

Department of Communication and Culture
University of Calgary
Communications Studies (COMS) 591 – Seminar 01
Senior Seminar in Communication
Winter 2014
Wednesdays 14:00 - 16:45

Instructor: Tania S. Smith
Office/Phone Number: Social Sciences 326 / 403-220-7774
Office Hours: Wed. 12:00-13:00 or by appointment
Email: smit@ucalgary.ca
Website: www.ucalgary.ca/~smit

Course Description

With reference to a special topic, this course explores the variety of ways in which communication builds social and cultural values. Students will undertake a major project that will integrate their understanding of communication theory, history and methodology.

This section of the course will focus on visual culture and web design. “Visual culture” may be defined as “the shared practices of a group, community, or society through which means are made out of the visual, aural, and textual world of representations and the ways that looking practices are engaged in symbolic and communicative activities” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 3). Students will learn basic web design skills as they post their assignments to a WordPress blog they will create and manage, which they may choose to make public after the course is over.

Course Objectives

- To become familiar with visual culture as a way in which communication builds social and cultural values.
- To integrate communication knowledge and skills gained from courses and extracurricular activities throughout one’s postsecondary degree.
- To develop basic skills in web design and professional online communication.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Instead of Blackboard, the *Instructure Canvas* system (<http://www.instructure.com/>) will be used for course information, scheduling, assignment submission, and grading. For convenient access, the course’s area on Blackboard will provide a link to the course’s area on Canvas.

Canvas is a “learning management system” (LMS) that is adopted widely across many universities, and is offered free of charge to teachers and their students in up to 3 courses. It is user-friendly, provides tools for online engagement, protects student privacy, and is compatible with up-to-date computer systems and browsers. Students will be sent an email invitation and will register during the first two weeks of class.

Students will each be expected to create a free professional blog hosted on WordPress.com to post course assignments. The instructor must be added to the users list as a co-administrator during the course. Its privacy settings should be set to block search engine access. It may be deleted, moved or made public after the course is over.

During class time, use electronic devices for course related functions only. Show professional courtesy and attentiveness to the instructor and fellow students by using technology silently and discreetly. Minimize visual distractions from your screen.

Textbooks/Readings

- Sturken, M. & Cartwright, L. (2009) Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford. (Approx. \$100 – price is due to color images throughout)
- Links to additional free, public online readings on Web Design will be provided on the online learning management system.

Assignments and Evaluation

Capstone Presentation	As scheduled	15%
------------------------------	---------------------	------------

Give a 10-15 minute presentation about how your postsecondary learning has contributed to the enrichment of your personal life, your active engagement as a citizen in your communities, your understanding of communication, and your preparation for your potential future career(s). Draw from at least 4 courses you have taken, one of them beyond Communications Studies, and from extracurricular activities. Use at least 10 presentation slides and a 1-page minimum handout including quotes or images, and questions for class discussion.

Annotated Bibliography of Images	January 22	5%
---	-------------------	-----------

In preparation for your visual criticism essay, supply a 5-image annotated bibliography in the form of a spreadsheet. Use proper APA citation throughout.

Visual criticism essay	Draft Jan. 29; Final February 12	20%
-------------------------------	---	------------

In a series of blog posts, write a visual critique of 1500-2000 words + references on at least 3 related images, or images from videos or films, published within the past 10 years. Your blog posts should make an argument about how the images function within visual culture, and should integrate well-cited concepts from at least three chapters of our textbook. The images must be used with respect for copyright. Use proper APA citation throughout.

Term project proposal	February 26	5%
------------------------------	--------------------	-----------

A 250-300 word abstract and detailed outline of your planned blog posts for the term project.

Term project	Draft March 26; Final April 9	35%
---------------------	--------------------------------------	------------

Compose an online term project (a cohesive series of blog posts) totaling 3000-4000 words + references, which makes significant use of at least 5 visual works, either original works composed by yourself, or borrowed visual works used with respect for copyright. Make good use of at least 5 citations from the course textbook. The project may consist of a series of “professional portfolio” posts which introduce and make an argument about how each featured artifact (i.e. a past course assignment, or other communication you produced) demonstrates your advanced skills and knowledge. Or it may be a series of “essay” posts that make evaluative, insightful arguments *using* images, or arguments *about* images. Alternatively, it may consist partly of portfolio posts and essay posts. Use proper APA citation and referencing in each post.

Drafts and Peer Reviews	as scheduled	20%
Peer reviews facilitate peer learning and often enhance assignment quality. Students will submit a complete draft of their <i>Visual Criticism</i> and <i>Term Project</i> 2 weeks before the final versions are due (2% each) and will submit their presentation materials before class on their <i>Presentation</i> day (1%) so that these materials are well prepared for peer review. Drafts will be scored only for timeliness and completeness, and they will receive feedback only from peers, not from the instructor.		
	<i>Assignment draft deadlines are noted above</i>	<i>5%</i>

In addition, each student will write three 250-word minimum peer reviews for designated peers:

- 1) A Peer Review Memo on a peer's *Visual Criticism* draft and point-form notes on another peer's draft *Due February 5th before class begins* *5%*
- 2) A Peer Review Memo on a peer's *Term Project* draft and point-form notes on another peer's draft *Due April 2nd before class begins* *5%*
- 3) A Peer Review Memo on a peer's *Presentation* and point-form notes on another peer's presentation *Due within 2 business days after each presentation* *5%*

Peer Review Memos will be graded for their quality, and point-form notes for their timeliness of submission. Each late item may result in a penalty of 1% (see "Policy for Late Assignments").

NOTE: All assignments except the Drafts & Peer Reviews must be completed, even if submitted late, in order to pass the course.

Registrar-scheduled exam: No.

Assignment submission

All assignments must be submitted electronically via Canvas to each assignment's designated submission area. Do NOT email your assignments directly to the instructor. For assignments that are posted to your WordPress blog, submit your assignment's live URL(s) as instructed, and submit a PDF copy that will be used for grading.

It is the student's responsibility to verify each online submission, and to keep a secure backup copy of each submitted assignment. Immediately after submitting a file or link, download or view your file and open it to verify that it is the correct version and there were no transfer errors. Regularly back up your WordPress blog by exporting an xml file of all content: Dashboard > Tools > Export. In case of a hard drive failure, keep backup copies of all assignments on a memory stick and/or use an online file storage program such as Box.com.

Temporary alternative submission methods:

- 1) If Canvas is not working or is unavailable to you for any reason, temporarily submit your assignment via Blackboard (Tools > Digital Drop Box > SEND file) and notify the instructor by email that you have done so.
- 2) If internet access is unavailable, you may submit your paper within the 24 hour grace period. 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.

If you use a temporary alternative submission method, re-submit the assignment electronically via Canvas as soon as possible when access is available.

Policy for late assignments

Deadlines

All major assignments are due online by *11:59PM on their deadline date*, with the following exceptions: *Presentation materials and Peer reviews* must be submitted online to the appropriate discussion forum before the beginning of class on one's presentation day or the scheduled peer review day.

Penalties

- At the discretion of the instructor, assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Missing one's scheduled presentation without advance notice may result in one grade penalty.
- For components of the *Draft & Peer Review* assignment, the instructor may apply a late penalty of 1% for each 1%, 2% or 5% component (i.e. a 1% deduction for each late Peer Review memo and each late Draft).
- For all assignments (except Peer Review Memos and Presentation materials), a *grace period* of 24 hours is allowed for unanticipated technical difficulties, short-term illness, or unexpected scheduling challenges. After the 24-hour period expires, an assignment will be considered *2 days late* (the grace period is not a deadline extension).
- A student is automatically permitted a 48-hour deadline extension on the Visual Criticism or Term Project if his/her Presentation is scheduled on their due dates.
- Verifiable documentation of illness (or other obstacles beyond one's control) may be required to appeal for reduced late penalties or special extensions.

Assignment length

Assignments may be up to 10% longer than the maximum or 10% shorter than the minimum. An excellent assignment fulfills all requirements and is not wordy or repetitive. On all assignments, students will be asked to provide a word count calculation at the end, before the References.

The number of *words, not pages* is used for length calculations. The official word count focuses on the student's own headings and sentences within the body of the document. *Do NOT count words in long quotations (over 40 words), title page, table of contents, tables & figures, captions, footnotes, references, appendices, page numbers, or running heads.* To calculate word count in Microsoft Word, select the text to calculate and use Review > Word Count. Alternatively, paste text into an online counter: <http://www.textfixer.com/tools/online-word-counter.php>

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). Students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their full names on the first page and by submitting files via Canvas login. However, keep your private information secure. Do NOT place your UofC ID number or other private information on drafts or assignment files that will be viewed by your peers. More information:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

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 Support 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:

Letter Grade	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

Assignment grades may be provided as letter grades, percentages, or points, as follows:

- Major assignments will be given a letter grade (A-, B+), and the instructor will convert this to a percentage using its midpoint on the Grading Scale shown above. For example, an “A minus” will be converted to 87.5%. However, A+ grades will be converted to 100% and F grades to 0%. Each assignment’s score will then be weighted by % of final grade.
- Partial assignment components (i.e. Drafts and Peer Reviews) will be given points equal to their percentage of the final grade, and their mathematical equivalent on the Grading Scale will be used in final grade calculations. For example, a score of 5 out of 7 for materials posted on the *Review Essay Draft (2%) & Peer Review (5%) forum* will be calculated as 71% and weighted by 7% of the final course grade.

Revision option: If a student earns a score lower than B- on the first major assignment (Visual Criticism), he or she may request a revision option by scheduling an appointment within 5 days. The revised assignment will be due within 2 weeks after an appointment with the instructor. The new assignment score will be the *average* between the original and revised assignment scores.

Grading timeline: The instructor will make an effort to return graded assignments via Canvas within two weeks (14 days), with some exceptions. A grading period may be extended to accommodate a holiday. Any assignment submitted late may be returned later than normal.

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 (3rd 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 Graduate Calendar at the following link:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-o.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 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/provost/students/ombuds>

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 (i.e. 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/ethics/cfreb>

Reading List – To be provided online

Schedule of readings – To be provided online.