

MMC 6660 – Comm, Tech & Society - Fall 2024

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Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Description

Communication and technology are key cornerstones of the human experience and can have a lasting impact on societies around the world. Rapid technological innovation has brought significant changes to the ways we communicate and interact. The technologies related to communication have created a new culture of communication at all levels and have significantly affected politics, economics, policy, education, well-being, etc.

This course studies the effects of communication technology on individuals and society, and the effect that society has on these technologies. It examines current issues related to the diffusion of new technologies, as well as the obstacles to widespread use of individual communication technologies.

Students in this course will analyze ethical questions and theories related to the use of emerging communications forms, and consider the factors related to successful technological deployment. Students will be required to look beyond “good/bad” classification of new communication technology and conduct in-depth interrogations of technology and the issues that surround it.

We will explore challenges relating to traditional and new media, information dissemination in societies, and the role of technology in changing our world and how we communicate.

Learning Outcomes

- Describe some of the major developments in the social history of communication technologies and their social/cultural consequences.
- Identify information and communication-related ethical and social issues in contemporary society and describe the various perspectives that characterize current debates on those issues.
- Discuss the development of the “information society” as distinguished from previous historical eras and formations, the views on its prevalence and significance, and its social, cultural and institutional manifestations.
- Examine new technology and forecast possible effects on society and the concomitant effects that society may have on the new technology.
- Communicate their ideas about technology using multiple modes of communication including, written, oral, visual, and group communication styles.
- Summarize how various technological advances have changed our views about communication and the way we communicate.
- Brainstorm, research, write and present on a topic of their choosing that relates to communication, society, and technology.

Discussion Proposals

Every week, the instructor will introduce a topic related to the effects of communication technology on individuals and society and/or the effects of society on these technologies. Students will use this lecture as a foundation for researching the topic and proposing a student-led discussion based on their research. Every student will submit a half-page proposal by 5 p.m. for their proposed discussion, as well as a list of 5-7 references. Each week, one student's proposal will be accepted, and they will be notified one day after the lecture (on Tuesday) that their proposal is accepted. The following week, the chosen student will present/lead a discussion in class about that topic.

Student-Led Lectures/Presentations and Class Discussion

The student-led lectures/presentations can run from 20-30 minutes. Twenty minutes is the minimum. This will be followed by a 30-minute or more discussion with the class that will be led by the presenter. A slide deck is required as part of the lecture/presentation (minimum of 5 slides). Slides must **not** be used to present extensive text. The presenter should **not** use slides as a crutch to read text to the class. Slides should consist of brief bullet points that the presenter will expound upon in their lecture. 3-4 bullet points per slide are acceptable. Full sentences and paragraphs of text are not acceptable. Charts, graphics, photos, short videos, and other visual elements are encouraged in the slide presentation. The discussion with the class can include interactive elements if relevant to the presentation.

Class Participation

Participation is not simply attending class. You are expected to fully participate in class. This means arriving prepared to discuss the topic(s) at hand. You are all expected to participate in class discussions by providing relevant discussion insight, being respectful of your classmates and their opinions and sharing any personal experience relevant to the discussion.

All students are required to contribute to the post-presentation discussion by asking thoughtful questions and/or providing thoughtful insights/reactions to the presentation. As such, prior to class, you should think of one or two discussion questions based on the week's student-led discussion topic. Participation in the student-led discussions will be noted by the instructor and will be a significant part of the participation score.

Unexcused absences from any class will affect the student's participation score.

Final Project (Report or Website)

In Week 6 of the semester, you will submit a topic to explore for a final project. Students will work in assigned teams. The topic must be related to communications technology and based on research. Students will submit their proposals in Week 6 by meeting with the instructor for approval. In Week 7, teams will present their topics to the class for additional feedback.

This research will culminate in both a paper or website project, **and** an in-class presentation. This final project will require the synthesis of class lectures, discussions, and outside research to analyze possible effects the new communication technology of your choice could have on society, and how members of society may, in turn, affect that technology. If the team chooses to write a paper, that paper will be 10-12 pages, not including the citations. If the team chooses to create a website, the website must include enough content to be comparable to the 10-12 page research paper expectation. I will be happy to discuss potential deliverables for the website option after I have approved your topic.

Use this as a guide for topics: As a business strategy manager in an advertising/PR agency, media organization, or corporation, you are responsible for anticipating and preparing for future issues that could affect your organization's managerial direction. This report will discuss an important topic that is likely to have a significant impact on your business in the near future.

You should address these questions: 1) why the issue is important for society, 2) who the main stakeholders are, 3) technology updates, and 4) what the effects are on society. You must also connect the issue to your expertise or major (advertising, public relations, journalism, etc.)

Finally, you will explore/report on solutions to the issue. Ideally, the final paper or website will include academic theories or models, but that is not mandatory.

Final Project (Presentation) All teams must also deliver an in-class 15-20 minute visual presentation. In this presentation, you will present your final report or website product to the class. In this presentation, you will clearly introduce the topic you chose and discuss its effects on individuals and society.

Good resources from which to find out about new technology include:

Wired, Tech Crunch, CNet News, Zdnet, Gizmodo, The New Scientist, OneZero, MIT Tech Review.

After each presentation, the team will lead a discussion about their topic. All students will be expected to ask questions during the discussion portion of the presentation.

Reaction Paper

Every student will submit a reaction paper at the end of the semester that will review/reflect on each of the student-led presentations/discussions. This will include a review/reflection of the student's own presentation/discussion. The expected volume of the reaction paper is 4 pages or more (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman). A decisive takeaway from the project presentation and class discussion is required. It is suggested that students work on the paper throughout the semester and build each reaction paragraph soon after each presentation/class discussion is finished.

You must answer each of the five questions below for each presentation/class discussion:

1. What is one takeaway from the presentation/discussion that you find to be most relevant?
2. Name one idea or aspect of the topic you agreed with. Explain why you agree.

3. Name one idea or aspect of the topic you disagreed with. Explain why you disagree.
4. Describe one ethical challenge the topic presents and offer one solution/idea to overcome it.
5. Think of one regulatory or legal challenge presented by the topic. Describe one potential option for overcoming that legal or regulatory challenge.

Assignments and Evaluation

Item	Point for Each Item	Frequency	Total Point
Kranzberg's Laws Assignment	55	1	55
Twitter and Teargas Assignment	55	1	55
Discussion Proposals	30	11	330
Lecture/Discussion Leading	150	1	150
In-class Participation	10	11	110
Final Project: report or website	130	1	130
Final Project: presentation	100	1	100
Reaction Paper	70	1	70
Total			1,000

Grade Scale

	Points		Percent		Percent		Percent
A	1,000-930	B	869-830	C	769-730	D	669-630
A-	929-900	B-	829-800	C-	729-700	D-	629-600
B+	899-870	C+	799-770	D+	699-670	E	599-0

Attendance

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1617/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences>

Attendance is mandatory. Anyone who misses two class days loses a full letter grade for the course. Because this course meets just one day per week for three periods back-to-back, missing even one class day is significant. Missing more than two class days/6 class periods is grounds to be prohibited from further attendance and assigned a failing grade by the professor. Absences count from the first class meeting.

Acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena), and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. All of these require documentation to not lose a letter grade in the course. Other reasons also may be approved.

Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence, if the absence is approved/excused by the instructor.

If a student does not participate in at least one of the first two class meetings of the course, has not contacted the department to indicate his or her intent, the student can be dropped from the course. Students must not assume that they will be dropped, however. The department will notify students if they have been dropped from the course.

Lateness is disruptive. Anyone coming late (after a 5-minute grace period) on more than one occasion loses a half-letter grade for the course.

Some Rules

1. Professionalism

Respect your classmates, their work and their views. Be polite, professional and respectful when expressing yourself. In addition, part of my job is to get you as ready for the professional industry as possible. Not following basic instructions disqualifies anyone from jobs, so, to get you ready for these expectations, you will have to follow every single instruction on any given assignment. Failure to do so will result in an automatic 20% deduction (of the maximum number of points possible) the first time, 50% the second time and 100% any time after that. Detailed instructions for all assignments are available on Canvas.

2. Preparation

As the adage goes, “by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail,” so review all relevant course material, check due dates, and review all assignment guidelines before completing any assignment or project. Ask questions if you have any doubts. I will always get back to you as soon as I can. However: If you have a question about an assignment, don’t text me at the last minute and expect an answer right away/before the deadline. I may not be available if I am attending to another class, in a meeting, or in an appointment in which I cannot be disturbed.

3. Deadlines

Remember there’s a reason “DEAD” makes up half the word “deadline.” **All** deadlines are firm, especially in the media industry. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on the date and time they are due. If you want to work ahead, you are welcome to. I will always try to provide feedback in a timely manner.

Exceptions may be made for extraordinary circumstances if you notify me before the due date. I am available by email at bgrogan@ufl.edu or Canvas Inbox. (Email is quicker.) Please reach out!

4. Feedback

Your work may be critiqued by your peers. While this can be uncomfortable, it helps you grow as you learn to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Of course, refer to rule #1 when you are doing the critiquing.

Course Content

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures as a method of note-taking if they so choose. Students **may not** publish recorded lectures in any format, including but not limited to print publications, websites, personal blogs or social media. Recorded lecture content may not be shared with other students who are either enrolled or not enrolled in the course.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the instructor presentation. A class lecture **does not include** lab sessions, student presentations, academic exercises involving solely student participation, quizzes, tests, exams, private conversations between students in class or between a student and the instructor during class.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section or another class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Honor Code

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 Semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, **I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.**” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Click here to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

For more information about academic honesty, contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 392-1261.

Diversity

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect all of our courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

In order to best carry out these ideals, we must exhibit respect, inclusiveness and an understanding for all people. Our differences will serve as a strength that we embrace as we discuss relevant mass communication and technologies throughout the semester. Exposure to different perspectives, values, ideals, and experiences will make us all better, more compassionate, and understanding. We all maximize our outcomes when we feel comfortable. Please let me know what I can do to make sure you feel respected and welcomed in this space.

You *will* encounter ideas and thoughts you do *not* agree with but understand that this is one of the central purposes of this course. Sometimes, we need to feel uncomfortable in order to step outside of our worlds and enter the realities of others. We seek to be challenged!

Accommodations For Students With Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first **register with the Disability Resource Center**. The Center will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. 352-392-8565
<https://disability.ufl.edu>

Online Course Evaluations

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/>.

Campus Resources: Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.

On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.