

**COMM 5345.001 New Media Theories and Applications**  
**(Spring 2016)**  
**6:00—8:45 p.m. Wednesdays in 253 HPR Building**

**ABOUT THIS COURSE:** This course is an exploration of the cognitive, linguistic, and interpretive approaches to the study of new media, commonly referred to as social media. Consideration will be given to both the practical and theoretical values of new media. In this course, we will explore communication technology, primarily the Internet, in the context of meaning for individuals and for society in general. We will survey a range of intellectual approaches to this inquiry. Our goals include:

- Examining the nature of changing communication forms and their implications from a variety of perspectives.
- Conducting research into a specific area related to communication in the context of social media, resulting in a completed paper suitable for academic conference presentation and/or journal publication.<sup>1</sup>

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Students will be able to

1. Explain communication from a variety of communication theoretical perspectives. (Program Learning Outcome: Theoretical Knowledge)
  - a) Demonstrate an understanding of praxis of communication theory, new media, and communication.
  - b) Demonstrate the ability to use new media.
2. Conduct original research using a method appropriate to the research question. (Program Learning Outcome: Research)
  - a) Demonstrate the ability to think critically about new media, convergence, and communication.
  - b) Discuss and examine critically theories and approaches used to research, understand, and implement mediated communication strategies using new media technologies and applications.
3. Evaluate the communication rules, norms, listening skills, and rhetorical strategies used by people. (Program Learning Outcome: Communication Assessment)

**TEXTBOOK:**

- **Communication Technology and Social Change: Theory and Implications** Carolyn A. Lin and David J. Atkin, editors (Routledge, 2008 / LEA, 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> This syllabus has been adopted and modified from Uiowa's instructor, Jane Singer, syllabus for educational use only. Prof. Singer teaches communication and change there.

Additional readings will be incorporated each week. Some will come from the instructor and others from you. Details are provided below.

### **INSTRUCTOR:**

- Dr. Rauf Arif
- Office: HPR 266
- Office Hours: Fridays 11a.m.—1:30 p.m., or by appointment.
- E-mail: [rarif@uttyler.edu](mailto:rarif@uttyler.edu)
- Phone: 903-566-7364

Dr. Arif's research is mainly in the area of online journalism, social media and social movements in digital age. His recent articles have appeared in prestigious academic journals including the *Journal of Media, War and Conflict*; *Journal of Media Studies*, among others. Before becoming an academic, he worked for over eight years as a print and TV media journalist. Arif holds a Ph.D. in Mass Communication from the University of Iowa; M.S. in Mass Communication from the University of Kansas; and an M.A. in Broadcast Journalism from the University of Bahawalpur.

### **CLASS POLICIES:**

**ATTENDANCE:** This is a once-a-week graduate seminar, so class attendance and participation –including leadership of discussion and presentation of original ideas – are important components. Three to four unexcused absences will result in an automatic half grade deduction (5 percent). Five or more unexcused absences will result in a full grade deduction. Missing more than five classes, without discussing the situation with your instructor, could result in a failing grade for the course. In the event of a dire emergency that prevents your being with us, please let me know the reason for your absence within 24 hours of the missed class. (E-mail is fine.)

**FINAL EXAM:** This is a graduate seminar; we won't have one. In lieu of an exam, you will have a final reflective/summary essay to write; it will be due on our scheduled final exam date. Details will be provided in class.

### **GRADING**

Your grade in *New Media Theories and Applications* will come from your class attendance; work on a research paper; a set of essays; and your contributions to the class readings, discussion and website/blog. You must complete all work on time to receive full credit. More details about the various assignments will be provided in class.

### **RESEARCH PAPER**

**60 percent of total grade**

You will complete an academic research paper and present it to the class at the end of the semester. Interim stages in this project will be required and graded as follows:

**February 3:** Topic proposal due **(5 percent)**

**February 17:** Outline and preliminary source list due **(10 percent)**

**March 02:** Workshop, literature review **(Freebies)**

**March 09:** Workshop, RQs and method

**March 23:** Workshop, findings

**March 30:** Workshop, discussion and conclusion

**April 6:** First draft due **(15 percent)**

**April 27:** New Media Theories & Practices Symposium **(5 percent)**

You will present your finished research to the class and our invited guests. Each paper will have a student discussant. The presenter will be graded on the quality of the presentation. The discussant will be graded on the quality of the critique.

**May 04:** Final paper due **(25 percent)**

### **ESSAYS**

**25 percent of total grade**

A series of essays will take the place of any tests as mid-term and final assessment tools.

- **Think pieces:** A total of three short (two- to three-page) essays, each worth **5 percent of your total grade**, on ideas discussed in class or in your readings. Specific content will be up to you; the general idea is to articulate your thoughts about class topics.

**Due dates:** **February 10, March 9, April 13, 2016.**

- **Reflective essay:** A longer and more analytical essay, worth **10 percent of your total grade**. Details about the format and content of this piece will be provided in class.

**Due date:** No later than the end of the day Friday, May 06 (finals week)

### **CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS**

**15 percent of total grade**

You will contribute **one reading** on class-related topics of your choosing during the semester and lead a discussion of it both in class and on our website/blog. In addition, you will be assessed on your overall contributions to the class community, primarily through classroom and online discussion and commentary.

## MISCELLANEOUS

- A. Course Withdrawal: The last date to withdraw from classes is **March 21, 2016**.
- B. **Final Exam Dates: between May 3<sup>rd</sup>—7<sup>th</sup>.**
- C. Electronic Devices: Turn off all electronic devices including cell phones and MP3 players. Allowing a cell phone or other device to ring during class is rude and disrupts class. No text messaging or checking the time on your cell phone during class. Keep these devices in your backpack during class.
- D. Use of Computers in Class: Do not use computers during class for reading/writing e-mail, surfing the Web, playing games, working on assignments for other classes, or writing letters. You may use a laptop computer only for taking class notes. If you use your laptop for any other purpose, I will require you to immediately close the computer.
- E. Assignment Policy:
  - 1. We will use Blackboard, online blogging sites, Twitter, and other new media throughout this course.
  - 2. Assignments will be given throughout the semester. Students are responsible for all course materials, including, but not limited to, class lectures, handouts, workbook and textbook reading assignments.
  - 3. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.
  - 4. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the beginning of class.
  - 5. ALL PAPERS MUST BE TYPED OR WORD-PROCESSED USING THE FORMAT AND MEDIUM REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT.
  - 6. SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND NEATNESS COUNT!
- F. Late Assignments: Late assignments will not be accepted. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the date specified.
- G. Attendance and Tardiness Policy: This is a graduate course. You are expected to attend class. See the current UT Tyler catalog for the university's policy on student responsibility for missed classes and assignments. Be familiar with the university's drop policy. Students who anticipate being absent from class due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform the instructor by the end of the first class meeting.
- H. **Academic Honesty Policy:** Students will adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. **Anyone caught cheating will earn a "0" for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action.** **Plagiarism (the use of written and oral words or ideas of another person, including another student, without the expressed acknowledgment of the**

**speaker's or writer's indebtedness to that person) will not be tolerated.**

This includes the use of papers or other materials previously submitted to instructors in other classes, as well as video and audio recordings. **Students caught plagiarizing will fail this class and be subject to academic and disciplinary action.**

## II. University of Texas at Tyler Policies

- A. **Students Rights and Responsibilities:** To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:

### B. Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies:

1. 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. 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. **(Census Date Spring 2016: February 1st.)**
2. 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.
3. The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:
  - a) Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
  - b) Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date).
  - c) Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade).
  - d) Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment.
  - e) Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid.

### C. State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

1. Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during

their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

2. Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

- D. Social Security and FERPA Statement:** It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.
- E. The U-T Tyler 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. Location: BUS 202. Appointments: 903-565-5995.
- F. Disability Services:** In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodation must provide documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services counselor. If you have a disability, including a learning disability, for which you request an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services office in UC 3150, or call (903) 566-7079.
- G. Student Absence due to Religious Observance:** Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

## RESOURCES

A few good **ACADEMIC** sources for communication technology research (in alphabetical order):

- *Convergence: The Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*  
([convergence.beds.ac.uk](http://convergence.beds.ac.uk); also accessible from Sage website)
- *Information, Communication and Society*  
([www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rics](http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rics))
- *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* (affiliated with ICA)  
([www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=1083-6101](http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=1083-6101))

- *New Media & Society*  
([nms.sagepub.com](http://nms.sagepub.com))

... and for research about communication in general, including mass communication:

- *Journal of Communication* (flagship journal affiliated with ICA)  
([www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0021-9916](http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0021-9916))
- *Journal of Communication Inquiry*  
([jci.sagepub.com](http://jci.sagepub.com))
- *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* (affiliated with AEJMC)

Good **TRADE, RESEARCH and THINK TANK** sources for current media trends and info:

- *American Journalism Review* ([ajr.org](http://ajr.org))
- *Columbia Journalism Review* ([cjr.org](http://cjr.org))
- *CJR Daily* ([cjrdaily.org](http://cjrdaily.org)) is a good media blog
- *Online Journalism Review* ([ojr.org](http://ojr.org)), now under Knight Digital Media Center umbrella ([www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org](http://www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org))
- *Pew Internet & American Life Project* ([www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org))
- *Poynter Institute* ([poynter.org](http://poynter.org))
- *Romenesko* ([poynter.org/column.asp?id=45](http://poynter.org/column.asp?id=45)) for daily dish
- *Project for Excellence in Journalism* ([journalism.org](http://journalism.org))

Some good **SEARCH TOOLS** (you'll need your University ID to access most of them):

For **academic** citations: Com Abstracts ([www.cios.org/www/advab.htm](http://www.cios.org/www/advab.htm))  
Google Scholar ([scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com))  
Ingenta Connect ([ingentaconnect.com](http://ingentaconnect.com))  
JStor ([jstor.org](http://jstor.org))

For **media** sources: Lexis-Nexis ([www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic](http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic))

Rauf's favorite **CITATION STYLE** reference book:

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*  
("APA" style, obviously...the most widely, though not universally, used in our field)

Leading **SCHOLARLY ORGANIZATIONS** in our field:

- Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, AEJMC ([aejmc.org](http://aejmc.org)). Paper submission deadline April 1.
- International Association for Media and Communication Research, IAMCR ([iamcr.net](http://iamcr.net)). Paper submission deadline January/February.

- International Communication Association, ICA (**[icahdq.org](http://icahdq.org)**)  
Paper submission deadline November 1.
- National Communication Association, NCA (**[www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org)**)  
Paper submission deadline mid-February.