

COMM 309
Communication and Technology
Summer 2017

Instructor	Lik Sam Chan, Ph.D. candidate liksamch@usc.edu liksamchan.com
Time	Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 am – 1:40 pm, 5/18 – 6/29
Venue	ANN 406
Office Hour	Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm or by appointment
Office Location	ASC G6 (old Annenberg building)

Course Description

What is “technology”? Why and how do people adopt a new technology? What is the role of technology in our contemporary life? Do we use technology, such as a smartphone, or are we used by the smartphone? In this introductory course, we will examine the cultural, social, political, and economic dynamics of communication technologies and their social significance. We ask what the relationship between technology and human agency (or society) is. We will read, appreciate, and critique contemporary research from both social scientific and critical traditions.

The course is organized into two blocks. In the first block, we will look at major debates concerning technology and society at large. We will read beyond the discipline of communication, including philosophy, psychology, political science, sociology, gender studies, and science and technology studies. In the second block, we will focus on Internet-based systems and cultures. We will look at social media, surveillance, privacy, intimacy, cultural production, digital labor, big data, and platform design. At the end of this course, you will be able to critically assess the role of communication technologies in contemporary life and to analyze other emerging communication technologies.

Instructor’s Biography

I am a Hong Kong native and currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. I received my bachelor degree in journalism and communication from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and my master’s degree in cultural studies from Goldsmiths, University of London. Before joining Annenberg, I worked as an advertising copywriter in Hong Kong. My favorite client was Red Bull. My current research addresses communication technologies, romance, sexuality, and culture. I enjoy conducting research and I have presented at conferences such as the International Communication Association and the National Communication Association. I have also published in *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *Continuum-Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, *International Journal of Communication*, *Computers in Human Behavior*, and *Journal of Homosexuality*.

Teaching Style

The summer session is short and intense. In fact, life is short and intense; therefore, I expect all of us to devote 100% (or at least 95%) of our attention. Each class consists of three parts: your presentations, my lecture, and some in-class exercises. Be prepared to receive lots of materials every day (so caffeine is welcomed)! My teaching style is interactional; I welcome you to raise questions any time in the class. Feel free to propose opposing ideas or to share your personal experiences. I hope we have fun, really— this is what you need to feel in order to learn.

We all come from diverse backgrounds and have various experiences, upbringings, and stories that make us truly unique individuals. I know each of you has different strengths and learns in unique ways. As such, I'm treating each of you as individuals, not just as "one of the students in my class."

The Best Way to Get an "A" in this Class

- ❖ Have breakfast before the class—No one can engage in the class when they are hungry;
- ❖ Read the assigned readings before the class—So you understand the lecture better;
- ❖ Do not start doing your assignment the day before the deadline—This usually produces poor output;
- ❖ Make friends with your classmates—They can support you personally and academically;
- ❖ Ask questions. Ask questions. Ask questions;
- ❖ Turn your phone off during class and don't wander off to social media while using your laptop—Staying focused in the class is directly related to your class performance grade (check out this [study](#));
- ❖ Be a responsible college student—For every one hour of class meeting, leave yourself two hours to study at home.

Assignments, Grading, Late Policies

Questions for each class (5%)

You will read the assigned readings before the class. When you read, mark down questions you have related to the reading materials. Post two of your questions on Blackboard no later than 11 pm on the day before the class. Whenever appropriate, I will discuss your questions in the class.

Participation (10%)

This is a seminar-format class where your participation is paramount to the dynamics of the class. There will be various exercises in the classes that help you understand concepts and materials better. Your physical presence and mental presence are both required. If you are found to use your laptops for non-class-related purposes, you will be marked as absent for that meeting.

Presentation of articles (2 x 7.5% = 15%)

Two times during the summer session, you will individually present one of the readings assigned for that class. You can choose whichever readings to present but your first presentation will take place on or before June 6 and the second will take place after June 6. Each presentation is ideally around

10 minutes. You will (1) highlight key concepts from the readings and (2) summarize the arguments. In this exercise, you will stay close to the reading without going beyond what the reading entails. You will also provide a one-page handout to your classmates. An example of such handout will be given to you. No presentation slide is required.

Technology case presentation (15%)

You will work with one of your classmates to lead a discussion on a technological artifact, technology-related event, or phenomenon. Your team will determine the topic but, if needed, I can provide some ideas to you. You will do a slide presentation, where you will introduce to the class the technology or technology-phenomenon and critically evaluate its relationship with our life. Prepare two to three questions to discuss with your classmates. Your presentation and discussion will last around 45 minutes. You are not required to make copies of your slides to your classmates. I will provide details about this assignment at a later date.

Book review (15%) and sharing (5%)

You will select a book from a pre-determined reading list and write a 5-to-6-page book review. I will show you examples of book review. This book review will be shared to your classmates. Apart from writing a review, you will prepare a 5-min pitch of this book and will share with your classmates in a speed-dating format. I will provide details about this assignment at a later date.

Term paper (35%)

Your term paper is an individual assignment. You will engage with a technological artifact, technology-related event, or phenomenon with theories and concepts that are covered in this class. Your chosen topic can be the same as your technology case presentation. Make use of the academic reading materials from the class and the book reviews written by your classmates. This assignment consists of a paper proposal (3%), a 12-min presentation (12%), and a 12-to-15-page paper (20%). Details about this assignment will be provided later.

Grading

This course uses the following grading scheme.

A 94 – 100	B- 80 – 83.9	D+ 67 – 69.9
A- 90 – 93.9	C+ 77 – 79.9	D 64 – 66.9
B+ 87 – 89.9	C 74 – 76.9	D- 60 – 63.9
B 84 – 86.9	C- 70 – 73.9	F 0 – 59.9

Late submission

Unless there is a valid, documented medical/family reason and you have communicated with me before an assignment's due date, late assignments will not be accepted without penalty. If an assignment is submitted late, I will subtract one partial letter grade for every 24 hours the assignment is late. E.g., an assignment handed in 24 hours late can only earn a maximum possible grade of **A-**; 48 hours late, **B+**, etc. No assignment will be accepted more than 72 hours past the due date.

Course Policies

E-mail policy

I will generally answer your email within 24 hours, but I usually don't answer email on weekends. Please mark the subject line of your email "[COMM309]" so that I can notice your emails from hundreds of work-related and junk emails I receive every day. When writing your email, please be formal. Begin your emails with "Hi Sam" or "Hi Mr. Chan" and end them with your name. If you have a longer question that would be best addressed in a conversation, please make an appointment with me.

Laptop policy

This course is not only about understanding communication technologies cognitively but also about how to use technologies appropriately. You are allowed to use laptops during the class for taking notes and participate in other class-related exercises. Remember, use of laptops in the classroom is a privilege; if you abuse this privilege by checking emails, Facebook, Topshop, and others, you will be marked as absent for that meeting.

Academic accommodation

Any students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me no later than the second class of course. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm The office is in the Student Union room 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Academic conduct

The Annenberg School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy (University of Southern California Catalogue, 2016-2017).

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles as set forth in *SCampus*.

Support systems

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu> or to the *Department of Public Safety*, <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community—such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member—can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> describes reporting options and other resources.

Couse Schedule

This syllabus represents my current plan. I will communicate changes, if any, clearly.

Part 1: Theoretical Foundations and Debates

#1	May 18 (Thu)	Introduction <i>Discussion:</i> Defining “technology”
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lazarsfeld, P. (2004). Administrative and critical communications research. In J. D. Peters & P. Simonson (eds.) <i>Mass communication and American social thought: Key Texts, 1919–1968</i> (pp. 166–173). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (do not need to read before the class)
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#2	May 23 (Tue)	What is technology? <i>Activity:</i> Film viewing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Heidegger, M. (1977). The question concerning technology. In D. F. Krell (Ed.), <i>Basic writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)</i> (pp. 311-341). New York, NY: Harper & Row. (2) ❖ Marx, L. (2010). Technology: The emergence of a hazardous concept. <i>Technology and Culture</i>, 51(3), 561-577. (2) ❖ Hui, Y. (2012). What is a digital object? <i>Metaphilosophy</i>, 43, 380–395. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9973.2012.01761.x (2)
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#-	May 25 (Thu)	No class—International Communication Association Conference
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#3	May 30 (Tue)	Technology and society
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Baym, N. (2010). <i>Personal connections in the digital age</i> (pp. 22-49). New York, NY: Polity Press. ❖ McLuhan, M. (1964). <i>Understanding media: The extensions of human</i> (pp. 19–35) New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book. (1) ❖ Cowan, R. S. (1985). How the refrigerator got its hum. In D. MacKenzie & J Wajcman (Eds.), <i>The social shaping of technology</i> (pp. 202–218). Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press. (1)

- ❖ Nagy, P., & Neff, G. (2015). Imagined affordance: Reconstructing a keyword for communication theory. *Social Media + Society*, 1, 1–9. doi:10.1177/2056305115603385 **(1)**

#4 Jun 1 (Thu)

Technology adoption and use

Activity: Turning research results into value-added solutions

- ❖ Peters, O. (2011). Three theoretical perspectives on communication technology adoption. In A. Vishwanath & G. A. Barnett (Eds.), *The diffusion of innovations: A communication science perspective* (pp. 33–56). New York, NY: Peter Lang. **(2)**
- ❖ Rubin, A. M. (2002). The uses-and-gratifications perspective of media effects. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 525–548). New Jersey: LEA. **(1)**

Part 2: Thematic Issues in Contemporary Communication Technologies

#5 Jun 6 (Tue)

Social media

Activity: Film viewing

- ❖ Ellison, N. B. & boyd, d. (2013). Sociality through social network sites. In W. H. Dutton (Ed.) *The Oxford handbook of Internet studies* (pp. 151–172). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. **(1)**
- ❖ Zhang, Y. & Leung, L. (2015). A review of social networking service (SNS) research in communication journals from 2006 to 2011,” *New Media & Society*, 17, 1007–1024. doi:10.1177/1461444813520477 **(1)**
- ❖ Vitak, J., & Ellison, N. B. (2013). “There’s a network out there you might as well tap”: Exploring the benefits of and barriers to exchanging informational and support-based resources on Facebook. *New Media & Society*, 15, 243–259. doi:10.1177/1461444812451566 **(1)**
- ❖ Jenkins, H. (2014). Fan activism as participatory politics: The case of the Harry Potter Alliance. In M. Ratto & M. Boler (Eds.), *DIY citizenshi* (pp. 65–73). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. **(1)**

Technology case presentation (#1)

#6 Jun 8 (Thu)

Surveillance and governance

Guest speaker: Ms. Sarah Myer-West

- ❖ Solove, D. (2011). *Nothing to hide: The false tradeoff between privacy and security*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. (“Introduction”) **(1)**
- ❖ Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2014). Networked privacy: How teenagers negotiate context in social media. *New Media & Society*. doi:10.1177/1461444814543995 **(1)**

Technology case presentation (#2)

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- #7 Jun 13 (Tue) Intimacy
- Activity:* Book review speed dating and book review due
- ❖ Quiroz, P. A. (2013). From finding the perfect love online to satellite dating and “loving-the-one-you’re near”: A look at Grindr, Skout, Plenty of Fish, Meet Moi, Zoosk and Assisted Serendipity. *Humanity & Society*, 37, 181–185. doi:10.1177/0160597613481727
 - ❖ Hobbs, M., Owen, S., & Gerber, L. (2016). Liquid love? Dating apps, sex, relationships and the digital transformation of intimacy. *Journal of Sociology*. doi: 10.1177/1440783316662718 **(1)**
 - ❖ Farci, M., Rossi, L., Boccia Artieri, G., & Giglietto, F. (2017). Networked intimacy: Intimacy and friendship among Italian Facebook users. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20, 784–801. **(1)**
- Technology case presentation (#3)*
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- #8 Jun 15 (Thu) Digital production and labor
- Guest speaker:* Mr. James Lee
- ❖ Kushner, S. (2013). The freelance translation machine: Algorithmic culture and the invisible industry. *New Media & Society*. doi: 10.1177/1461444812469597 **(1)**
 - ❖ Mitchelstein, E., & Boczkowski, P. (2013). Tradition and transformation in online news production and consumption. In W. H. Dutton (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of Internet studies* (pp. 378–400). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. **(1)**
- Technology case presentation (#4)*
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Jun 18 (Sun) Proposal due at 5:00 pm via email

- #9 Jun 20 (Tue) Big data
- Activity:* Individual meeting on Jun 19 and Jun 20
- ❖ Gitelman, L., & Jackson, V. (2013). Introduction. In L. Gitleman (Ed.), “Raw data” is an oxymoron (pp. 1–14). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. **(1)**
 - ❖ boyd, danah, & Crawford, Kate. (2012). Critical questions for big data. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15, 662–679. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2012.678878 **(1)**
- Technology case presentation (#5)*
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#10 Jun 22 (Thu) Platform design

Activity: How do algorithms work?

❖ Winner, L. (1980). Do artifacts have politics? *Daedalus*, 109, 121–136.
Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20024652> (1)

❖ Gillespie, T. (2010). The politics of “platforms.” *New Media & Society*, 12, 347–364. doi:10.1177/1461444809342738 (1)

Technology case presentation (#6)

#11 Jun 27 (Tue) **Term Paper Presentation and Due**
