

The University of Calgary  
Department of Sociology

SOCI 345: Mass Communication  
Spring 2015

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00-4:00 pm; Thursday 3:00-4:00 pm; by appointment.

### Course Description

This course offers a critical, theoretically-informed look at what it means to live in a society in which the forms and content of mass media/mass communication and our uses of them shape our lives in significant ways. In particular, it constitutes an exploration of New Media and its “Convergence Culture”, that is to say, the cultural transformations that are taking place as media converge and change. Looking at the Web 2.0, transmedia storytelling and other phenomena associated with New Media, this course aims to go beyond the notion of mass communication and introduce the student into the new ways in which societies and individuals are interacting with media.

### Course Objectives

This course will provide the students with the opportunity to:

1. Examine the role of mass media and particularly New Media in their lives.
2. Understand the factors implicated with the rise and integration of new communications technologies.
3. Grasp the complex relationships between media and popular culture.
4. Explore New Media and some of the cultural transformations related to it.
5. Develop an understanding of “Convergence Culture”.

### Textbooks

Jenkins, Henry. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Custom Course Pack.

### Evaluation

Assignments (Four on this course)	40 %
Midterm examination (June 9)	25 %
Final Project (June 23)	35 %

**Assignments** are exercises designed to enhance the understanding of the topics discussed on class. They will not be accepted after their due dates unless a documented reason for not submitting them is provided (acceptable reasons: illness, family affliction, religious observance).

The **Midterm examination** will consist of multiple choice and short essay questions. It covers topics from sessions 1 to 7.

The **Final Project** will be a paper in which the students will present their research, analysis and comparison of the different ways in which a social movement –the Student Movement in Quebec, the Occupy Movement or the Arab Spring, for example- is covered by the commercial media and alternative media such as blogs. In teams of four persons, the students will gather information from different sources and, using concepts learned in the course, will conduct a content analysis of this information. In addition to the paper, the teams will also present the results of their research to their classmates. The weighting of the Final Project is composed of: Paper (25 percentage points) and Presentation (10 percentage points).

## **Grading**

Your final letter grade will be determined according to the following schedule:

Number Grade Letter Grade

95-100	A+
90-94	A
85-89	A-
80-84	B+
75-79	B
70-74	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
55-59	D+
50-54	D
49 or less	F

## **Course Overview**

1. History, Culture and Media (Sessions 1 to 3)
2. Audiences, Popular Culture and Mass Media (Sessions 4 to 5)
3. Convergence Culture and New Media (Sessions 6 to 9)
4. Digital Futures (Sessions 10 to 11)

## **Week-by-Week Overview**

Session 1 (May 14):

Introduction. A Brief History of Media: From Pictographs to Periodicals.

- Session 2 (May 19):  
A Brief History of Media: Mass Media, Advertising and Beyond.
- Session 3 (May 21):  
Welcome to Cyberia: Rise of the Cyberspace.
- Session 4 (May 26):  
Audiences: A Cultural Studies Approach.
- Session 5 (May 28):  
Popular Culture: The Mainstream, the Underground and the Postmodern Sublime.
- Session 6 (June 2):  
Convergence Culture: From Transmedia Storytelling to Knowledge Communities.
- Session 7 (June 4):  
Convergence Culture: Media Convergence and Surveillance.
- Session 8 (June 9):  
New Media: Democracy and Freedom of Expression.  
Midterm Examination.
- Session 9 (June 11):  
New Media: The Question of Copyright in the Age of Convergence.
- Session 10 (June 16):  
Digital Futures: Simulacra, Simulation and Hyperreality.
- Session 11 (June 18):  
Digital Futures: Connected but Alone?
- Session 12 (June 23):  
Conclusions: Convergence Culture, Media and the Ghost in the Machine.  
Presentation of Final Projects.
- Session 13 (June 25):  
Presentation of Final Projects.

**Course Notes:**

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.

2. Academic Misconduct: Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>
3. Protection of Privacy: The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.
4. Ethical Research: Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.
5. Deferrals: If possible, please provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to write an exam or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student. If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a "make up" test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a "make up" test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology. Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at: [http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Sp\\_Su\\_DFE\\_App.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Sp_Su_DFE_App.pdf)

Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Students Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

6. Student Representation: The 2014-15 Students' Union VP Academic's email is: Hana Kadri [suypaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suypaca@ucalgary.ca). The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: [arts1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@ucalgary.ca), [arts2@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts2@ucalgary.ca), [arts3@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts3@ucalgary.ca), and [arts4@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts4@ucalgary.ca). You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>
7. Emergency Evacuation: In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at Professional Faculties - Food Court. Please check these assembly point locations for your other classes at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>
8. Safewalk: The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.
9. Academic Accommodation: Students who require academic accommodation, must register with Student Accessibility Services (formerly the Disability Resource Centre) at MC 452 (or phone 403-220-8237). Please provide academic accommodation letters to the instructor as early in the semester as possible and no later than two weeks after the course begins.