COMM 309 – Communication and Technology

M/W, 3:30 – 4:50
Room: ANN L105A
Instructor: Dmitri Williams, Professor
Email: *dcwillia@usc.edu*
Office: ANN 414K
TAs:
[A - G] TBD
[H - Si] TBD
[Su - Z] TBD

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.

Student Learning Outcomes
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.

Course Notes:

Readings
All readings are supplied via Blackboard. No, you don't have to buy anything (yay). The materials consist of book excerpts, online articles, magazine clips, research papers, and trade articles.

Also: Students are required to read WIRED magazine as it comes out. It's cheap, and also available online, and hey, all of your other readings are supplied for free. I recommend subscribing.

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.

Lastly, but important: The classroom is a safe space for ideas and discussion, which requires that everyone does their part to create an atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance. There will be no discrimination based on anyone's background, demographics, or politics, etc. In short, the only thing I don't tolerate is intolerance.

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) Social Media blackout.
   From Sep. 22 to Sep. 27 (you can start Sep. 25 if you are weak(!) or have a work reason), 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 Sep. 26 (before our Thursday class) 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 Friday, December 9 at 5 pm. Papers will be submitted to the Turnitin system via Blackboard. Late papers will lose 10% per day late, starting at 5:01 pm on the 9th.

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	10%
Exam 1	30%*
Exam 2	25%*
Quiz	5%
Final Paper	30%
Participation	Extra credit

*For Fall '22, we will take the average of Exam 1 and 2 and use that score to replace the lower of the two.

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:

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

Assignment Submission Policy
All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor/TA, usually with some kind of documentation, grades are reduced by 10% per day late, starting immediately at the time and date due.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/22/22 – 12/2/22)

Link: https://classes.usc.edu/term-20223/calendar/
Friday, September 9: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001
Friday, September 9: Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W," except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001
Friday, September 9: Last day to change enrollment option to audit for Session 001
Friday, September 9: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass to a letter grade for Session 001
Friday, September 9: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall
Tuesday, September 13: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001
Friday, October 7: Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of "W" will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]
Friday, November 11: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

Date	Class #	Session	Readings	Assignment Due
T, Aug. 23	1	Class intro, Structuralism, Prisoner's Dilemma	None	
Th, Aug. 25	2	Trust, Systems, Community	Ranked: The Ten Best Cities	
T, Aug. 30	3	Origins and precedents	Czitrom, p. 3-29; McLuhan, p. 3-6 (intro). Optional (but fun): robot delivery at UCLA.	
Th, Sep. 1	4	Science Fiction as metaphor	Glassner, p. 29-35, NYT: How China is Policing the Future Optional: for something very different about why we watch what we watch, read this by Cottom nb: Possum link w/transcript	
T, Sep. 6	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
Th, Sep. 8	6	Participatory culture	Jenkins and Lopez, "On Emma Gonzalez's Jacket" Class guest: Henry Jenkins	
T, Sep. 13	7	Lessig and code, Structuralism goes bonkers	Lessig, 9-28	
Th, Sep. 15	8	CMC	Love in the time of robots (WIRED).	
T, Sep. 20	9	Traditional media business models	Litman, p. 265-272	
Th, Sep. 22	10	Social Media Entertainment	Calling Western Union, Craig & Conversation article Class guest: David Craig	Note: start blackout today, or no later than this Sunday, Sep. 25
T, Sep. 27 (Rosh Hashana)	11	Social Impact I: Community	Putnam, Ch. 13; Conti, Do Yourself a Favor (The Atlantic)	

Th, Sep. 29	12	Social Impact II: Exit, Voice and Loyalty	Galston reading, Optional: two studies on Facebook use	Social media blackout exercise due
T, Oct. 4	13	The Networks Perspective, Influence	Christakis & Fowler, Ch. 3	Sample question due to TAs
Th, Oct. 6	14	The Spectrum and the FCC/Midterm Review	"The Strange David and Goliath Saga" Spectrum Map (no, you don't have to memorize it)	
T, Oct. 11 (Sukkot)	15	Midterm	Note: You will not need bluebooks. You will need a laptop.	
Th, Oct. 13 Fall Recess, No Class				
T, Oct. 18 (Simchat Torah)	16	Midterm debrief, Politics, Parties, Political Compass	"America Without Family, God or Patriotism"	
Th, Oct. 20	17	Technology and Democracy, cont., Collective action	Shirky, 55-69, then 1-6, Two WIRED articles on speech	
T, Oct. 25	18	Analytics, Big Data	Day in the life of an analyst. Read SAS' page on what analytics is.	
Th, Oct. 27	19	Persuasion	Cialdini, Ch. 1	Note: submit ideas for next week by Monday to this link.
T, Nov. 1	20	Term paper workshop	None	Paper topic due today to TAs.
Th, Nov. 3	21	What's new? Games, AI, AR/VR (InWith), smart cars, smart homes, Metaverse, what else? Inventors and investors/Updates from the News Cycle/Comm theories/Lessig TED	Pick one (at least): 1. Metaverse predictions 2. AI gets creative 3. Smart speaker article	Send in examples of the next big thing. e.g. Snelweg Sprookjes, or AI on AI.

T, Nov. 8	22	Identity I: Anonymity, Reputation, Roles	Turkle, Ch. 8 Optional: [Private messages are the new(old) social network](#)	
Th, Nov. 10	23	Identity II: Cues, Front/Backstage, Deception, Etiquette	Meyrowitz, Ch. 3	Paper outlines due to TAs.
T, Nov. 15	24	Identity III and Managing the Commons:	WIRED China Social Credit, Lessig, Ch. 6, Cyberspaces	
Th, Nov. 17	25	No class meeting, do the assignment instead	Optional: Dibbell, A Rape in Cyberspace (trigger warning: skip if problematic)	Watch "Nosedive" and think about how it relates to the China Social Credit system
T, Nov. 22	26	New media business models, disruption, The Long Tail	WIRED Guide to Blockchain, Wikipedia entry Optional: "The Blockchain: A Love Story/A Horror Story"	Submit a final exam question
Th, Nov. 24		No class, Thanksgiving		
T, Nov. 29	27	Evals, Class wrap up & bringing it all together, Final exam review	NYT article on a new study	
Th, Dec. 1	28	Final exam	Note: You will not need bluebooks. You will need a laptop.	
Friday, Dec. 9		Final Papers Due	Papers due on Turnitin by 5pm	

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](#)." Other forms of
academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university
policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

The 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.

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course, without approval of the instructor.

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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776
osas.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.