Readings:

Crowley, David & Paul Heyer, eds. (2010) *Communication in History*, 6th Edition (If you find a fifth edition floating around, it will likely do the job although you may find the different page numbers inconvenient)

Ong, Walter. (1982) *Orality and Literacy*

Book of readings – available in bookstore

Additional readings (freely available on the Internet) will be linked from Blackboard

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation and lab work – ongoing throughout the term – 10%

Quiz 1 – Feb 3 (during lab time) - 10 %

Reading reflection assignment – Feb 10 - 20%

Proposal for Term Paper – March 2 – 5%

Quiz 2 – March 9 (during lab time) – 10%

Term paper – March 30 - 35%

Quiz 3 – April 13 (during lab time) - 10%

Lab work will consist of brief exercises and responses completed before the lab and handed in at the lab. They will not be graded as such but they are important aids to focussed discussion, and completing them will largely determine your participation grade. Occasional absences with good reason can be forgiven.

The **reading reflection** assignment will be a brief (1000-1500 word) paper in which you will choose a reading (either one discussed in class or another from the texts provided), summarize what **you** think are its most relevant arguments, and reflect on how it can be applied to an understanding of phenomena in modern life.

The **proposal** assignment will be a proposal for your term paper (about 500 words or so). It must include some evidence of preliminary research (including actually having read some of the material), and a sense of your approach to the topic.

The **term paper** will be a 2000-2500 word research assignment in which you will apply the concepts of the course to any communications technology of your choice. You will base your paper on relevant books and articles (I will give general suggestions on how to track down useful one), but you will be encouraged to create a thesis that pulls them together into an argument for the philosophical, cognitive, social, and epistemological effects of the technology (not just its technical or purely historical aspects).

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Assignments will be submitted electronically via Blackboard. Detailed instructions will be provided.

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. If you need an extension for urgent reasons, please discuss this with me *before* the due date.

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. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.** For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

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://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

Grading System

All grades will be assigned as letter grades. The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

(Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will be converted to a number for calculation purposes using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

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) 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 Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

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
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points 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.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

To be provided by the first day of class on the Blackboard site.