COMM 4361: Communication Processes and Artificial Intelligence

MWF 10:10-11:05am, CAS 158, CRN #21130

University of Texas – Tyler, Spring 2026

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Office Hours: M/W 9:00am-12:00pm or by appointment

Course Overview

In *Team Human* (2019), Douglass Rushkoff argued that "if we don't truly know what something is programmed to do, chances are it is programming us". The computational technologies that enable and constrain human activity are becoming increasingly complex to the degree that laypersons, and even experts, find themselves unequipped to tackle the litany of technological and humanistic issues that arise in tandem with their proliferation. Lauded as the "next big thing" in the history of technological development, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the forefront of this conversation. It is integral that students receive a multifaceted and rigorous AI education program to prepare them to be technically proficient and morally-informed consumers, producers, and disseminators of information in the AI-generated era.

Course Description

This course is an exploration of the history, creation, application, and effect of artificial intelligence on human communication. The course covers the historical development, theoretical and infrastructural underpinnings, practical applications, and ethical effects of AI technologies. Students will develop a foundational understanding of the inner-workings of AI technologies and learn to employ AI technologies for various professional and practical purposes.

Learning Objectives

1) Understand the historical and theoretical development of AI technologies.
2) Critically analyze and evaluate ethical assessments of applications of AI technologies on professional, political, and personal levels.
3) Employ contemporary AI tools to conceptualize, research, create, and present original creative projects.

<u>**Course Policies and Expectations**</u>

Description of Instructional Methods: In general, instruction will be student-centered and require the development of theoretical knowledge and the demonstration of practical competence in professional interpersonal communication through a variety of instructional methods. The tools implemented include, but are not limited to, textbook readings, supplementary readings, PowerPoints, online exams/quizzes, independent and guided research, recorded lectures, individual and group presentations, and written documents.

Communication: The best way to reach me will be via email. ***<u>Do NOT use the messenger app in Canvas.</u>*** During the work week (M-F 9:00am – 5:00pm) I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If you do not receive a response from me within this time frame, please send another message. Response times are subject to delay on the weekends and evenings.

Attendance & Participation: You will be expected to attend class in-person. In almost all careers, unexplained absences are not tolerated. This class will adopt a similar policy. Students are allotted one "freebie" for which they can miss class for any reason. Grades will be docked for any absence past the freebie. Of course, I understand that life happens, so if any issues arise please discuss alternative options *prior* to the class meeting time.

In addition to attending class, you are responsible for actively participating during in-class activities. You are expected to engage with in-class discussions, written activities, and presentations both independently and as a group. The activities we will complete in class are meant for us to dive in and use AI technologies in various ways.

If there is perfect attendance – i.e. everyone shows up for every class period – I will jump in the lake at the end of the semester.

Late Work & Make-Up Assignments: As a rule of thumb, I do not accept late-work. In almost any career, you will be expected to complete your assigned work by the date it is required. This class will mirror that expectation. Of course, I do understand that life happens. If something comes up, ***please contact me prior to the assignment deadline to discuss your options***.

Technology Use: During our class sessions we will do a variety of activities that will require you do research, craft documents/written materials, and create presentations. Thus, you should have at least one device capable of connecting to the internet (phone, tablet, laptop, etc.) and at least one form of writing and recording information (notebook, laptop, etc.). We will also be experimenting with various AI technology that may require you to create accounts which will be expected as part of the course.

While we will use technology in the classroom quite a bit, it is important to note that even with the ubiquity of such devices, they should be used primarily for course-related activities. Any egregious use of devices for activities unrelated to the course (texting, doom scrolling , snapchatting, watching Netflix, etc.) are subject to disciplinary action.

Classroom Etiquette: During the course of the semester, you all will be tasked with completing both written and verbal work independently and with groups. You are expected to be cordial and

cooperative with your group mates. Any disrespectful or malicious behavior towards classmates will not be tolerated and is subject to disciplinary action and/removal from the course.

University Policies

UT-Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT-Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do. To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct

The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that "Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Therefore, we enforce the Student Conduct and Discipline policy (Links to an external site.) in the Student Manual Of Operating Procedures (Section 8).

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to: copying from another student's test paper; using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test; failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test; possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have

been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test; using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program; collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority; discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination; divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student; substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment; paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program; falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit; taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

"Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit. "Collusion" includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

Artificial Intelligence Usage

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. ***For this course, AI usage will be permitted on a case-by-case basis as indicated by the instructor. Please pay careful attention to instructor guidance on when to and when not use AI for assignments.***

The UT-Tyler Writing Center

The Writing Center provides professional writing tutoring for all students in all disciplines. If you wish to use the Writing Center, you should plan for a minimum of two hour-long tutorials per assignment: the first to provide an initial consultation and drafting plan, and the second to follow up. Be prepared to take an active role in your learning, as you will be asked to discuss your work during your tutorial. While Writing Center tutors are happy to provide constructive criticism and teach effective writing techniques, under no circumstances will they fix, repair, or operate on your paper. Appointments: 903.565-5995, writingcenter@uttyler.edu

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler and fill out the New Student application.

The Student Accessibility and Reso"rces'(SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices, the SAR office located in the University Center, #3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies:

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated (September 3, 2021). Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract. The Census Date (September 3, 2021) is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date).

- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade).
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment.
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

Final Exam Policy:

Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members are required to maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.

Incomplete Grade Policy:

If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete all of the requirements for a course by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in lieu of a grade only when all of the following conditions are met: (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all course work or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; and (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average for a student.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to complete all of the work for the course within the time limit, then the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has not been assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F, or to NC if the course was originally taken under the CR/NC grading basis.

Grade Appeal Policy:

UT Tyler's Grade Appeal policy requires the completion of a Grade Appeal form for this action to take place. The grade appeal begins with the instructor of your course. If you do not agree with the decision of the instructor, you may then move your appeal to the department chair/school director for that course. If you are still dissatisfied with the decision of the chair/director, you may move the appeal to the Dean of the College offering that course who has the final decision. Grade appeals must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade. The Grade Appeal form is found on the Registrar's Form Library.

Withdrawing from Class:

Students may withdraw (drop) from this course using the Withdrawal Portal. Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance. Make sure to carefully read the implications for withdrawing from a course and the instructions on using the Withdrawal portal.

Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career*. The six courses dropped include those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance. CAUTION #1: Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule. CAUTION #2: All international students must check with the Office of International Programs before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms. CAUTION #3: All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course. CAUTION #4: All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with the Military and Veterans Success Center.

*Students who began college for the first time before 2007 are exempt from this law.

Absence for Official University Events or Activities:

This course follows the practices related to approved absences as noted by the Student Manual of Operating Procedures (Sec. 1 -501 (Links to an external site.):

Absence for Religious Holidays:

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious holiday are requested to inform the instructor by the second class meeting of the semester.

FERPA:

UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in University Policy 5.2.3 (Links to an external site.). The course instructor will follow all requirements in protecting your confidential information.

Military Affiliated Students:

UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military affiliated students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with me if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make me aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. I am willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff

who are trained to assist you. Campus resources for military affiliated students are in the Military and Veterans Success Center (MVSC (Links to an external site.) The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu, or via phone at 903.565.5972.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation:

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

UT Tyler Resources for Students:

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

<div align="center">**Overview of Assignments**</div>

Activity Applications (225 points): An important part of learning about AI is through actually using it. As such, each day in class we will be doing some form of activity in which we apply what we have learned to complete a specific task. These applications will vary in scope and style, but will reflect a variety of tasks that may be seen in a communication-based career. You will complete these tasks in class and will submit them at the end of the class period for credit. Because of the collaborative nature of these tasks, they _are not able to_ be made up. _If you miss class, you miss the activity application points._

Short Position Papers (3x75 = 225 points): During the semester you will be tasked with responding to a prompt on regarding specific AI technologies, their inner-workings, and their impacts in society. These papers will be 3-5 pages, single spaced and will require you to briefly and informally discuss them in class.

Technical Skill Development (3x50=150 points): As is the nature with any subject, it is impossible to learn everything about AI in a communication course on a university campus. As such you will tasked with identifying and completing three independent skills training courses/modules pertaining to AI. Items must be approved prior to completion. See assignment sheet for more detail.

Projects (2 x 200pts = 400 pts): In the place of examinations, you will complete two substantial, independent projects throughout the course of the semester.

The first project will be a Formal Report of AI and particular industry of your choosing. This report should be formatted professionally (for portfolio purposes) and should mirror that of governmental and/or consulting reports. Reports will include title page, table of contents, substance sections, recommendations, and sources. Students are required to craft 15+ pages total. Reports will be presented to the class. Further details are available in the assignment sheet.

For the second project, you will create a workshop on a specific AI tool/application for a specific work-oriented task. To be clear, this project is not about showing how we can use AI to graft Donald Trump's head onto John Cena's body. Your workshop should be centered around a task that is done for specific work or creative tasks. In total, you will craft a written, visual, and verbal training program for that specific AI tool. All materials are expected to be formatted professionally (for portfolio purposes). Workshops will be presented as a "AI Symposium" in the final week of the course and a public audience will be invited to attend. More details available in the assignment sheet.

Point Breakdown

A = 900-1000 points

B = 800-899 points

C = 700-799 points

D = 600-699 points

F = 599 points and below

Module	Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
		Schedule (Tentative)			
Module	**Week**	**Date**	**Topic**	**Reading**	**Assignments**
Module 1: Conceptual Foundations in Information and the Data Economy	1	12-Jan	No Class		
		14-Jan	No Class		
		16-Jan	Course Introcution	n/a	Syllabus Contract due 1/18
	2	19-Jan	No Class - MLK Day		
		21-Jan	What is Information?	Harrari, 2024	
		23-Jan	Informational Narratives	Bogost, 2015; Barthes, 1983	
	3	26-Jan	Historical Development of ICTs	Russel & Noirvig, 2010; Naughton, 2016	
		28-Jan	Big Data & The Economy	boyd & Crawford, 2012	
		30-Jan	Control and Surveillance	MacDougal, 2014; Gary, 2020	
	4	2-Feb	Approaches for Big Data	Gozzi, 2002; Gustafson, 2024	Short Paper #1 due by 2/3
Module 2: Foundations of Computer Science + Artificial Intelligence		4-Feb	Key Concepts and Terms in AI pt. 2	Gunkel, 2020	
		6-Feb	Key Concepts and Terms in AI pt. 2	Gunkel, 2020 + MIT Glossary	
	5	9-Feb	Key Concepts and Terms in AI pt. 3	Gunkel + PDF	
		11-Feb	Coding Basics	PDF + Coding Bootcamp	
		13-Feb	Effects of Coding	Marino, 2020	TSD #1 due by 2/15
	6	16-Feb	Ethical Paradigms pt. I	Huang, 2023	
		18-Feb	Ethical Paradigms pt. I	PDF	
		20-Feb	Lab Day		
Module 3: Special Topics	7	23-Feb	Self	Barad, 2007	
		25-Feb	Health	Dunn, 2023; Shaheen, 2021	
		27-Feb	Work/Leisure	Mayer, 2017	
	8	2-Mar	Economics	Muthrashnikan, 2020	
		4-Mar	War + Politics	Packer and Reeves, 2016; Kittler, 2017	
		6-Mar	Futures of AI + Quantum Computing	Calzati & de Kerckhove, 2024	Short Paper #2 due by 3/8
	9	9-Mar	Workday		
		11-Mar	Midterm Presentations		Project #1 due by class time
		13-Mar	Midterm Presentations		
	10	16-Mar			
		18-Mar	No Class - Spring Break		
		20-Mar	No Class - Spring Break		
			No Class - Spring Break		
Module 4: Practical Applications	11	23-Mar	Course Recap + Recalibration		
		25-Mar	LLMs and Prompting	Chub et. all, 2022 + MIT PDF	
		27-Mar	LLMs and Research	Georgetown Tools Repository	
	12	30-Mar	AI and Writing	Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024	
		1-Apr	AI for Audio	Chedroui, 2024	
		3-Apr	AI Video Creationp pt. I	Crawford & Paglen, 2024	TSD #2 due by 4/5
	13	6-Apr	AI Video Creation pt. II	Acedo et. al, 2024	
		8-Apr	Creating an AI Agent	Online PDF	
		10-Apr	Deploying AI Teams	PDF	Short Paper #3 due by 4/12
	14	13-Apr	AGI and Emerging AI	PDF	
		15-Apr	Quatum Computing and Future of AI	Kroker & Kook, 2024	
		17-Apr	Workshop + Individual Meetings		TSD #3 due by 4/20
	15	20-Apr	Course Wrap-up		
		22-Apr	Final Presentations		Project #2 due by Class Time
		24-Apr	Final Presentations		
	16	27-Apr			
			Finals Week		
			*ALL assignments due at 11:59pm unless noted otherwise**		

CMST 4361 (Spring 2026) Syllabus Contract

I have read the syllabus for CMST 4361 and agree to the terms for required coursework and acceptable behavior.

Name:

Year in School:

Major/Minor:

Hometown:

Professional Headshot:

What do you hope to get out of this class?

What are your career interests?

What experience and/or proficiency do you have with AI platforms?

What is you general opinion of AI? Is it good, bad, useful, harmful, etc.?

Who are the top 3 people who inspire you (this can be personally or professionally) and why?

Who are your top 3 musical artists and/or songs?

What are your favorite TV Shows, movies, or books/authors?

Lastly, if you feel comfortable doing so, please list any time commitments (work, extra-curriculars, family, etc.) you have – or expect to have – outside of CMST 436 this Spring. (This section is entirely optional and exists just so that, if you wish, I am aware of your general schedule and can accommodate you accordingly).