MMC 6660: Communication, Technology and Society

Spring 2022

College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida

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Place: Weimer Hall, Room 1090
Day and Time: Mondays, Periods 9-11 (4:05 - 7:05 p.m.)

Instructor: Dr. Roxane Coche
E-Mail: rcoche@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Mondays 8:30-10:30 a.m. or by appointment
⇒ Email or text me *at any time*! My cell number is on Canvas.
Canvas Link: https://ufl.instructure.com
Course Text: None – Readings available online

Overview

We live in a world of rapid technological innovation, which has brought significant changes in the ways we communicate and interact with forms of media. In fact, the technologies related to communication have created a culture surrounding how we see, hear, read and use information, and have significantly impacted politics, economics, policy, etc. This course studies the impacts of communication technology on individuals and society, and the impact 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 the various 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 tech and the issues that surround it.

Course Learning Objectives

Students successfully completing the course will be able to:

- 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.

- Describe and discuss various theories related to communication technologies and be able to recognize the influence of these theories in current debates and discussions.
- Examine new technology and forecast possible impacts on society and the concomitant impact 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.

Some Rules

1. Professionalism

Respect your classmates, their work and their views. Be polite, professional and respectful when expressing yourself. In addition, I believe 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 old adage goes, "by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail," so do the required reading and listen to the lectures before completing any assignment, story or project.
Ask questions if you have any doubts. I check my emails and texts way more than recommended by mental health professionals. I will always get back to you as soon as I can. If I seem to have forgotten for whatever reason (it doesn't happen often, but it might), message me again. You are not bugging me by staying on top of things. **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 be sleeping or showering at that time. I may use technology in unhealthy fashion (or so *they* say), but I am still a human being.

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 get 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, text, or call (almost) on a daily basis, 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.

5. Course Content

In the interest of honest and frank discussions, all materials I post on Canvas or other instructing tools (lectures, comments of guest speakers, discussion boards) are strictly off the record. This means that they may not be published in any format, either in a print publication or on a website, personal blog or social media.

6. Honor Code

All students are expected to follow the University of Florida Honor Code. The full text of the Honor Code can be found on the Dean of Students Office's website. Any violation of the academic integrity expected will result in a minimum academic sanction of a grade of zero on the appropriate assignment, and the student being reported to the journalism department. Note that plagiarism specifically is unforgivable in journalism. It essentially ends a journalist's career.

7. Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, https://disability.ufl.edu) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this process as early as possible in the semester.

8. Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on a minimum of 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. They typically open during the last three weeks of the semester. Announcements will be made giving specific times when they are open. Summary results are available at the URL above.

Course Grading

You will be graded in accordance with UF policies out of 600 points:

Evaluation Components	Note	Points Per Component	% of Total Grade
Reflections (4)	–	50 points each = 200 points total	33%
Class Participation (13)	You will receive a grade out of 5 each week. All absences will result in a grade of zero in this category. The lowest three (of 13) will be dropped.	5 points each = 50 points total	8%
Discussion Leadership (1)	–	100 points	17%
Project/Presentation (1)	–	250 points	42%
Total	**–**	**600 pts**	**100%**

Reflections

You will produce four (4) reflections of the readings. Each should be comparable to at least two double-spaced pages of text. Responses should critically reflect on the readings of the week the work is turned in and incorporate topics of the prior weeks as appropriate. In any given week, syntheses should be turned in before the start of class (e.g., if you are synthesizing the readings of week 4, you must turn in your work by 4:05 p.m. on Monday that week).

You may seek to incorporate the tools of whatever platform you choose into your responses, i.e. gifs, music, animations, etc.

You must turn in at least one reflection every three weeks until you have written four. So, the first one must be turned in by Week 4, the second one by Week 7, the third one by Week 11, and the last one by Week 14. If you want to work ahead to be done early (e.g., write all reflections in the first four weeks), you are welcome to do so.

Class Participation

Participation is not simply attending class. You are expected to fully participate in class. This means having completed all assigned readings prior to class and 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. As such, you should think of **one or two discussion questions** based on the weekly readings/videos for every class session.

Discussion Leadership

More information about discussion leaderships will be provided in the first couple of weeks of class, based on the number of students enrolled.

Project/Presentation

In the beginning of the semester, you will choose a topic to explore for a final project. The topic must be related to communications technology and based on research, but the format is yours to decide (research paper, website, video, podcast, ad campaign, etc.). This research will culminate in both a paper or project and an in-class presentation. This project will require the synthesis of class readings, discussions, and outside research to analyze possible impacts the new comm tech of your choice could have on society, and how members of society may, in turn, impact that tech. All students must do a visual presentation. Good resources from which to find about new technology include: Wired, Tech Crunch, CNet News, Zdnet, Gizmodo, The New Scientist, OneZero, MIT Tech Review.

Final grades will be calculated with the following table:

		550-600 points	A	540-549 points	A-
520-539 points	B+	500-519 points	B	480-499 points	B-
460-479 points	C+	440-459 points	C	420-439 points	C-
400-419 points	D+	380-399 points	D	360-379 points	D-
359 points and under	F				

Tentative Course Outline

History and Definitions	
Week 1	Intro – The major questions – Determinism
Week 2 – NO CLASS	**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY**
Week 3	Communication technology in society
Technological determinism: Technology Influencing Society	
Week 4	Diffusion of Innovations & Uses and Grats
Week 5	"Digital colonialism"
Week 6	Identity formation and the social construction of reality
Social determinism: Society Influencing Technology	
Week 7	Technological innovation is social
Week 8	Developing AI
Week 9 – NO CLASS	**SPRING BREAK**
Week 10	International Case study
Ethical, Social, and Political Issues of Technology	
Week 11	Solving societal problems via technology
Week 12	Surveillance and privacy
Week 13	Media, public opinion and democracy
Week 14	Final presentations
Week 15	Class wrap-up

Additional policies and information

1. Health and wellness resources on campus

- *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.

2. 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.