

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

**Communication Studies COMS 591, S02**  
**Senior Seminar in Communication**

Winter 2015

Thurs., Jan.15 – Thurs., April 9 (excluding Feb. 19)

**Lectures, Th 2:00 PM – 4:45 PM**

**Instructor:** Dr. Joanna Redden  
**Office:** SS 304  
**Office Phone:** 403-220-8728  
**E-Mail:** Joanna.redden@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Wed. 13:00 – 15:00, or by appointment

**Course Description**

The topic of this senior seminar is Big Data. The hype, controversy and debate surrounding contemporary uses of data, particularly big data, have exploded in the last few years. As more information comes to light about surveillance practices, data collection and data mining, the handling of private data, and the manipulation of social data, it is becoming increasingly clear that we need to become more big data literate and better appreciate how our information is being collected and used, in whose interests, and to what ends. In this seminar we will critically engage with contemporary data issues. In particular we will focus on questions and debates related to surveillance, social data analytics, data brokers, data mining and the limits of big data knowledge, privacy and transparency, predictive analytics, computational politics, data activism, hacktivism and whistleblowers.

**Additional Information**

This seminar requires active participation. Students will be responsible for participating in discussion, leading discussion, conducting independent research and working as part of a group. Regular attendance is expected and participation is crucial. Readings must be completed in advance of class, and students are expected to participate fully in seminar discussions of all assigned readings. As we are dealing with contemporary issues and ongoing debates it is not expected that you have any prior knowledge of the topics we are covering in this course. The selected readings and assignments are designed to provide you with the knowledge needed to participate fully. In addition, a selection of recent and relevant news coverage will be posted to D2L to give you an introduction to the debates, valuable reference points, and the range of social and political implications of topics covered.

## Objectives of the Course

COMS 591 has the following major objectives:

1. To provide you with the opportunity to co-ordinate and integrate the knowledge, skills, and experience you have acquired during your studies;
2. To provide you with the opportunity to create a major research project drawing on course material and personal interests, which you will present to the class and expand into a formal research paper;
3. To encourage you to think and research across disciplinary boundaries;
4. To help prepare you for the expectations of graduate level study and professional work.

## Textbooks and Readings

Selections from the following texts will be made available via the COMS 591 D2L course website:

Andrews, Lori (2013) *I Know Who You Are and I Saw What You Did: Social Networks and the Death of Privacy*, New York: Free Press.

Beake, Stephen (2014) *Data Brokers and the Need for Transparency and Accountability*, Nova Science Pub Inc.

Bennett, Colin J. (2014) *Transparent Lives: Surveillance in Canada*, Athabasca: AU Press.

Coleman, Gabriela (2014) *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*, New York: Verso.

Diebert, Ronald (2014) *Black Code: Inside the Battle for Cyberspace*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Kitchin, Rob (2014) *The Data Revolution: Big Data, Open Data, Data Infrastructures and Their Consequences*, New York: Sage.

Gitelman, Lisa (2013) *Raw Data is an Oxymoron*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Greenwald, Glenn (2014) *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Mayer-Schönberger, Viktor and Cukier, Kenneth (2013) *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Morozov, Evgeny (2013) *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*, New York: Public Affairs.

Mosco, Vincent (2014) *To the Cloud: Big Data in a Turbulent World*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Turow, Joseph (2011) *The Daily You: How the New Advertising Industry is Defining Your Identity and Your Worth*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

U.S. Federal Trade Commission (2014) *Data Brokers: A Call for Transparency and Accountability*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Federal Trade Commission.

Additional readings will also be posted to D2L.

## 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:	Weekly	10%
Group Presentation:	Throughout Term (sign up)	25%
Research Proposal:	Feb. 12	15%
Research Essay:	Apr. 2	30%
Final Presentation:	Apr. 2 and Apr. 9	20%

Participation: Seminars require active participation. Participation is not measured solely by how often you speak. Informed, thoughtful contributions to discussion are more important than frequent contributions. An ability to demonstrate familiarity with the required readings is also crucial. Attentive listening matters – students who interrupt others, distract their classmates, or use electronic devices in a way that distracts the instructor or other students will see an impact on their participation grade. Students are also expected to participate by engaging with the presentations of fellow students by attending presentations, asking questions, and offering thoughtful and constructive commentary.

Group Presentations: Different groups will present on selected readings for our classes from Jan. 29 to Mar. 19. A signup sheet for presentation groups will be available on the first day of class – those who do not sign up will be assigned to a group. Each group will be responsible for one topic area and the text(s) associated with the topic for that week. Presentations will take place for the first half of each seminar. Each group is responsible for summarizing and highlighting the key ideas presented in the text(s), considering the reading in relation to contemporary debates, and generating discussion about their topic. More detail about group presentations will be provided in class and posted to D2L.

Research Proposal: Your research proposal will outline the analysis you intend to undertake for your research essay. This proposal should be no more than 500 words (excluding bibliography), and should identify your research question, its relevance to the course, and your plan for how to engage with your question (through primary research, secondary research, or a combination of the two). Your proposal should also include a preliminary annotated bibliography of five scholarly sources that you expect to be useful in the preparation of your essay. *Please remember that any research involving human subjects requires ethics consent – the instructor can support you in applying, but you must leave ample time to apply for and receive ethics approval.*

Research Essay: The research essay for this course gives you an opportunity to pursue a topic of your choice related to course content. You may choose to research a topic related to the issues covered in the course, or you may choose to further research a

topic you began exploring in your group presentation. Your paper should be approximately 2500 words in length, and should be double-spaced, in a 12 point font, with one inch margins. Proper citations and referencing are required. More information about essay requirements will be provided in class and on D2L.

**Final Presentation:** Your final presentation is an individual oral presentation about your research essay. The final presentation provides a means for you to present your work to your peers. You will have approximately 8 minutes to present a summary of your research, followed by 3 to 5 minutes of questions. All presentations will take place in the final two classes of the semester, so the presentation time limits will be enforced.

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

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

**Submission of Assignments:** Please hand in your essays directly to me at the beginning of class. 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 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.

### **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> 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 <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> </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>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Student Services Mobile App</b></li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<p><b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Faculty of Arts Reps</b></li> <li>• <b>Student Ombudsman</b></li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html">http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a></p>
<p><b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b></p> <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><b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <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>

### **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

To be posted on D2L in the first week of classes