

# **SYLLABUS: COMM 3554**

## **Social Implications of Communication Tech**

### **Online Spring 2021**

**Instructor:** Wenbo Li

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**Zoom office hours:** Tuesdays 10am-12pm or by appointment

**Teaching Assistant/Grader:** Chloe Mortenson

**Email address:** mortenson.12@osu.edu

**Zoom office hours:** Thursdays 11am to 1pm.

## **Course Description and Learning Goals**

This is an upper-level course on the social implications of communication technology. We will cover many communication technologies such as social networking sites, online dating sites, video games, texting, mobile telephony, and virtual reality. We will also cover important issues that cut across multiple technologies, such as privacy, digital deception, and cyberbullying. At times, we consider the ways communication technology may affect society as a whole (e.g., the spread of fake news) as well as cases in which communication technologies affect their individual users (e.g., the connection between social media and mental health).

- Students will learn about the characteristics, functionality, and usage of communication technologies; a focus will be placed on identifying the unique properties of new communication technologies.
- Students will be able to explain the historical origin of the study of communication technology.
- Students will increase their knowledge of the effects of communication technology on ourselves and society.
- Students will apply existing theory and research findings to new media technologies.
- Students will develop strategies for using and managing communication technology in our daily lives.
- Students will build critical skills to analyze and interpret communication technologies and their messages.

## Required Textbook

Downs, E. (Ed.) (2019). The dark side of media and technology: A 21st century guide to media and technological literacy. New York, NY: Peter Lang. (ISBN: 978-1-4331-4900-9)

**Note:** You may purchase an electronic version of the text directly from the publisher: <https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/65416>

I will provide other required media content, materials, and readings via Carmen throughout the semester.

## Course technology

For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

- **Carmen:**
  - Carmen, Ohio State's Learning Management System, will be used to host materials and activities throughout this course. To access Carmen, visit [Carmen.osu.edu](https://carmen.osu.edu). Log in to Carmen using your name.# and password. If you have not setup a name.# and password, visit [my.osu.edu](https://my.osu.edu).
  - Help guides on the use of Carmen can be found at <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmen>
  - **This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.**
    - [Carmen accessibility](#)
- **Secured Media Library**
  - Some of the videos for this course will be posted in the University's Secured Media Library. The link will be posted on the class Carmen page and you will be automatically directed to the correct video.
  - Help guides on the use of Secured Media Library can be found at <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/securedmedialibrary>
- **Zoom Office Hours**
  - Office hours will be held through Zoom. I'll be online from 10am to 12pm on Tuesdays. Chloe will be on Zoom from 11am to 1pm on Thursdays. The links to my and Chloe's Zoom office hours are posted in the course Carmen modules.

- Students may use the audio and video functions if a webcam and microphone are available. If not, there is still a chat function within Zoom for the student to live chat with me or Chloe in the virtual office hours room.
- **Self-Service and Chat support:** <http://ocio.osu.edu/selfservice>
- **Phone:** 614-688-HELP (4357)
- **Email:** [8help@osu.edu](mailto:8help@osu.edu)
- **TDD:** 614-688-8743

### Baseline technical skills necessary for online courses

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills & Navigating Carmen

### Necessary equipment

- Computer: Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection

### Necessary software

- Word processor with the ability to save files under .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf. Most popular word processing software programs including Microsoft Word and Mac Pages have these abilities.
- OSU students have access to Microsoft Office products free of charge. To install, please visit [https://osuitsm.service-now.com/selfservice/kb\\_view.do?sysparm\\_article=kb04733](https://osuitsm.service-now.com/selfservice/kb_view.do?sysparm_article=kb04733)

## Grading and faculty response

### Grades

Assignment or category	Points
Syllabus and APA Quiz (#1)	20
Quizzes (#3)	60
Weekly Discussion Posts (#11)	110
Reflection Papers (#4)	120
Exam (#1)	100
Group project (#1)	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>

## Assignments

**WEEKLY DISCUSSION POSTS.** Each week you will be expected to take part in class discussions. Discussions will take place over the course of Wednesday through Friday each week. You are expected (from week 2 onwards) to be making around **AT LEAST THREE** discussion posts (one initial post + two responses) per week. You should not be looking to make a point based on your own thoughts and then leaving. Instead, you should seek to engage with what other group members are saying and responding to them. **Initial posts are due by Wednesday 11:59pm and at least 2 response posts are due by Friday 11:59pm.** Each discussion post does not need to be especially long. Approximately a paragraph may be all that is needed, although you are free to make longer or shorter posts where you feel appropriate. An excellent discussion post (and response) should demonstrate 1. Understanding of the concept(s) in the material provided 2. Independent thought regarding the concepts and material 3. Thoughtful response to the work of at least 2 other students in the class.

**QUIZZES.** **Four** quizzes will be administered on Carmen. The quizzes are designed to assess your understanding of the readings and audio lectures. Every other Wednesday, you will be required to take a quiz showing your mastery of the course content. The first quiz will be on Week 2. All quizzes are announced and available on your weekly schedule. These quizzes cannot be made up and must be completed on Wednesday. Quizzes will open on Mondays at 12:00 AM EST and close at 11:59 PM EST. You have 24 hours to complete the quiz. The quizzes will be open book/notes and cover material from the textbook, other readings, and lecture. Some of the material on the quizzes may reappear on exams. The quiz description in Carmen will state which material each quiz covers. You have 1 attempt to take each quiz, and quizzes are timed. Due dates are listed in the course calendar below.

**REFLECTION PAPERS.** You will complete **four** reflection assignments over the course of the semester. Due dates are listed in the course calendar below. You will need to cite any sources that you use for these assignments. Your reflections will be reported in a 2.5-page minimum double-spaced paper, complete with outside references. We will use APA style citations in this course (either the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> edition is fine). An excellent submission will briefly explain the theory or concept and then go into depth, making a connection between the concept and a real-world application. A complete rubric and description for each will be provided on Carmen when the paper is assigned. Note that we can only grade what you have submitted. Double check before submitting your work.

**EXAM.** **One** exam of 50 questions will be delivered on Carmen to assess comprehension of reading and lecture materials at the end of the spring semester. The exam is open book/notes. The exam will cover information from textbook readings, other readings, and lecture. They will feature some combination of multiple choice, true/false, and matching style questions. I will design the questions to assess your definitional understanding of course content and ability to accurately apply, interpret, and evaluate human communication and behavior through the lens of course concepts.

**GROUP PROJECT.** You will be randomly assigned to a small group of four to five people. Each group will write a brief paper and give an elevator pitch on a topic related to communication technologies. Each group member will also need to submit peer evaluations. Further details about the project will be announced in class (see the course calendar below) and available on Carmen.

**EXTRA CREDIT.** Students may earn up to five points of extra credit by participating in the School of Communication's Communication Research Experience Program (C-REP). One hour of research participation is equal to one point of extra credit. A non-research participation alternative is also available if you do not wish to participate in studies or are ineligible to participate in a research study. The C-REP Spring 2021 Student Guide is now posted on Carmen, and it has more details about research participation. If you want to obtain an alternate assignment or need to unlock your C-REP account, you will need contact the C-REP coordinator, Olivia Bullock, at [bullock.181@osu.edu](mailto:bullock.181@osu.edu). Additional extra credit opportunities will be announced via Carmen throughout the term.

## Late assignments

A 2-hour grace period is given for **weekly discussions/responses and reflection papers** (excluding quizzes and exams) to ease any technology or personal issues that may arise. Late submissions for assignments will not incur a penalty during the grace period but will incur a **30%** penalty each day the submission is late. The first day begins one minute after the grace period has ended, with an automatic loss of 30% of the points. Please do not email your paper to the professor or to the TA. We will open the assignment window for you so that you can upload it for the plagiarism check. It will not be counted as submitted until you have submitted it to Carmen.

You must have a medical excuse or a note from Carmen/Canvas staff documenting an actual Carmen/Canvas problem that would have affected your submission to have a paper or post accepted with no penalty after the assignment period closes.

## Grading scale

93–100: A  
90–92.9: A-  
87–89.9: B+  
83–86.9: B  
80–82.9: B-  
77–79.9: C+  
73–76.9: C  
70–72.9: C-  
67–69.9: D+  
60–66.9: D  
Below 60: E

**Please note:** Carmen Canvas, OSU's grading and class management software, does not round fractions up. Please take that into account in computing grades. I do not manually round up grades. There will be opportunities for extra credit for students who choose to earn those points.

## Faculty feedback and response time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call **614-688-HELP** at any time if you have a technical problem.)

### Communicating with the Instructor

In general, students should refer first to the course syllabus and Carmen for due dates, assignment details, and other course information. Please reserve email messages for extenuating circumstances and points of administrative concern. **Preferably**, use email rather than Carmen messaging **to reach the instructor**.

In any email communication, students must put "COMM 3554" in the subject line and demonstrate professional courtesy in their message. I expect professionalism from your emails: You need to politely address me, include a subject line, use respectful languages, and sign your name at the end. I will respond once to emails that do not meet this standard and let you know what needs to be improved. Subsequent unprofessional emails will not receive a response.

Generally, you can expect me to reply to emails within 24 hours on weekdays. I may take up to 48 hours to respond on weekends. I will let you know if there are any circumstances that affect my ability to respond to emails for a particular week.

### Class Questions Discussion Board

If you have a question that you would like answered that would benefit the whole class (e.g., a question about clarifying assignment instructions, a question about using C-REP, a question about course content), you can post it on the Carmen discussion board titled "Class Questions." I will respond as soon as I am able. Your classmates might also respond to you if they know the answer. Be sure to check previous posts in the discussion board to see if your question has already been asked and answered. Also make sure you check this syllabus and Carmen announcements to see if your question is answered there before posting.

This discussion board is NOT where you ask questions about your own grades. Grades should be discussed privately.

### Grading and feedback

Chloe will be grading all your assignments except your group projects. Wenbo will be grading your final projects.

For large weekly assignments, you can generally expect feedback within **7-10 days**. This class has over 110 students and only one TA. Patience is a virtue. Your exam grades should be posted within 24 hours after it's closed.

### Discussion board

Myself or the TA will check and reply to messages in the discussion boards every **24 hours on school days**.

## Attendance, participation, and discussions

### Student participation

Because this is a distance-education course, your attendance is based on your online activity and participation. The following is a summary of everyone's expected participation:

- **Viewing lectures: MODULES POSTED ON CARMEN ONCE PER WEEK**  
Lecture content and materials will be posted on Carmen on Mondays. The lectures start with a video overview of course materials followed by text materials. The videos are short to provide the most optimal viewing experience and to increase attention and engagement. Text materials are provided for your convenience so that you can always come back and review. The lectures should be viewed within the week to be sure you are up to date with the course materials.
- **Office hours:**  
We are available to help you to learn, understand, and grow as individuals. If your question is something that you believe may be of interest to others in the class, please post to the "Ask the instructor" discussion board. Office hours are virtual on Zoom.

### Discussion and communication guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Tone and civility:** Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Remember that sarcasm doesn't always come across online. The instructor and TA both work very hard to provide a positive learning experience. Please keep this in mind and remain civilized and respectful in your email and discussion board communications.

- **Citing your sources:** When we have academic discussions, please cite your sources to back up what you say. (For the textbook or other course materials, list at least the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.)

## Other course policies

### Student Academic Services

Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services' website provides support for student academic success. Information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors can be obtained through this website. The site is: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

### Student Services

The Student Service Center assists with financial aid matters, tuition and fee payments. Please see their site at: <http://ssc.osu.edu>

### Copyright Disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

### Diversity

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

### Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)



## Academic integrity policy

### Policies for this online course

- **Written assignments:** Your written assignments, including discussion posts, should be your own original work. In formal assignments, you should follow **APA** style to cite the ideas and words of your research sources. You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your assignments before you turn them in--but no one else should revise or rewrite your work.
- **Reusing past work:** In general, you are prohibited in university courses from turning in work from a past class to your current class, even if you modify it. If you want to build on past research or revisit a topic you've explored in previous courses, please discuss the situation with me.
- **Falsifying research or results:** All research you will conduct in this course is intended to be a learning experience; you should never feel tempted to make your results or your library research look more successful than it was.

### Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

## Accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities

### Requesting accommodations

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcomed to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu) ; 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu) ; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

## Course schedule (tentative)

I will make every attempt to adhere to these dates. However, these dates are subject to change. Please check Carmen (especially the announcements and messages), which is where I will post changes if necessary.

**Unless otherwise noted, assignments/exams are due 11:59pm EST (no matter where you are, time difference excuses are NOT accepted)**

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Deadlines
1	1/11-1/15	<u>Topic</u> : Introduction to the course <u>Reading</u> : Syllabus <u>Media</u> : Purdue OWL APA tutorials	None
2	1/18 (Martin Luther King Jr. Day, no class)-1/22	<u>Topic</u> : What is technology, and what do we mean by social implications? <u>Reading</u> : Textbook chs. 1 & 25	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F) Quiz 1: Syllabus and APA due 1/18
3	1/25-1/29	<u>Topic 1</u> : Concepts and Theories <u>Reading</u> : McEwan (2015) & Metzger (2009) <u>Topic 2</u> : Drones, Virtual reality, & Other emerging technologies <u>Reading</u> : Textbook chs. 21 & 23	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F)
4	2/1-2/5	<u>Topic 1</u> : Psychological effects & Problematic use <u>Reading</u> : Textbook chs. 8 & 20 <u>Topic 2</u> : Identities, Groups, & Self-presentation <u>Reading</u> : Textbook chs. 7 & 18	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F) Reflection paper #1 due 2/1
5	2/8-2/12	<u>Topic</u> : Individual differences & Relationships (Part 1) <u>Reading</u> : Textbook ch. 12	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F) Quiz 2 due 2/8

6	2/15-2/19	<u>Topic:</u> Relationships (Part 2) <u>Reading:</u> Fox & Frampton (2017) & Textbook ch. 13	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F)
7	2/22-2/26	<u>Topic 1:</u> Privacy & Surveillance <u>Reading:</u> Merchant (2015) & Textbook ch. 16 <u>Topic 2:</u> Social influence <u>Reading:</u> Jones et al. (2012)	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F) Reflection Paper 2 due 2/22
8	3/1-3/5	<u>Topic 1:</u> Concerns about children <u>Reading:</u> Textbook chs. 14 & 15 <u>Topic 2:</u> Tech & Info Inequality <u>Reading:</u> Cacciatore et al. (2018), Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2017), Wei & Hindman (2009)	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F) Quiz 3 due 3/1
9	3/8-3/12	<u>Topic:</u> Film screening for Reflection paper #3 <u>Media:</u> <i>Her</i> (2013)	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F)
10	3/15-3/19	<u>Topic:</u> Education & Health <u>Reading:</u> Ahn & Fox (2018) & Singh (2014) <u>Topic 1:</u> Network neutrality & Ethics <u>Reading:</u> none	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F) Reflection Paper #3 due 3/15
11	3/22-3/26	<u>Topic:</u> Social networks <u>Reading:</u> Christakis & Fowler (2011) Ch.1, <a href="#">Watts (2016)</a>	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F)
12	3/29-4/2	<u>Topic:</u> Social media, polarization, misinformation, and protest <u>Reading:</u> Bohannon (2017), Bail et al. (2018), Pennycook & Rand (2019), Guess et al. (2019)	Discussion Post (W) & Responses (F) Quiz 4 due 3/29
13	4/5-4/9	<u>Topic:</u> Guest lecture <u>Review for the exam</u>	Reflection Paper #4 due 4/9

14	4/12-4/16	Exam	
15	4/19-4/23	Work on final project/paper (Group meetings with instructor)	Papers & slides due for all groups on 4/25
16	Exam week		Peer reviewer due for all groups on 4/30

*Course policies, readings, and course structure based on the in-person courses by Dr. Jessica Frampton. Layout adapted from Dr. Siyue (April) Li. This syllabus is an agreement between the instructor and the student. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as deemed necessary. By staying enrolled in this class, the student agrees to abide by the policies described herein.*