

Communication 3640: Writing for New Media

Fall 2010 – M and W 7.30 am to 9.25 am – LNCO 2950

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Office hours: by appointment (typically
M and W 10 am to 11:30 am)

Grades: available on WebCT

Readings: (Mostly) available on Web CT

PART ONE: Rules of the Course

Catalog Description

This writing foundation course surveys the important components of writing in/for new media environments for entertainment, informational, educational, and interpersonal purposes. Media forms and platforms covered include narratives for film and TV, the Internet, e-games, documentaries, blogs, and personal media devices. Students discuss and evaluate new media writing and write their own new media content. Basic computer proficiency (word processing, Internet use) is required.

Required Skills

This course is writing intensive, so be prepared to use the entire range of composition skills and concepts: coherence, organization, focus, paragraph structure, grammar, and use of word processing software. In addition, this course asks you to transpose those skills to various new media forms, including blogs, wikis, social networks. This will require patience and a willingness to experiment on your part. However, you are not alone; there are many resources on campus and online to help you with these challenges.

Required Readings and Materials

There is no required book to purchase for this course. All the material will be provided to you via WebCT or links to various Web pages. This means the course will cost little (outside of any printing you may do). However, one expense required will be a movie rental or purchase: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004, rated R). It is available to rent or stream through Netflix.

Required Services

You will be required to sign up for several free online services, most likely including Facebook, YouTube, Blogger, Google, Flickr, and Wikipedia. You might already have accounts with these services. If so, it is up to you to decide whether or not to use your existing accounts for this course. You typically can have multiple accounts based on multiple email addresses, with free email addresses available from Google, Yahoo!, and Hotmail. We will discuss Terms of Service and privacy implications of these services in the class.

Etiquette

This is the first time I have ever heard of a 7.30 am class. I am not a morning person. However, I will be in LNCO 2950 promptly at 7.30. I expect the same from you. If I am more than 15 minutes late, you may go home. If you are more than 15 minutes late, stay home.

In-class technology is a double-edged sword. Studies have shown that using computers in class reduces learning. However, computers provide incredible resources. If you use a computer in class, stay on task. Cell phones should be set to vibrate. Texting is strictly forbidden – for every person I see texting, I will add an additional question to the the mid-term exam. LOL OMG :(

This class has content drawn from popular culture and the Web. Moreover, your classmates will likely share opinions and/or material they have created in class or online. Disagreement is certainly allowed, but debate must be respectful and grounded in evidence and logic. Unlike some corners of the Web, this course does not condone ad hominem attacks.

Unfortunately, no food, drink, or even gum(!) is permitted in LNCO 2950. It's the policy. My hands are tied.

Time Management

Per the University College Advising office, "As a rule of thumb, you should plan to study two hours for every hour you are in the classroom. That means that if you are registered for 12 credit hours, you'll need 24 hours a week of study time. With that in mind if you're working or have other commitments, you may need to make an adjustment in your course load or outside commitments."

Outside of documented, major family events (sickness, death, etc) I will not give consideration for late assignments.

However, I do have a "life happens" policy:

- You receive two class-days of "freebies." That is, If assignment X is due on Wednesday, but you are unable to turn it in that day – for whatever reason – you have up until the Wednesday of the next week (ie, two class days: Monday and Wednesday) to turn it in. You DO NOT need to email me. I don't need to know why it is late. You DO however must note that

you are using your freebies.

- Anything beyond these freebies will result in at least a 60% drop in the grade. That is, you will automatically fail the assignment (but still may receive some credit depending upon your work).
- ONE KEY EXCEPTION: Final assignment. Because of the nature of the end of the semester, I cannot take the final assignment after it is due.
- ANOTHER KEY EXCEPTION: Be sure to have the readings done before class in order to participate in discussions.

If you do not have a computer at home, plan to spend significant time in a campus computer lab to complete assignments.

If you know that you must miss a class, let me know at least two weeks in advance to make accommodations.

Content Accommodations

In the spirit of higher education, this course should present challenges, some of which may be ideological in nature, and you are encouraged to empower yourself to engage these challenges. This course has been designed to meet or exceed the quality of similar courses taught at top-caliber universities around the world. Readings and materials assigned for this class have been carefully scrutinized and selected. As we study communication in its various forms and contexts, we will apply the concepts we engage to a variety of examples, including those that occur in the venue of popular culture. Popular culture, as you are certainly aware, can contain potentially objectionable material. I make every effort to give notices before showing potentially objectionable material in class, often with disclaimers about language, violence, or sexual content. Please understand that all material that I will present in this class or require you to know has been selected for its overall value and its applicability to the course, and my colleagues in the department have reviewed and approved of all of the content to be presented in the course. That said, I will not make content accommodations for any material scheduled for this course. It is your responsibility to review the syllabus, readings, assignments, and materials to be sure that this is a course you wish to take. Should you have questions or concerns, please see me immediately. Details on the university's accommodation policy are available here:
<http://www.admin.utah.edu/facdev/pdf/accommodations-policy-background.pdf>

ADA Accommodations

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (CDS), 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with

prior notification to CDS.

Honesty, Plagiarism, and Intellectual Property

This course will require you to work alone and in groups. All work you contribute should be your own. Plagiarism – the unattributed use of someone else's intellectual work – is a severe offense. I will review each case of plagiarism and either penalize it by failing the assignment or failing the student for the course. Every semester, I find cases, and I will take them to the Dean if necessary. So don't do it.

Given the remix/reuse culture of the Web, much of your work will consist of creating pastiches – mixes of other people's work. This is an acceptable practice in this course on the following condition: you must give full attribution to the original authors of the material you use. Attribution can take the form of hyperlinking or citation. WHEN IN DOUBT, PROVIDE ATTRIBUTION.

Communication

I prefer to communicate either in person or via email. I may send you emails via the Campus Information System or WebCT. It is your responsibility to have a functioning email address associated with these campus sites.

All assignments will be turned in via either WebCT, on a course blog, or via email. Pay attention to the assignment requirements. Any assignment which is turned in by the wrong method will be marked down 40%.

My Responsibilities

Since this syllabus is now taking on the appearance of a legalese-drenched Terms of Service agreement on a Web 2.0 site, I think it's best for me to explain what I will do for you in this course:

1. I will act as a guide into the world of writing in new media. That is, I will not play the role of authority, but rather present you with many opportunities to explore and learn. Thus, I will typically use Socratic methods to "teach you how to fish..."
2. My grading is aimed towards rewarding excellence and encouraging improvement. I do not give out grades; you earn them.
3. I will point you towards a wide range of helpful resources on campus and online.
4. I will be available to help you (by appointment).
5. On this **first day of class**, I am willing to discuss the syllabus requirements if you feel that my policies need revision.

PART TWO: Assignments and Grading

Assignment/Component	Points
Participation in class	250
Small assignments	100
Assignment 1: Blog evaluation	100
Assignment 2: Social networking	100
Assignment 3: Wikipedia participation	150
Assignment 4: Mini-blog	200
Mid-term quiz	100
TOTAL	1000 points

Grading Scale

Point Range	Grade
970 - 1000	A+
940 - 969	A
900 - 939	A-
870 - 899	B+
840 - 869	B
800 - 839	B-
770 - 799	C+
740 - 769	C
700 - 739	C-
670 - 699	D+
640 - 669	D
600 - 639	D-
599 or less	E

Description of Assignments and Participation

In-class Participation: 250 pts

This is in-class discussion of readings, topics, and works.

Small Assignments: 100 pts

From time to time, I will ask for small papers or other works. For example, I have a survey for you to complete (25 pts). I have a brief assignment asking you to tell me what you want out of the course (25 pts). I have one reaction paper assignment (500 words, 50 pts). More details to follow.

Four Major Assignments: 550 pts

The heart of the course are four major assignments: a blog evaluation, Wikipedia participation, a social networking group project, and a mini-blog. See handouts for more details.

Mid-term quiz: 100 pts

This quiz will be based on the readings, concepts, and techniques we will discuss in the first half of the course. It will consist of short answer questions. It is designed to let me know what concepts you're getting and which you might need further help with. We will have a collective review day the class prior to the quiz.

PART THREE: Course Schedule

The schedule is, of course, subject to change. Notice of any changes will be made in-class, via WebCT, or via email. The schedule is available on WebCT under the "Syllabus" section.