

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

**Communication and Media Studies COMS 381, LEC 1**

**Communications History**

**Winter 2020**

**Tues., Jan. 14 – Tues., Apr. 14 (excluding Feb. 17 - 21 and Apr. 10)**

**Lectures: Tues. 12:30-14:20, Labs Fri. 9:00-9:50, 10:00-10:50, 11:00-11:50,  
or 12:00-12:50**

**Updated March 18, 2020**

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**E-Mail:** annie.rudd@ucalgary.ca (when emailing, please mention “COMS 381” in the subject line)  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 15:00-16:00 or by appointment **by email to the end of term**

**Course Description**

How have changes in communications media shaped the ways people have formed and maintained communities, gained and exercised political agency, practiced and contested religious beliefs, and participated in acts of consumption, self-presentation, and social interaction? And how, in turn, have shifts in social, political, and economic conditions informed new developments in communications media? These are some of the questions that will guide our discussions in this course.

This course offers a general survey of how communication systems and practices have developed through history, and of the social contexts within which they emerged, transformed, and adapted through time. Within this framework, we will examine major technological developments in the history of human communication. In addition to surveying a range of important secondary sources tracing important developments in the history of communication, we will draw on primary sources and on theories of communication to contextualize shifts in communications history and to trace the impacts of these shifts on social organization and everyday life.

Our course begins with the transition from oral to literate cultures in the ancient world, and extends to the digital cultures of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Historical developments that we will trace include the moveable type printing press, the newspaper, photography, radio broadcasting, television, and digital social media, among others. As we look at how humans have communicated in the past, we will contextualize the “new media” of today, considering both continuities and changes between the media of the past and the media of the present.

## Objectives of the Course

This course aims:

- to expose you to, and familiarize you with, a series of important developments in the history of communication;
- to enable you to draw connections between communications and broader processes of social and cultural change, through readings, lectures, and writing assignments that link communications technologies with phenomena such as imperialism, religious reform, consumer culture, and globalization;
- to introduce you to techniques of historical interpretation and research;
- to provide you with context that will help you approach the media of the present moment in a critical, historically literate way.

## Delivery of Online Instruction

With the University of Calgary's move to online instruction for March and April 2020, weekly lectures will be delivered online and posted to our course D2L site. Please consult the document titled "Plan for Online Instruction – COMS 381 W2020," which was sent to the UCalgary email accounts of all students in the class and is posted to D2L, for information on how to access online lectures, complete the midterm test, and submit assignments online in this course.

To summarize the information provided there:

- The midterm test will be given as a take-home test on March 24, and will include short-answer and short essay questions. You will have 48 hours to complete the test. The question sheet will be posted to the D2L Dropbox at 12:30 on March 24.
- Weekly online lectures will be posted to the course D2L page on Tuesdays by 12:30 starting on March 31. You can view them by choosing "Content" then scrolling down to the module titled "Weekly Lecture – [Date]". They will consist of narrated slide presentations with questions you can respond to for lecture participation credit.
- Lab participation activities will be provided to you by your TA via email on a weekly basis.
- You can communicate with your instructor or TA by sending an email with questions about course content and assignments, or by emailing to set up a Zoom video chat.

## Readings

All readings will be posted on D2L. You should have the week's readings completed before you get to lecture. Please be sure to bring the assigned readings with you to lectures and labs (whether printed out or digitally), as some in-class assignments and activities will require you to have them on hand.

An important note: all readings and dates listed on the course outline are subject to change—so please check D2L regularly for the most up-to-date version of the course schedule.

## Internet and Electronic Communication Device Information

The use of laptop computers and tablets is permitted in lectures, but they should be used solely for notetaking and you're responsible for ensuring they do not cause any distractions

for you or others. Phones must be silenced and put in your bag before lectures and tutorials begin. Audio recording or filming during lectures and tutorials is prohibited without permission from the instructor.

### **A Note on Email Communication**

Emails to your instructor should be sent from your University of Calgary email account, with “COMS 381” mentioned in the subject line. Please do not use email to ask questions that can be answered by looking at the course outline or D2L. I aim to answer emails within 48 hours of receiving them, excluding weekends—if you have emailed me and have not heard back within this timeframe, please feel free to send a follow-up message. Of course, you should also feel free to visit my office hours to discuss course content or solicit feedback on work in progress. In fact, I encourage you to do so, as meeting with you individually helps me put a face to the name in a large class like this one!

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Your grade in this course will be determined based on the following:

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Percentage of final grade</b>
Primary source analysis	Due February 25	25%
Midterm test	Take-home exam will be posted on D2L at 12:30pm March 24; completed exams must be submitted via D2L Dropbox by 12:30pm March 26	20%
Research essay proposal	Due March 31	5%
Research essay	Due April 14	30%
Lecture participation (in-person and online)	Throughout the term	10%
Lab participation (in-person and online)	Throughout the term	10%

### **Primary Source Analysis**

With this writing assignment, you'll engage in a task that is central to the work of communications history: you will analyze and interpret a primary source. Choosing from a list of primary sources available through online library and museum collections, your task will be to situate the source within its historical context through secondary readings assigned in this course, and to discuss how the artifact reveals information about the historical context in which it appears, as well as how knowledge about its historical context allows us to better understand the artifact. The minimum length of the primary source analysis assignment should be 800 words, excluding citations. More details will be provided early in the semester.

## **Midterm Test**

A midterm test will be given. This test will be given as a take-home test to reflect the move to online instruction and the cancellation of in-person classes. It will include short-answer and short essay questions, and it will require you to demonstrate your comprehension of material covered in the assigned readings, in lectures, and in labs. The test will be open-book. Further information will be provided in advance of the exam, and there will be a prep session in labs the week before the exam. You will have 48 hours to complete this test, but you need only dedicate two hours to it. The test questions will be posted to the D2L Dropbox labeled "Midterm Test" at 12:30pm on March 24, and you must submit your completed test as a Word or PDF file via this Dropbox by 12:30pm on March 26. After this deadline the Dropbox will close; late assignments, which will receive a lateness penalty, can be submitted via email to [annie.rudd@ucalgary.ca](mailto:annie.rudd@ucalgary.ca).

## **Research Essay Proposal**

You will be asked to submit a research essay proposal via the D2L Dropbox. This proposal must include a brief (minimum 150-word) description of your essay topic, a working thesis statement, and two academic sources outside of the course readings (these can include academic journal articles and academic books) that you intend to use in your essay. The primary purpose of this proposal is to encourage you to get started on your research well in advance of the due date. Detailed feedback will not be provided on proposals, so if you have questions about your essay topic, approach, sources, or argument, please visit office hours or email your professor or TA.

## **Research Essay**

Drawing on the critical approaches to communication history that we have examined in this course, you will be asked to write a research essay that considers, in focused and specific ways, how a communications medium has been connected with a specific historical development or complex of developments. With the medium you have chosen, what is the nature of the relationship between communication and historical change? This essay will require you to make thoughtful use of academic sources, and you are also encouraged, though not required, to make use of at least one primary source. You will have the option to write a traditional essay (minimum 1800 words), or a digital essay that includes appropriate and well-integrated images, video, or other multimedia as appropriate (minimum 1200 words). More details will be provided on the essay assignment sheet, which will be provided to you well in advance of the deadline. Examples of successful digital essays will also be provided. You should plan on getting started on this essay well in advance of the due date. Research essays should be submitted digitally via the D2L Dropbox marked "Research Essay." Please give a careful read to the assignment instructions and grading rubric posted to D2L for information on how to complete and submit this assignment.

## **Lecture Participation: In-Person and Online**

Verbal participation in lecture is strongly encouraged, but will not be formally assessed as part of your grade. However, attending lecture is required, and attendance will be essential in order for you to complete the assignments that count toward your lecture participation grade. Throughout the term, you'll be expected to participate in five short writing assignments in lectures; these writing assignments will ask you to reflect on ideas presented in the assigned readings, to interpret short excerpts from primary sources, or to connect developments in communication history to present-day life and your own

experiences. They are open-book and will be completed on paper handouts (except in cases of accessibility accommodations), so be sure to bring a pen or pencil to class. Dates of these assignments will not be given in advance, and no make-ups are permitted, so it's important to attend lecture regularly. However, only the top four of your five assignments will be counted toward your grade, so you can safely miss one lecture without your grade being negatively impacted.

With the move to online instruction, lecture participation assignments will be completed on D2L. Starting on March 31, posted lecture slides will contain writing prompts for students to complete in order to receive credit for lecture participation.

In lectures as well as in labs, engaged, respectful, and non-disruptive participation is expected of all students. This means showing up on time, staying for the duration, and not having private conversations or using your phone during class. Failure to adhere to these expectations may negatively affect your participation grade.

### **Lab Participation**

Consistent attendance at labs as well as active and informed involvement in lab discussions and activities is required. Your participation grade will be assessed based not only on the frequency with which you speak up, but on the quality of your contributions as well.

Attendance will be taken in labs; if you do not expect to attend labs frequently, you should not enroll in this course. Infrequent participation or attendance will result in a lower grade or possibly a failing grade in the course, and will also make it difficult for you to do well on tests and writing assignments.

Lab participation grades will be calculated based on in-person lab participation before the move to online instruction, and online lab participation following this transition. With the move to online instruction, your TA will email you a participation activity to complete each week (starting March 20). These activities will take 30-50 minutes and you should aim to complete them the same day they are assigned; contact your TA if you require accommodations on this. You will receive lab participation credit each time you complete these assignments.

### **Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

**Note:** All assignments and exams weighted more than 25% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

### **Submission of Assignments:**

**From March 15 onward, please submit assignments to designated dropboxes in D2L.**

Research essays should be submitted in lecture. If it is not possible for you to hand in your essay directly to your TA or instructor, 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 photo ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. 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/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

**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 will be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Brief extensions may be given by the instructor provided the student has a compelling reason to request one, and the request is made well in advance of the deadline.

### **Student Accommodations**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For 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 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) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

### **Expectations for Writing**

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

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

Final grades are reported as letter grades. Numerical grades will be used for writing assignments, participation, and tests.

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, numerical grades will be converted to corresponding letter grades according to this scale.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not 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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to [https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm\\_source=ssc&utm\\_medium=redirect&utm\\_campaign=redirect](https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect)

### **Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation**

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright ([www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf)) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

### **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, including 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>

### **Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal**

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

### **Student Support Services and Resources**

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at [itsupport@ucalgary.ca](mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca) or by calling 403-220.5555.

### **Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings**

The weekly schedule of class topics and readings can be found on our course D2L site.