

**Department of Communication and Culture**  
**COMS 627**  
**Media and Politics**

**Fall 2011**  
**Thursdays 13:00-15:50**  
**SS 315**

**Instructor:** Dr. Michael Keren  
**Office/Phone Number:** SS 200; 220-3248  
**Office Hours:** Thursday 12-1 or by appointment  
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**Course Description**

In this seminar we shall survey ideas by political thinkers who dealt with the interaction between communication media and the nature of the political community since ancient times to the present. The seminar consists of weekly discussions of selected writings and of student presentations of their seminar paper, due at the end of the seminar.

**Course Objectives**

The seminar is devoted to in-depth understanding of the role of communication media in forming, reforming and destroying political systems.

**Internet and electronic communication device information**

The use of electronic communication devices is not allowed. Laptops can be used for note taking only.

**Textbooks/Readings**

Harold Innis, *Empire and Communications*, Gil Courtemanche, *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*, Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Michael Keren, *Blogosphere: The New Political Arena*

**Assignments and Evaluation**

For the paper (about 20 pages) every student will choose a political regime, movement, leader or event – historical or contemporary – and analyze the role played by one medium (the newspaper, the novel, the pamphlet, radio, TV, theatre, cinema, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, the mobile phone, etc.) or a combination of several media in its origin, its development and in its aftermath. The paper will be presented in class.

**Composition of the Grade:** Informed participation 20%, presentation 20% seminar paper 60%.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. Note: Please hand in your papers directly to your instructor at the beginning of the last session of the seminar.

**Registrar's- scheduled exam:** No

**Policy for late assignments:** In case of emergency, please contact the instructor. Otherwise, please submit the assignment on time.

## 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. You will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up any assignments or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.

## Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments 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: [www.efwr.ucalgary.ca](http://www.efwr.ucalgary.ca)

**Grading System** - The following grading system is used in the Faculty of Graduate Studies:

Grade	Grade Point Value	Graduate Description
A+	4	Outstanding
A	4	Excellent – superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter
A-	3.7	Very good performance
B+	3.3	Good performance
B	3	Satisfactory performance
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Note: The grade point value (3.0) associated with this grade is the minimum acceptable average that a graduate student must maintain throughout the program as computed at the end of each registration anniversary year of the program.		
B-	2.7	Minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies
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Note: A student who receives a B- or lower in two or more courses will be required to withdraw regardless of their grade point average unless the program recommends otherwise. Individual programs may require a higher minimum passing grade.		
C+	2.3	
C	2.0	All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted toward Faculty of Graduate
C-	1.7	Studies course requirements. A student who receives a grade
D+	1.3	of F will normally be required to withdraw unless the program
D	1.0	recommends otherwise.
F	0.0	

## 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 (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, [efwr.ucalgary.ca](http://efwr.ucalgary.ca)) 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 Graduate Calendar at the following link:

<http://grad.ucalgary.ca/files/grad/UC%20Graduate%20Calendar%202010-2011%20July%206-10.pdf>

### **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 [www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/su](http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/su)

### **Graduate Students' Association**

For details on the Graduate Students' Association, please see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/GSA/>

### **Student Ombudsman**

For details on the Student Ombudsman, please see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/GSA/services/ombudsperson.html>

### **Emergency Evacuation and Assembly Points**

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and assembly points, please 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 (ie. surveys, interviews, observation) as a 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:

Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB)

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

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

#### **September 15. Introduction**

**September 22. Discussion of the Seminar Paper**

Consult: Harold Innis, *Empire and Communications*

**September 29. Media and Politics in Classical Thought**

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>

**October 6. Media and Politics in Modern Thought**

[http://www.serendipity.li/jsmill/on\\_lib.html](http://www.serendipity.li/jsmill/on_lib.html)

**October 13. Media, Totalitarianism and Genocide**

Gil Courtemanche, *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*

**October 20. Existentialist Communication**

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>

**October 27. Media and the Political Economy of Capitalism**

Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*

**November 3. New Media and Democracy**

Michael Keren, *Blogosphere*

**November 10. Reading week.**

**November 17- December 1. Presentation of the seminar papers.**

**December 8. Conclusion (paper due at 1pm).**