

University of Florida
College of Journalism and Communications

Computer-Mediated Communication
MMC 6936 Section 6802 – Spring 2022
Tuesday 5:10-8:10
FLG 0275

Instructor: Kun Xu

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Office location: Weimer 3065

Office Hours: Monday 4:00-5:00 in office or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Since the 1970s, computer-mediated communication (CMC) has developed for more than 40 years. Starting as a direct comparison to face-to-face communication, CMC theories have offered important insights for our understanding of how certain technology features in computing environments deliver messages, how people form bonds with each other online, and how unique networks are created through computing systems. The concept of “mediation” has challenged some of the basic assumptions of how we form relationships with each other. This course will cover topics such as interpersonal and hyper-personal models of communication, spatial and social presence, online dating, virtual reality, augmented reality, media addiction, location-based mobile media, and future CMC development. This course is a seminar-based course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, your success in this class will be indicated by how well you can:

- Have a deep understanding of how mediated communication affects communication process
- Discuss and critically evaluate various perspectives/theoretical frameworks in mediated communication
- Develop your own perspectives and original ideas about mediated communication phenomena

Required Readings:

All readings including links to online sources will be available on Canvas (elearning.ufl.edu).

Recommended readings:

Sundar, S. (2015). *The handbook of the psychology of communication technology*. Chichester, England: Wiley Blackwell.

Outcomes Assessment:

Class discussion and participation – 20%

Leading discussion – 15%

Weekly documents – 10%

Paper review – 15%

Final research paper and presentation – 40%

Grading Criteria:

A = an earned grade that represents outstanding and exceptional work; keep working and submit to conferences/journals

B = an earned grade indicating competent, above average work; need some conceptual modification for conference submission and journal submission

C = an earned grade for work that is average and/or merely fulfills the basics of the assignment and lacks some important connection to the course material; need a thorough revision to enhance the work.

F = an earned failing grade for late work, poorly executed work, plagiarism or other failure to adhere to the requirements of academic integrity.

ASSIGNMENTS

Class discussion and participation

- You must read assigned readings completely and participate in class discussion each week. Discussion is a very important part of your learning process.

Leading discussion

- Students will assume the role of discussion leaders twice in the semester. The topics will be assigned at the beginning of the semester. A discussion leader is responsible for preparing discussion questions and a few insights on the articles. The leader is also in charge of the opening prompts on weekly documents. The discussion leader should assume that everyone has read the articles and is prepared for discussion. The discussion should lead to better understanding of mediated communication theory and research. When leading discussion, try to synthesize or integrate other readings assigned for this class or ideas from outside this class.

Weekly Document

- To facilitate understanding of the readings, we're going to have a rotating group of students lead discussion on each week's readings. Students in charge of leading class discussion for that week should post opening prompts onto our class document (Google) by Sunday night. The content of the post should include the major points of the readings, questions that you may want to discuss with students, any sentence/argument that you feel confused about or raises questions related to other communication concepts/theories/methods.
- The entire class will then be required to work on the document, posting and commenting on passages, posting links to related articles/points, concepts, theories, and engaging with discussion prompts by others. These comments should not be simple summary of the readings, but should critically reflect your major arguments, theoretical, and empirical questions, methodological issues, and directions for future research. Ideally, we'll come out of this class with a working document that can be a useful resource about ideas/literature moving forward. Students need to pick at least one discussion question

and finish posting comments by Tuesday noon. The discussion leader and I will pick some of the questions to discuss in class.

- Here are some general ideas about what you can look for as you read.
 - What are the main theoretical constructs under investigation
 - How are these concepts being tested (operationalized) in the empirical research
 - Issues you did not understand within the theories and/or readings
 - Portions of the readings you especially agree with/disagree with
 - Broader theoretical issues raised by the readings
 - Empirical and/or theoretical questions raised by the readings
 - How the readings relate to or contradict previous theory and research in the field
 - What are the implications (practical or theoretical) of the conclusions reached by the authors?
 - Are there any flaws in the studies and/or arguments being made?
 - Are you convinced?
 - What future research is needed in this area?
 - What questions and/or concerns occurred to you as you read?

Paper Review

- Approaches to computer-mediated communication derive from multiple areas (e.g., interpersonal communication, psychology, information science, social constructive perspectives). As our class will primarily focus on the technology perspective, we need more lens to looking into CMC. This paper review requires you to first look for an interpersonal communication theory, then find an appropriate journal article that applies the theory in a new media context. Present to us what this theory is about, what the research context is, what the research questions and hypotheses are, what some of the major results are, how similar or different it is when applied to the new media context, and how this theory may be further developed/expanded (theory contribution). Also present to us some of the limitations of this study. Write a 2-page single spaced summary of this article and deliver the presentation to teach us about the theory.

Final Research Paper/Proposal

- Write a full research paper/proposal related to any mediated communication phenomena. If you are working on a full research paper, it should be about 20 – 30 pages including references, tables, and figures. If you are working on a research proposal, it should be about 10-14 pages long including introduction, literature review, hypotheses/research questions, methods, and references. Use APA format. You can take any approach to your study (e.g., quant, qual, critical, etc.).
- You can choose to coauthor with classmates. But in that case, you should submit a full research paper that can be considered for conference presentation. You can only collaborate with at most 2 classmates (i.e., three authors in total).
- Research topics and outline will be due week 8, given students 2 months to complete the paper.
- Here is a general guideline about the structure of your paper:
 - Purpose and rational of the study
 - Literature review: What needs to be investigated? What research gap existed in prior research? What is the logic of your proposed hypotheses and RQs?

- Hypotheses and research questions
- Research methods: Include sample, procedures, measures, data analysis plans etc.
- Discussion (for a full research paper): What do the results mean? What can you conclude based on results? What theoretical contribution is there?

COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Etiquette

- The class does not tolerate harassment. Harassment consists of abusive behavior directed toward an individual or group because of race, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental disability, including learning disability, mental retardation and past/present history of a mental disorder.
- Act professional when contacting the instructor. For example, emails should include subjects. Put the course name in the subject line. Do not expect an immediate answer to email questions. I try best to reply within 48 hours.

Academic Honesty/Policy on Plagiarism

Honesty is expected in all assignments, exams, and presentations. All writing submitted to this course must be your original work. Use the American Psychological Association (APA) citation format including quoting and paraphrasing in your writing. **Plagiarism is the most extreme form of academic dishonesty and will result in failing this course and possible removal from the university.** Plagiarism includes cheating on assigned work, submitting the same paper for two courses, buying papers, turning in someone else's work for your own use.

Grade Appeals

If a student believes he/she have legitimate grounds on which to dispute a grade on a particular assignment, the student may submit a formal written appeal to the instructor within 10 days of receiving the original grade. The appeal must provide rationale for why the current grade is inaccurate. Feelings are not criteria. Once the student has submitted a formal grade appeal and all the supporting evidence including the graded copy of the assignment in question, the instructor will carefully examine the assignment and provide a new grade. Once the instructor has entered the final grade to the university system, that grade will not be changed under any circumstances.

Accommodations for Special Needs:

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a documented Disability, including special accommodations for access to technology resources and electronic instructional materials required for the course, should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Please

contact me to discuss the specific situation by the end of the second week of classes or as soon as practical.

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/>.”

Tentative Course Schedule

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Note</u>
1	1/11	Introduction to course	
2	1/18	Nature of CMC theory and research	
3	1/25	Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyper-personal (1)	
4	2/1	Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyper-personal (2)	
5	2/8	Social identity model of deindividuation effects	
6	2/15	Social presence and spatial presence	
7	2/22	Presence and virtual reality (1)	
8	3/1	Presence and virtual reality (2)	
	3/8	Spring break	
9	3/15	Augmented reality and location-based mobile media	
10	3/22	Media addiction	
11	3/29	Online dating and online deception	
12	4/5	CMC 3.0: Future CMC	
13	4/12	Work on final paper	
14	4/19	Presentation and Final Paper Submission	

Note: Changes that occur to the syllabus will be announced in class or on Canvas.