

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

**Communication and Media Studies (COMS) 401.45 L05**  
**Cyberspace 2.0: Critical Perspectives on Digital Culture**  
**Winter 2017**

**Depart Calgary Dec. 27, 2016 — Depart Los Angeles Jan. 6, 2017**

**Instructor:** Mark Wolfe, PhD  
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**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal

### **Course Description**

This course explores key works of media theorists in the 20th, late 20th and early 21 centuries by way of gaining critical perspective on digital media technologies and culture today. After an introduction to Marshall McLuhan's work of the 1950s and 1960s, seminal works from the first wave of "cyberspace" writing in the 1980s and 90s will be used to shed light on key social and conceptual issues that continue to dog us today, including identity, privacy, community and the nature of reality itself. These literatures will then be updated by reviewing key contemporary works of a specifically critical nature – including the writings of Nicholas Carr, Douglas Rushkoff and Andrew Keen – and raise key questions around the role of the audience, media regulation, and human autonomy in an advanced digital economy. Guest lectures by early cyberspace writers and tours of the gaming and media/entertainment production industry in the Los Angeles area will provide ample opportunity to engage real-world thinkers and media producers and allow students to experience the culture of digital media production up close.

### **Additional Information**

- No prerequisites
- The course uses seminars in which students lead and shape the discussion by engaging readings, guest lecturers and industry hosts
- This is a thinking-intensive course requiring advanced reading skills

### **Objectives of the Course**

To build awareness and appreciation of the issues and effects of New Media as informed by the influence of seminal thinkers in the 20th and 21st centuries. Students will be able to:

- Articulate the key constructs and distinctions in key theorists' work, including

“the medium is the message,” the “ontology of cyberspace,” the “gift economy,” and “present shock.”

- Become critical observers of media use in the everyday context by bringing the work of key new media writers to bear in student assignments and journalized reflections

### **Textbooks and Readings**

Links to learning resources provided on D2L

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

Need to bring a functional tablet or laptop to Los Angeles

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

1. *Journal* (due Jan. 8) (25%)
2. *Take-home quiz #1* (due Jan. 31, 2017) (20%)
3. *Take-home quiz #2* (due Feb. 27, 2017) (20%)
4. *Final project/paper* (due April 12, 2017) (35%)

**Journal (compiled in LA; due Jan. 8, 25%)** – Students will maintain a record of on-going impressions and critical assessments of the culture, behaviour and attitudes around digital media as observed and engaged with while in Los Angeles, and then articulate those observations and insights in a 3-5 page journal reflection.

**Quizzes (20% each; see due dates above)** – Take-home quizzes will require essay responses the thematic questions that will be based on lectures, guest lectures and engagements with industry hosts. Quizzes will be submitted by Drop Box on D2L.

**Final project (35%; due April 12)** – This assignment, completed singly or in small groups of 3 or 4 students, comprises a research paper that focuses on a New Media topic or technology (ie. social media; Netflix; remote sensing/surveillance, etc.), policy (ie. copyright; freedom of access; etc.) or issue (ie. privacy; impact on literacy) in a way that brings a critical perspective to New Media study and practice.

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

### **Registrar-scheduled final examination: No**

You do not need to complete all assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

**Submission of Assignments:** Please hand in your essays electronically using the following file-naming convention example: SmithJournal.doc

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture 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/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. [Edit as you wish to reflect your own policy.]

### **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**

In this course, percentages will be used in evaluation of all assignments. Final grades will be reported as letter grades.

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. NOTE if you use a different method of calculating final grades, replace the previous sentence with a clear explanation of your calculation method (e.g., In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to corresponding GPA values.)

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>		<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>		<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>		<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>		<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>		<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>		<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	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      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 (220-5333). 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>
<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>403-266-HELP (4357)</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 Lecture Topics and Readings

### Before departure for LA:

- No formal lectures; suggested readings:

Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps (Michael Benedikt)

The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality (Michael Heim)

### In Los Angeles:

- Dec. 28 – Reading: Understanding Media – Introduction and Chapters 1, 2 and 13
- Dec. 29 – Lecture: McLuhan on The Medium is the Message: Hot and Cold Media; Architecture
- Dec. 30 – Reading: Will the real body please stand up? (Rosanne Stone); Jaron Lanier's Virtually There.
- Jan. 1 – Lecture: McLuhan and Heim – the future of human space/architecture.
- Jan 2 – Seminar: Third Wave VR
- Jan. 3 – Seminar: Third Wave VR, AR
- Jan. 4 – Lecture: The critics – Carr, Rushkoff and Keen.
- Jan 5 – Tutorials: completing assignments for this course; final projects