CA 360: Communication and the Internet
Dr. Brett Lunceford
W: 2.30-5.00PM
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Course Description

From the Course Catalog: “Intensive study and application of rhetorical and communication theories to understanding problems that arise as the Internet and the World Wide Web begin to render fixed media-based communication obsolete. Implications for advertising, journalism, organizational record keeping and management, interpersonal communication, training, entertainment, etc.”

My Description: This course explores how the medium of the Internet influences how messages are created and received. In this course, we will discuss issues such as the digital divide, interface design, and media literacy. We will consider the broader implications of living in an information society for both society and individuals. This course also includes instruction on elements of basic web design so students can learn to create effective online messages. That said, the purpose of this course is not to teach you to become a web designer—the practical aspects of the course are there to help you more fully understand the theory.

This course has two primary goals:

- Provide students with a greater understanding of how technology influences communication and behavior.
- Provide students with a greater understanding of how technology influences society.
- Provide students with the tools to create and critically assess mediated messages.

These goals will be assessed through assignments designed to help the student critically think about technology and communication (Reflection Papers, Email Assignments) and to create online messages (Website).

I expect that each student will come to class prepared to discuss the readings for the day. According to the University of South Alabama’s Academic Policies and Procedures, “Each hour of lecture usually requires two hours of outside preparation. Thus, a student carrying sixteen semester hours should be prepared to spend at least 48 hours in class and study per week.”

Required Texts


Lecture readings will be available through the library’s online course reserves.

**Class Climate**

The questions that we will grapple with have no easy answers. There will be points where you may disagree with someone else. This is appropriate and, to some degree, desirable. However, respect for others in the class is an essential component of this class. Arguments should be made in a spirit of inquiry rather than as personal attacks.

**Attendance Policy**

This is a junior level course, so I assume that by now you recognize the value of regular class attendance. This course relies heavily on in-class discussion. Excessive absences—even excused absences—will negatively impact your participation grade in this course. If you are not present, you are not able to participate and it is impossible to make up the discussion. Because this course meets only once per week, you get one absence free—no questions asked. However, after one absence, each unexcused absence will decrease your final grade by one letter grade, so use it wisely. In order for an absence to be excused, I need appropriate documentation when you return to class. In addition, there may be in-class activities that are not practical to make up. If you are absent, please do not email me asking, “What did I miss?” Make friends with your classmates and get the notes from them and/or come to my office hours.

**Academic Honesty**

From the Student Academic Conduct Policies: “Any dishonesty related to academic work or records constitutes academic misconduct including, but not limited to, activities such as giving or receiving unauthorized aid in tests and examinations, improperly obtaining a copy of an examination, plagiarism, misrepresentation of information, or altering transcripts or university records. . . . Penalties may range from the loss of credit for a particular assignment to dismissal from the University” (*The Lowdown*, p. 249). In short, don’t do it. I don’t like to bust students for plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty but I will. It isn’t fair to others and it isn’t fair to yourself. If you have any questions on what constitutes plagiarism, see http://www.southalabama.edu/univlib/sauer/plagiarismforstudents.html.

**Assignments**

**Reflection Papers:** Throughout the course, I will ask you to consider specific questions concerning how online technologies influence your life.

**Advocacy Website:** Each student will choose a particular advocacy group or cause and build a basic website that promotes that cause. The purpose of this assignment is not to mimic an already existing website; rather, the purpose is to demonstrate your ability to craft a website that
considers the audience for the website and displays competence in creating online messages. When I evaluate your website, I will be more interested in how you craft your message than in how slick the website looks. A well written website is still more effective than a slick, but poorly written, website. I will expect you to defend your choices in how you created the website.

**Email Communications:** As the course progresses, I will ask for short, email communications that address particular issues concerning your website—for example, the audience for the website.

**Late work policy for the Reflection Papers and Email Communications:** Late assignments will receive half credit at the most and will only be accepted by the next scheduled class. No assignments will be accepted one week past the original due date. If you know that you will be absent when an assignment is due, have a classmate bring it to class or bring it to my office before the class period on which it is due. I will not accept reflection papers by email.

**Late work policy for the Website:** Because there is no final exam and you will be creating the website through the entire semester, the website must be posted by the due date. They will not be graded after the due date.

There will be no final exam in this course; the website will serve that purpose.

**Grading Scale**

There are 100 points available in this course:

- Reflection Papers: 30
- Email Communications: 15
- Website: 30
- Participation: 25

A=90-100; B=80-89.99; C=70-79.99; D=60-69.99; F=below 60

**Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodation. The Office of Special Student Services will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations.

If you will need special accommodations please talk to me as soon as possible.

**A Note on my Teaching Philosophy**

I believe that every student in my class has the ability to succeed in this course. My goal is to create a comfortable environment in which you can explore and improve your ability to think critically and skillfully present your ideas to an audience. I do not “give” grades; students earn grades—no one is entitled to get an “A” in a class unless they earn it. I cannot grade on effort—I
must grade what you actually do. My job is to push students to do their best and to then exceed that standard. I recognize that this is futile unless I also provide the support and assistance that each student needs to excel. Therefore, I provide office hours and expect students to use them and am generally available through email. I assume that attaining a university degree is your first priority. If this is not the case, it is less likely that you will excel. Some of you are here because you want to get a better job. I believe that education should do much more than job training, but if you see it as job training, at least take it seriously. Recognize that you will probably be required to work 40 hours a week (or more) from 8am until 5pm. If you are chronically late, they fire you. If you do not do your work, they fire you. If you drop the ball, you probably will not get a raise, they may fire you, and in some cases legal action may be taken against you. Bottom line—you do your part to excel and I will be there to help you reach that goal.

**Reading Schedule**

**Week 1**

8/22 Overview of course: Technological Determinism in the Course Catalog

**Lab:** The Medium is the Message

**Week 2**

8/29 A Brief History of Technology


**Lab:** Appendix A (Farkas and Farkas): 25 Guidelines for Getting Started

**Week 3**

9/5 The Rise of the Net Generation


**Lab:** Getting familiar with Dreamweaver: Unit A (Bishop)
Chapter 2 (Farkas and Farkas): Planning the Project
Week 4

9/12  Design Online: Why Are Web Pages Different From Print?


**Lab:** Basic Web Elements I: Unit B (Bishop)
Chapter 3 (Farkas and Farkas): Designing and Building the Project

Week 5

9/19  Online Language


**Lab:** Basic Web Elements II: Unit C (Bishop)
Chapter 9 (Farkas and Farkas): Designing Effective Links

Week 6

9/26  The Rhetoric of Interface Design


**Lab:** Links and Navigation: Unit F (Bishop)
Chapter 8 (Farkas and Farkas): The Navigational Interface
Week 7

10/3  Social Construction of Technology


**Lab:** Text and CSS: Unit D (Bishop)
Chapter 10 (Farkas and Farkas): Writing For the Web

Week 8

10/10  Does the Internet Democratize the Media?


**Lab:** Images: Unit E (Bishop)
Chapter 11 (Farkas and Farkas): Graphic Design

Week 9

10/17  YouTube Culture


**Lab:** Tables: Unit G (Bishop)
Chapter 4 (Farkas and Farkas): Using Content Types Effectively

**Week 10**

**10/24** Theories of the Information Society: Digital Divide


**Lab:** Frames: Unit H (Bishop)
Chapter 5 (Farkas and Farkas): Societal Implications and Ethical Choices

**Week 11**

**10/31** Politics Online


**Lab:** Forms: Unit I (Bishop)

**Week 12**

**11/7** Social Consequences of Ubiquitous Computing


**Lab:** FTP, Etc.
Week 13
11/14 Love (and Lust) Online


**Lab:** Open Lab Time

Week 14
11/21 No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15
11/28 Cyberspace and the Law


**Lab:** Open Lab Time

Week 16
12/4 Classes end. No class, but websites are due by this date.

**Regarding Changes in Course Requirements**

Since all classes do not progress at the same rate, the instructor may wish to modify the above requirements or their timing as circumstances dictate. For example, the instructor may wish to change the number and frequency of exams, or the number and sequence of assignments. However, the students must be given adequate notification. Moreover, there may be non-typical classes for which these requirements are not strictly applicable in each instance and may need
modification. If such modification is needed, it must be in writing and conform to the spirit of this policy statement.