

New Media and a Democratic Society

MMC 6612 | Fall 2018 | Section 16733

Thursday periods 6–8 (12:50–3:50 p.m.) in Weimer 1090

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Office phone: (352) 392-8456 (NOTE: Email is better. Much better.)

Website: <https://mmc6612.wordpress.com/>

Course Description

This course examines the relationships between communication technologies and democracy, not only in the United States but elsewhere as well. Communication technologies such as the Internet and mobile devices do not automatically lead to or improve democracy, but they do contribute to changes in the society as a whole. Communication technologies make possible new ways of knowing and taking action.

We will examine how changes related to communication media might enhance or curtail democracy, and democratic participation, with a particular emphasis on the relationships among the media, the public, and the government in a democracy. Please note that communication media include TV, Internet, printed publications and more. NGOs (nonprofits) play a role in today's democracies, as do traditional media organizations such as CNN and *The New York Times*. *Note:* This is not a course in political communication.

Prerequisites: None

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to identify and discuss, from an informed and up-to-date position, implications and possible consequences of various newer communication tools and systems, such as social media, YouTube, surveillance technologies, copyright law, the mobile Internet, and crowdsourcing.

Attendance and Attitude

Students are expected to show respect for one another and for the instructor by arriving before the class starting time. Attendance is taken. ***Lateness and absences will result in a lower final grade.*** If you have been absent, you are responsible for finding out about any missed material

by consulting another student and/or going to the instructor's office hours. These matters will not be handled via email.

Mobile devices must be turned OFF and placed out of sight during class. Do not check text messages, social media, email, etc., during class, as your instructor considers this quite rude and therefore grounds for disciplinary action. Moreover, you will miss things if you're checking your phone. Give your full and undivided attention to anyone who is speaking in class, including your fellow students.

Students may use a laptop computer during class. However, if you are seen checking social media or any other sites unrelated to the immediate topics being discussed in class, penalties may be imposed. Penalties range from a warning (first offense) to grade point deductions. It is hoped you will get the most value possible out of your in-class time.

UF Attendance Policies

> <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Course Deadlines and Makeup Work

Late assignments are not accepted unless an emergency can be documented. This means that an assignment submitted late is graded as a zero. Assignments are not accepted via email unless requested by the instructor. If an illness or a personal emergency prevents you from completing an assignment on time, advance notice and written documentation are required. If advance notice is not possible because of a genuine emergency, written documentation will be required. No work for "extra credit" is accepted.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty of any kind is not tolerated in this course. It will be reported to the Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Studies — and *it will result in a failing grade for this course.* A formal report of the offense will be filed with the university's Dean of Students.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- Collaborating with another person, through any medium, on an assignment that is supposed to be completed by you alone.
- Using **any work done by another person** and submitting it for a class assignment. This violation includes copying someone else's text and offering it as your own, and also translating text from another language.
- Submitting work you did for another class or course.
- Copying or paraphrasing text without complete and correct attribution.
- Copying text without enclosing it in quotation marks and attributing it.

We expect graduate students to:

- Think for themselves and write their own thoughts in a clear manner.
- Refrain from copying/pasting text.
- Carefully cite, quote, and attribute any material taken from any source so it is absolutely clear to the reader that such material is NOT a student's own thoughts but rather the work of someone else.
- Leave no doubt in a reader's mind as to what is original and what comes from other sources.

In the UF Graduate Catalog, in the General Regulations section, you can find details about "Academic Integrity," "Academic Honesty," and the "Student Conduct Code" under those headings.

UF Graduate Catalog, General Regulations

> <http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=2486>

UF Student Conduct Code

> <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Required Reading

There are no required books for this course. Weekly readings from scholarly journals are required. These will be provided in ARES course reserves, usually in PDF format.

ARES Course Reserves

> <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/>

Course Requirements

Read this entire document in the first week of classes. If anything is not clear to you, ask for clarification before the end of Drop/Add (August 28, 2018). This syllabus is a contract between you and me.

Please make sure to check the course website at least once a week. Specific details about each week's blog post will be published there. If you rely only on a printed or downloaded copy of the course schedule, you may miss a change in the schedule.

> WEBSITE: <https://mmc6612.wordpress.com/>

Weekly blog posts

Each blog post is described in the assignment for the week. **The blog posts are NOT simple reactions to the readings.** Each post must be 300 to 500 words long. Demonstrate your understanding of the material. Show that you have both read and understood any assigned reading or viewing. Report as instructed on any activities assigned. Required: A total of 10 blog posts. See the website for details.

Weekly blog comments

Blog posts seem pointless if no one is reading them, and blog comments show a blogger that someone is paying attention. Thus each week you are asked to comment on three of the posts by your fellow students. **These comments count for 36 percent of your grade for the course.** See the website for details.

Topic presentation

The topic presentations are based on the week's topic. For the class meeting in which a student is assigned the topic presentation, that student is responsible for elaborating on and enhancing the topic. The presentation should inspire a class discussion *beyond* what has already been covered in the weekly blog post. Each topic presentation requires a reference list relevant to the topic. The **reference list** will be emailed to the instructor one week before the presentation. Each student will be a topic presenter once during the semester. The topic presenter will lead the class in a **discussion** following his or her presentation. There are several discrete requirements for this assignment. See the website for details.

Class attendance and participation

Points will be subtracted if you miss more than one (1) class meeting, are chronically late, leave class early, or show inattention. There are 10 possible points, which are 10 percent of your final course grade. Everyone starts with 10 points. It's up to you whether you lose any points. **Participation is expected;** points will be subtracted if you do not contribute. We will abide by UF's attendance policies (see link on page 2 of this document).

- For each class meeting you do not attend at all: -1 point
One (1) missed class is excused (no points taken); no formal excuse is needed.
- For chronic lateness—
 - If you have been marked late 3 times or more: -1 point
 - If you have been marked late 6 times or more: -2 points
- If you need to leave class early, please inform your instructor in advance. Please be prepared to stay for the entire class meeting each week, even though it is likely we will finish early.
- For repeatedly showing inattention, e.g. checking your phone, or viewing unrelated websites on your laptop: You will be warned about this. After two warnings, a third incident will be -1 point. Subsequent incidents will result in more deductions.

- Making comments and asking questions should be a normal part of any graduate course. There might be a week or two when you have nothing to say, but you will be warned if you don't contribute anything week after week. After a warning, a week when you do not participate will be -0.5 point. Subsequent incidents will result in further deductions.

Grades

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|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Weekly blog posts | 20 points |
| Weekly blog comments | 36 points |
| Reference list | 8 points |
| Topic presentation | 20 points |
| Discussion leadership | 6 points |
| Attendance and participation | 10 points |
| TOTAL | 100 points |

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|---------------|----|--------------------|----|
| 92–100 points | A | 72–77 points | C |
| 90–91 points | A– | 70–71 points | C– |
| 88–89 points | B+ | 68–69 points | D+ |
| 82–87 points | B | 62–67 points | D |
| 80–81 points | B– | 60–61 points | D– |
| 78–79 points | C+ | 59 points or fewer | E |

UF Policies about Student Grades

> <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

UF Dates (Fall 2018)

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|---------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Classes begin | Aug. 22 | Sept. 3 | Labor Day |
| Drop/Add | Aug. 22–28 | Nov. 2–3 | Homecoming |
| Classes end | Dec. 5 | Nov. 12 | Veterans Day |
| Final exams | Dec. 8–14 | Nov. 21–24 | Thanksgiving |

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting accommodations 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 accommodations. Accommodations must be discussed in private, not in the classroom.

UF Disability Resource Center

> <https://drc.dso.ufl.edu/>

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/>

Evaluations are typically open during the final weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific dates when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>

Course Schedule

Note that many important details are on the website — <https://mmc6612.wordpress.com/> — and do not appear herein. **Links to assigned readings, videos, etc., are on the Course Schedule page of the website.**

Week 1 | Aug. 22–25

Introduction to the course. Expectations, assignments, deadlines, etc.

Week 2 | Aug. 26–Sept. 1

Media, power, democracy, and the internet. The obligations of citizens.
Blog post 1 due.

Week 3 | Sept. 2–8

Freedom of speech, press, and assembly. How are rights guaranteed?
Blog post 2 due.

Week 4 | Sept. 9–15

Your professor will be at a conference this week. Class will not meet.

Week 5 | Sept. 16–22

Civil discussion online: Who speaks? Who is heard? Net neutrality.
Blog post 3 due.

Week 6 | Sept. 23–29

Organizing political movements and hate groups online.
Blog post 4 due.

Week 7 | Sept. 30–Oct. 6

Privacy in a digital world, privacy and corporate power. Who controls information about you?
Government surveillance of citizens. Privacy as a human right.

Blog post 5 due.

Week 8 | Oct. 7–13

Digital outlaws, hackers and hacktivists, hacker culture, open source, file sharing.

Blog post 6 due.

Week 9 | Oct. 14–20

Copyright, creativity, and intellectual property concerns.

Blog post 7 due.

Week 10 | Oct. 21–27

Algorithms and their consequences.

Blog post 8 due.

Week 11 | Oct. 28–Nov. 3

Implications of the mobile Internet and the Digital Divide.

Blog post 9 due.

Week 12 | Nov. 4–10

Public diplomacy and U.S. foreign policy toward online freedom of speech.

Blog post 10 due.

Week 13 | Nov. 11–17

Crowdsourcing: What it is, what it can be used for, how it works. (Note: NOT crowdfunding.)

Blog post 11 due.

Week 14 | Nov. 18–24

Thanksgiving is this week. Class will not meet.

Week 15 | Nov. 25–Dec. 1

Viral online media; what is “virality”? How are messages propagated?

Blog post 12 due.

Dec. 2–5

No class this week. Have a nice break!

Weekly topics are subject to change. Please check the course website for the latest updates.