

New Media and a Democratic Society

MMC 6612 | Fall 2015 | Section 1F08 | 1078 Weimer Hall
Wednesdays 3–6 p.m. (periods 8, 9 and 10)

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WEBSITE: <http://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 will 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 the media include TV, Internet, printed publications and more. NGOs (nonprofits) also play a role in today's democracies. *Note:* This is not a course in political communication.

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, blogging, YouTube, surveillance technologies, changing conditions of copyrights, the mobile Internet, and crowdsourcing.

Attendance and Attitude

Students are expected to show respect for one another and for the instructor. Attendance and arriving on time for class are necessary. **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 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. **Give your full and undivided attention to anyone who is speaking in class, including your fellow students.**

Students are permitted to use a laptop computer or tablet during class. However, if you are seen checking social media or any other sites unrelated to the immediate topics being discussed in class, penalties will be imposed. Penalties range from a warning (first offense) to grade point deductions. Please give your full attention to the class while you are in the classroom.

UF Attendance Policies

> <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Course Deadlines and Makeup Work

Late assignments are not accepted. 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. 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 this college’s Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Studies AND to the university’s Dean of Students—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:

- Copying and pasting the words or images of others and presenting them as your own.
- Using any work done by another person and submitting it for a class assignment.
- Submitting work you did for another class.

UF Student Honor Code

> <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

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.

UF Disability Resource Center

> <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Required Readings

Students are required to read assigned scholarly articles and other texts pertinent to the weekly discussion topic. Journal articles are listed in the online syllabus (on the Course Schedule page) and are available (free) through the UF library’s 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 me for clarification before Aug. 31, 2015. This syllabus is a contract between you and me.

Please make sure to check the course website at least once a week. If you rely only on a printed or downloaded copy, you may miss a change in the schedule.

> WEBSITE: <http://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 reading assignment. For the class meeting in which a student is assigned the topic presentation, that student is responsible for elaborating on and explaining the reading. Each topic presentation must include at least three websites and/or online posts relevant to the assigned reading. Each student will be a topic presenter once during the semester. 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. **Participation is expected;** points will be subtracted if you do not contribute. Your assessment of the in-class presentations

UF Dates (Fall 2015)

Classes begin	Aug. 24	Sept. 7	Labor Day
Drop/Add	Aug. 24–28	Nov. 6–7	Homecoming
Classes end	Dec. 9	Nov. 11	Veterans Day
Final exams	Dec. 12–18	Nov. 25–28	Thanksgiving

Grades and Grading Policies

Weekly blog posts	20 points
Weekly blog comments	36 points
Topic presentation	23 points
Presentation assessments	11 points
Class attendance and participation	10 points
TOTAL	100 points

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/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

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 and Required Readings

Please note that many important details are on the website (<http://mmc6612.wordpress.com/>) and do not appear herein. **Links to videos, etc., are on the Course Schedule page of the website.**

Week 1 | Aug. 26

Introduction to the course.

Week 2 | Sept. 2

Blog post 1 due. READ Ekström (2008) AND Barger & Barney (2004). Media, power, democracy, and the Internet; the obligations of citizens.

Week 3 | Sept. 9

Blog post 2 due. READ Valenzuela, Arriagada & Scherman (2012) AND Youmans & York (2012). Political and revolutionary activism, protest movements, political action movements.

Week 4 | Sept. 16

Blog post 3 due. READ Marwick & boyd (2011) AND Moon & Hadley (2014). Twitter as a source of information; credibility; celebrity. **NOTE: Start work on this blog assignment EARLY.**

Week 5 | Sept. 23

Guest speaker: Aaron Beveridge, doctoral student, UF English Department. Aaron will present and explain MassMine, a free tool for extracting large datasets from social media for research and analysis. Professor McAdams will be attending a conference. No blog post.

Week 6 | Sept. 30

Blog post 4 due. READ Fuchs (2012) AND Taddicken (2014). WATCH TED Talks: Kovacs (2012). Privacy in a digital world. Privacy as a human right.

Week 7 | Oct. 7

Blog post 5 due. READ Berger & Milkman (2012) AND Alhabash & McAlister (2015) AND (*very short*) Peretti (2013). Viral online media; what is “virality”?

Week 8 | Oct. 14

Blog post 6 due. READ Leung & Lee (2014) AND Bennett (2012). Participation, collective action, political mobilization, alternative media.

Week 9 | Oct. 21

Blog post 7 due. READ Shirky (2011) AND Comor & Bean (2012). Freedom of speech, press, and assembly; public diplomacy and U.S. foreign policy toward online freedom of speech.

Week 10 | Oct. 28

Blog post 8 due. WATCH the video *RIP: A Remix Manifesto* (1 hr. 28 min.) AND also WATCH TED Talks: Ferguson (9 min. 43 sec.). Remix culture, copyright, and intellectual property concerns.

Week 11 | Nov. 4

Blog post 9 due. READ Söderberg (2013) and John (2014). Digital outlaws, hackers and hacktivists, hacker culture, open source, file sharing.

Week 12 | Nov. 11

Veterans Day, a UF holiday. Class will not meet. No blog post.

Week 13 | Nov. 18

Blog post 10 due. READ Richards (2013) AND West (2013). Government surveillance of citizens; the revelations of Edward Snowden.

Week 14 | Nov. 25

Thursday is Thanksgiving. Class will not meet on Wednesday. No blog post.

Week 15 | Dec. 2

Blog post 11 due. READ Brabham (2012) AND Asmolov (2015). Crowdsourcing: What it is, what it can be used for, how it works.

Week 16 | Dec. 9

Blog post 12 due. READ Lin et al. (2013) AND Wasserman (2011). Implications of the mobile Internet.
Course summary and conclusions.

Please note that Dec. 9 is a normal class meeting day. If you are not present, it will count as an absence.