COMM 3554
SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

SUMMER 2024 ONLINE COURSE

Instructor: Ralph J. Martins

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Online office hours: via Zoom, Tu/Th from 10am to 12pm. The Zoom link is on Carmen.

Course description

This is an upper-level course on the social implications of communication technologies. We will cover an array of technologies**,** such as social networking sites, online dating sites/apps, video games, user-generated content platforms, and virtual reality platforms. Throughout the course, we will devote attention to important social issues that implicate communication technologies, such as digital deception, cyberbullying, privacy and surveillance, digital sexual content, and political influence campaigns. We will consider ways in which these technologies may affect societies as wholes (e.g., "fake news" and mis- or dis-information), as well as how they affect individual users (e.g., social comparison and its effects on mental health).

Learning goals

The aim for this class is to enable you to:

- Recognize and describe the characteristics, functionalities, and uses of comm. tech.
- Understand historical paradigms in the study and popular interpretation of comm. tech.
- Recognize and classify different types of communication or media effects, as well as describe, infer, and hypothesize about these effects on individuals and on societies in a critical and evidence-based manner.
- Navigate contemporary discourse about comm. tech in an informed and scientific way.
- Apply existing theory and evidence to understand the properties of – and to analyze the implications of – new/emerging tech, to the extent possible.
- Critique existing theory and frameworks for where they fall short in guiding our thinking about new/emerging tech and suggest modifications or other improvements to theory.
- Develop effective strategies for using and managing communication technology in your own life.

Embedded Literacies: Goals and Expected Learning Outcomes

This course fulfills the Technology Embedded Literacy in the General Education curriculum.

Students who are taking this course to fulfill their Technology expected learning outcome are expected to develop familiarity with specific forms of technology, and of their practical possibilities and limitations in relation to particular disciplinary or interdisciplinary projects.

Successful students will develop a critical appreciation of the relations between technologies and their contexts (social, cultural, historical) and of the range of effects and consequences (legal, ethical, political) produced or enabled by particular technologies. They will be able to:

- Critically describe the relationships between technology and societies in historical and cultural context.
- Recognize how technologies emerge and change.
- Evaluate the social and ethical implications of technology.

Course structure and requirements

This course is 100% online. There will be no mandatory sessions for which you must be logged in to Carmen or Zoom at a scheduled time. Office hours are held at scheduled times, but these are not mandatory – though, of course, I encourage you to see me should you want to.

The course will last eight weeks. At the start of each week, a new module will become available on the course Carmen site. This module will contain all of the materials and content associated with what we are doing that week. Typically, this will include one or more short lecture videos, additional reading materials, and assignments, plus any other materials we are using that week.

I will post an announcement on Carmen when the module becomes available. As long as you are meeting your deadlines, you may schedule your work during the week as you please. Some assignments will be due by the end of the same week. You are expected to log in to the course Carmen site at least once per week to access the modules.

This is a 3-credit-hour course. According to Ohio State policy (www.go.osu.edu/credithours), students should expect to spend around 3 hours per week on direct instruction (lectures, quizzes/exams, and other Carmen activities), plus up to 6 hours on class prep and homework (reading and assignments) to receive a grade of (C) average.

Required textbook

Our textbook for the class is:

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)

You may purchase an electronic version of the text directly from the publisher: https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/65416. You can also find both new and used paperback copies for purchase on the various online marketplaces if you prefer.

Grading, assignments, and feedback

Grading

Assignment Category	Points
Weekly discussion posts (x8, lowest score dropped)	70
Quizzes (x3)	60
Short analysis papers (x3)	120
Exam (x1)	100
Total	**350**

Please note that Carmen Canvas, OSU's grading and class management software, does not round fractions up. Take that into account in computing grades. I do not manually round up grades, but there are ample opportunities for extra credit. The OSU grading scale is as follows:

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

Assignments

Weekly discussions

Every week, you will submit a response to a question prompt that I will assign. The prompt will introduce some contemporary issue pertaining to communication technologies and raise an open question regarding the issue.

You are expected to address all components of the prompt. To earn full credit, you will need to demonstrate understanding of both the prompt itself and of relevant course materials and show that you can apply what we're learning in class to thoughtful discussion of real-world communication phenomena. Your responses will need to be 150-250 words long, and they will be due on Fridays by 11:59pm. I will drop your lowest discussion score.

Please note that these discussions are NOT a glorified participation score. I expect to see that you have put some thought into your responses.

Please also note that your classmates will be able to see your posts.

Quizzes

Three quizzes will be administered on Carmen. The quizzes are designed to assess your conceptual understanding of, and your ability to apply, the course materials. All quizzes are prescheduled as per the course schedule. You will have the full week to complete each quiz; they will be due on Sundays at 11:59 pm. You will have only 1 attempt to take each quiz, and each quiz is timed. I do not usually permit students to make up missed quizzes unless there are reasonable extenuating circumstances. The quizzes are open book: Feel free to refer to course materials and/or to your own notes while taking the quizzes. You must, however, complete the quizzes working solo, which means you may not communicate with anyone while working on your quiz. Some of the material on the quizzes may reappear on exams.

Short analysis papers

You will complete three short papers over the course of the semester. Due dates are listed in the course calendar. The point of these papers is for you to engage in independent critical analysis of some "problem" as it relates to communication technology. Prompts will be provided in advance. You will communicate your analysis via a 2-page double-spaced paper (i.e., roughly 500 words, not counting your reference list), complete with references.

A good paper will briefly explain relevant theories or concepts before engaging in a thoughtful analysis, making clear connections between concepts and real-world phenomena, and describing and/or explaining any relationships therein. A rubric and description for each paper will be provided on Carmen when the paper is assigned.

You will need to cite any sources that you use for these assignments. We will use APA-style citation in this course. APA resources are available in the first Carmen module.

Please remember that I can only grade what you have submitted. So, double check your work before you submit it. Your papers will be due on Sundays at 11:59 pm.

P.S. The use of generative-AI technologies such as ChatGPT and Sudowrite to prepare work that you submit as the product of your own efforts is not permitted during this course. Please see the course policy on academic integrity for more information.

You will find an OSU statement on artificial intelligence and academic integrity here: https://oaa.osu.edu/artificial-intelligence-and-academic-integrity

Final Exam

One exam will be completed on Carmen to assess your holistic comprehension of the course materials at the end of the term. The exam will cover information from textbook readings, other readings, class discussions, and my lecture videos. They will feature some combination of multiple choice, true/false, matching, and short answer questions. I will design the questions to assess your understanding of course content and ability to accurately apply, interpret, and evaluate mediated human communication and behavior through the lens of course concepts.

The exam is remotely proctored, and you will need to finish it in one sitting.

The instructor reserves the right to adjust the denominator on the exam should it turn out that a question is incorrect, unfair, or unnecessarily confusing. The same holds true for quizzes.

Extra credit

There are three opportunities for extra credit in this class, which add up to 14 points or 4% of the total possible points earned through regular assignments.

1. You may earn up to 6 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 two points of extra credit. A non-research participation alternative is also available if you do not wish to participate in studies or you are not eligible to participate in a research study. The C-REP Summer Student Guide will be posted on Carmen. If you want to obtain an alternate assignment or need to unlock your C-REP account, you will need to contact the C-REP coordinator.

2. You may earn up to 4 points of extra credit for finding and emailing to me a journalistic piece (article, video, or podcast) in a major outlet that describes in detail some effect or relationship that we have talked about in the class. In the body of your email, please say which effect or relationship you think the piece is describing, and why.

3. Finally, in the spirit of boosting response rates to course evaluations, you may earn 4 points of extra credit for completing your SEI for this course by the due date. You will need to submit a screenshot of the submission confirmation message. (Do NOT include the actual evaluation scores or written comments; I only want to see the confirmation message.) I will set up a Carmen assignment for you to submit these near the end of term.

Late assignments

A **2-hour grace period** is given for some assignments (discussions and short papers) to ease any technology or personal issues that may arise. Late submissions for assignments will not incur a penalty during the grace period, but they will incur a **25%** penalty immediately after that, plus an additional 25% for each day the submission is late. If you must submit an assignment late, please DO NOT email your paper directly to the instructor. Let me know, and I will re-open the assignment for you on Carmen so that you can upload it for the Turnitin check. Your assignment will not be counted as having been submitted until you have uploaded it to Carmen.

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

This late-submission policy is only applicable to written assignments (short papers and discussion posts). Late quizzes and/or a late exam will NOT be accepted at all, barring exceptional and documentable extenuating circumstances.

Instructor feedback and response time

I try, and am usually able, to grade your discussion posts within 3-5 days.

For your short papers, you will be able to see feedback within 7-10 days.

For quizzes, you will be able to see your score immediately. For the exam, however, you will only be able to see your score after the exam period ends.

Course technology and tech support

Hardware requirements and tech competency

You will need regular access to a computer with an up-to-date OS (Mac or Windows) and a high-speed internet connection for this class, and you will need to be able to use a word processor, browse the internet, and navigate Carmen Canvas and Zoom. You will also need a device that you can use for BuckeyePass authentication. If you would like to attend a Zoom meeting at any point, you will also need a microphone on a computer, or a smartphone.

CarmenCanvas

CarmenCanvas – Carmen for short – is Ohio State's learning management system. We will use Carmen to facilitate almost all our work for this course. If you need help with Carmen, please visit www.go.osu.edu/canvasstudent.

CarmenZoom

Any synchronous virtual meetings, including office hours, will be conducted via CarmenZoom – Zoom for short. If you need help with Zoom, please visit www.go.osu.edu/zoom-meetings.

Word processing software

You will need a word processor with the ability to save files in the .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf formats. Most popular word processors have these features. OSU students have access to Microsoft Office products free of charge; please see https://osuitsm.service-now.com/selfservice/kb_view.do?sysparm_article=kb04733 for info.

Turnitin

Students at The Ohio State University are accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Therefore, you should be familiar with the guidelines provided by the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) and Section A of OSU's Code of Student Conduct in order to meet the academic expectations concerning appropriate documentation of sources. In addition, OSU has made Turnitin, a learning tool and plagiarism prevention system, available to instructors. For this class, you will submit your papers to Turnitin from Carmen. When grading your work, I will interpret the originality report, following Section A of OSU's Code of Student Conduct as appropriate. For more information about Turnitin, please see the vendor's guide for students. Note that submitted final papers become part of the OSU database.

Communication

You may reach me via email at martins.37@osu.edu. I try to respond to emails within 24 hours. Please email me from your Buckeyemail or OSU email address. Messages sent to my OSU email address from a non-OSU account are often flagged as spam, and since OSU cannot confirm their delivery, you may not use them as evidence of communication attempts.

I will use a variety of channels to communicate with you. General course announcements will be sent out via the Announcements feature on Carmen, and office hours will be held via Zoom. Feedback will be provided first via Carmen, and then through email or Zoom should you wish to talk further. Any other one-to-one communications will be sent via email.

BuckeyePass

You will need to use BuckeyePass (www.buckeyepass.osu.edu) multi-factor authentication to access your courses in Carmen. To ensure that you are able to connect to Carmen at all times, it is recommended that you take the following steps:

- Register multiple devices in case something happens to your primary device. Visit the BuckeyePass - Adding a Device help article for step-by-step instructions (https://admin.resources.osu.edu/buckeyepass/adding-a-device).
- Request passcodes to keep as a backup authentication option. When you see the Duo login screen on your computer, click Enter a Passcode and then click the Text me new codes button that appears. This will text you ten passcodes good for 365 days that can each be used once.
- Download the Duo Mobile application to all of your registered devices for the ability to generate one-time codes in the event that you lose cell, data, or Wi-Fi service.
- If none of these options meet the needs of your situation, you can contact the IT Service Desk at 614-688-4357(HELP), and IT support staff will help you work out a solution.

Getting tech support

For help with your password, university email, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the Ohio State IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at ocio.osu.edu/help/hours, and support for urgent issues is available 24/7.

- Self-Service and Chat support: www.ocio.osu.edu/help
- Phone: 614-688-4357 (HELP)
- Email: servicedesk@osu.edu
- TDD: 614-688-8743

University and 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.

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.

Additional disclaimer

This syllabus represents a contract "in the works". Events that transpire over the semester may require modifications to the course. In the event of any change, I will announce the change and update the syllabus on Carmen. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and to be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc. I also reserve the right to modify course policies throughout the semester; again, should this be necessary, any changes will be communicated as soon as I can manage.

Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Office of Institutional Equity:

- Online reporting form at equity.osu.edu,
- Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,
- Or email equity@osu.edu

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Office of Institutional Equity to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.

- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

Title IX

Title IX specifies 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 can find the appropriate resources at http://titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Interim Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Molly Peirano, at titleix@osu.edu

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 are or someone you know is 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 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. If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24-hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445).

Health and safety requirements

All students, faculty and staff are required to comply with and stay up to date on all university safety and health guidance (https://safeandhealthy.osu.edu). Non-compliance will result in a warning first, and disciplinary actions will be taken for repeated offenses.

Student illness or absence

If you are too ill to participate in this course due to any illness, please contact the instructor as soon as you are able. All materials will be made available on Carmen, including lecture recordings and slides. Alternate assignments or extensions can be arranged if necessary.

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 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. To contact SLDS: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Accessibility of course technology

This online course requires use of CarmenCanvas (Ohio State's learning management system), CarmenZoom, and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.

- Canvas accessibility (www.go.osu.edu/canvas-accessibility)
- Streaming audio and video
- CarmenZoom accessibility (www.go.osu.edu/zoom-accessibility)
- Collaborative course tools

Instructor illness or absence

If the instructor is too ill to teach the course for a period of time, the designated backup for this course will step in. You will be notified via email from the School of Communication.

Academic Integrity Policy

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/.

Furthermore, there are now many new generative AI tools available, and their use in certain situations may violate academic integrity policies. In this course, you may not submit material for assignments (e.g., discussion board posts, short papers) that were created using generative AI as if it is your own work; this constitutes plagiarism and will be considered a violation of academic integrity.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by university rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the university's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- Committee on Academic Misconduct web page (www.go.osu.edu/coam)
- Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity (www.go.osu.edu/ten-suggestions)

Land acknowledgement
We would like to acknowledge the land that The Ohio State University occupies is the ancestral and contemporary territory of the Shawnee, Potawatomi, Delaware, Miami, Peoria, Seneca, Wyandotte, Ojibwe and Cherokee peoples. Specifically, the university resides on land ceded in the 1795 Treaty of Greeneville and the forced removal of tribes through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. I/We want to honor the resiliency of these tribal nations and recognize the historical contexts that has and continues to affect the Indigenous peoples of this land. More information on OSU's land acknowledgement can be found here: https://mcc.osu.edu/about-us/land-acknowledgement

Course schedule

Most weeks will follow a regular schedule:

- Weekly modules will be posted to Carmen on **Mondays**.
- Discussion posts are due on **Fridays**.
- Quizzes or short papers are due on **Sundays**.

Unless otherwise noted, assignments/exams are due <u>11:59pm EDT (UTC -4).</u>

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Deadlines
1	5/7-5/12	<u>Topics</u>: Introduction to the course + Basic concepts in comm tech <u>Readings</u>: Downs chapters 1 & 25	Discussion 1 (5/10)
2	5/13-5/19	<u>Topics</u>: Media use + Online interaction 1 <u>Readings</u>: Downs chapter 20 + chapter 11	Discussion 2 (5/17) Quiz 1 (5/19)

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Deadlines
3	5/20-5/26	Topics: Online interaction 2 + Social and psychological effects Readings: Downs chapters 21 & 23 + Downs chapters 8 & 15	Discussion 3 (5/24) Short Paper 1 (5/26)
4	5/27-6/2	Topics: Identities and stereotypes + relationships Readings: Downs chapter 7 + chapter 12 & other readings	Discussion 4 (5/31) Quiz 2 (6/2)
5	6/3-6/9	Topic: Online sexual content and sexual abuse Reading: Downs chapters 13 & 14 + other readings	Discussion 5 (6/7) Short Paper 2 (6/9)
6	6/10-6/16	Topics: Politics and comm tech Reading: Downs chapters 3 & 4 + other readings	Discussion 6 (6/14) Quiz 3 (6/16)
7	6/17-6/23	Topic: Privacy, surveillance, and infosec Readings: Downs chapters 16, 17, and 22	Discussion 7 (6/21) Short Paper 3 (6/23)
8	6/24-6/28	Topic: Comm tech and money Reading: Downs chapter 5 + other readings	Discussion 8 (6/28) ***FINAL EXAM (6/28)**