

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

**Communications Studies COMS 401 L01**

**Special Topics in Communications Studies: NEW MEDIA & THE TECHNOLOGICAL  
IMAGINATION**

**Winter 2015**

Mon., Jan. 12 – Wed., April 15 (excluding Feb. 15 - 22)

**Tuesday & Thursday, 11:00-12:15**

**Instructor:** Samantha C. Thrift  
**Office:** SS 210  
**Office Phone:** 403-220-5320  
**E-Mail:** samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Wednesday's 14:00-16:00

**Course Description**

This course examines the processes by which we evaluate the emergence of new media (or waves of new media), focusing on the personal, cultural, and historical qualities of emerging technologies. Drawing on the notion of the technological imaginary, New Media & the Technological Imagination examines the way we communicate about new media, and how these discourses express societal preoccupations with the perceived threat and promise of technological innovation; alongside the celebration of “new things” and their progressive potential, exist anxieties over the power of new media to compromise our security, privacy, and sense of community. In order to complicate linear narratives of technological progress, students will critically reflect on the “newness” of new media and investigate contemporary media cultures through insights about past “new” media forms, like the telegraph, typewriter, telephone, and television. What (and whose) values are already invested in old media? How do certain media forms take on good or bad cultural connotations? How do these meanings impact the creation, design, and reception of new media technologies in the digital age?

**Additional Information**

This is a seminar-style course emphasizing student participation and discussion.

**Textbooks and Readings**

A digital course pack has been prepared and will be made available on the COMS 401 L01 D2L course website.

**Internet and electronic communication device information**

The in-class use of computers for activities other than note taking purposes will not be tolerated. Therefore, cell phones and other electronic communication devices must be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during

class time. If you engage in non-course related online activity during class, the professor will confiscate the device for the duration of that class.

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

### **Email**

When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course number (COMS 401) and a clear statement of purpose in the subject line. If you do not include the course number in your email's subject line, your email may get lost in your instructor's overflowing inbox and go unread! Please maintain a respectful tone in your correspondence with course instructors.

Email correspondence is most useful for short specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions on the course material or assignments please visit me during office hours.

I will return emails during the week, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read or replied to until the next working day. NOTE: I do not accept email submissions of work.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Participation	20%	Every class.
Class Facilitation	20%	Student Choice
Case Study: Proposal	10%	February 12
Case Study: The Archive	20%	March 19
Case Study: Final Paper	30%	April 14

#### **I. Participation: 20%**

One purpose of a seminar like this is to teach students to form their own ideas and share them with their peers. The very work of the course consists of engaging in a discussion of ideas. Your participation entails coming to class having carefully read the day's assigned texts; being ready and willing to discuss issues raised in the readings; offering your informed, critical responses; listening to your classmates' remarks attentively and responding in a respectful and constructive manner.

Your participation will be measured with in-class activities and discussion.

## II. Class Facilitation: 20%

In addition to your regular attendance and participation in class, you will take the lead in our class discussion for approximately 30 minutes. In small groups, you will introduce a topic relating to that day's assigned readings, making clear links to important passages in the texts. You will also have prepared 2-3 discussion questions to create conversation about the ideas, themes, and critical concepts found in the readings.

Your moderation will be evaluated on the clarity and quality of your remarks, the creativity of your presentation (ex. delivery of content - by lecture, group work, media examples?), and your ability to create and sustain substantive, on topic discussion with your peers. You must also provide a copy of your presentation outline (notes are fine) and your discussion questions to the instructor **by noon the Wednesday before class**.

As facilitators, your role is to moderate and direct the discussion, which includes listening to your classmates' responses, ensuring equitable participation from all class members, drawing connections between individual responses when appropriate, and maintaining focus on the materials at hand. Also, your facilitation must not dramatically exceed or fall short of time expectations.

Note: Although it is the responsibility of the facilitators to begin and direct discussion, there is a responsibility on all class members to assist them in their task by engaging with the material under study in a knowledgeable and thoughtful manner.

## III. Case Study

The Case Study is the main writing assignment for New Media & the Technological Imagination. Case studies are valuable because they enable us to investigate phenomena within real world contexts. In this instance, we are interested in exploring how technologies are more than material artifacts that impact the world in a straightforward way. Instead, the case study works from the premise that technologies signify complex sets of practices, beliefs, norms and values that reflect and shape our thoughts about personhood, agency, time, gender/race/class, labour, and political engagement. If successful, your final paper will connect your chosen new media artifact with these big picture issues, drawing on the ideas, concepts, and frameworks outlined by our course authors and discussed in class during the semester.

In keeping with the overall theme of the course, you will be conducting an analysis of the *discursive construction* of a new media technology. Your study will investigate all aspects of the artifact's design, production, implementation, reception, and 'fate,' as these things are described and discussed in mass and popular media. You must select an "old" new media or a "new" new media artifact, but keep in mind that the older your technology, the hard it may be to find media sources published at the time of its introduction (i.e., archival research is fascinating, but quite labour intensive).

Examples:	3D printing	walkman (or discman or iPod)
	touch screen technology	YouTube
	Snapchat	video phone (Facetime, etc)
	Phonebloks	the electric car
	the Internet	Smart home technology
	wearable technology	

**Proposal (10%)** due: February 12

The Case Study Proposal is a 2-3 page document that:

- identifies the new media artifact you intend to study;
- explains why this technology is of interest to you, conceptually;
- identifies what primary sources you will collect (& from where); and
- includes a list of 5 secondary sources that you anticipate being useful to your analysis.

Please note that once I approve this topic, you are committed to it for the term.

**The Archive (20%)** due: March 19<sup>th</sup>

After I've approved your proposal, you will collect five primary sources. These are the texts, videos, images, blogs, etc. that will form the basis of your analysis. Your primary sources can include news articles, blog posts, Wikipedia entries, TED talks, official product websites, alternative media reporting, and/or pop cultural representations (ex. advertising, music videos, film, novels, and so forth). These are different from "secondary sources," which consists of course readings, journal articles, and academic books.

You will acquire a total of five primary sources for your case study, and write a brief analysis (max. 250 words) of each source. Each analysis must relate to a different assigned reading from the course, and it will explain how the primary source relates to the chosen reading. Your submission must include a URL link, a photocopy, or some other documentation of the primary source, so that I can assess your work.

The goal of this portion of the assignment is to keep you thinking about how different theoretical and methodological approaches relate to your case study.

**Final Paper (30%)** due: April 14

The final component of the Case Study is a 10-page analysis based on course readings, your Archive, and the topic outlined in your initial proposal. I will be evaluating your submission based on the selection and use of course materials, your ability to critically engage with course concepts (i.e., do you demonstrate understanding of course authors' arguments? how do you apply ideas presented by our authors to further your own analysis and argument?), and the quality of your writing (i.e., grammar, organization, and clarity). Importantly, your essay should contain a recognizable, concise thesis that is coherently and defensibly argued throughout your text.

Your final essay must include two bibliographies: one of the primary sources contained in your Archive, one of your secondary (or academic) sources. Your secondary source bibliography must include at least three texts from assigned course readings (these three texts may vary from those cited in your proposal).

You should select one of the following three citation styles and use consistently throughout: APA, MLA, or Chicago.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** No

PLEASE NOTE: All assignments and exams weighted more than 20% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

**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. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

### **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.

Late work will not be accepted one week past the original deadline without appropriate documentation (i.e., doctor's note). Late work will not receive written feedback.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

### **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. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. 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 System & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department 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	00 - 49.99%	0%

## 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 <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . 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 (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

### Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:picarts@ucalgary.ca">picarts@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> <b>403-220-5333</b> <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="http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html">http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>
<b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b>	<b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm

<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><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>
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### **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

The Schedule of Readings will be posted to D2L before the first class.