

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 591 (S02): Senior Seminar in Communication and Media Studies

Topic: "Do we control the media or do they control us?"

WINTER 2021: 11 January to 12 April (excluding Feb. 15th and April 05th)

Lecture: M 11:00 to 13:45

All Lectures will be delivered in synchronous Zoom sessions on Mondays

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR WINTER 2021:

This Winter 2021 course will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please read the outline carefully. All sessions for this course will be delivered synchronously, hosted on the Zoom video-conferencing program. To access scheduled Zoom course sessions, go to D2L, click on the COMMUNICATION tab, and select Zoom 5 or 10 minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

If you will not be able to participate in scheduled synchronous class sessions owing to time differences, then you should arrange to take this course when it is offered in person in the future.

Instructor:	Richard Hawkins
Email:	rhawkins@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 10:00 – 12:00 (open Zoom office hours). Or by appointment

Course Description

The Capstone Seminar is an opportunity for students to review, synthesize, and integrate the knowledge they have gained during their undergraduate studies in the Department of Communication Media and Film.

In order to define a common general focus, the seminar will be oriented to the broad question "*Do we control the media or do they control us?*".

The seminar will be oriented towards individual Capstone Projects that demonstrate the intellectual capabilities gained by the student over a full course of undergraduate study. Each Capstone project will consist of a written deliverable on a contemporary topic or issue chosen by the student, along with a class presentation and discussion.

To aid in preparation of these projects, the seminar will involve students in preparing and presenting critical graded assessments of key concepts from the Communication, Media Studies and Film literature. Some of this literature will be assigned by the instructor and some of it will be chosen by the students. This part of the seminar will involve working in small study groups.

Additional Information

This is a participatory seminar. It is heavily oriented to student discussions, presentations and work in small groups. All students will be expected to participate fully. Students who

may be uncomfortable participating in this way may have difficulty completing the requirements satisfactorily and may wish to seek alternatives.

Objectives of the Course

- to conduct a critical review and evaluation of key concepts, issues, and debates within the field of communication studies;
- to provide students with an opportunity to synthesize ideas from their undergraduate studies and apply them to a topic of relevance to communication in contemporary society;
- to hone organizational, critical thinking, discussion and presentation skills.

Textbooks and Readings

Roger Silverstone (2007) *Media and Morality: On the Rise of the Mediapolis*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

The required text is available on-line from the library. A persistent link will be provided on D2L when term commences.

Learning Technologies Requirements & Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

This is an online course. In order to complete online courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone. If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact the university's IT department. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Instructors may arrange to record synchronous zoom class sessions for lesson capture; however, students are not to share recordings with others. Please carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assignments	Due
20%	Collective Book Review	As scheduled
20%	Study group seminar	As scheduled
10%	Term Project updates: (a) Concept (5%) (b) Abstract (5%)	Due Monday February 1 Due Monday February 22
15%	Term Project Presentation	As scheduled (last two days of instruction)
35%	Term Project Paper	Due final day of class (April 12)

As appropriate to a Capstone Seminar, students are expected to demonstrate that over a three-to-four-year course of study they have learned to engage critically and in depth with theories, argumentation and evidence. Students should begin developing their projects early in the Term. Students are encouraged to consult the instructor about projects at interval throughout the Term.

To assist students in meeting the project challenge, the seminar will proceed through **three Modules**. Each Module will involve progressively more individual input and will be graded accordingly.

Module One: Collective Book Review (20% group grade)

The purpose of Module One is to help students begin collecting and organizing ideas and concepts from their studies in the Communication Media and Film curricula, with an eye to developing their Capstone projects.

This exercise will be structured around a collective in-depth review of the assigned text (see above), which was chosen because it synthesizes many key concepts in communication and media studies, from several perspectives, in a challenging way.

All students in the seminar will be expected to read the entire book. Working in small study groups (2-3 participants), students will prepare seminars based on individual Chapters. Each group will prepare one in-depth critical exposition of one of the Chapters.

The exercise will involve advance preparation and coordination, which students can organize in any way they choose. However, the class sessions will follow a fixed format:

- Each individual group member will be responsible for preparing and delivering a brief (5-7 minute) exposition of an idea, theory, debate etc. taken from the Chapter assigned for that week. Each group must coordinate these expositions internally to prevent duplication.
- The group will then engage in debate and discussion prompted by questions or interventions either from the instructor or from other students in the class.
- Each group will prepare a short (1-2 page) summary note of the points covered in their session. This must be submitted to the D2L Dropbox **the day before the scheduled session.**

The summary notes are not assessed – they are meant only to document what was presented. However, The assignment will not be graded until the summary notes are received.

NOTE: Each group will be given a GROUP GRADE reflective of the effort as a whole.

Module Two: Study Group Seminars (20% - combined group and individual grade)

The purpose of Module Two is to give students the opportunity to further hone their expository and critical skills by applying insights from a text or texts of their own choosing to a specific topical and/or theoretical issue or theme selected collectively by consensus of the group. The objective is to practice applying perspectives drawn from the CMF literature to comment critically on contemporary issues.

This Module will follow the same format as Module One except that each group member will select the literature he or she wishes to discuss as related to the selected issue or theme.

The exercise will involve advance preparation and coordination, which students can organize in any way they choose. However, the exercise will follow a fixed format:

- Groups will select a theme and/or issue by consensus and elect one member of the group to explain this briefly at the beginning of the seminar.
- Each individual group member will be responsible for preparing and delivering a brief (5-7 minute) exposition of a specific idea, theory, debate etc., taken from a text of her/his own choosing, and explain how it is relevant to the theme or context chosen by the group.
- The sessions will conclude with debate and discussion prompted by questions or interventions either from the instructor or from other students in the class.
- Each participant will prepare a short (1-2 page) bullet-form summary note of the points covered in their session, along with bibliographic references for the text or texts from which their discussion was drawn. This must be submitted to the D2L Dropbox the day before the scheduled session.

The summary notes are not assessed – they are meant only to document what was presented. However, The assignment will not be graded until the summary notes are received.

The group seminars (worth 20% of the course grade) will be assessed as follows:

- GROUP GRADE (5%): based on assessment of the organization of the seminar and the coherence of the theme or issue
- INDIVIDUAL GRADES (15%): based on assessment of the quality of each individual presentation

Both Module One and Module Two assignments will be assessed on the following criteria:

- understanding of the key concepts
- clarity of presentation
- critical perspective and awareness of contemporary relevance
- response to questions

Except where excused for legitimate reasons, failure to present in a scheduled group exercise in either Module, or failure to participate in a group, will result in loss of the grade for this assignment for the individual concerned. The rest of the group will receive a grade.

Module Three: Capstone project

(35% for the Capstone paper, 10% for preparatory submissions, 15% for the final presentation)

Working independently, students will undertake Capstone Projects on topics of their own choosing. Projects may take a variety of forms at the discretion of the student, but all must be amenable to **final submission in written form** and amenable to a formal class presentation of no more than 10 minutes.

Examples of suitable forms include:

- A conventional research paper
- A critical discussion of an issue or theory drawn from the literature
- A report to an NGO or community organization on a topical communications issue
- A scenario for a film or radio documentary
- An submission or appeal to a government, regulatory or industry body
- A communications strategy relevant to a topical issue
- etc. ... or consult the instructor

Regardless of the form chosen, the same assessment criteria will be imposed:

- Indicative length: 2500 words (excluding bibliography and figures).
- Projects must display explicit and in-depth understanding of key theories, arguments, issues and approaches as drawn from the Communication, Media Studies and Film literatures, commensurate with expectations appropriate to impending completion of a undergraduate degree.
- Projects must demonstrate critical awareness of the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of concepts, theories, approaches and evidence drawn from these literatures, both generally and as applied to the chosen topic or issue.
- Explicit bibliographical references are required.

Capstone Project Milestones:

1. Concept note (1-2 pages)

Due Monday, February 1. This is a graded assignment worth 5% of the course grade. The Concept note need not be definitive, but it should outline a project idea. It should define a topic, introduce some of the issues related to the topic that you could address in your Capstone exercise, pose some possible questions and indicate how the project could be approached.

2. Project abstract (2-3 pages)

Due Monday February 22. This is a graded assignment worth 5% of the course grade. The Abstract should describe the project definitively, outlining the topic, issues, approaches and background literature. An indicative bibliography should be included (3-5 bibliographical references to literature that the student will explore in the project).

3. Final presentations:

Projects will be presented to the class and discussed in 10 minute individual sessions scheduled over the final two days of instruction. This is a graded assignment worth 15% of the course grade

Students may choose any presentation format that is appropriate to the type project deliverable they have chosen.

Power points and other audio visuals are not required, and if used should be used sparingly. Videos or other media requiring set up time are discouraged.

Presentations should contain the following:

- The topic
- The key issues
- The format, background, approach, method etc., as appropriate
- Your findings and conclusions – what you learned from the exercise

4. Capstone papers: Due the last day of class

Note: You must complete all assignments and exams or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments electronically by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox.

Include your name and ID number on all assignments.

It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Late delivery of assignments is discouraged, except in the case of genuine emergency or illness. In such event the instructor must be notified in reasonable time either before or after the emergency or illness.

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Assignments delivered more than five calendar days late will not be marked and a grade of zero will be entered for the assignment.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this

need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, each assignment will be given a numeric grade (e.g. 14/20 for an assignment worth 20% of the course grade). Within the score ranges indicated in the Department Guidelines below, final grades will be entered as letter grades corresponding to the cumulative score for all assignments (e.g. a final cumulative grade of 80 would be entered as a final grade of B+).

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%

1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://success.ucalgary.ca/home.htm>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines.

This course does not require research with human subjects. However, if students wish to undertake or participate in such work for their Capstone projects (for example in research involving surveys, interviews, or observations), you must obtain ethics approval from the Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee. Consult your instructor before even considering research of this nature. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Be aware that under the ethics guidelines even the reporting of casual encounters or conversations in written academic work can in some cases be deemed data from research with human subjects. Avoid such issues and consult the instructor if you have any questions.

Warning: Assignments containing elements that clearly require ethics approval under the guidelines, but for which no ethics certificate has been issued, will not be accepted or marked.

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Mo Jan 11	Course Introduction and organization	N.A
2	Mo Jan 18	Book review GROUP A	Chapter 1
		Book review GROUP B	Chapter 2
3	Mo Jan 25	Book review GROUP C	Chapter 3
		Book review GROUP D	Chapter 4
4	Mo Feb 1	Book review GROUP E	Chapter 5
		Book review GROUP F Term Project CONCEPT Due	Chapter 6
5	Mo Feb 8	Book review GROUP G	Chapter 7
		Book review GROUP H	Summary
Feb 14 -21 Reading week			
6	Mo Feb 22	Seminar Group One Seminar Group Two Term Project ABSTRACT Due	As scheduled (Seminar presentation reports due in D2L drop box the day before each seminar)
7	Mo Mar 1	Seminar Group Three Seminar Group Four	
8	Mar 8	Seminar Group Five Seminar Group Six	
9	Mo Mar 15	Seminar Group Seven Seminar Group Eight	
10	Mo Mar 22	Seminar Group Nine Seminar Group Ten	
11	Mo Mar 29	Term Project Presentations	
12	Mo Ap 5	No Class	
13	Mo Ap 12	Term Project Presentations Term Project Papers Due	As scheduled