

# SYLLABUS: COMM 3466 (21834) ONLINE COMMUNICATION AND POPULAR CULTURE

## Course Overview

As stated in the course catalog, this course examines “communication causes and impacts of the changing technological environment where traditional differences between cultural products, folk, mass, popular, low, elite, high, knowledge, journalistic, and informational are disappearing.” Prereq: Not open to students with credit for 666. Credit Hours: 3.0. The course will be presented entirely online.

## Instructor(s)

Instructor
Charles “Joe” Francemone, M.A. Email Address: <a href="mailto:francemone.1@osu.edu">francemone.1@osu.edu</a> Online Office Hours: By appointment

## Course Description

This general elective course will examine how popular culture is reflected in human communication. Although the course will focus primarily on mass communication as a source of popular culture, we will also explore how popular culture influences our interpersonal relationships and how we communicate with each other. For example, one section asks students to apply communication theories related to the spread of information through society to describe how popular culture infiltrates mass communication messages and spreads to more interpersonal contexts.

Presented in an online format, this course will take a dynamic approach to learning. We will venture through various aspects of popular culture: Music, movies, slang, and even memes. Although all assignments are completed individually, you should engage with other students through our online discussions. To this end, certain technologies are required for taking this course (see Course Technology section).

Throughout the 8 weeks of class, you’ll develop a more thorough understanding of popular culture through the lens of the communication discipline. Our focus will help you explain popular culture’s intersection with the individual. We will explore how popular culture came to be, why it is more important than many people think, and how it helps us to understand our place in the world and how we communicate with others.

## Course Learning Outcomes

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

- Classify various definitions of popular culture and their relationship to the various levels of communication (e.g., interpersonal, group, mass).
- Recognize and categorize different elements of popular culture as they relate to communication phenomena, such as social bonding and group formation.
- Identify the historical and contemporary sources of popular culture as they relate to communication theories, including but not limited to diffusion of innovations, two-step flow, and entertainment appraisal.
- Apply communication theories to understand the communicative functions of popular culture.

## Course Materials

No official textbook is being adopted for this course. Readings for the course will consist of chapters and articles posted in digital format on Carmen (see Course Schedule for specific readings).

The readings and other media materials presented in the course are designed to challenge the students' current abilities. They range from chapters in undergraduate textbooks to cutting edge research articles published in the field's best journals.

## Course Requirements

### Assignments

The assignments are designed to assess basic-level understandings (e.g., remember and understand) as well as higher-level understandings (e.g., apply and analyze). The specific assignments are presented below along with a short description of the general format of the assignment and its relationship to student learning.

- 5 Reading Quizzes (25% of grade)
  - Quizzes will be administered throughout the semester on a semi-weekly schedule. All quizzes are due by Sunday night of the week they are assigned. Quizzes will not take place during weeks where students must complete a milestone assignment.
  - The quizzes represent a check-in point for the students and the instructor. They ensure that students are keeping up with the readings and that the students are getting the “overarching lesson” from each reading.
- 7 Discussion Board Posts/Replies (35% of grade)
  - Even though this is an online course, students' participation will be assessed by examining whether they engaged with all course materials and contributed substantially to the discussion boards. Discussion boards will be posted each week where students post questions or observations about the course content. Students must make **1 individual post** and **1 reply to another student** to receive credit. These posts must make **substantive** contributions to the discussion boards. A simple comment is not a substantive contribution. Linking various theories, topics, etc. and

bringing in outside information is. Although the discussion boards are open-ended, and students can present any information they wish.

- Term Paper (40%)
  - The term paper will ask students to trace the history of a popular cultural product and how it has impacted society at large. What are the origins of the cultural product, how did it gain popularity, and how has it impacted society?
  - Students will link their historical analysis to important communication theories discussed throughout the course.
  - There are two milestone assignments related to the term paper at different points in the semester. These milestone assignments will help you stay on track so that your final product is higher in quality.
  - Milestone Assignment 1 is due during Week 3. (10% of grade)
    - This assignment asks students to identify their topic of interest.
    - Students will identify their cultural product, how they intend to research its evolution, and present an annotated bibliography of at least 5 sources that they plan on using in their final paper.
  - Milestone Assignment 2 is due during Week 6. (10% of grade)
    - This assignment requires students to present an outline of their final paper.
    - By this point, students should have completed the primary research phase of their project and have an outline of the structure of their final paper. The outline should be at least 1.5-2 pages long (single-spaced) and have enough detail that the instructor has a firm understanding of what the student will present in their final document.
  - Final Paper: A 6-page (double-spaced) term paper will be due during week 8. (20% of grade)

## 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 and Buckeyelink do not round up grades. Your grades will be exactly what is earned and will not be rounded up. Extra credit will be offered for students who wish to earn a chance to improve grades.

## 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.)

### Grading and feedback

For assignments, you can generally expect feedback within **10 days**.

### E-mail

I will reply to e-mails within **24 hours on week days**. Please email through Buckeyemail and not Carmen Messages. DO NOT reply to a Carmen message through Buckeyemail.

### Instructor communication

At times announcements will be made to the class via Carmen Announcements and sent through a Carmen message. Please regularly check both to ensure you do not miss a communication.

## Attendance, participation, and discussions

### Student participation requirements

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:

- **Online lectures**  
Recorded lectures will be uploaded with all other materials every Monday. More than one lecture may appear in the upload. The videos are short to provide the most optimal viewing experience and to increase attention and engagement. Watch a lecture, take a break, come back to the next.
- **Readings**  
All readings are expected to be completed prior to viewing the lectures.
- **Discussion Board Posts**  
Weekly discussion board participation is required for the course.

### Communication guidelines

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

- **Writing style:** This course is intended to prepare you for future communications as a professional. Assignments should be approached in this manner. Please proofread, edit, and include appropriate language.
- **Tone and civility:** Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Furthermore, rude or impatient communications are generally not appreciated in professional situations. Please consider your words as if you were a professional when communicating with other students, the instructor, and the teaching assistant.
- **Citing your sources:** When requested, 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.)

## Academic Misconduct

All of your work in this class is expected to be your independent contribution. You should not seek help from other students, friends, family, etc.

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/>.

## Late Assignments

Late work is not accepted in this class. Assignments turned in after the deadline will only be accepted with a valid medical or university excuse that is presented within 5 days of the missed deadline. It is the student’s responsibility to be sure the assignment submitted correctly. Please check your Carmen folder after submission to ensure the upload is there and complete.

## Disability Services

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 immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. 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.

## Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614--292--5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614--292--5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1--800--273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

## Sexual Misconduct/Relationship Violence

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)

## Diversity Policy

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

## 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. The following technologies may be used in this course. You should familiarize yourself with them if you have questions.

- **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:**
  - Media materials for this course will be made available via the Secured Media Library. [go.osu.edu/SecuredMediaLibrary](https://go.osu.edu/SecuredMediaLibrary)
  - To obtain additional help for use of the Secured Media Library, please email [emedialib@osu.edu](mailto:emedialib@osu.edu)
  - Frequently Asked Questions and support can be found at

<https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/secured-media-library>

- **CarmenZoom**

- Office hours will be held through Ohio State's conferencing platform, CarmenZoom.
- Help guides on the use of CarmenZoom can be found at [https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmenzoom/getting-started-carmenzoom?search\\_text=with%20all%20the%20functionality%20of%20a%20Zoom%20pro%20account%20that%20includes%20up%20to%20300&search\\_terms=zoom](https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmenzoom/getting-started-carmenzoom?search_text=with%20all%20the%20functionality%20of%20a%20Zoom%20pro%20account%20that%20includes%20up%20to%20300&search_terms=zoom)

- **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: current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection
- Webcam and microphone recommended for office hours, chat function available for students without webcam or microphone.

**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)

## Course Schedule

Date	Topics	Readings (Available on Carmen)	Assignments Due
Week 1 (5/9)	Syllabus and defining popular culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Syllabus</li> <li>Story (2018). "What is popular culture?"</li> <li>Gans (1974). "The critique of mass culture"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading Quiz 1</li> <li>Discussion Post 1</li> </ul>
Week 2 (5/15)	Methods for explaining popular culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Danesi (2019). "Explaining pop culture"</li> <li>McQuail (2010). "Mass communication and culture"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading Quiz 2</li> <li>Discussion Post 2</li> </ul>
Week 3 (5/22)	Sources of popular culture and popular language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Danesi (2019). "The business of pop culture"</li> <li>McQuail (2010). "The production of media culture"</li> <li>Danesi (2019). "Pop language"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milestone 1</li> <li>Discussion Post 3</li> </ul>
Week 4 (5/29)	How does popular culture spread?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rogers (1983). "Elements of diffusion"</li> <li>Xu et al. (2016). "Networked cultural diffusion..."</li> <li>Choi (2015). "The two-step flow of communication..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading Quiz 3</li> <li>Discussion Post 4</li> </ul>
Week 5 (6/5)	Identifying experts and mavens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boster et al. (2011). "Identifying influence..."</li> <li>Carpenter et al., (2015). "Evidence for the validity of a social connectedness scale..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading Quiz 4</li> <li>Discussion Post 5</li> </ul>
Week 6 (6/12)	Examining popularity of music and film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Askin et al. (2017). "What makes popular culture..."</li> <li>Litman (1983). "Predicting success of theatrical..."</li> <li>Lewis et al. (2019). "Are enjoyment and appreciation..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milestone 2</li> <li>Discussion Post 6</li> </ul>
Week 7 (6/19)	How people select media and how popular media reflects society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rubin (2006). "Uses and gratifications..."</li> <li>Knobloch-Westernwick (2006). "Mood management..."</li> <li>Smith et al. (2016). "Inequality in 700 popular films..."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading Quiz 5</li> <li>Discussion Post 7</li> </ul>
Week 8 (6/26)	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Term Paper</li> </ul>