

## MMC 6936 Communication, Technology and Society



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Office Hours by appointment

This course looks to the past and to the future to explore the relationship between the media system, and other societal forces, including, but not limited to, technological development, economics, politics and demographics. Students will learn frameworks in which to evaluate the future of the media system.

Textbooks:

Ian Wilson and William K. Ralston, Jr., *The Scenario Planning Handbook: Developing Strategies in Uncertain Times* Thomson/Southwestern, 2006

Bill Kovarik, *Revolutions in Communication: Media History from Gutenberg to the Digital Age*, 2d edition. New York: Bloomsbury, 2016

*Other readings as assigned.*

*Powerpoint slides used in lectures, some assigned and recommended readings will be available on the course website available through the Canvas system in E-learning.*

Course objectives. At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe and explain the “media system,” including:
  - The internal and external influences on the development and use of Communication technologies.
  - How these interact to affect the development of the media systems, and are affected, themselves
- Identify, locate and use information sources useful in analyzing trends and issues in elements of the media system.

- Using qualitative and quantitative tools, analyze these influences as drivers of communication technology development, and the influence of communication technologies on the political, economic, and other systems within societies.
- In a team approach conduct research and write a scenario about a future state of an aspect of the media system.

#### Assignments and grading:

The Major assignment for this course will be a group project to write a scenario about the future state of a component of the media system. You will also present your work to the class. Examples might be Public Relations in a particular industry; reporting on political campaigns, or operating an electronic media company. Scenarios are used by public and private organizations to consider possible futures, and are particularly useful during periods of uncertainty, such as the current situation in media and communication. This exercise requires students to think about the various influences on the evolution of media and media technologies, but does not require the collection and analysis of “hard data,” a skill which students may not yet have. Scenarios are “stories,” which further enhances the student’s skills in communicating ideas. (40% of course grade)

#### Other graded assignments include:

- Locate and write a summary of an article from the popular or trade press that addresses one or more of the influences on the Spread of Communication Technologies. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the argument? Is enough information provided to support the argument? Are there other explanations that are not included, or that might be of even more importance? In addition to the written report, you will provide a brief oral presentation to the class. (15% of course grade)
- Locate and write a summary of an article from the popular or trade press that discusses the future of a media-related industry or job/profession. What does the author see as the nature of those changes? What are factors that are leading to those changes? How well does the author provide evidence to support the argument? Are there other explanations that are not included, or that might be of even more importance? In addition to the written report, you will provide a brief oral presentation to the class. (15% of course grade)
- Exams/Quizzes about reading assignments (20% of course grade)
- Class participation/attendance (10% of course grade)

#### **Student Responsibilities and Requirements:**

- You are expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance will be taken, and excessive absences will negatively affect your final grade

- All assignments are due when listed. Failure to meet this requirement will result in a lower grade, up to and including a “0” for that assignment.
- Assigned readings are to be completed prior to coming to class. Participation is part of the grading requirements, and this can only be accomplished if you are prepared to discuss the day’s topics.
- There will be a class list-serve (e-mail) that will be used to distribute important information and announcements about class assignments, quizzes, schedules, etc. You are responsible for maintaining an e-mail account that allows you to receive these messages, and to regularly check for messages.
- *UNIVERSITY POLICIES REGARDING PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED ON ALL ASSIGNMENTS. YOU ARE EXPECTED TO ABIDE BY THE UNIVERSITY’S HONOR CODE AND ACADEMIC HONESTY GUIDELINES. STUDENTS WHO VIOLATE THESE RULES WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF “E” AND BE REFERRED TO STUDENT JUDICIAL AFFAIRS*

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."

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

Individual attention to the particular needs of each student, and monitoring of each student's progress is often difficult **unless you make me aware of a special problem**. If you are unclear about material in lectures and/or readings, if you have other questions, or you need assistance please see me as soon as possible.

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. Please contact Disability Services if you have any documented special needs that could affect your performance in this class. Email: [accessuf@dso.ufl.edu](mailto:accessuf@dso.ufl.edu) Voice: 352-392-8565 x200

University policies regarding grades can be found at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

### Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> . Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results> .

### Course Outline (Schedule Subject to Change)

August 23-25 Introduction: The Interplay of Technology, Society, Individuals, and the Environment

Read: “How Paper Shaped Civilization,” “Humans Once Opposed Coffee and Refrigeration,” “How Technology Disrupted the Truth,” and “What Impact Will Emerging Technologies Have on Society?”

View, *The Day the Universe Changed: A Matter of Fact*

August 30-September 1 Introduction to Scenarios

Read: Ralston and Wilson, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, Appendix A

“The Use and Abuse of Scenarios”

September 6-8 Resources for Finding Information (Sept 8, April Hines, UF librarian)

September 13-22 What Accounts for Media Evolution and Revolution?

1. Influences on the Spread of Communication Technologies
  - a. Technology
    - i. Ability to solve technical problems
    - ii. Overly fancy solutions to simple problems
  - b. Finance and Economics
  - c. Policy and Regulation
  - d. Management and Business

- i. Individual or Corporate Leadership
  - ii. Resistance/Adaptability of Existing Media
- e. Consumers and Their Needs
  - i. Functional Alternatives
  - ii. Diffusion and Adoption Patterns

Read A. Michael Noll, *The Evolution of Media* Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2007. Part IV, “Thinking Strategically”

Read Kovarik Parts 1 and 2

September 27-29 Diffusion of Innovations

Read: Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Chapters 1, 5, 6, 7, 11

October 4-13 The Natural Life Cycle of New Media Evolution

Forecasting Approaches

- a. Strategic Planning
- b. SWOT
- c. Porter’s Competitive Strategy
- d. Gartner Hype Cycle
- e. Examples of Quantitative Forecasts
- f. Qualitative Techniques
  - i. Historical Analogy
  - ii. Scenarios

Read: Kovarik, Parts 3 and 4

“The Long and Winding Road to 2025”

**October 13 Article 1 paper due**

October 18 Exam Preparation

**October 20 Exam**

October 25-December 6 Scenarios

***November 10 Article 2 paper due***

***(Presentations November 29-December 6)***

Read: Wilson and Ralston, Parts 2, 3, 4, 5

Woody Wade, *Scenario Planning: A Field Guide to the Future*, Chapter 2, “How To,” and Chapter 3, “Case Studies: The Real World”

Final Paper Due: Noon Wednesday December 14