

**Communications Studies (COMS) 201 L01  
Introduction to Communications Studies  
Fall 2012**

**Lectures Monday and Wednesday 10:00-10:50**

**Required Labs Friday**

**B01 9:00 – 9:50 (Anne Rainville [amrainvi@gmail.com](mailto:amrainvi@gmail.com))**

**B02 10:00-10:50 (Anne Rainville [amrainvi@gmail.com](mailto:amrainvi@gmail.com))**

**B03 9:00 – 9:50 (Julia Kingdon [kingdonjb@gmail.com](mailto:kingdonjb@gmail.com))**

**B04 10:00 – 10:50 (Julia Kingdon [kingdonjb@gmail.com](mailto:kingdonjb@gmail.com))**

**Instructor:** Dr. Doug Brent

**Office  
Location:** SS 312

**Office Phone:** 403-220-5458

**E-Mail:** [dabrent@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dabrent@ucalgary.ca)

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 11:00-12:00 or by appointment (and if the door is open, drop in anytime)

### **Additional Information**

Please be aware that much of this course deals in part with the artifacts, experiences, and products of popular culture. Some of the material we study may involve coarse language, sexuality, and violence. If this is a problem for you, please see the instructor or your TA.

If you want to e-mail the instructor or your TA, please put “COMS 201” in the subject line. This will make it much less likely to get lost in overloaded in-boxes. We will try to give you a helpful response as soon as possible, although we don’t guarantee to be reading e-mail constantly, especially over the weekend.

### **Course Description**

In this course, we will explore the question of what we are doing when we “communicate.” Are we simply transmitting information? Are we creating meaning? Are we participating in a social process? Are we persuading others? Are we supporting the social status quo? Are we voicing challenges to the “system?” Incorporating examples from popular culture, COMS 201 will facilitate you finding an answer to these questions for yourself.

### **Objectives of the Course**

Through readings, lectures, written assignments, and group discussions and activities, COMS 201 will introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of communications. Recognizing that communication is integral to all human activities and interactions, this course explores elements of communications studies that appeal to scholars from a variety of academic disciplines. Through an overview of the key concepts,

methodological traditions, and major theoretical currents of the field, students will have an opportunity to experience the cutting-edge diversity that defines communications studies.

In addition, the course will seek to introduce students to the activity of scholarly communication itself by covering some of the basic principles of academic research: finding and using sources, developing original arguments based partly on those of others, and writing papers in the genre of academic research.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

Laptops are permitted for note taking only. iPods, cellphones and gaming devices should be turned off during class. Please respect the lecturer, teaching assistants and your fellow students.

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

Wood, Julia T. *Communication Theories in Action: An Introduction*. Third Edition. Canada: Wadsworth, 2004.

One additional reading is available as a booklet available from the bookstore.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Participation: Weekly (10%)  
October 5 Quiz 1 (10%)  
October 19 Application of Theory Paper (20%)  
November 2 Quiz 2 (10%)  
November 19 Citation Exercise (5%)  
November 23 Research Paper (35%)  
December 7 Quiz 3 (10%)

There will be no registrar-scheduled examination in this course.

**Quizzes:** These will consist of multiple-choice questions designed to test your knowledge of theories covered in lectures, labs and readings. They will be written during the lab.

**Citation Exercise:** This will be a short exercise written in lab with peer support designed to help you become familiar with the conventions of academic citation.

**Application of Theory Paper.** This will be a paper of approximately 1000 words in which you discuss a theory that has been covered in class and apply it as a means of explaining an artifact (an element of popular culture, a news item, etc.), a public event, or an aspect of your own life.

**Research Paper.** This will be a paper of approximately 1500-1750 words in which you bring material that you have researched from the library plus material from the lectures

and readings to bear on a research question. A selection of questions will be provided to you well in advance. You will be graded on your understanding of the material and on your ability to construct a well-organized and reasonably literate argument.

Participation grades will be awarded on the basis of your active involvement in tutorial discussions and activities. Details of required tutorial activities will be provided weekly and posted on Blackboard. Frequently, you will be expected to write up and bring to lab a brief discussion of a question related to the lecture material and readings. In order to receive participation grades, you are expected to be in attendance for tutorials, contribute to the discussions, and complete required group work and presentations. Improper use of electronic devices, as well as other forms of inattentiveness, will impact your participation grade.

**Labs are not considered optional.** They are not just tutorials where you can go if you feel that you need extra help. They are more like science labs in which you get an opportunity to try out theories in a discussion-oriented setting. Your participation grade depends on your contributions to labs.

**All written assignments will be submitted electronically via blackboard.** Detailed instructions will be provided. You will also retrieve your graded assignments with comments via blackboard. This system has at least three advantages:

1. Papers will be less likely to go astray.
2. We will not have to use valuable class time collecting and returning masses of paper.
3. You will receive helpful comments on your Word document that you can actually read, as opposed to hieroglyphics squashed illegibly into the margins.

**Please do not send in assignments by e-mail.** Our inboxes are as cluttered as yours probably are, and this is a sure way of assignments getting lost.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** No.

### **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

### **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. This includes papers submitted electronically – don't depend on the Blackboard system or the electronic filename to establish your identity.** For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

## Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

## Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

(Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero. However, quiz grades will be calculated using the actual scores obtained on the quiz and will not be converted to letter grades until calculated as part of the final course grade.

## Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas

begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

### **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

### **Students' Union**

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see

<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

### **Student Ombudsman**

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see

<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

### **Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points**

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

### **"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333**

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

### **Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your

research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

### **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

To be posted on Blackboard in the first week of classes.