



*Byte* (Nov. 1976).

## **COMM 340**

### **The Cultures of New Media**

Summer 2020

Mon., Weds., Fri., 1-3:50pm PT

Section 20541R / Session 051

Instructor: Franny Corry

Office hours: Mon., 4pm–5pm PT

Connect via Zoom class link

**Connecting to class:**

Live class

2:15pm-3:50pm PT:

[\[Zoom link\]](#)

Recorded lectures

1-2:15pm, or any time before class:

[\[Blackboard Zoom link\]](#)

Piazza

[\[Piazza link\]](#)

**Course description:**

COMM 340: The Cultures of New Media explores the cultural implications, ideological responses, and social contexts of digitally mediated communication. Surveying cultural processes of representation, identity, production, consumption, and community-building in relation to digital media, we will come to know and interrogate those mediating technologies we call “new” today: from algorithms to artificial intelligence, social platforms to predictive policing, virtual assistants to virtual learning, and beyond. What are the politics, debates, implications, and histories of these artifacts? How are they shaped by their cultural contexts—and how do they shape them? Students will explore these questions through course readings, participatory exercises, virtual discussion, and original, public-facing research projects on new media subjects of their choosing.

This mid-level course is suitable for any student interested in developing a nuanced understanding of digital media use today. Students of COMM 340 will benefit from, but are not required to have taken, previous coursework in social and cultural aspects of communication technologies (e.g. COMM 309, Communication and Technology).

## Student learning objectives:

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

- Understand the mutual shaping of sociocultural processes and digital communication technologies
- Articulate how technological novelty and obsolescence are culturally constituted and identify how these values are communicated
- Recognize new media technologies' relationship with historic or long-standing forms of power, especially in relation to cultural and social identity
- Develop original analysis of new media cultures that students participate in or observe in their daily lives

## Class Format:

Each course meeting will consist of two components, unless otherwise noted on the syllabus: a *pre-recorded lecture* with participation via Piazza, and a *live meeting* via Zoom.

### Recorded lecture

**Watch from 1-2:15pm PT, or any time before live class**

This pre-recorded, asynchronous lecture addresses core ideas from the readings, provides additional context for these concepts, and includes participatory activities that are completed via Piazza.

Pre-recorded lectures last approximately one hour and fifteen minutes and will be uploaded to Blackboard three days before the class period in which we will discuss them.

You are required to watch the lecture videos and participate in the Piazza activity *before* joining our live class meeting via Zoom at 2:15pm. You may watch the lecture during the designated class time of 1pm-2:15pm, or at any point prior to that.

### **Piazza lecture activities**

Piazza is an online platform for student discussion. Signing up for our Piazza forum is required for this course. Instructions will be given in the first class.

At some point in each recorded lecture, I will ask you to take some time (from 5 minutes to 30 minutes) to engage with an activity that relates to the lecture topic. It may involve writing a response to the readings, taking a picture, engaging in online research, or otherwise. I will ask you to post the result of this activity to our shared Piazza site. Specific instructions will be given in each lecture. Come prepared to discuss your contribution in our live class.

### **Live meeting**

**2:15-3:50pm PT**

We will meet via Zoom for a live class component, where we will discuss readings and media artifacts, address questions from lecture, workshop assignments, and participate in in-class group activities.

### **Required Course Texts:**

All readings will be available as PDFs through Blackboard or linked through the syllabus.

### **Course policies**

#### **Respectful Learning Environment**

Our goal in this classroom is to foster a supportive learning environment. This means that your conduct—your speaking, your listening, your writing—supports other students in exploring the ideas of the course, their own experience in relation to these ideas, and their growth as a student, person, and community member.

#### **Attendance & Participation**

Regular attendance and class participation ensure a dynamic learning environment—especially so when we are engaging in distance learning!

To this end, live class attendance, watching the recorded lectures, and adequate class preparation are necessary.

Readings will be discussed in the class period and should be completed before the class period they are associated with on the syllabus. In-class participation will be assessed on verbal engagement, active listening, and in-class group work.

We have very few class meetings in this accelerated summer course; as such, more than two unexcused absences of the live meeting during the semester will affect your grade. Each unexcused absence beyond two will reduce your final grade by one half (i.e. an A becomes an A-). If you must miss class because of illness, religious observance, sanctioned university activity, or an emergency, please contact me as soon as possible *before* class.

### **Assignment Submission & Deadlines**

Written assignments should be submitted via Turnitin on Blackboard by 11:59pm PT on the day they are due. If you are experiencing a technical difficulty with the site, please email me your assignment *before* the deadline. Late assignments will be marked a half grade lower for each day beyond the deadline.

### **Instructor Communication**

I am available via email ([corry@usc.edu](mailto:corry@usc.edu)) Monday through Friday, between 9am and 6pm. I try to respond to emails within 24 hours during these periods; if I have not responded to you within 24 hours, please resend your email.

I am also available for questions, clarifications, and workshopping of the writing or research process during my virtual office hours, which are held after class on Mondays from 4pm to 5pm PT. If this time doesn't work for you, email me to set up an alternative.

***A note on academic email norms.*** Emailing with your instructors can be confusing. (Why do they sign their emails with initials?! Do I call them Dr.?! What if I *really* can't find the info on the syllabus?! I've been there.

Some email guidelines for our course:

- You are welcome to call me by my first name (Franny), in emails and in class.
- Before emailing about logistical matters, please check the syllabus to make sure your answer isn't hidden somewhere in its pages. Then follow up with a classmate to double-check that your question wasn't already covered in class.
- For other tips on navigating the world of academic email, here's a guide by Annenberg alum Dr. Laura Portwood-Stacer: [How to Email Your Professor \(Without Being Annoying AF\)](#)

## Technology

Laptops and other technologies are to be used for purposes relevant to the class—like connecting to it! Please refrain, however, from using technology that will distract you from listening and participating in class.

## How we'll use Zoom

We will be connecting over Zoom for our live class periods. Zoom is a “new media” technology that has its own politics, limitations, risks, and evolving set of norms. We'll be observing and discussing them throughout the term.

I have some general guidelines that are made in the spirit of making virtual classwork via Zoom as engaging and comfortable as possible:

- I ask (but do not require) that you have your video turned on for our live class periods. Seeing your classmates can often facilitate getting to know each other, the creation of an engaging learning environment, and effective listening.
- It's helpful to turn on the Zoom “break” symbol (and turn off your camera) if you need to take a break or step away for a moment.
- When there is class discussion, I will give guidelines about whether to use the Zoom hand raise feature, to unmute and jump in verbally, or to raise your physical hand on video.

- USC mandates that class sessions are recorded for accessibility purposes. I share class recordings in accordance with these accessibility needs. Sharing live class recordings beyond accessibility needs may be worked out on a student-by-student basis. If you are sent a class recording link it should not be shared.
- These guidelines will likely evolve as the term progresses.

### Academic Integrity

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](http://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, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Assignments & Assessment:

#### Piazza lecture responses

Each recorded lecture will have a Piazza assignment (described above) due prior to the live Zoom class period with which it is associated. These responses are assessed not on whether an answer is ‘right’ or ‘wrong,’ but instead on engagement with the week’s topics and with the question being posed.

Lecture responses are given a ✓+ for satisfactory completion (96%), a ✓– for unsatisfactory completion (75%), or a 0 for no completion.

#### The “old media when it was new” project

Inspired by the Dead Media Archive we explore in Week 2, our class will create a publicly accessible website exploring “old” media when it was “new.”

For this assignment, choose a media technology that debuted *more than 10 years ago*. Find at least three sources from the year that it

debuted: 1) An advertisement for this object, 2) a newspaper article about this object, and 3) an additional primary source of your choosing.

Using concepts from Week 1 and Week 2, critically analyze these primary sources to explore how technological novelty was communicated. Essays should be at least 900 words (before references), should incorporate at least two assigned texts from class, and should be written for a general audience.

Further instructions, guiding questions, and assessment criteria will be given in class.

### **Open-book assessment**

An open-book, open-note short answer and essay exam will be given on Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, covering all class periods and readings prior to that date. Questions will be sent to students at 1pm, and responses will be due via TurnItIn by 4pm on that day.

### **Final project**

In this class, we not only interrogate what *new media culture* means, but we explore the histories, debates, politics and possibilities of new media technologies in their specific cultural contexts. The final paper asks you to use the theories and methods encountered throughout the course to engage in an original analysis of a new media culture or new media concept of your choosing. Specific guiding prompts will be given in class. Papers should be 8-10 pages before references, double-spaced, in Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins.

### **In-class participation**

Class participation is based on your preparation for class as well as class engagement, including verbal participation and active listening.



The assignments above compose your final grade as follows:

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Piazza lecture responses	150	15
Old media when it was new project	200	20
Open book assessment	250	25
Final project	300	30
Participation	100	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Grading Breakdown:

Standard letter grades are used, and are as follows:

94% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 93%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

### Grading Standards (or, what 'A' work looks like)

I love to give out As. That's because an A represents that you:

- Successfully understood and clearly communicated both core and nuanced concepts of the course, showing how they applied to examples discussed in class and to cases you thought of on your own.
- Dug into the readings—questioning them, thinking about them in relation to each other, applying them to other concepts you've learned—beyond excerpts we discuss in class.
- Took into account instructor and peer feedback, using it to improve your work throughout the semester.
- Followed assignment guidelines given both on the syllabus and in class, including turning in assignments on time.
- Went above and beyond in demonstrating care and effort with your work from beginning to end, whether engaging in sound research practices or copyediting your paper to ensure there are no mistakes.

## Schedule

### Week 1

#### The Cultures of New Media

**Wednesday, July 1:** Course introduction

Read:

- Lev Manovich, "New Media from Borges to HTML" (2001)

**Friday, July 3:** NO CLASS

Independence Day observed

### Week 2

#### Out with the old, in with the new

**Monday, July 6:** Old new media

Read:

- Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey Pingree, (2003) "What's New About New Media?" from *New Media, 1740-1915*
- Carolyn Marvin, (1987) "Dazzling the Multitude: Imagining the Electric Light as a Communications Medium"

**Wednesday, July 8:** Obsolescence and dead media

Read:

- Giles Slade, (2007) "Introduction," *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America*

Explore:

- NYU Dept. of Media, Culture, and Communication's Dead Media Archive ([Link](#))

DUE: Old new media artifact topic

### **Friday, July 10: New words for new media**

Read:

- Lee Vinsel, (2014) “How to Give up the I-Word, Pt. 1 & 2,” *Culture Digitally* ([Link Pt. 1](#)) ([Link Pt. 2](#))

Watch:

- Jill Lepore, “The cult of disruptive innovation: Where America went wrong” ([Link](#))

## **Week 3**

### **Identity and representation**

#### **Monday July 13: Identity and self-presentation**

Read:

- danah boyd, (2014) “Identity: Why do teens seem strange online?” from *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*

Watch:

- Amanda Hess, (2017) “The White Internet’s Love Affair with Digital Blackface,” *New York Times* ([Link](#))
- Ruth Gebreyesus, (2018) Presentation from Ethics and Archiving the Web: The Ethics of Digital Folklore (15:49-24:20)

#### **Wednesday July 15: Representation**

Read:

- Safiya Noble, (2012) “Missed connections: What search engines say about women.” *Bitch Magazine*, 54, 36-41

#### **Friday July 17: Invisibility & anonymity**

Read:

- Lisa Nakamura, (2014) “Indigenous circuits: Navajo women and the racialization of early electronic manufacture” *American Quarterly*, 66(4), 919-941.
- Angela Chen (2019) “How Silicon Valley’s successes are fueled by an underclass of ‘ghost workers’” *The Verge* ([Link](#))

DUE: Final version, old new media project

## Week 4

### Connection and community

#### Monday July 20: (Virtual) Community

Read:

- Paul Byron & Brady Robards, (2017) “There’s Something Queer about Tumblr,” *The Conversation*. ([Link](#))
- Andre Brock, (2020) “Introduction,” *Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures*, NYU Press.
- Michael Harriot, (2019) “The Racist Next Door,” *The Root*. ([Link](#))

#### Wednesday July 22: Platforms & participatory culture

Read:

- Tarleton Gillespie, (2010). “The politics of ‘platforms.’” *New Media & Society*, 12(3), 347–364.
- “What Went Wrong with Web 2.0” (2013) from Henry Jenkins, Joshua Green, Sam Ford. *Spreadable Media Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* New York University Press.

#### Friday July 24: Dating & sex

Read:

– Ilana Gershon, (2010) “Introduction” from *The Breakup 2.0 : Disconnecting over New Media* Cornell University Press.

## Week 5

### Public life

#### Monday July 27: NO CLASS MEETING

– Open book assessment

#### Wednesday July 29: Public services

Read:

– Virginia Eubanks (2012) The Digital Poorhouse. Harper’s Magazine. 2018; 336.

#### Friday July 31 Education

Read:

– Zach Whittaker, (2020) “Maybe we Shouldn’t Use Zoom After All” *Techcrunch* ([Link](#))

– Other readings TBD

## Week 6

### Production, consumption, capitalism...joy?

#### Monday August 3: Advertising

Read:

– Cathy O’Neil (2016), “Bomb parts: What is a model?” and “Propaganda machine: Online advertising,” from *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*.

#### Wednesday August 5: Labor & activism

Read:

- Brooke Erin Duffy (2017), “Entrepreneurial Wishes and Career Dreams” from *Not Getting Paid to Do What You Love*
- Johanna Bhuiyan (2019) “How the Google walkout transformed tech workers into activists,” *LA Times* ([Link](#))

**Friday August 7:** Doing nothing

Watch:

- Jenny Odell (2019), “How to do nothing” ([Link](#))

**Week 7:**

**Your Cultures of New Media**

**Monday August 10:** Final project presentation

**Final papers due:** Monday August 17<sup>th</sup>

**Support Systems**

**Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call**  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1(800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call**

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call**

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

**Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX  
– (213) 821-8298**

[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

**Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or  
(213) 821-8298**

[usc-advocate.symphlicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symphlicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

**The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776  
[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)**

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

**USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710**

[uscса.usc.edu](http://uscса.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

**Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101**

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

**USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call**

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

**USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call**

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

### **Annenberg Student Success Fund**

<https://annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

### **Breaking Bread Program [undergraduate students only]**

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/>

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally “breaking bread” over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.

### **About Your Instructor**

I'm a doctoral candidate and Annenberg fellow here at the USC Annenberg School. My research looks at old digital technologies, what happens to these artifacts and systems over time, and what that means for us and our communities. I'm interested in learning about



your experiences with digital media, and am always game for talking about the politics of new and old tech, for supporting projects you're working on, and for laughing at old issues of *Byte*.