

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

**Communication and Media Studies (COMS) 435 L01
Mass Communications and Canadian Society**

Winter 2018

**Wednesday, January 10 – Wednesday, April 11 (excluding February 21)
Wednesday 14:00 – 16:45**

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Course Description

This course introduces students to literature on various aspects of the Canadian media, including public policy questions such as the concentration of media ownership, Canadian content requirements, censorship, the role of the media during elections, and the problems and opportunities that might be brought by advances in technology. The course draws upon historical and contemporary examples to explore the unique relationship between Canadian citizens and the mass media.

Objectives of the Course

Through lectures, readings, class discussions, and course assignments, students will:

- Explore a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of mass communications and Canadian society.
- Develop critical and analytical skills through the interrogation of texts, media, policies, organizations, corporations, and events.
- Examine the social, political, and economic impacts of contemporary Canadian mass communications upon Canadian populations.

Textbooks and Readings

David Taras. *Digital Mosaic: Media, Power, and Identity in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 2015 (Required)

Students are expected to have all readings completed prior to scheduled class times in order to contribute effectively during class discussions and activities.

Additional required readings to be posted or linked on D2L throughout the semester.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops are permitted for note taking only. **iPods, cellphones and gaming devices may not be used at all during class.** Please respect the instructor and your fellow students. Improper use of electronic devices will impact your participation grade.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation	(ongoing)	10%
D2L Short Writing (2 X 10%)	First by Jan 31	20%
	Second by April 4 (latest)	
Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography	March 14	15%
Midterm (closed book)	March 21	25%
Final Essay	April 11	30%

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

Participation—10%: Due date—ongoing

Students are expected to not only be in attendance every week, but to contribute significantly to the class discussions via individual comments, in-class group work activities, and short presentations. Oral participation will help solidify concepts for yourself and others.

Desire2Learn Short Writing Assignment —20% (2 X 10%): Due date—various

Throughout the course, students will be required to write a total of two (2) responses to a prompted discussion question in the syllabus or an original question posed by the student. The first assignment must be completed

within the first four weeks of class (by Jan. 31). This assignment is about your ideas – therefore the responses are due before the class in which the reading will be discussed. Suggestions for topics are posted with the weekly readings but student may choose another perspective. Assignments will not be accepted after the class begins and the readings are discussed. The class on **April 4** is the final class to submit the second short writing assignment.

Each response must be between 500 and 750 words, equivalent to two (2) or three (3) pages double-spaced. Responses must have a thesis statement, a definitive argument, and conclusion. This assignment seeks to synthesize course material with experience from students' personal media engagement. **Responses must demonstrate sound analysis of the ideas from course readings and include specific quotes (this is primary, your personal reflections may be used to underscore the points raised in the readings).** Other sources may be used if formally cited but are not required.

These assignments are to be uploaded to D2L.

Essay Proposal and Annotated bibliography —15%: Due date—March 14 (start of class, as two separate files on D2L)

Students must submit a two (2) page (500 word), double-spaced proposal regarding their final essay research project. Essay proposal submissions must include the following: a working title; a critical question about the relationship between mass communications and Canadian society; a possible thesis statement; and a rationale as to why you have chosen your critical question. Why is this area of research significant? Marks will be awarded for clarity of proposal and its relevance to the greater themes studied in the class. **(10 marks)**

In addition to the essay proposal, **in a separate file**, students must submit a list of eight (8) academic sources from a variety of resources (books, book chapters, journal articles, etc.) **from outside the course syllabus**. Sources that are not academic (ie news stories) may be used but only as an addition to the eight academic sources. Each academic source must include a brief annotation *in your own words* of three-to-five (3-5) sentences, as to its importance for your potential final essay research project. **(5 marks)**

Midterm—25%: March 21

A midterm examination will test knowledge on all course readings up to this point in the course and content presented in lectures. Readings for the week of March 21 will be included. Midterms must be taken in class unless documentation is provided for a legitimate absence. Possible testing formats include short answers, and/or essay questions. Students will have the first

half of class (90 minutes) to write the midterm. No class is scheduled for the second half. The exam is closed book.

Final Essay—30%: Due date—April 11 (start of class)

Students will submit a 2500 word (seven to eight page) research essay, excluding bibliography. The final essay must be printed in a double-spaced format (12 font), paginated, and with your name, course & professor, a title and a properly cited bibliography. Essays must have a clear thesis statement to be argued throughout the body of the text. Essays must demonstrate strong research in support of the thesis.

Students will ask one critical question about the relationship between mass communications and Canadian society. As such, each essay must include a critical analysis of a particular development in media and its impact, or potential impact, on Canadian society. The essay should build upon a theme identified in class discussion or in one or more of the articles/works under examination throughout the course. Your point must be unified throughout and introduced by a clear thesis statement in the first paragraph.

Students should strengthen and develop their original argument by drawing upon their own experiences while demonstrating clear applications of the resources cited. Sources outside the eight (8) scholarly works required may be used to support your thesis but must be from a credible source (if uncertain, ask Dr. Taylor).

All references must be properly and fully cited in a consistent format (APA or Chicago preferred). Essays must generally follow what was proposed in the preceding essay proposal assignment unless otherwise discussed with the instructor.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your final essay directly to your instructor.

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.

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/.

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_0.pdf.

Please note:

1. Students seeking accommodations for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors directly. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
2. 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.
3. 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. 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 & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Media, Communication 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	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 <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 (3rd 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/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints

	If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support • IT help line	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus 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.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Week 1 (Jan 10): Citizens and Publics

Readings:

Taras: Chapter 2, Identity and Citizenship in Canada.ca (page 39 – 67)

- Is there a difference between citizen and consumer in contemporary media? Does this matter?
- Does your personal media consumption constitute a “public sphere”?

Week 2 (Jan 17): the Historical Arch of Canadian Mass Media

Readings:

Knowlton Nash, The Microphone Wars, Chapter 3: “The Dream of National Public Radio” (65-89) Available via D2L

The Aird Report, 1929. Available via D2L (not required to read all appendices; don't worry – the report is 13 pages)

- What is unique about the challenge of national communication in Canada?
- Are the foundational principles of Canadian broadcasting as outlined in the Aird Report still valid?
- From a lobbying perspective, what lessons are to be drawn from the experience of Graham Spry and Alan Plaunt?

Week 3 (Jan 24): the Struggles of the CBC

Taras: Chapter 7, The Ever-Shrinking World of Public Broadcasting

DeCillia, B., & McCurdy, P. (2016). The Sound of Silence: The Absence of Public Service Values in Canadian Media Discourse about the CBC. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 41(4).

- How has new technology challenged the traditional role of the CBC? Is the “shrinking” irreversible?
- Why do the authors believe the discourse of neoliberalism is ill suited to the CBC? Do you agree?
- Should the CBC be advertising free?

Week 4 (Jan 31): Canadian Television in the 21st Century

first short writing due

Readings: One of two CRTC Let's Talk TV reports:
CRTC Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2015-86 (par 1-47; 163 – 225)
<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2015/2015-86.htm>

Or

CRTC Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2015-96
<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2015/2015-96.htm> (par 1-52; 122-144)

Bradshaw, J. (April 17, 2015). Streaming Wars: How Disruptors are Shaking Up the TV Business. *The Globe and Mail*. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/streaming-trouble-the-traditional-and-digital-tv-worlds-clash/article24015722/>

- Does globalization pose a problem or opportunity for Canadian television production? Argue one side, even if you see advantages to both.
- Does traditional television (cable, satellite, over-the-air) have a future? Will the CRTC 2015-96 proposals help?
- Are Canadian content regulations in media worth preserving?

- Would workers in the Canadian media creation industry be happy with CRTC 2015-96?

Week 5 (Feb 7): Elections and the Mass Media, Political Communication

Readings: Taras: Chapter 8, Are Journalists and Politicians Abandoning the Public?

Christopher Waddell. (2012) “Berry’d Alive: The Media, Technology, and the Death of Political Coverage” in How Canadians communicate: IV, Media and politics, ed. Taras, David; Waddell, Christopher Robb. Available in ebook via U of Calgary library.

- With reference to two points raised by Taras, do you feel the mainstream media provides a suitable range of coverage for the Canadian 2015 federal election?
- Do you think Waddell’s points are still valid post-2015 election?
- With reference to either reading, has the internet improved political discourse in Canada?

Week 6 (Feb 14): Ownership

Readings: Taras: Chapter 3, The Ownership Juggernaut

Dwayne Winseck. The CMCR Project’s Growth and Development of the Network Media Economy in Canada, 1984-2015 Report
http://www.cmcrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Growth_of_the_Network_Media_Economy_in_Canada_1984-2015_Final.pdf (executive summary 1-7; introduction 1-17; concluding remarks 49-52)

- Who owns the key elements of your media consumption habits? Do you feel this impacts you as a consumer and citizen?
- Is direct government involvement in the media sector more acceptable than it might be in other industries?
- Using Winseck’s report, what patterns in the media industry concern you as a citizen?

****Feb 21 Reading Break, No class****

Week 7 (Feb 28): Censorship and Communication Rights

Readings: (Macdonald and Butt count as one reading)

Neil Macdonald, Free Speech on the Run, Even in the Home of the Brave. CBC.ca. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/free-speech-on-the-run-even-in-the-home-of-the-brave-1.3084507>

and

David Butt. "Canada's law on hate speech is the embodiment of compromise" The Globe and Mail. Jan 19, 2015

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/canadas-law-on-hate-speech-is-the-embodiment-of-compromise/article22520419/>

Marc Raboy. "Media" in Media Divides: Communication Rights and the Right to Communicate in Canada (91-119). Available online via U of Calgary library.

- Hate speech or unlimited free expression? Which is better for democracy?
- Should anonymity on the internet be protected?
- How are Communication Rights different from traditional Freedom of the Press?

Week 8 (March 7): Advertising and the Print Industry

Readings:

Taras, Chapter 6: Falling Stars: The Future of Newspapers and Conventional Broadcasting.

Dallas Smythe. On the Audience Commodity and Its Work. From *Dependency Road* (230-256). Available via D2L

- The Smythe chapter was published in 1981. Is his thesis still valid?
- Do you think newspapers and/or conventional broadcasting will disappear like the telegraph or will they still play a role in the emerging media environment?
- What does fall of Gawker tell us about the future of journalism?

Week 9 (March 14): French and Aboriginal Media

****essay proposal and annotated bibliography due****

Readings:

Roth, Lorna. (2000). **Bypassing of Borders and Building of Bridges: Steps in the Construction of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in Canada.** *International Communication Gazette*. Vol. 62, Issue 3-4, pp. 251 – 269 (available via library)

Bailey, P. Sept 12, 2012. "Les Trash: Tawdry television offers a worm's-eye view of la belle province" The Walrus. <http://thewalrus.ca/2006-02-television/>

- APTN is mandated to be accessible on every cable and satellite package in Canada. Should it receive this special treatment?
- Why does Quebec media remain far more popular than English Canada? Is it just a matter of language or are other factors at play?

Week 10 (March 21): Radio and the music industry

****Mid term Exam****

Sutherland, Richard and Will Straw. "The Canadian Music Industry at a Crossroads" in Taras et al. (2007) *How Canadians Communicate 2: Media, Globalization and Identity*. Calgary: U of Calgary Press (available via library as ebook).

- Should Canada maintain CanCon requirements for radio in 2015?
- Much has changed since 2007. Do Sutherland and Straw's arguments still seem valid?

Week 11 (March 28): Labour and 'new' media

Readings:

Andrew Ross, "In Search of the Lost Paycheck" in Scholz, T. (2012). *Digital Labor : The Internet as Playground and Factory*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis. (Ebook available via library)

Nicole S. Cohen. 2012. "[Cultural Work as a Site of Struggle: Freelancers and Exploitation.](#)" *tripleC: Cognition, Communication, Co-operation* 10(2): 141-155.

- Is the historic rationale for organized labour, as presented by Ross, challenged by technology?
- Compare your work experience with the results of Cohen's study.
- How does technology enhance/hinder your own employment prospects?

Week 12 (April 4): Social Media

*****last class for short paper submissions*****

Taras: Chapter 5, Connecting and Disconnecting on the Social Media Frontier

Botterill, J., Bredin, M., & Dun, T. (2015). Millennial's Media Use: It is A Matter Of Time. *Canadian Journal Of Communication*, 40(3). Available via UCalgary Library.

- Is social media a continuation of an established media tradition or is it something altogether new?

- Was social media a key media for you in the 2015 federal election or the 2017 municipal election? Which party/candidate was most effective in its use?
- As a Millennial, do you agree with the conclusions of Botterill et al's study?

Week 13 (April 11)

Victor Pickard (2017) The Big Picture: Misinformation Society

<http://www.publicbooks.org/the-big-picture-misinformation-society/>

****final essays due at the beginning of class****