



SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

Illinois State University

COM 218 001: Communication Technologies and Impacts Fall 2026 Course Syllabus

Class Meetings: Tues/Thurs 2:00 – 3:15 pm in Fell Hall 176

Instructor: Dr. Fan (“Ellie”) Yang

Office: 460 Fell Hall

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 12:30 – 1:30 pm or By Appointment

To make an appointment, go to

<https://calendly.com/fyang8-ilstu/30min>

Email: fyang8@ilstu.edu

Office Phone: (309) 438-3671

Course description:

The study of basic communication technologies (radio, television, computer, mobile, virtual reality, and AI) and their impact on the individual, group, organization, and society.

Textbook and supplementary materials:

- (1) Handouts and articles are assigned by the instructor on a weekly basis. You can download the reading materials from the class CANVAS page.
- (2) A personal laptop or desktop computer running Windows 10 or MacOSX. If this poses a financial difficulty, please contact Dr. Yang immediately to find an alternative arrangement.
- (3) Broadband internet connection.

Learning objectives:

- (1) Understand the historical role of communication technologies in the development of human civilization.
- (2) Discover the nature of both older and newer technologies.
- (3) Identify relevant communication theories to analyze and explain contemporary communication technologies.
- (4) Explore both micro and macro implications of communication technologies for social interaction and structure.
- (5) Access current and potential future trends in communication technology uses.

Instructional methods:

This class is typically scheduled and designed as an in-person class. Many of the materials and assignments are delivered electronically. Additionally, I will share materials, including readings, assignments, feedback, and more through our course site. Check regularly for updates! If you have questions about your work or does not pertain the course generally, please email me directly (fyang8@ilstu.edu).



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This course centers around the basic understanding of media technology in human communication. We will complete multiple projects that include analysis, planning, development, and more. To successfully complete this course, you will do the following:

- Read assigned chapters.
- Watch additional media.
- Participate in discussion topics.
- Participate in assignments.
- Complete quizzes and exams.
- Complete project reports and reflections.
- Attend the class.

Class sessions consist of lectures, discussions, hands-on activities, or a combination of all three. Each week will introduce a new theme or set of themes related to theories, problems, and concepts related to communication technologies. On discussion days, you will be required to read articles, book chapters, or news stories and come prepared to discuss them in the context of the daily / weekly theme. During the final week of classes, you will engage in debates related to policy issues, and provide feedback to your peers.

Learning assessments:

Your success in this class depends greatly on you completing the assigned readings, participating in class discussions about the readings, applying lessons to other courses, working well with your peers, following directions, and, ultimately, producing great products for the assignments. Assessment of students' learning against the course's objectives shall be done through a combination of learning assessments, which fall in the following five parts:

1. Quiz and online discussion (50 points, 40%)

There will be quizzes every two weeks (30 points) and two online discussions (20 points) on readings and course content on CANVAS. Discussion assignments are designed so we can ask questions, consider possibilities, and develop a better understanding of course concepts. To help develop the skills needed for larger projects, there will be a variety of activities and 'practice' assignments in class that focus on a narrow set of concepts. These assignments will help you practice your creative/analytical skills and become more familiar with media technology in research and practice.

2. Attendance and participation (15 weeks X 2 point each = 30 points, 10%)

Attendance is required. Meeting the credit hour standard, the course is scheduled to have two 75-minute classroom lectures. You are expected to attend all class sessions and fully responsible for learning all the lecture materials. Another part of your participation score will be based on your performance in answering questions and group discussion during the lecture time.

3. Group essay project (20 points, 10%)



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The group project revolves around discussing an assigned academic paper led by the group leader. Each group consists of 5 students who will write a 5-6 page summary and critique of an academic paper together in a designated week. The group will also provide a brief list of questions to lead a discussion (30 mins) in an assigned session. The group will be responsible for spurring discussion of the readings by identifying the major points of readings and questions they raise for the study of media technologies. Members are encouraged to share new and current good examples and illustrations of the topic of that week. Each group's topical reading is assigned by drawing lots.

4. Midterm exam (100 points, 20%):

The midterm will take 60 minutes to complete on CANVAS.

5. Final exam (100 points, 20%):

The time and location will abide by the instructor's notification.

Grading scale:

There is no curve for grading. Rather, grading is based on a point-system in which you work toward 300 total points. They are distributed as follows:

Components	Number of Points	Percentage
Three Quizzes & Two Online Discussion	50	40.0
Attendance & Participation	30	10.0
Group Essay Project	20	10.0
Midterm Exam	100	20.0
Final Exam	100	20.0
Total	300	100.0

We encourage you to keep track of your performance based on this point allocation system on CANVAS. This allows you to be aware of your grades throughout the semester and adjust your study strategies if you're dissatisfied with it. The following breakdowns are used to assign letter grades to your performance in this course:

A = 90.00% and greater
B = 80.00% – 89.99%
C = 70.00% – 79.99%
D = 60.00% – 69.99%
F = less than 60.00%

Extra Credit



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Additional extra-credit opportunities for research project participation may be announced during the semester (Students can participate in a maximum of three additional extra credit opportunities worth 1 point per opportunity). You are encouraged to browse SoC Research Announcement Board (<https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/>) for research participation and keep the participation evidence (e.g., email confirmation from the research investigator) by the end of the semester. The Research Announcement Board is updated as research studies are opened/closed, and it is your responsibility to access the Board and be aware of available opportunities. The extra credit points will be added to your final grade and may not necessarily appear in the gradebook immediately upon your completion of the opportunity.

Course outline/major topics studied:

Note: Course schedule is subject to change with instructor notification and students will be responsible for abiding by these changes. All reading materials can be accessed on CANVAS. You are highly encouraged to check weekly schedule on CANVAS under the tab “assignment” for the assignment due date.

Dates	Lecture	Readings	Assignments
Week 1 (Aug 17 - 21)	Course overview and the definition of communication technology	(1) Course syllabus (2) Team YoungWonks “Evolution of Communication Technology”	Group bonding
Week 2 (Aug 24 - 28)	Historical perspectives on communication technologies (Tuesday) & Group meeting (Thursday)	(1) YouTube Video, “History of the Internet” (2) London Broadcasting Company “2024 Broadcasting Industry Trends: 5 Key Trends in Broadcast Media”	
Week 3 (Aug 31 – Sep 4)	The evolution of communication technologies	(1) M. Kranzberg “Technology and History” (2) A. Sinitsyna “News and Media Industry Trends to Watch for in 2024”	Quiz 1 (Sep 3)
Week 4 (Sep 7 - 11)	Platforms & Publics	(1) J. Mercieca “We Are All Propagandists Now” (2) Siva Vaidhyanthan “Making Sense of the Facebook Menace”	Online Discussion 1 (Due date: Sep 13 at 11:59 PM) Group 1 discussion



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			(In class, Sep 10)
Week 5 (Sep 14 - 18)	Algorithms & Big Data	(1) E. Dou & G. De Vynck, "Google is an Illegal Monopoly, Federal Court Rules" (2) d. boyd & K. Crawford "Critical Questions for Big Data"	Quiz 2 (Sep 17)
Week 6 (Sep 21 - 25)	Social Media	(1) M. Jones, "The Complete History of Social Media: A Timeline of the Invention of Online Networking" (2) YouTube Video, "How social media can make history - Clay Shirky"	Group 2 discussion (In class, Sep 24)
Week 7 (Sep 28 – Oct 2)	Social Media Analysis & Workshop	(1) W. Fan & M. Gordon, "The Power of Social Media Analytics" (2) Hands-on sessions on sentiment analysis, text analysis and engagement analysis	Quiz 3 (Oct 1)
Week 8 (Oct 5 - 9)	Midterm exam review: Tuesday Midterm exam: Thursday		
Week 9 (Oct 12 - 16)	5G Technology & Mobile Media	(1) BBC News, "Do We Still Need the Telephone?" (2) M. Delgado, "From 'the Brick' to the iPhone, the Cellphone Celebrates 50 Years"	Online Discussion 2 (Due date: Oct 18 at 11:59 PM) Group 3 discussion (In class, Oct 15)



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Week 10 (Oct 19 - 23)	Virtual Reality & Augmented Reality	(1) Z. Watson, Z. “VR for news: The New Reality” (2) YouTube Video “I Spent 24 Hours Trapped in the Metaverse”	Quiz 4 (Oct 22)
Week 11 (Oct 26 - 30)	Governance & Economics	(1) C. Doctorow, “What the Fediverse (does/n't) Solve” (2) C. Valente, “Stop Talking to Each Other and Start Buying Things”	Group 4 discussion (In class, Oct 29)
Week 12 (Nov 2 - 6)	Ethics of Communication Technologies	(1) S. Schwarzman, “Can We Make Artificial Intelligence Ethical?” (2) E. Gibney, “The Scant Science behind Cambridge Analytica’s Controversial Marketing techniques”	Quiz 5 (Nov 5)
Week 13 (Nov 9 - 13)	Special Topics in Media Technology Research and Profession	(1) N. Singer, “Your Online Attention, Bought in An Instant” (2) The Field Test Team, “Basic Terms in Digital Advertising and Online Marketing”	Group 5 discussion (In class, Nov 12)
Week 14 (Nov 16 - 20)	Future of Communication Technology	(1) H. Rabinder. “How Artificial Intelligence is Changing Mass Communications and the Media Sector at Large.” (2) M. Fisher “Belonging is Stronger than Facts: The Age of Misinformation”	Quiz 6 (Nov 11)



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Week 15 (Nov 23 - 27)	Thanksgiving vacation	Thanksgiving vacation	
Week 16 (Nov 30 – Dec 4)	Final exam review		

Due Dates

Class assignments are due according to the assignment due date. Late work when accepted will receive a 20% grade reduction for each day after the deadline. Late group reports do not receive the same full feedback as on-time papers. No emailed assignments will be accepted. If you'd like to discuss your assignments with the instructor, please make an appointment. No assignments are accepted after the final exam.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes as specified in the course syllabi for each course. It is the responsibility of each student to promptly notify the instructor when unable to attend class. If you cannot attend class, you are responsible for covering missed material (check Canvas, talk to peers, meet with instructor, etc.). **Absences, on their own, do not justify late submissions.** If you are unable to submit work on time, you must make timely arrangements with me (before the deadline or immediately following an absence) or receive a 0. While I will work with you as best I can, keep in mind that some activities and assignments cannot be recreated or extended (discussions, presentations, etc.).

Only a notification from the Dean of Students Office will provide a basis for exceptions to these policies. If you are sick or if you know in advance of any conflicts that will prevent you from being in class, it is YOUR responsibility to make arrangements to turn in any assignments or lab activities on or before the due date.

If an emergency occurs that prevents the administration of a course scheduled final examination, the final course grades will be calculated based on the work in the course completed to that point in time and the faculty member's considered judgment. Final exams will not be rescheduled, and a grade of "I" will not be given as a result of an institutional cancellation of a final examination. This final exam policy does not apply to online courses.



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Technology Considerations

As you prepare for this semester, make sure to check out [Redbirds Keep Learning](#) for information regarding CANVAS and other technology-related questions. If not have access to the technology needed to be successful in this class, please let Dr. Yang know and contact the [Technology Support Center](#). The staff at the TSC will work with you try to solve your issue through technology-based solutions (i.e. updated software/operating system, walking you through WiFi options, etc.). If the staff at the TSC recognizes that it is not an issue they can solve or that you have expressed financial need, you can contact the [ISU Tech Zone](#) for assistance regarding technology acquisition of items. You can also visit [ISU IT Help](#), email SupportCenter@IllinoisState.edu, or call (309) 438-4357 with your name, ULID, and phone number to have campus tech support help you find equipment. Students from families with Zero Expected Family Contribution on their FAFSA can also contact financial aid for computer purchases.

Course Communication Policy

All students enrolled in this course have access to the course website on CANVAS. Readings, assignment instructions, and assessments will be available through CANVAS. Important course announcements will be made in class and via announcements on CANVAS. It is YOUR responsibility to check both CANVAS and your ISU email on a regular basis. If you need to contact Dr. Yang by email, please feel free to do so at his Illinois State email address (fyang8@ilstu.edu). As a student of higher education, it is expected that all of your communication is of professional quality. To ensure that your email is given full consideration, please identify the subject matter in the subject line of the email and identify your section number. Please be sure to address Dr. Yang in a professional manner. Always sign your name in your email messages. Expect one to two full business days for a response.

Academic Integrity & Classroom Behavior

You are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the [Code of Student Conduct](#) and any additional syllabus language. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration on any work, or the presentation of someone else's work, is plagiarism. Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI-generated content) without proper attribution or authorization would also be a form of plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible. Any allegation of a violation of this section may be referred to [Student Conduct and Community Responsibilities](#), a unit of the Dean of Students Office for possible sanctioning. In addition, a grade penalty can also be applied.

Mental Health and Student Well-Being

Life at college can get complicated. If you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed, lost, anxious, depressed or are struggling with personal issues, do not hesitate to call or visit [Student Counseling](#)



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[Services](#) (SCS). These services are free and completely confidential. SCS is located at 320 Student Services Building, 309-438-3655. It's hard to learn if you're hungry or couch surfing. If you are having difficulty affording groceries, accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or securing a safe and stable place to live, help may be available. Contact [the Dean of Students Office](#) to learn more.

Campus Safety and Security

Illinois State University is committed to maintaining a safe environment for the University community. Please take a few moments to make sure you are signed up for ISU Emergency Alerts at [IllinoisState.edu/EmergencyAlert](https://illinoisstate.edu/EmergencyAlert). Additional safety information is available on the Campus Safety and Security website, Security.IllinoisState.edu.

Student Access and Accommodation Services

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 308 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit Student Access and Accommodation Service online at <https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/index.php>.

Religious Observances

It is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. You may arrange to take an exam on an alternative date if the exam falls on a religious holy day. Let your instructor know in the first two weeks of the semester if any exam date or other due date falls on a religious holy day.

Notice of Recording a Class Session

COM 218 class sessions may be recorded by your instructor for later use. Any recordings that are made available are for use by students enrolled in the class and are for the purpose of individual or group study only. The recordings may not be reproduced, shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to publicly accessible web environments. Please do not independently record the course without prior authorization from your instructor or an approved accommodation from [Student Access and Accommodations Services](#). Students may not record class sessions without prior written approval from Dr. Yang.

Constructive Conversations

Engaging in civil discourse is both a privilege and a responsibility of living in a democratic society. This class will provide both anticipated and unexpected opportunities to engage in conversations about controversial topics. Thus, when these topics emerge, we will work to agree on a set of guidelines that ensures that our civil discourse remains civil.

This Syllabus is Subject to Change



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Any aspect of this syllabus, including policies, due dates, content, and course calendar, may be adjusted to meet the needs and pace of the class. Changes will be announced via class, Email, or CANVAS. It is YOUR responsibility to regularly check your ISU email and CANVAS accounts.