

COMM 309 - Communication and Technology

M & W, 3:30 – 4:50

Room: ANN L105A

Instructor: Dmitri Williams, Associate Professor

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Office: ANN 414K

TAs: Donna Kim (doownkim@usc.edu). Office Hours: M & W, 2:15 - 3:15 (TBU), ASC G-6 (basement floor of the **west** wing; Ph.D. office)

Calvin Liu (LiuCalvi@usc.edu). Office Hours: 5-6pm Mondays outside of G20.

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

Course Description

The uses and effects of technology, the rise of networks, issues of industry, identity and community online, analytics and data, apps, mobile and new tech.

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 are 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. [\\$5/year, here](#).

Do you have to read everything? Only if you want to be smart. And if you want an A. I will have pop quizzes specifically designed to reward students who read, and to penalize those who don't. They won't be about obscure details. If it's clear that many students aren't reading, I'll have more of them. If it's clear students are reading, I'll have fewer.

Note Taking

I will use slides and will post them on Blackboard since many students like to have them and to annotate them. To be really, really clear: They are not your notes. They are not a study sheet for exams. They do not cover everything, especially points of discussion or the readings. Your notes are your notes.

Attendance & Courtesy

My number one rule of life, OK, my number two rule of life is “Just show up.” Attendance is not taken. You can skip it and simply fail at life. And if you miss a quiz, you’ll of course fail that.

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 clear: it hurts you. The more you actively listen and take notes, the better you do, period.

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. Spell correctly, and use good grammar.

Use Times, 12pt, double spaced, with 1” margins.

Exams are graded blind: names are removed before grading for anonymity.

Late assignments lose 10% per day.

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 on the following topics, assigned throughout the term.

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 or The Waldo Moment

Season 3: San Junipero or Playtest

Season 4: Arkangel

Grading rubric: Did you analyze or merely describe? Did you apply concepts from class? Was it thoughtful or surface-level? Was your formatting, spelling and grammar professional grade?

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?

Grading rubric: Did you answer all of the questions above? Did you apply course concepts? Was it thoughtful or surface level? Was your formatting, spelling and grammar professional grade?

3) Social Media blackout.

From October 28 to Nov 3, 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 Nov. 3, 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? Consider comparing your results with the Facebook Quitting study on Blackboard. Apply 2-3 concepts from lecture or the readings for the best grade.

Grading rubric: Did you answer all of the questions above? Did you apply course concepts? Was it thoughtful or surface level? Was your formatting, spelling and grammar professional grade?

Final Paper

The final paper is a research paper on a topic of your 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 5 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 5th.

Grading rubric: Did you format as we described in class? Did you do something empirical? Did you have hypotheses and did you address them with evidence? Were the results presented clearly? Did you draw conclusions from them? Did you incorporate concepts from class?

Grade breakdown

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

Course Grading Policy

Average work does not get a B+ or A-. That may apply in other classes, but it doesn't here. If that's a problem, *don't take this class*.

All assignments need to be completed and handed in on time to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused, or discuss your situation with your TA in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out.

In order to pass this class you will need to complete ALL of the assignments. Failure to complete one or more of them will result in an F in the class.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A/A- outstanding, thoughtful and enthusiastic work

B+/B above average work, demonstrating good insight into assignment

B-/C+ needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow through

C and below fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores won the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A = 100-94

A- = 94-90

B+ = 89-87

B = 86-84

B- = 83-80

C+ = 79-77

C = 76-74

C- = 73-70

D+ = 69-67

D = 66-64

D- = 63-60

F = 59-0

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/sssa

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. 26	1	Class intro	None	
W, Aug. 28	2	Community	The Community Zuck Longs to Build (WIRED)	
M, Sep. 2		Labor Day, no class		
W, Sep. 4	3	Origins and precedents	Czitrom, p. 3-29; McLuhan, p. 3-6 (intro).	
M, Sep. 9	4	Science Fiction as metaphor	Glassner, p. 29-35	
W, Sep. 11	5	Diffusion, Being Digital	Rogers, p. 267-299; Negroponte excerpts Ch. 1 (11-28) Ch. 6 (75-85) Ch. 12-14 (149-183)	Black Mirror Assignment
M, Sep. 16	6	Lessig and code	Lessig, 9-28; Dibbell reading Optional, if you are feeling the Black Mirror Nosedive episode: Short-form and long-form articles on Chinese social credit score. The latter is a great read.	
W, Sep. 18	7	CMC	Love in the time of robots (WIRED).	
M, Sep. 23	8	Social Media Entertainment	Social Media Entertainment (Intro chapter), Cunningham & Craig Class guest: David Craig	
W, Sep. 25	9	Traditional media business models	Litman, p. 265-272	
M, Sep. 30	10	Social Impact I: Community	Putnam, Ch. 13	
W, Oct. 2	11	Social Impact II: Exit, Voice and Loyalty	Galston reading	

M, Oct. 7	12	New media business models, disruption, The Long Tail	Wikipedia entry & WIRED Disruption article	
W, Oct. 9	13	Networks everywhere	Christakis & Fowler, Ch. 3 Class guests: Yiqi Li and Jingyi Sun	Sample question due to TAs
M, Oct. 14	14	The Spectrum and the FCC/Midterm Review	"The Strange David and Goliath Saga" Spectrum Map (no, you don't have to memorize it)	FB Analysis
W, Oct. 16		Midterm	None	
M, Oct. 21	15	Midterm debrief, Persuasion	Cialdini, Ch. 1	
W, Oct. 23	16	AI	Reading TBD Class guest: Gaia Dempsey	
M, Oct. 28	17	Term paper workshop	Quitting Facebook journal article, and/or: https://cnaillifestyle.channelnnewsasia.com/trending/why-is-screen-time-bad-for-you-scientists-are-trying-to-find-out-11600902e	Paper topic due today to Aveva Xu. Note: stop social media for 1 week now
W, Oct. 30	18	Identity I: Anonymity, Reputation, Roles	Turkle, Ch. 8 Optional: Private messages are the new(old) social network	
M, Nov. 4	19	Identity II: Cues, Front/Backstage	Meyrowitz, Ch. 3 Optional: Grindr was a safe space for gay men	Social Media withdrawal analysis
W, Nov. 6	20	Analytics, Big Data	Day in the life of an analyst. Read SAS' page on what analytics is.	
M, Nov. 11	21	Technology and Democracy	Shirky, 55-69, then 1-6, Two WIRED articles on speech	
W, Nov. 13	22	Digital journalism, press freedom	Journalism article, Ananny book intro Class guest: Mike Ananny	Paper outlines due to TAs today.

M, Nov. 18	23	What's new? Games, AR, smart cars, smart homes, what else? Inventors and investors/Updates from the News Cycle/Comm theories/Lessig TED	Smart speaker article	Bring in examples of the next big thing, and/or send articles to your TA.
W, Nov. 20	24	Participatory culture	Jenkins and Lopez, "On Emma Gonzalez's Jacket" Class guest: Henry Jenkins	
M, Nov. 25	25	Managing the Commons	WIRED Guide to Blockchain Optional: "The Blockchain: A Love Story/A Horror Story"	Bring a typed exam question
W, Nov. 27		No class, Thanksgiving		
M, Dec. 2	26	Class wrap up and Final review		Course evaluations (in class)
W, Dec. 4		Final Exam		
Wednesday, Dec. 11		Final Papers Due	Papers due on Turnitin by 5pm	