

COMM 5345/CMST 4320 – New Media Theories and Applications

Thursdays, 6-8:45 p.m.

Room: CAS 258 and online via Zoom

Syllabus – Fall 2023

Professor: Dr. Terry L. Britt
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-3 p.m., and by appointment
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Note: Syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be posted under “Announcements” on the class Canvas site, by email through Canvas, and verbally announced in the next class meeting.

I. Course Description

Catalog: This course involves an exploration of the cognitive, linguistic, and interpretive approaches to the study of new media. Consideration will be given to both the practical and theoretical values of new media.

II. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

A. Research

1. Students will be able to conduct original research using a method appropriate to the research question.
 - a. Develop an understanding of the structures, theories, and applications of new media in the context of potential research questions and research projects pertaining to new media.
 - b. Write a fully developed research study proposal pertaining to new media usage, content, effects, production, control, or dissemination.

B. Theoretical knowledge

1. Students will be able to explain communication from a variety of communication theoretical perspectives.
 - a. Apply critical thinking skills to literature within the study and research of new media theories and applications and contribute significantly to group discussions of the same.

- b. Identify and analyze scholarly literature pertaining to new media theories and applications for inclusion in a full research proposal and any future research articles developed from that research proposal.

C. Communication Assessment

1. Students will be able to evaluate the communication rules, norms, listening skills, and rhetorical strategies used by people.
 - a. Successfully lead and moderate a group discussion on a topic within new media theories and applications, and relevant literature.
 - b. Successfully communicate issues and points pertaining to new media theories and applications through outlines, information, and relevant media content to colleagues within a group setting.

III. Things to Know for This Class:

A. Attendance:

1. Attendance is mandatory and it is expected of you, as graduate students, to carry the commitment level and self-discipline to attend class each meeting. Participation and attendance do constitute part of the course grade (see below).
2. Bereavement: Students will be given an excused absence to attend the funeral service of someone in the immediate family or first level of relatives (aunts, uncles, first cousins); however, the absence needs to be documented through a printed or online obituary, or copy/scan of the service program.
3. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform the instructor by the second class meeting.
4. You are responsible for turning in all assignments by deadline even though you may be absent.
5. You are also responsible for lecture materials, announcements and assignments made during any absence.
6. If you must be absent or late to class, please notify me by email as soon as possible.

B. Assignment Policy:

1. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the announced time via Canvas. Late assignments will be penalized by one grade level per day late. (i.e. if it is one day late, you lose 10 percent off the top.).
2. Assignments must be typed and submitted using the format required for the assignment.
3. Assignments and due dates may change at the instructor's discretion with fair notice.
4. Students must complete all assignments to pass the course. This does not mean, however, that merely completing all assignments guarantees a passing grade.
5. All assignments must include student name, date, assignment name, course name and word count.

C. Classroom Courtesies:

1. No cellphone use during class. No calls, no texts, no status update checks. In an emergency, please exit the classroom to use your device.
2. As we are meeting each week in a room that is not a computer lab, I am fine with it if you need to bring a beverage with you to class, but I would ask that all such beverages have a lid or other top on them to minimize spills. Please do not bring any food into the class. If you need to eat something, do so outside the room door and then re-enter when finished.
3. Laptop and tablet use is for note taking and class-related research. Other uses will be noted, and these devices can be restricted in class.
4. Talk, debate, ask questions and challenge but stay on topic.

D. Access to Technology:

1. I use Canvas to communicate, post assignments and readings, present feedback, and provide a space for you to communicate with your classmates. Check Canvas regularly.

E. Email Policy:

1. On weekdays, you should expect my response in 24 hours. On weekends, I will do my best to answer your questions in 48 hours.

F. Academic Honesty:

1. Practice academic integrity and accept responsibility for your actions.
2. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, unattributed use of others' work (including test and paper "banks"), disruption of class, and discourtesy to, or harassment of, other students or your instructor.
3. Anyone caught cheating will earn a "0" for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action.
4. **PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.** This includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit. Students caught plagiarizing will fail the assignment, may fail this class and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. Go here for more:
<http://www.utt Tyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php>

G. Course grading

DAP (Discussion, Attendance, and Participation) (15% of course grade)

Graduate school and the courses/seminars you take in a graduate program are heavily dependent upon your regular participation in class sessions and discussions that take place therein. Essentially, if we have everyone here each class session – this is particularly crucial with a small enrollment and only one meeting per week – we have a much better discussion and overall experience in the course. To that end, if you attend and actively take part in discussion each week, you will receive full credit for this part of the course grade. I will also set up a discussion board on our course Canvas site on most weeks for relevant posts that could help spur our discussions each week.

Absences may be excused for a documented illness, documented death in the immediate family or first branch of relatives (aunts, uncles, first cousins), or a university-sponsored activity

or academic conference. Unexcused absences will affect the points earned for this part of the course grade. If an unusual situation has arisen, please contact me as soon as possible.

New Media Presentation (25% of course grade)

This is an assignment to help you dive deeper into some aspect of new media and the digital world in which we live. Each student will select a date in our class schedule (maximum two per date) and prepare some type of demonstration and discussion about one component of media since the year 2000; it can be a theory/concept, a media platform or service, or a social/cultural trend born of a digital medium. I would also welcome work on “dead” or obsolete media of the current century (MySpace or the iPod, anyone?). Although a slideshow presentation is welcome, I don't want that to be the whole of your work. Use videos, photos, news archives, websites, etc., and have some type of activity for the class. I'm happy to talk to any of you about ideas if you're feeling stuck on what to present and how to present it. Having been through many graduate seminars with this type of assignment as part of the course grade, I can tell you that a well-prepared effort and enthusiasm about your topic will likely result in a high grade.

Midterm assignment (30% of course grade)

COMM 5345: One of the objectives of this course for graduate students is to help you develop a research agenda that will include projects dealing with new media (effects, structures, communication channels, etc.). To that end, your midterm assignment will be a thoroughly developed research proposal (8-12 pp., double-spaced, with citations in APA 7th edition). In the proposal I would like to see the following:

- a. The research question(s) or hypotheses being addressed and support for their inclusion in the research;
- b. Relevant literature;
- c. Method(s) employed for the research and cited literature supporting the methods;
- d. Expected findings and contribution(s) to scholarship within new media.

I will be available for consultation on research ideas and guidance in writing the proposal, during office hours stated above or by appointment. I strongly encourage each of you to reach out to me once you have a proposal in mind and for any questions thereafter.

CMST 4320: For undergraduate students in this course, the midterm assignment will be an analysis paper or concept explication on your choice of new media theories/concepts, a digital app, or other digital service or framework. The paper should be 2,000-2,500 words and include the following:

- a. A thorough definition and history of the subject
- b. Cited literature (APA 7th format) in which your subject featured or was utilized in the research.
- c. Benefits and drawbacks relevant to the subject
- d. Any personal examples that would serve to illustrate or further explain the subject.

Final assignment (30% of course grade)

COMM 5345: For your course final, you will take the research proposal submitted as your midterm assignment and develop it into a full research paper (15-20 pp. double-spaced) or get as close as possible. This means submitting an IRB application if your proposed study involves human subjects and, pending approval, at least being underway with subject recruitment and possibly with research sessions. If needed, I will try to provide time blocks for use of the

Media and Communication Research Laboratory (CAS 207). Your grade will be based on revision and further development of the proposal paper at midterm and progress toward an active research study.

CMST 4320: Undergraduate students will submit their own research proposal or idea as a final paper. It will be evaluated under the same guidelines as the graduate student midterm assignment. A consultation with me (in-person or online) about your research proposal is required and will be part of the grade for this assignment.

Grade scale:

A – 90-100%

B – 80-89%

C – 70-79%

D – 60-69%

F – 59% and below

Reminder: A letter grade of B or better is required for course credit for any graduate-level course in the Department of Communication at the University of Texas at Tyler to count toward the master's degree. A letter grade of C or better is required for any undergraduate course in the Department of Communication at the University of Texas at Tyler to count toward a mass communication or communication studies bachelor's degree.

Course schedule (Subject to change):

Aug. 24 – Course introduction, syllabus, and group activity

Unit I – History and evolution of new media

Aug. 31 – Changes all around: Last half of 20th Century, McLuhan and Postman, TV, personal computing, and the internet

Sept. 7 – The World Wide Web: Early days, millennium transitions, “Big 5” takeover

Sept. 14 – Prosumerism: Changing the rules of media production and distribution

Unit II – New media theory-building and research

Sept. 21 – Intro: Making sense of the new media age through theory and research

Sept. 28 – New media, new thinking: Overview of media theories and research methods for the 21st century

Unit III – How we do things now

Oct. 5 – The digital disruption: Online news, A/V content, and interactions.

Oct. 12 – They call it “e-commerce”: The rise of online shopping and shipping

Oct. 19 – Social media platforms: New media’s double-edged sword

Oct. 26 – Archives and access of digital media: Saving our future past

Unit IV – New media’s new(er) horizons

Nov. 2 – An introduction to media psychophysiology and neuroscience

Nov. 9 – AI, Part I: Chatbots, robots, and digital people

Nov. 16 – AI, Part II: Fears and abuses...and beneficial breakthroughs

Nov. 23 – No class meeting; Thanksgiving break

Nov. 30 – Created worlds: Virtual reality and augmented reality