COMS 355: Media and New Technology
Concordia University
Dept. of Communication Studies
Lecturer: Antonia Hernández
https://coms355.wordpress.com/

Fall 2017
Monday 8:45 - 11:30 am in CJ 4.240

Contact Information
Email: antonia@cordltx.org. Please note that I only answer emails from Monday to Friday, 9-5pm, within a 24-hour timeframe (and please wait 48 hrs before asking for clarification in relation to your marks).
Office Hours: By appointment Monday 1pm - 3pm

Course Overview
This course explores concepts of media and digital technologies in the field of communications from conceptual, technical, and practical perspectives. Using Wendy Chun’s argument that new technology matters when it seems to not matter at all (2016), this class will interrogate common habits and practices in different fields that are informed by digital technologies and their impact in the distribution of power and capital.

Objectives
- Understand and apply key critical frameworks to technologies in order to evaluate their social and technological impacts from various angles
- Gain a better understanding of technological concepts (such as algorithms, big data, software, machine learning...) that are drastically modifying the current media ecology
- Develop an awareness of the exertion of power and exclusions through technologies
- Practice group research, presentation skills and discussion in formal and informal settings
- Practice individual analytic essay writing skills, with a focus on proper documentation and citation of new media

Required Reading
You are expected to come to class having read the required readings in order to discuss and participate. Recommended readings/media are relevant articles, podcasts or videos that complement the week’s topic and may be of service to you for further research. The website of the class will reflect the development and discussions of the course, and you are encouraged to post relevant references there.
The course readings will be available through the library via the Library’s eReserve service: http://www.concordia.ca > Library > Find Books, Articles... > Course Reserves
Direct link: https://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/

Grading
Participation (10%)
You are invited and expected to participate in every class. Participation requires students to have read the assigned readings, identified issues of interest and completed the weekly activity as indicated. You must be prepared to engage in discussions and debates on the weekly topic and course readings as well as the in-class activities. Contributing to the website also counts as participation.

The meme of the week (15%)
Yes. Each week you will prepare a meme inspired by the corresponding readings. This meme has to be printed and hung in the classroom during the pause, and posted on the website of the class. They will not be evaluated individually but you have to complete 8 out of 10 to have the complete grade. Bonus: if your meme is picked for discussion you can skip the following week.

Group presentations (15%)
In one (predetermined) week, you will have to be prepared as a group (three-four students) to present the readings (approx. 20 minutes), including a related media example. You will pose three questions to the class that will be addressed during the session. The group is also in charge of selecting three memes that week for the second part of the class and posting the entire presentation on the website.

Glossary entry (20%)
You have to choose a term from this list and prepare an entry for the website based on it. It is not just a definition: you have to investigate and reflect on the term, and contribute to the discussion about it in your own way. Different (digital) formats are possible for this assignment. We will have a quick session of presentations (5').
Due: October 12th

Final Paper (40%)
The final assignment is a critical analysis of a social media platform, application, practice and/or product and its relationship to the media ecology. You should pick a topic that you would like to know more about and directly relevant to the course. This assignment will be divided in three parts:

Proposal (10%)
A one-page summary outlining your chosen object and the angle from which you will examine it. This summary has to include the bibliographic references you want to include in your essay, explaining why they are pertinent for sustaining your argument.
Due: October 30th

Presentation (15%)
In one of the last two sessions of the class you will have 10 minutes to present your research, outlining your main questions and arguments.

Paper (15%)
No less than 2000 words, 7 references minimum, 10 in-text citations minimum (at least 4 academic references).

Calendar

September 11th
Session 01: Introduction

September 18th
Session 02: What Are We Talking About When We Talk About New Technologies.

Required readings:

Complementary readings / media:

September 25th
Session 03: Media, mediation, medium.

Required readings:
Chun, W. H. K. (2016). Introduction: Habitual New Media, or Updating to Remain (Close to) the Same. In Updating to remain the same: habitual new media (pp. 1–19). Cambridge,
MA: The MIT Press. [link]

Complementary readings / media:

October 2nd

Required readings:

Complementary readings:

October 16th
Session 05: AI, Machine Learning and More Tales From the Future Present

Required readings:

Complementary readings:
https://doi.org/10.1145/2872518.2889302

October 23rd
Session 06: Networks. Some of Them More Social Than Others.

Required readings:

Complementary readings/media:

October 30th
Session 07: The Online Self.

**Required readings:**

**Complementary readings:**
Auerbach, D. (n.d.). Anonymity as Culture: Treatise. [link]

November 6th
Session 08: Dating and Sexting and Emojis and Memes

**Required readings:**

**Complementary readings:**

November 13th
Session 09: Working in the Platform

**Required readings:**
Malden, MA: Polity Press. [link]

Complementary readings:

November 20th
Session 10: Big Data and Politics and Eugenics (and News and Clickfarms)

Required readings:

Complementary readings:
November 27th
Session II: Embodiment, Virtual Reality and Gaming

**Required readings:**


**Complementary readings/media:**
The Rise and Fall and Rise of Virtual Reality. (n.d.). [link]


**Field Trip:** Virtual Reality Garden: the Guardian’s works. Phi Centre (date tbd)
[link]

December 4th
Session 12: Presentations I

December 5th
Session 13: Presentations II
Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University (2017/2018)

We would like to begin by acknowledging that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien’kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community. (Indigenous Directions Leadership Group, Feb. 16, 2017)

List of Student Services and Useful Resources

1. Communication Studies Academic Advisor: Ms. Jennifer Botsford Jennifer.Botsford@concordia.ca
2. Counselling and Psychological Services: http://concordia.ca/students/counselling-life-skills
3. Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides: http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations
4. Student Success Centre: http://concordia.ca/students/success
5. Health Services: http://concordia.ca/students/health
6. Financial Aid and Awards: http://concordia.ca/offices/faao
7. HOJO (Off Campus Housing and Job Bank): http://csu.qc.ca/hojo
8. Academic Integrity: http://concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity
9. Access Centre for Students with Disabilities: http://concordia.ca/offices/acsd
10. CSU Advocacy Centre: http://csu.qc.ca/advocacy
11. Dean of Students Office: http://concordia.ca/offices/dean-students
12. International Students Office: http://concordia.ca/students/international
13. Student Hub: http://concordia.ca/students
15. BA Coms announcement list: To subscribe, send an email to majordomo@lists.concordia.ca with ‘subscribe bacoms’ (no quotes) as the only text in your message. Save the reply for future reference as we cannot unsubscribe you!
16. Postings for internships and paid work for students in the Department of Communication Studies only: http://comsopps.concordia.ca BA students cannot take internships in their first year.
17. Sexual Assault Resource Centre: http://concordia.ca/students/sexual-assault.html
18. Indigenous Directions: http://concordia.ca/about/indigenous.html

University Rights and Responsibilities
**Academic Integrity:** “The Academic Code of Conduct sets out for students, instructors and administrators both the process and the expectations involved when a charge of academic misconduct occurs. The regulations are presented within the context of an academic community which seeks to support student learning at Concordia University.” (From Article 1 of the Academic Code of Conduct). Full text: [http://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity/offences.html](http://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity/offences.html)

**Plagiarism:** The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement.” This includes material copied word for word from books, journals, Internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It refers to material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It also includes for example the work of a fellow student, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased from any source. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone—it can refer to copying images, graphs, tables and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It includes oral presentations, computer assignment and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into any other language and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. In Simple Words: Do not copy, paraphrase or translate anything from anywhere without saying where you obtained it! Source: Academic Integrity Website: [http://concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity](http://concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity)

**Disabilities:** The University’s commitment to providing equal educational opportunities to all students includes students with disabilities. To demonstrate full respect for the academic capacities and potential of students with disabilities, the University seeks to remove attitudinal and physical barriers that may hinder or prevent qualified students with disabilities from participating fully in University life. Please see the instructor during the first class if you feel you require assistance.

For more information please visit [http://concordia.ca/offices/acsd](http://concordia.ca/offices/acsd)

**Safe Space Classroom:** Concordia classrooms are considered ‘safe space classrooms’. In order to create a climate for open and honest dialogue and to encourage the broadest range of viewpoints, it is important for class participants to treat each other with respect. Name-calling, accusations, verbal attacks, sarcasm, and other negative exchanges are counter-productive to successful teaching and learning. The purpose of class discussions is to generate greater understanding about different topics. The expression of the broadest range of ideas, including dissenting views, helps to accomplish this goal. However, in expressing viewpoints, students should try to raise questions and comments in ways that will promote learning, rather than defensiveness and feelings of conflict in other students. Thus, questions and comments should be asked or stated in such a way that will promote greater insight into the awareness of topics as opposed to anger and conflict. The purpose of dialogue and discussion is not to reach a consensus, nor to convince each other of different viewpoints. Rather, the purpose of dialogue in the classroom is to reach higher levels of learning by examining different viewpoints and
opinions with respect and civility.

Department Policies

**Participation:** This grade is based on overall punctuality and attendance in the classes, labs and workshops. Student preparedness, initiative and level of class engagement is evaluated (this means participating in discussions and demonstration of familiarity with required readings). Participation also includes completing all required readings and all assignments on time. Students are expected to be collegial, respectful and tolerant of peers, teaching assistants, technical instructors and professors. The best classroom experience will occur with courteous and engaged participation and interaction with each other, the work, the discussions and debates.

**Attendance:** Regular attendance is a requirement. Students are expected to actively participate in all classes, workshops, critiques, discussions and labs associated with courses, and to complete all required course work according to deadlines and guidelines as assigned. Failure to comply can result in loss of marks.

**Electronic Devices:** No electronic devices may be used once the class starts. All mobile phones, iPods, PDAs, cell phones, laptops etc. must be turned off and put away. The only exceptions are if the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities has authorized such use or the instructor specifically grants permission for use.

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**Communication Studies Numerical Grade, Letter Grade And Official Grade Point Equivalents**

Numerical grade, letter grade and official grade point equivalents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Grade</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Official Grade Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94 – 100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 – 93</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86 – 89</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82 – 85</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78 – 81</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 – 77</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 – 73</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Superior work in both content and presentation. This is a student who appears, even at an early stage, to be a potential honours student. The work answers all components of a question. It demonstrates clear and persuasive argument, a well-structured text that features solid introductory and concluding arguments, and examples to illustrate the argument. Few, if any presentation errors appear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Better than average in both content and presentation. This student has the potential for honours, though it is less evident than for the A student. Student’s work is clear and well structured. Minor components of an answer might be missing, and there may be fewer illustrations for the argument. Some minor but noticeable errors in presentation may have interfered with the general quality of the work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Student demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of the material. Ideas are presented in a style that is at least somewhat coherent and orderly. Occasional examples are provided to support arguments. Presentation errors that affect the quality of the work are more apparent than in B work. Some components of a question may have been omitted in the response.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Student has only a basic grasp of the material. Sense of organization and development is often not demonstrated in the response. Few, if any, examples are provided to illustrate argument. Major components of a question might have been neglected; and major presentation errors hamper the work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Shows an inadequate grasp of the material. Work has major errors of style; and provides no supporting illustration for argument. Ideas are not clear to the reader. Work lacks a sense of structure.</td>
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</tbody>
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Additional criteria, parameters and guidelines will be handed out in class when each assignment is introduced and discussed.
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Attendance
Please email with anticipation me if you know in advance that you will miss a class (it is your responsibility to do the required catch-up).

Needs
If you have particular circumstances that could interfere with your performance in the class, please let me know soon. I strongly encourage you to consult the multiple available resources in the University (writing assistance, stress management, etc) and to register with ACSD if you are in a situation that could benefit from it.

Food
Discreet: unobtrusive, inconspicuous, odorless, inaudible, restrained.

Syllabus
I reserve the right to modify the syllabus as necessary for better addressing class needs. Changes will be communicated with anticipation and posted on the website.

Format
Your essays must include a title page with your name, the title of the essay, my name and course title, page numbering, and a complete reference page and full source citation. Use a serif font 12-point font, double space, with 1.5 margins all around. Please follow a recognized citation format (APA, MLA, Chicago...).

Language
You may submit your assignments in either English or French.