

Communication on the Internet

MMC 3260 | Spring 2024 | 3 credits | Class #: 15084 section: 1170

Instructor: Gary Ritzenthaler Email: gritz@ufl.edu Course channel: mmc3260.slack.com	Class meeting hours: TTH 12:50 - 1:40pm Room: Weimer Hall 3024 Lab hours: F 11:30am - 1:40pm (optional) Office Hours: W 5-6pm and by appointment
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“The future is already here. It’s just not evenly distributed.” -- William Gibson

This course explores the evolution, impact, and intricacies of communication on the Internet. The course explores current trends of Internet media and future possibilities, and on building a set of practical digital skills you might need in future online media markets. Subjects covered include digital identity and privacy issues, artificial intelligence, social media dynamics, technological advancements, and website development. The course aims to equip students with an overview of how communication practices influence and are influenced by the internet, preparing them for careers in media production and management, journalism, marketing, and related fields.

Note: Because this is a hybrid course, there is more detail about this course and the course assignments available in the course site on UF eLearning (Canvas). Please be sure to review all of that material, not just the material in this document. Here is a link to our course on Canvas: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/488980>

Course objectives

The course aims for the following primary objectives:

1. Learn the history and structure of the Internet and the World Wide Web, and explore current issues and future trends surrounding the Internet.
2. Analyze interrelated elements of identity, privacy, and ethical considerations in online forms of communication.
3. Survey technological advancements influencing online communication, and the impact of those advancements on personal and professional communication.
4. Gain practical skills in website development and management, focusing on WordPress.
5. Prepare for careers in journalism and media by applying course concepts to real-world scenarios.

Class meetings and office hours

Most of the required assignments for this course take place online in UF's eLearning learning platform (Canvas) and related tools, but **this class is not 100% online**. Class meetings will be held from 12:50pm-1:40pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and attendance is required for class meetings. **Your attendance and participation in class is a significant part of your final grade.** Attendance in this class follows the [University of Florida's attendance policies](#).

There will be lab hours on Friday from 11:30am - 1:40pm. During these hours I will go through all the steps needed to complete any project assignments for that week, along with examples.

Office hours will be held from 5-6 pm ET on Wednesdays, as a Huddle on the course Slack channel. Please join us to ask any questions you have about anything in the course. Your prof is happy to meet with you by appointment outside these hours if you have questions about your project or any of the material in this course. You can also contact your prof via the course Slack channel.

Readings and course materials

Textbooks

There is *no printed textbook* for the course .. but you will be reading and viewing material from the Web for each module. You will find that there are more pages to read online for this course than you may be used to in other courses; think of these Canvas pages as the textbook for the course.

Course videos

In addition to readings, almost all of the modules in this course will require you to watch some form of video instruction, using videos created by your instructor or selected videos from experts on that course topic. See the course website for more info.

Because you will be watching so much video, please be sure your computer is powerful enough to display the videos without problems. If you aren't sure about this, review the computer requirements for all College of Journalism and Communications students here:

<https://www.jou.ufl.edu/current-students/current-undergraduate/current-academics/equipment/>

Tech help

For all problems with Canvas and UF's online course materials, students should contact the UF tech helpdesk at <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/> For help with WordPress issues, students should check the excellent resources at: <https://wordpress.org/support/> before emailing your professor.

Course workload

One credit hour is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as “one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester.” For a three-credit class, this means that in this class you should expect to spend up to 3 hours per week watching course videos and/or reading assignments, and up to 6-9 hours per week studying for and completing quizzes, working on your project, and completing other course assignments.

Assignments

Here are the major graded elements that you will complete for this course. More details about each element of the course are available in the class eLearning (Canvas) site.

1. Quizzes, surveys, and assignments: 35%

For every module in this course there will be one or more small quizzes or assignments to test your knowledge of the material. This means there will be a lot of quizzes (probably around 15-20 total), but each quiz is only a small part of your overall grade.

2. Project : 30%

An independent study project will be a big part of your grade this semester. The goal of the project is to provide students with the opportunity to research or examine in depth an Internet-related topic that isn't covered through the modules in the course. The project includes research, a presentation or teaching activity, and a website. There will be much more about the project as we go through the semester.

3. Discussions and participation : 25%

Participation is crucial to this course, so part of your grade is devoted to how engaged you are with the course material and with your classmates. Elements of course participation will include attendance, class discussions, check-in meetings with your professor, and other measures of course participation.

4. Final exam : 10%

The final exam will cover material from the entire semester. More instructions on the exam and on how to use the proctoring software for the exam will be available during the last week of classes.

Deadlines

All quizzes will be due before 11:59pm on a Sunday evening. Assignments for the project usually will be due on Friday before 11:59pm. There is a printable calendar for the course available with the syllabus in Canvas. Deadlines for all activities will also be added to the Canvas course calendar.

Quizzes will not be accepted late unless you have gotten approval *before the quiz* from the professor. Assignments turned in late will be assessed a full letter grade deduction for each day they are late. Assignments will not be accepted after two days beyond the due date except via the written permission of the instructor. If you need to miss the due date for any assignment, communicate your concern as far in advance as possible. If you have a genuine emergency and advance notice is not possible, written documentation will be required. Assignment deadlines in Canvas are usually set for 11:59 p.m. If you submit after the deadline, your assignment is late.

Read the assignment instructions; many assignments will require you to post something online or write something in your project group's pages on Canvas. Assignments will not be accepted by email unless requested by the instructor.

Extra credit

There will be a small number of extra credit opportunities available in the course, which will be communicated via course announcements. Other than these options, students should not expect or request extra credit.

Grading

Grading will be based on the collection of course elements described above. More details about each graded element listed above are described in more detail in pages on the course site. Grades will be awarded based on the following scale.

Name:	Range:	
A	100 %	to 94.0%
A-	< 94.0 %	to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 %	to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 %	to 84.0%
B-	< 84.0 %	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 %	to 74.0%
C-	< 74.0 %	to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 %	to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 %	to 64.0%
D-	< 64.0 %	to 61.0%
F	< 61.0 %	to 0.0%

Information on current University of Florida grading policies can be found at:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

All grades are final unless questions about grades are addressed in writing within one week. For more information on how grades are calculated, there is a useful page on grades and grading in the University of Florida Undergrad Catalog.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at

<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

UF and Course Policies

Your future employers will expect professional behavior in your conduct and your work; your instructors and the University of Florida expect the same from you as students in this course. This section deals with the guidelines and requirements for these expectations.

University policy on accommodating students with disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

Students in distress

If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit <https://umatter.ufl.edu/> to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Professionalism

Students are expected to maintain the appropriate level of professionalism, cooperation, and language in all aspects of this course including, but not limited to, discussions, written assignments, presentations, and interactions with the instructor and colleagues.

Academic honesty

You should be familiar with the rules described in the University of Florida student honor code. <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community, and any example of academic dishonesty will be dealt with seriously. It will be reported to the student's department chair and to the university's Dean of Students—and it will result in a failing grade for the assignment, or, depending on the severity, for this course. A formal report of the offense will be filed with the university's Dean of Students.

If you are aware of academic dishonesty, please notify the instructor or contact the Student Honor Court (392-1631) or Cheating Hotline (392- 6999).

Given the above, academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting work done by another person for a class assignment.
- Collaborating with other students to complete quizzes or collect quiz answers.
- Submitting work you did for another course.
- Not giving credit for any idea, media resource, text or code that you use for a class assignment or the project.

Please note that the rules on plagiarism apply to online sources, images, and all online content. Stealing another person's content is painfully easy on the web, but when it comes to turning in work for this class, I expect you to credit anything you get from somebody else, whether that is images, code for projects, or ideas for written work. If you have any questions, it's always best to check with your instructor first.

Resources for understanding academic integrity

The University of Florida maintains several resources at the Dean of Students Office website to allow you to understand the requirements for what is expected of you as a student.

One of those resources is an excellent Academic Integrity module to help you understand

situations that would be in violation of the Student Honor Code. Your prof highly recommends that you take the time to complete this module.

Another good resource is the presentation on "Avoiding Plagiarism". It discusses the rules and guidelines around plagiarism and how to cite. Your instructors recommend that you take half an hour at the beginning of the semester to watch the video.

Course Outline:

(Note: this outline may need to be modified - please see the class calendar for the most current version of this outline)

- **Week 1:** Overview and Course Introduction
 - Course objectives and expectations
 - Course foundations
- **Week 2:** The History and structure of the Internet
 - Early development and milestones
 - Evolution of Internet infrastructure
- **Week 3:** Putting content on the Web
 - Web Hosting
 - Domain Set Up
 - Cloud

Website Development and Content Management

- **Week 4:** Basics of WordPress Development
 - Introduction to WordPress
 - Setting up a WordPress site
 - Customizing themes and plugins
 - Best practices for content creation and management for media professionals
- **Week 5:** HTML & CSS
 - Structure
- **Week 6:** HTML & CSS
 - Visual Design and Layout for Web

Privacy and Ethics in Online Communication

- **Week 7:** Digital identity and privacy
 - Data collection and surveillance
 - Legal Frameworks
 - Case studies
- **Week 8:** Ethical Considerations
 - Online behavior and digital citizenship

- Ethical dilemmas in internet communication

Digital Marketing

- **Week 9:** Digital Marketing
 - Visual Search
 - Organic
- **Week 10:** Digital Marketing
 - Paid
 - Social Media
 - Analytics

Artificial Intelligence and Communication

- **Week 11:** Introduction to AI in Communication
 - Definition and types of AI
 - Historical context
 - AI Applications in Online Communication
 - AI-driven content creation and curation
- **Week 12:** Ethical and Social Implications of AI
 - AI bias and fairness in media
 - The future of AI in the mass media
 - Chatbots and virtual assistants

Technological Advancements

- **Week 13:** Emerging Technologies in Communication
 - Virtual and augmented reality
 - Internet of Things (IoT)
- **Week 14:** Digital vs Analog World
 - Predictions and emerging trends in media
 - Preparing for future challenges in journalism
- **Week 15:** Project Work