CMST 3210 Computer-Mediated Communication

Spring 2019, Online

Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Office Location & Hours
Dr. Sanela Elli Osmanovic	sosman3@lsu.edu	Coates 136A; T-Th 7:30-9:00, 3:00-4:00, or by appt

General Information

Description

The principal objective of this course is to provide students with an understanding of how communication technologies and relationships have become interdependent with one another. Digital culture centers on communication, with interaction and interactivity as the lifeblood of mediated conversation. The original "killer application" of the internet was email. We have since evolved many, and much more sophisticated digital modes of talking, listening, sending, and attending. Computer mediated communication, thus, is at the intersection of these new media technologies (e.g. Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) and interpersonal communication.

Issues central to the course include the impact of relationships on communication technology use and vice versa, romantic and family communication in the digital world, friendships and online social support, identity and impression management, virtual communities, problematic computer mediated communication, and privacy.

Expectations and Goals

As a General Education Humanities Course, CMST 3900 will enable students to demonstrate an understanding of historical, cultural, and philosophical complexity that supports sophisticated discourse.

As a result of this course, students should:

1. Develop an understanding of current research, theories, and principles of computer-mediated communication processes to provide the basis of effective future application.
2. Develop an understanding of how the selection and use of technologies continues to change communication practices on interpersonal and group levels.
3. Improve critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills in evaluating online content and culture.
4. Process academic and practical arguments and philosophies of the merits of technologies and relationships.
5. Examine concepts and provide novel solutions to problems facing modern technologies.
6. Plan, structure, and report self-directed research that furthers related literature.

Course Requirements

Required Texts

Turkle, S. (2011). Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less From Each Other. Basic Books. **ISBN:** 9780465031467

McEwan, B. (2015). *Navigating New Media Networks: Managing communication challenges in a networked society.* Lanham, MA: Lexington. **ISBN:** 9780739186206

Other readings, videos, and materials will be posted weekly on Moodle.

Assignments

This course occurs entirely online. Our primary course website is on Moodle. We will also make use of YouTube, and various other websites to create a dynamic and interactive course environment. Because this is an online course, it is required that you visit Moodle and check your email regularly for updates. You must have access to a consistent internet connection throughout the duration of the course. This course is organized into weekly units.

The semester will be divided in three parts: 1. theory, where for the first seven weeks we will focus on reading and discussion; 2. application, where for the following six weeks we will focus on projects; and 3. final paper. Students will be graded on their work on the above as follows:

- **Reading/discussion (250 points, weeks 2-8).** To lay the foundation for project work, we will begin the semester with weekly reading (which includes watching videos and perusing other material), which we will then discuss on our Moodle class forum. The following is the breakdown of the assignments and points:

  - **Leading the discussion (60 points).** Each discussion week, 4 students will be assigned to lead the online discussion on the week's topic. The students can choose to work together or separately, making sure they read the assigned material, compare/connect it with the two books, and create a list of talking points on the topics. The talking points will be posted on Moodle, and serve as discussion starters. The discussion leaders will assure the conversation flows and the discussion is thoughtful and substantive. Detailed instructions on leading group discussions are available on Moodle.

  - **Two responses (20 points per week, 140 points total).** Each week, you will review the books and the material posted on Moodle, and take part in the discussion, preferably on something from the material that tickled your fancy. You will respond to two threads started by your discussion leaders or other classmates. Each (re)action carries 10 points, for a total of 20 points earned for the week.

  - **Suggest your own topic (50 points).** Over the course of the reading/discussion weeks, we will cover a number of topics, but far from everything pertaining to digital communication. With this assignment, you can post a discussion on something that is close to your own heart, including the pertinent reading. This will earn you 40 points. Reading and responding to another classmate's submission will earn you remaining 10 points. You can do this assignment any time during the six-week reading/discussion period. The final submission date can be found on Moodle and in the course calendar below.

- **Projects (300 points, weeks 9-13).** In the second half of the semester, we will put the theories, research, and concepts to practical use through smaller and larger projects. **Detailed guidelines and grading rubrics for each will be posted on Moodle as we approach their deadlines**, but here is the overview of the assignments and points:

  - **Create an online dating profile (10 points).** Based on one of the popular apps (Tinder/Grindr/Bumble, etc.), create an online dating profile. Keep in mind the tenants of self-presentation, online impression management, and privacy we covered in the first seven weeks of class.

- o **Twitter/Instagram/Twitch/YouTube celebrity critique (40 points).** Using a medium of your choice (video, writing…), analyze and critique a Twitter/Instagram/Twitch celebrity.

- o **Create a LinkedIn profile (30 points).** Create a full LinkedIn profile as detailed in the assignment guidelines posted on Moodle.

- o **Intergenerational gaming with family members (100 points).** You will be required to play games for three weeks (online and/or app games) with a family member from a different age group (parent/grandparent). After the play period, you will interview the family member and write up your own and their view of the activity and its effect on your communication.

- o **Group project (120 points).** As the name suggests, this is a group project, aimed at providing you with hands-on experience of working with a virtual team, as well as dabbling in online issues. You will be sorted into groups (I will roll the dice for you) as the project work starts, and thus will be able to start working on your group project as of week 9.

  Note: Due dates for each project are posted in the calendar below and on Moodle, but you can submit a project at any time during the five-week project period, as long as it is before its due date.

- **Final paper (100 points, last 2 weeks of the semester).** The purpose of this project is to develop an application that uses theories and concepts covered in the course to optimize digital technology use. This project consists of two parts:

  1. Develop an idea for a software program, web service, or smartphone application ("app") designed to optimize interactions in a certain domain of computer technology use (e.g., health, groups or organizations, interpersonal communication, virtual communities). Your development should draw from at least two units in the course (e.g., health and virtual communities, media use and groups/organizations, etc.) and apply concepts from these units to improve communication via computer technology. You can include mock-ups of the development (e.g., example web pages or interfaces—these do not have to be functional but should demonstrate what the application would look like) in your paper if it helps convey the design.

  2. Write a 4-5 page paper detailing the features of your development and explaining how those features relate to course concepts. Your paper should contain 2 parts. First, it should review contemporary research relevant to the application you developed. Second, it should describe the application you developed and how/why it will be effective, based on the research you reviewed earlier. In all cases, remember that you are arguing (based on the literature you reviewed) for the need for and effectiveness of your application, so you should provide convincing reasons for your analysis. Be sure to be specific about how the features of your application relate to the course concepts and your research. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of your application for the assignment, please contact me.

Final grades will be determined based on scores earned in these assignments. All work must be done during the semester and not made up after the fact.

Course Assignment	Maximum Points
Weekly discussions	140
Leading the discussion	60
Suggest your own topic	50
Online dating project	10
LinkedIn project	30
Twitter/Instagram/Twitch/YouTube critique	40
Intergenerational gaming	100
Group project	120
Final paper	100
Total	**650 points**

Grading Scale

A+	97-100
A	93-96.99
A-	90-92.99
B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99
B-	80-82.99
C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99
C-	70-72.99
D+	67-69.99
D	63-68.99
D-	60-62.99
F	59.99 and below

Discussing Grades

Please note, in accordance with the Federal Buckley Amendment, grades will **not** be discussed through email, or over the phone. You **must** discuss a grade in person during office hours within 2 weeks of receiving the grade. After 2 weeks, discussion and changes to grades will **not** be possible. This means do **not** come at the end of the semester about a grade from the first week of class.

Virtual Classroom Decorum

As the first half of this class largely consists of dialogue and group discussion, please respect the work. opinions, and the presentations of your classmates. Controversial subjects may arise. Be open-minded about topics your classmates post and considerate of their views.

Course Schedule (Tentative)

Week 1	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
01/09	Introductions, and syllabus	Read syllabus; check Moodle

Week 2	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
01/14	*Reading/discussion week:* **#tbt:** Communication (way back) then and now	Articles/videos on Moodle Weekly discussion leaders engage Post two forum responses

Week 3	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
01/21	*Reading/discussion week:* **#nofilter:** Identity and impression management online	Articles/videos on Moodle Weekly discussion leaders engage Post two forum responses

Week 4	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
01/28	*Reading/discussion week:* **#ship:** Friendships and online social support	Articles/videos on Moodle Weekly discussion leaders engage Post two forum responses

Week 5	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
02/04	*Reading/discussion week:* **#bae:** Romance and intimacy through technology	Articles/videos on Moodle Weekly discussion leaders engage Post two forum responses

Week 6	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
02/11	*Reading/discussion week:* **#kkthxbai:** Reinventing family communication	Articles/videos on Moodle Weekly discussion leaders engage Post two forum responses

Week 7	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
02/18	*Reading/discussion week:* **#troll:** Privacy, anonymity and aggressive behavior online **#meme:** I don't always take a communication class but when I do… *insert success kid meme*	Articles/videos on Moodle Weekly discussion leaders engage Post two forum responses

Week 8	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
02/25	*Reading/discussion week:* **#outofoffice:** Professional and group communication online	Articles/videos on Moodle Weekly discussion leaders engage Post two forum responses **Final date: Topic of your choice discussion due on March 2**

Week 9	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
03/04	*Project week*	**Create an online dating profile due on Saturday, March 9, at 6pm.** **Start intergenerational gaming project**

Week 10	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
03/11	*Project week*	**Twitter/Instagram/Twitch/YouTube celebrity critique due on Saturday, March 16, at 6pm.**

Week 11	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
03/18	*Project week*	**LinkedIn profile due on Saturday, March 23, at 6pm.**

Week 12	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
03/25	*Project week*	**Intergenerational gaming report due on Saturday, March 30, at 6pm.**

Week 13	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
04/01	*Project week*	Group project work week

Week 14	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
04/08	*Project week*	**Group project due on Saturday, April 13, at 6pm.**

Week 15	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
04/15	*Spring Break. Work on final paper.*	

Week 16	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
04/22	*Final paper week*	Check Moodle for instructions and deadlines

Week 15	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
04/29	*Final paper week*	Check Moodle for instructions and deadlines

Additional Information and Resources

Attendance and Participation

This is an entirely online class. Your participation in readings, discussions, and later projects is required for your grade.

Plagiarism

There will be no tolerance for plagiarism. You are to assume that all assignments in this course are individual assignments unless explicit instructions are provided for a group project. Any student found to have presented material not their own (either downloaded from the internet or written by another student) will immediately be reported to the Dean of Students. The Internet has made plagiarism very easy and very tempting. Hundreds of sites offer papers, research, writing, and editing. The ease with which such material is available over the Internet does not lessen the seriousness of claiming material from the Internet as your own. See the LSU policies on plagiarism here: http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html.

Extra Credit

Extra credit assignments may be scheduled and can only be submitted in the allocated time period. No end-of-the-semester, last minute extra credit assignments will be given.

Missed Work

Sometimes life just happens and you are unable to turn in an assignment on time (maybe you are stressed out, overwhelmed by other assignments in other classes, got drunk the night before and slept through your alarm, etc…). I will accept late work, but with a penalty. If you can't make an assignment deadline, you can turn the assignment in for **increasingly fewer points** throughout that day, up **until 11:59pm CST**. After that point, work will be accepted within the following week for the **maximum grade of a C** (see below for extenuating circumstances). After 7 days, late work will no longer be accepted for credit. (Life happens, but not without consequences.)

> **Extenuating circumstances:** I reserve the right to accept late work without penalty when a student has provided **proper documentation** of a university sanctioned emergency or conflict that has inhibited them from turning in an assignment on time. University sanctioned emergencies or conflicts include: family death/emergency, debilitating sickness, religious observance, serious weather conditions, varsity athletic competition, sanctioned curricular requirements with documentation, court-imposed legal obligations. For more information on university policy on student absences, see https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/policies-procedures/22/.

Students with disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitations Act of 1973 states: "If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office of Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations can be arranged." After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

Do you have a major?

Business leaders and other professionals recognize the importance of developing communication skills and analysis. Alan Greenspan, for example, stated, "To succeed, you will soon learn, as I did, the importance of a solid foundation in the basics of education – literacy, both verbal and numerical, and communication skills." We hope this course contributes to your success.

To learn more about communication, you may want to major or minor in the Department of Communication Studies. The program explores how people sustain and change, experience, and make sense of the world through symbolic action. Students develop conceptual skills to analyze written, oral, and visual messages. Students gain practical experience in such areas such as public speaking, group decision-making, performance, and film. Such skills are elemental to careers in business, government, law, social services, and the arts.

A major in Communication Studies requires 36 hours including 12 hours of core classes and 12 hours at the 3000 or 4000 level. A minor requires 15 hours with one core class and 6 hours at the 3000 level or above.

More information is available at www.lsu.edu/cmst or by contacting our undergraduate advisor Mr. Kent Filbel (kfilli@lsu.edu), whose hours are posted at his office, 135 Coates Hall.