

SYLLABUS – FALL 2006
Computer-Mediated Communication – COMST 4850
Maag 136 – Tuesdays & Thursdays – 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Instructor: Adam Earnheardt
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(please, no calls after 8:00 p.m.)

Office Hours:
Tuesday, Thursday – 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
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Required Text

Barnes, S. B. (2003). *Computer-mediated communication: Human-to-human communication across the Internet*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. (ISBN: 0205321453)

Recommended Texts

Bourhis, J., Adams, C., & Titsworth, S. (2006). *Style manual for communication studies* (2nd Edition). Boston: McGraw-Hill. (ISBN: 007353420X)

Course Description

YSU Catalog Description: COMST 4850. Computer Mediated Communication. Social interactions involved in e-mail, newsgroups, chats, muds, and 3D virtual worlds. Design, implementation and use of CMC stressing social implications. Prereq.: COMST 2656 and senior standing. 3 s.h.

My Description (Objectives)

In this course, you will explore the role of computer technology in communication. Computer-mediated communication, or CMC, has become the single most innovative tool to evolve from computer technology. However, you probably use CMC everyday without questioning why you use it, whether it's the best channel for communicating certain messages, and what alternate outcomes may emerge from your use (or misuse) of CMC.

Today we use CMC for many different personal and professional reasons. We will explore those reasons and test your assumptions about the uses of CMC. You will be introduced to old and new techniques for using CMC. You will also be introduced to more complicated issues in CMC research. We will explore CMC from multiple perspectives including interpersonal (one-to-one/many), small group, and mass media (many-to-many). The goal in the exercises related to these perspectives will be to build your CMC skills by making use of typical CMC tools such as e-mail, IM, web sites/blogs and more.

At the conclusion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Understand the history, basic structure and functions of the Internet.
2. Understand the social impact of the Internet as a medium of communication and recognize/discuss the effects of CMC on society.
3. Identify interpersonal and mass media theory relevant to analysis of the Internet.
4. Identify and discuss current issues and tools in computer-mediated communication, as well as current and emerging trends in online communication.
5. Evaluate and critique web sites/blogs/vlogs.
6. Utilize web site editors to build and maintain web content.
7. Incorporate multimedia and other dynamic elements into web pages.

Basic Assumptions

I have made a few basic assumptions about you and your decision to take this course. If I'm way off on any of these assumptions (that is, you fail to meet any or all of these assumptions) it is your responsibility to see me:

1. It is assumed that: a) you have a YSU email account, b) you know how to use it (receive mail, send mail, use attachments, etc.), and c) you check your email daily, or at least every other day.
2. It is assumed you know how to use a graphical web browser (IE, Netscape, Firefox, etc.) and that you can effectively navigate the Internet to locate desired information.
3. It is assumed that you have minimal amounts of computer-use anxiety. If you have high computer-use anxiety, please talk to me during the first week of class.

Lab Sessions

I've incorporated 8 lab sessions into the schedule. Our lab sessions will take place in the 4th floor instruction lab in Maag Library. While it is unclear what software is currently loaded on the computers in the instruction lab, it is safe to say that the free web builder services will be accessible from these systems. If not, we will find alternative solutions. Be prepared to bring work to these sessions (personal, group... see below) as I will likely include 15 to 25 minutes of lecture followed by "hands on" time.

Evaluation

This is a "senior year" communication course. Thus, the workload will be representative of a senior-level course. A total of 1000 points are available. Ten points is the equivalent of 1% of your final grade.

Quizzes – 50 points (10 points each)

There will be 8 quizzes. Quizzes will be unannounced. However, you can expect quizzes will be related to assigned readings. You WILL NOT be permitted to "make-up" missed quizzes. You WILL be permitted to drop your three lowest grades.

Exams – 350 points (total)

A mid-term exam and a final exam will be administered. Exam questions will be based on the readings and in-class discussions.

Mid-term Exam: 15% (150 points)

Final Exam: 20% (200 points)

Assignments – 600 points (total)

MASS: 15% (150 points)

I will randomly assign two websites at the beginning of the semester for you to critique. You will analyze the sites in terms of the guidelines/criteria provided in class. You should be able to adequately explore, examine and explain the content and quality of the web sites. You will present your findings to the class (using a PowerPoint that provides a link to the website, screen shots of the specific pages from your site, and a synopsis of your critique). More information, including criteria for evaluating the web sites and a grading rubric for this assignment, will be provided later.

SMALL GROUP: 20% (200 points)

In the second/third week, you will be assigned to a group. Working in this group, you will choose a communication-related topic/concept and develop a "team blog" around this concept. You should only use CMC to work on this project with other team members, understanding that you will likely meet FTF at the beginning of the project and during class meetings throughout the semester. Several "check points" will be established during the semester (every 7 to 14 days) during which I will evaluate (grade) content on your blog, including your ability to meet goals set out at the beginning of the project. You will present the group project to the class during the last regular class meeting (challenges to working in a collaborative environment online, successes, failures, etc.). You will use Google's blogspot.com unless you can provide me with another effective, free blogging service.

INTER/PERSONAL: 25% (250 points)

You will create a personal website. Depending on your ability to use web design software, you will be introduced to free, less-sophisticated software that will provide you with the tools necessary to build an effective (and pretty nice) web site. If you are more technologically advanced, you might consider taking on more of a challenge (I will discuss these options with you in person if you are interested). Several "check points" will be established during the semester (every 7 to 14 days) during which I will evaluate (grade) your progress. You will present your final project to the class during the 14th and 15th week of the semester (see schedule). This presentation should focus on CMC functions of the new site, the challenges you faced, new tricks you learned, ideas for the future, successes, failures, etc.

Policies

The MyYSU Portal (my.ysu.edu)

I will use YSU's new information portal service, MyYSU, to interact with you throughout the semester. The portal provides access to greater communication services (groups) and is less cumbersome than WebCT. To that end, grades will not be posted online. You will receive grades in class after I have completed evaluating assignments/exams.

Grading (Non-negotiable)

At any time, determine your letter grade by dividing the number of points you have earned by the number of points possible. The percentage will determine your letter grade: 90% and above = A; 80-89% = B; 70-79% = C; 60-69% = D; 59% and below = F. Additionally, grades are a private matter between you and your instructor. As such, they will not be discussed during class time, out in the hall before or after class, or via email. See me during my office hours or make a special appointment.

Attendance and Late Assignments

Attendance is expected. In addition, you are expected to be punctual. Please refer to the discussion of in-class assignments and quizzes for more information. Any late assignments will receive a penalty of one letter grade per class period. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Cell Phones

I like to be in constant communication with my family and friends. Thus, I often carry my cell phone to class. However, when class begins, I try to remember to do a "cell phone check" and turn it off so as not to disrupt the class. I ask you to do the same. Please turn your cell phones to vibrate, or better yet off, before class begins.

Missed Information

Do not ask me for missed information. Ask a fellow student. Please exchange phone numbers and email addresses with fellow students. If you miss class, ask others for hand-outs and other missed information or look online.

Paper Requirements

All papers must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the page, using Times New Roman 12-point font, with 1" margins all around. Research papers must be written in accordance with APA or MLA Style Guides. All work will be graded on grammar and style. Refer to the *Style Manual for Communication Studies* for more information. I will deduct a minimum of 10% from each paper that does not meet these guidelines.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty that involves taking the words, ideas, creations, or research of other persons and putting them forward as your own. Using the work of others without appropriate citation is intellectual theft and a violation of the YSU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct.

Some examples of plagiarism include:

- Copying material from any source (including the Internet)
- Presenting others' ideas as your own
- Using others' words with only slight modification
- Copying a classmate's paper
- Buying a paper on the Internet

There are other forms of plagiarism and many ways to avoid it, but the most important point is to never use someone else's work without giving complete and appropriate credit.

Schedule

The schedule is subject to change. Please refer to in-class, email, and MyYSU announcements for changes to this syllabus and the accompanying schedule.

Other Responsibilities

You are responsible for:

- your own learning and meeting all course obligations. I will guide you through the text, lecture materials, and related course content, but it is up to you to apply what you have heard and commit those lessons to memory.
- reading assignments for the day listed on the schedule, keeping in mind that you may have a quiz or in-class assignment related to those readings.
- participating in class discussions.
- asking relevant questions about course materials.
- respecting others, including the instructor, by listening to what they have to say and avoiding what I deem to be inappropriate behaviors (interrupting, making personal remarks, doing work for another class, reading the newspaper, engaging in private conversations, talking on cell phones, text-messaging, etc.).

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University procedure, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, you must contact the CSP/Disability Services Office, located at Wick House, at the beginning or the semester or when given an assignment for which an accommodation is required. Students with disabilities must verify their eligibility through the CSP/Disability Services Office intake procedures (330-941-1372).

Most importantly... let's have fun!

COMST 4850 Computer-Mediated Communication: Fall 2006 Schedule

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
#1	8/29 Introduction to the course Syllabus, Assignments, Grading	8/31 Defining CMC, Genres and Environments Due: Read Chapter 1
#2	9/5 Defining "Space" in Cyberculture Fantasy vs. Reality Due: Read Chapter 2	9/7 Human Computer Interaction, A.I. Introduction to Virtual Groups Assignment Due: Read Chapter 3
#3	9/12 Web Characteristics, Design Intro to Website Evaluation Assignment Due: Read Chapter 4	9/14 Use of Language, Acronyms, Emoticons Gender in CMC Due: Read Chapter 5
#4	9/19 Self-Presentation Online Thinking about Your Website Content Due: Read Chapter 6	9/21 Lab Session Introduction to Personal Website Assignment Due: Virtual Group Checkpoint 1
#5	9/26 Interpersonal Relationships in CMC ROUND 1: Website Eval Presentations Due: Read Chapter 7 & Web Evals 1	9/28 Lab Session Finding and evaluating good WYSIWYG editors Due: Personal Web Checkpoint 1
#6	10/3 Organizational Comm and CMC Due: Read Chapter 8	10/5 Lab Session Review for Mid-term Exam Due: Virtual Group Checkpoint 2
#7	10/10 Mid-term Exam	10/12 MUDs, MOOs, Fantasy Sports, etc. Due: Read Chapter 9 & Personal Web Checkpoint 2
#8	10/17 Lab Session	10/19 Lab Session Due: Virtual Group Checkpoint 3
#9	10/24 Education and CMC, Distance Learning. ROUND 2: Website Eval Presentations Due: Read Chapter 10 & Web Evals 2	10/26 Virtual Group Meetings Due: Read Chapter 11 & Personal Web Checkpoint 3
#10	10/31 Lab Session	11/2 Lab Session Due: Virtual Group Checkpoint 4
#11	11/7 Online Porn, Prostitution, Hate Speech, Hackers vs. Crackers. Due: Read Chapter 12-13 & Personal Web Checkpoint 4	11/9 Political Activation Online Global Village and Digital Divides Due: Read Chapter 14-15
#12	11/14 Virtual Group Meetings	11/16 Virtual Group Meetings Due: Virtual Group Checkpoint 5
#13	11/21 Lab Session Due: Personal Web Checkpoint 5	11/23 Thanksgiving
#14	11/28 Virtual Group Meetings	11/30 Personal Web Presentations
#15	12/5 Personal Web Presentations	12/7 Virtual Group Presentations
FINAL	Thursday, December 14, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Maag 136	