COMM 309 – Communication and Technology

<This is a draft. It will change, even during the term.>

M & W, 3:30 – 4:50
Room: ANN L105A
Instructor: Dmitri Williams, Associate Professor
Email: *dmitri.williams@usc.edu*
Office: ANN 414K
TAs: Deborah Neffa Creech (neffacre@usc.edu), Yusi Aveva Xu (yusixu@usc.edu)
TA Office Hours:

Professor's hours are by appointment. The hour before or after class are usually the most available, unless I am shepherding a guest.

Overview

From the course catalog: Survey of the cultural, social, political, and economic impacts of new communication technologies, including written language, the printing press, the telephone, television, and cyberspace.

We'll cover the history of communication technologies, then move into primarily present-day material. The course will cover business models, the social and psychological uses and effects of technology, the rise of networks, issues of identity and community online, analytics and data, apps, mobile and video games.

Learning Objectives

Students will gain a basic exposure to the fundamentals of business and economics, sociology, social psychology, and history by examining technology and its impact on society. Technology is different every semester, so the goal isn't necessarily to get you prepared for what's here now. The goal is to prepare you to understand and take advantage of whatever comes next, i.e. a toolset for the future.

Readings

Readings will be supplied via Blackboard. The materials consist of book excerpts, online articles, magazine clips, research papers, and trade articles.

Also: Students are required to subscribe to WIRED magazine. It's cheap, and also available online. $10/year, here.

Attendance & Courtesy

Attendance is not taken. You can skip it and simply fail at life. Similarly, you all have laptops and can use them to be distracted, but then why come to class? The research on using laptops in class and comprehension is very strong: it hurts you.

Please respect your classmates and don't be late or leave early.

Yes, it's a large class, but if you can participate, please do.

Grading

The papers for this class are graded on both content and format. Papers written unprofessionally will receive poor grades. Exams are graded blind: names are removed before grading for anonymity.

Any queries about your grade on an assignment must be submitted to the TA in writing, *no sooner* than 24 hours after you get your grade.

This class is not about memorization or rote learning. There will be some things you need to simply remember, but the bulk of your grade will depend on you *applying* knowledge.

Short assignments

Write one page on the following topics, assigned throughout the term. When it says "one page," it means using Times, 12pt, double spaced, with 1" margins. Late assignments lose 20% per day.

1) Black Mirror assignment. Watch one of the episodes below and write a 1-2 page reaction paper using concepts from the lecture.
   Episodes you can choose:
   Season 1, Fifteen Million Merits
   Season 2: White Christmas
   Season 3: San Junipero
   Season 4: Arkangel
2) FaceBook analysis. Use a Chrome browser and install the plug-in LostCircles. If you don't use FB, analyze a friend's FB account. Once loaded and ready, look at the visualization of your network. Write 1-2 pages about the following: What can you learn about yourself? "Where" are you in relation to other individuals? What groups can you observe? What do the patterns tell you? Should you change anything about yourself or your friends?
3) Social Media blackout. From October 17 to 23, don't use any social media (email is OK, text is up to you, but see if you can avoid it). On the evening of Oct. 23, write 1-2 pages about the experience. Was it good, bad, or something else? What were the pros and cons? Did you learn anything about yourself, or your friends? Will you do anything differently after the experience?

Grade breakdown

Short assignments	15%
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Quiz	5%
Final Paper	30%
Participation	Extra credit

Final Paper
The final paper is a research paper on a topic of student's choosing. The paper will be between 8 and 10 pages aside from a cover page and any reference list. Use Times, 12 pt., double space. It is due by Wednesday, December 4 at 5 pm. Papers will be submitted by email *and* to the Turnitin system via Blackboard. Late papers will lose 10% per day late, starting at 5:01 pm on the 4th.

Statement for Students with Disabilities
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) on the main USC campus each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. The phone number for DSP is +1 213 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:
Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:
Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response.
studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.
Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu

Date	Class #	Session	Readings	Assignment Due
M, Aug. 20	1	Class intro	None	
W, Aug. 22	2	Community	The Community Zuck Longs to Build (WIRED)	
M, Aug. 27	3	Origins and precedents	Czitrom, p. 3-29; McLuhan, p. 3-6 (intro).	
W, Aug. 29	4	Science Fiction as metaphor	Glassner, p. 29-35	
M, Sep. 3		Labor Day, no class		
W, Sep. 5	5	Diffusion, Being Digital	Rogers, p. 267-299; Negroponte excerpts	Black Mirror Assignment
M, Sep. 10	6	Traditional media business models	Litman, p. 265-272	
W, Sep. 12	7	New media business models, disruption, The Long Tail	"'Disruption' is how Silicon Valley Eats Its young" Wikipedia: Creative Destruction Class guest: Gabriel Zalzman.	
M, Sep. 17	8	Lessig and code	Lessig, 9-28; Dibbell reading	
W, Sep. 19	9	CMC	Love in the time of robots (WIRED).	
M, Sep. 24	10	Social Impact I: Community	Putnam, Ch. 13	
W, Sep. 26	11	Social Impact II: Exit, Voice and Loyalty	Galston reading	
M, Oct. 1	12	MCNs, Second Screens	USA Market Report Class guest: David Craig	
W, Oct. 3	13	Networks everywhere	Christakis & Fowler, Ch. 3 Class guest: Chrisy Hagen	FB analysis
M, Oct. 8	14	The Spectrum and the FCC/Midterm Review	"The Strange David and Goliath Saga" Spectrum Map (no, you don't have to memorize it)	

W, Oct. 10		Midterm	None	
M, Oct. 15	15	Midterm debrief, Inventors and investors/Updates from the News Cycle	<mark>TBD</mark>	
W, Oct. 17	16	Persuasion Continued	Cialdini, Ch. 1	Note: stop social media for 1 week now
M, Oct. 22	17	Term paper workshop		Paper topic due today to Yusi Xu.
W, Oct. 24	18	Identity I: Anonymity, Reputation, Roles	Turkle, Ch. 8	Social Media withdrawal analysis
M, Oct. 29	19	Identity II: Cues, Front/Backstage	Meyrowitz, Ch. 3	
W, Oct. 31	20	Analytics, Big Data	Read SAS' page on what analytics is. Watch short video on analysts' day.	
M, Nov. 5	21	Video Games I	Williams, Social History Chapter	
W, Nov. 7	22	Video Games II	Williams et al, Looking for Gender paper	Paper outlines due to Yusi Xu today.
M, Nov. 12	23	Convergence culture, user-generated content	Jenkins, "Star Trek Rewritten"	
W, Nov. 14	24	Technology and Democracy	Shirky, 55-69, then 1-6.	
M, Nov. 19	25	Managing the Commons	WIRED Guide to Blockchain Optional: "The Blockchain: A Love Story/A Horror Story"	
W. Nov. 21		No class, Thanksgiving		
M, Nov. 26	26	Class wrap up and Final review		

W, Nov. 28		Final Exam	
Wednesday, Dec. 4		Final Papers Due	Papers due by email to lead grader Yusi Xu by 5pm	