

**Communications Studies COMS 201 L01**  
**Introduction to Communication Studies**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Lectures Monday and Wednesday 12:00-12:50**  
**Required Labs on Fridays**

**Instructor:** Dr. Linda Vennard  
**Office Location:** SS307 (Shared Office)  
**Office Phone:** TBA  
**E-Mail:** vennard@ucalgary.ca  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday 10:00 – 12:00 noon

**Additional Information**

Instructor is also available by appointment.

Labs are not considered optional; they are an integral part of the course and attendance and active participation are expected.

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

**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 your 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 communication 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 communication 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 may not be used at all 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.

Additional online readings may be posted on or through Blackboard.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

- Test #1 (Early, September 27, 2013): 10%
- Test #2 (Midterm, October 25, 2013): 20%
- Test #3 (Final, November 29, 2013): 10%
- Application of Theory Paper (due November 15, 2013): 20%
- Research Paper (due December 4, 2013): 30%
- Participation (weekly): 10%

### **About the Tests:**

Tests will consist of multiple choice and/or short answer and/or short essay questions designed to test your knowledge of theories covered in lectures, labs and readings. They will be written during the Friday labs. Tests are 'non-cumulative', meaning they are based on lecture, lab and reading material covered from the previous test to that point (refer to Class Schedule for details). Test #1 (Early, September 27, 2013) will be composed of multiple choice questions, and is designed to provide early feedback on your comprehension of the course material to that point.

### **About the Application of Theory Paper:**

The Application of Theory Paper (20%) 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.

A hard copy of your Application of Theory Paper must be handed directly to your TA at the beginning of the lab on November 15, 2013. No electronic submissions will be accepted.

### **About the Research Paper:**

The Research Paper (30%) 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 logical argument.

A hard copy of your term paper must be handed directly to your TA at the beginning of the lecture on December 4, 2013. No electronic submissions will be accepted.

### **About Participation:**

Participation (10%) 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.

**You do not need to complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in the course.**

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

**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. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

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://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:

	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.

### **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 Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) 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.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

### **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**

A daily schedule of lectures and readings, as well as detailed assignment descriptions, will be made available on Blackboard on the first day of class.