New Media and a Democratic Society

MMC 6612 | Fall 2013 | Section 1F08 | 1078 Weimer Hall
Wednesdays 3–6 p.m. (periods 8, 9 and 10)

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Office: 3049 Weimer Hall
Office hours: Mondays 1–3 p.m. | And by appointment
Office phone: (352) 392-8456 (NOTE: E-mail is better. Much better.)
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. New communication technologies, such as the Internet, will not automatically lead to or improve democracy, but they do contribute to changes in the society as a whole. We will examine how changes related to communication media might enhance or curtail democracy, with a particular emphasis on the relationships among the press, the public, and the government in a democracy. Please note that the press includes TV, Internet, and other media. NGOs (nonprofits) also play a role in today's democracies. 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 e-mail.

Mobile devices must be turned OFF during class. Do not check text messages, e-mail, Facebook, 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 not permitted to use a computer during class unless instructed to do so.

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 e-mail 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 the Dean of this college, and to the Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Studies—and it will result in a failing grade for this course.

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


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/](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/](https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/)

Recommended Books

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th ed. (You are required to follow APA style for all your citations and reference lists in this course.)

Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M., & Haridakis, P. M. (2009). *Communication Research: Strategies and Sources*, 7th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (If you are a new master’s student, this book will help you develop your research skills to meet the expectations of the Graduate Faculty.)
Course Requirements

Please make sure to check the course website at least once a week. If you rely only on a printed 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. Each post should be 300 to 500 words long. Do not exceed 500 words. 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 (3) 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, with prompts from the professor. Each topic presentation must include at least three websites and/or blogs relevant to the assigned reading. Each student will be a topic presenter once during the semester. See the website for details.

Media use diary
For one week, you will log all your media activity each day. Once your week begins, you will make one blog post each day (this is in addition to any other blog posts required) for seven days. Ideally you’ll post at the end of your day, but you might choose to post first thing in the morning (about the previous day). 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.

Grades and Grading Policies

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly blog posts</td>
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<td>Weekly blog comments</td>
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<td>Topic presentation</td>
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<td>Media use diary</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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UF Policies about Student Grades
> [https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx)

**Course Evaluations**

At the end of the course, 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](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/](https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/)

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**Course Schedule and Required Readings**

Please note that many important details are on the website— [http://mmc6612.wordpress.com/](http://mmc6612.wordpress.com/) —and do not appear herein.

**Week 1 | Aug. 21**
Introduction to the course. Explanation of expectations.

**Week 2 | Aug. 28**
Blog post 1 due. READ Ekström (2008) AND Barger & Barney (2004). Media, democracy, the Internet, and political participation: foundation ideas for this course. **SIGN UP TODAY** for: (1) topic presentation date, and (2) your media diary week.

**Week 3 | Sept. 4**

**Week 4 | Sept. 11**
Week 5 | Sept. 18

Week 6 | Sept. 25
Blog post 5 due. WATCH the video RIP: A Remix Manifesto (1 hour 28 minutes). Online, free to view: http://www.nfb.ca/film/rip_a_remix_manifesto/
AND also WATCH TED Talks: Ferguson (2012): 9 min. 43 sec. Remix culture, copyright, and intellectual property concerns.

Week 7 | Oct. 2

Week 8 | Oct. 9

Week 9 | Oct. 16
Video: BurmaVJ, directed by Anders Østergaard (2008). In-class viewing. No blog post this week.

Week 10 | Oct. 23

Week 11 | Oct. 30

Week 12 | Nov. 6

Week 13 | Nov. 13

Week 14 | Nov. 20

Week 15 | Nov. 27
Thursday is Thanksgiving. Class will not meet on Wednesday.

Week 16 | Dec. 4
Summary and conclusions. (Class will meet!)
UF Dates (Fall 2013)

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<td>Drop/Add</td>
<td>Aug. 21–27</td>
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<td>Classes end</td>
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<td>Final exams</td>
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