

**COMM 339: Communication Technology & Culture**
4 units**Fall 2020 – MW 12:00pm-1:50pm****Section: 20540R****Location:** Zoom**Instructor:** Nathaniel Ming Curran**Office:** Zoom**Office Hours:** Monday, 2:00pm-3:30pm and by appointment**Contact Info:** ncurran@usc.edu**I. Course Description**

This course considers the effects on culture of a wide variety of communication technologies. We will consider how contemporary communication technologies are affecting, both positively and negatively, contemporary life around the globe. Topics to be explored in depth include globalization, networked individualism, and the gig economy. We will often host guest speakers who will come to lecture and debate about important topics of concern.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

Students will finish the course with a better understanding of the development and diffusion of various communication technologies, as well as their role in ongoing processes of globalization. In particular, students will gain strong insights into the social, economic, and cultural importance of communication technologies around the globe. Students will gain a critical perspective about technology and the roles that communication technologies have played in transforming the world over the past several decades. Students will leave the class with a more discerning eye towards the myriad functions that communication technologies play in contemporary society, and be able to creatively analyze and critique emerging and future technologies.

III. Course Notes

The situation with the COVID-19 pandemic is still unfolding. In an ideal world, this course would not be taking place online. However, we will make the best of the situation. Because of the dynamic nature of the situation, the syllabus is subject to change. We will use the fact that we are online to consider the implications of computer mediated communication, distance learning, and (im)mobile communication practices

IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments**a. Participation**

This course demands a high level of engagement and attention, and this remains the case even in an online setting. Thus, active participation is required, and failure to actively participate will result in receiving a low participation grade. Further, active participation refers not just to talking in class, but also to thoughtfully listening to others and responding in a respectful way. Because this class will rely heavily on participation and discussion, it is especially important that students voice their opinions with care and respect. Rude or demeaning behavior, towards either other

students or the instructor, will not be tolerated. There will also be many polls administered via Zoom, and students will need to participate in a timely manner.

Class attendance and engagement is a substantial part of students' participation grade in this class. While missing up to three classes may be excused without any penalty, any other unexcused absences will result in a penalty to the student's attendance grade.

b. Blackboard reading responses

By Sunday evening at 11:00pm, students must upload a 100-200 word reading response to the upcoming week's readings. These reading responses should both:

- 1) Summarize the main points of the coming week's readings;
- 2) Pose questions about the readings, especially where the student may be confused or disagree with the author.

These responses are expected to be written clearly and be free from grammatical errors. Only I will see the responses. Responses will be evaluated with letter grades, and will be returned to the student within two weeks.

c. Midterm Paper

By Monday, September 28th at 11:00pm, students must submit a 1,000-1,200 word essay that focuses on an existing communication technology, platform, or app. The essay must draw upon the themes and readings of the class to discuss: 1) how it appeared; 2) how it makes money; and 3) how it is affecting contemporary culture. By Friday, September 25th, students are expected to have conducted one-on-one meetings with me about their midterm paper.

d. Guest Lecture Response

Students are required to write a 500-750 word essay in response to one of the guest lectures. This essay must critically engage with the lecture, summarize its main points, and pose additional questions about the content. This response must be logically structured, well written, and free from grammatical errors.

e. Final Paper/Presentation

By Friday, November 20th at 1:00pm, students must turn in an 8-page final paper. In the final paper, students are asked to speculate about a future technology that will have significant effects on culture and society. The paper should address the same three questions as the midterm, and should be written as if were the year 2050 and this future technology were real. The final paper should make ample use of the readings assigned for class, as well as outside sources. The final paper is expected to be well-written, and free from awkward phrasing and grammatical errors. It should flow well and be convincing. Only papers that are rigorously researched, meticulously written, and creatively argued will be awarded an "A" grade. On the final two days of class, students will give 5-minute presentations about their final paper (and turn in a copy of their PPT).

V. Grading**a. Breakdown of Grade**

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation	15	15%
Blackboard reading responses	10	10%
Midterm Paper	20	20%
Guest Lecture Response	15	15%
Final Paper Presentation	10	10%
Final Paper	30	30%
TOTAL	100	100%

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: 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

c. Grading Standards

Obtaining an “A” grade in this class will require thoughtful and constructive participation in all class activities, as well as the submission of outstanding-quality work. This work must creatively engage with the course material.

Obtaining a “B” grade in this class will require consistent and sustained participation in class, as well as the submission of superior-quality work. This superior-quality work must accurately engage with the course material.

d. Grading Timeline

Because this is a condensed Fall semester, I will make every effort to return grades to you as quickly as possible. Reading responses and the midterm will be returned within two weeks of submission.

VI. Assignment Rubrics

If students have any questions regarding how assignments will be graded, they should reach out to me as early as possible.

VII. Assignment Submission Policy

- A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement from the instructor, late assignments will automatically be dropped one letter grade for each day they are late.
- B. Assignments must be submitted via blackboard. In addition, the final paper must also be emailed to me at ncurran@usc.edu by Thursday, November 19th at 11:00pm.
- C. All assignments should be turned in as Word documents.

VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

All required readings will be uploaded to Blackboard. In addition, students are advised to read the *The New York Times* and/or other news publications daily.

COURSE SCHEDULE

12:00pm-1:50, Mondays & Wednesdays August 17thst – November 12th, 2020

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability. Additional readings may be added.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 Dates: 8/17-8/21	Syllabus; Introductions; What is technology?	Susan Douglas (2006) on the turn within; Neil Postman (1992) on the judgement of Thamus	Prepare 1-2 minute introduction for first day of class (including year of study, major, hometown, etc.)
Week 2 Dates: 8/24-8/28	Globalization	Thomas Friedman (2005): “ <u>It’s a Flat World, After All</u> ”; Keri Smith (2018) on globalization; Anthony Giddens (2013) on globalization	Reading response 1 due by Sunday, August 23rd at 11pm
Week 3 Dates: 8/31-9/4	Network Society; and Networked Individualism	Manuel Castells (2010): excerpts; Barry Wellman and Lee Rainie (2012): excerpts;	Reading response 2 due by Sunday, August 30 th at 11pm
Week 4 Dates: 9/7-9/11	Social Networking Services	dana boyd & Nicole Ellison (2008) on SNS; Vann Newkirk II (2016) on Twitter;	[Labor Day: Monday, September 7] Reading response 3 due by Sunday, September 6 th at 11pm

		Ian Bogost (2020) on Facebook; TBD	
Week 5 Dates: 9/14-9/18	Online Cultures	Sulafa Zidani (2020) on memes; Dal Yong Jin (2017): Smartland Korea; Sherry Turkle (1999) “Cyberspace and Identity”; Theresa Senft & Nancy Baym (2015) on selfies	Reading response 4 due by Sunday, September 13 th at 11pm
Week 6 Dates: 9/21-9/25	Dating & Games; Guest speaker	Adrienne Shaw (2010) on games; Hobbs et al. (2017) on online dating	Reading response 5 due by Sunday, September 20 th at 11pm
Week 7 Dates: 9/28-10/2	Privacy; Guest Speaker	Shoshana Zuboff (2015) on surveillance capitalism; Gabrielle Coleman (2018) on Anonymity	Reading response 6 due by Sunday, September 27 th at 11pm
Week 8 Dates: 10/5-10/9	Artificial Intelligence; Guest Speaker	Sherry Turkle (2018) in <u>The New York Times</u> ; Saygin et al. (2001) on the Turing test	Reading response 7 due by Sunday, October 4 th at 11pm
Week 9 Dates: 10/12-10/16	AI and Algorithms	Safiya Noble (2018) excerpts; Safiya Noble and Brendesha Tynes (2016): excerpts	Reading response 8 due by Sunday, October 11 th at 11pm
Week 10 Dates: 10/19-10/23	Sharing economy and cosmopolitanism	Schor (2014) on the sharing economy; Sobre-Denton (2016) on virtual cosmopolitanism	Reading response 9 due by Sunday, October 18 th at 11pm
Week 11 Dates: 10/26-10/30	Gig economy	Kalleberg & Dunn (2016) on jobs in the gig economy; Mason (2018) on Uber	Reading response 9 due by Sunday, October 25 th at 11pm
Week 12 Dates: 11/2-11/6	Virtual influencers/guest speaker	Bonnie Nardi (2015) on Virtuality	Reading response 10 due by Sunday, November 1 st at 11pm

Week 13 Dates: 11/9-11/13	Final presentations and review; course evals	TBD; TBD	Reading response 9 due by Sunday, November 8th at 11pm; Course evals; Final paper presentation
STUDY DAYS Dates: 11/14-11/16			
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Dates: 11/17-11/24			Final Paper due November 20th by 1:00pm

XII. Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

Students are expected to be seated in front of their computers during class time and to keep their cameras on for the duration of class. If this is not possible, students should contact me to discuss the situation. Sharing the recordings of the classes with anyone is absolutely prohibited.

Communication

I highly encourage students to regularly meet with me via Zoom and to proactively discuss their performance in the class as it progresses. My email is ncurran@usc.edu.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
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

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

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, 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.symplicity.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

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
uscsa.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

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, 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

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

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.