



## COMMUNICATION 333: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURAL CHANGE

**Instructor:** Bill Kirkpatrick  
**Office:** 327 Higley, 587-8512  
**Email:** kirkpatrickb@denison.edu  
**Office Hours:** Wed., 2:30-3:30;  
Thu., 3:00-4:00;  
or by appointment

### Course Summary

The world of communication continues to change rapidly, and with it, the cultural landscape. New avenues of social connection, political action, and creative production clash with powerful financial, legal, and political forces, and the outcomes of these clashes are far from certain. This class explores the possibilities for cultural change that digital technology presents and the social/economic struggles over the future of our culture.

The goal of this course is to help you acquire new vocabularies and skills of cultural analysis and participation that will allow you to better understand, explain, and intervene in the social, cultural, and political possibilities of digital technology. By the end of this class, you should be able to produce clear and sophisticated cultural analyses of new technological developments and their potential social and political impacts, and feel confident participating in read/write cultures at both low- and high-impact levels.

### Learning Goals

By the end of this class, you should:

- be able to analyze the impacts of new media technologies with a greater understanding of their economic, political, legal, social, and cultural dimensions.
- be able to situate these impacts of new media technologies within a historical context of previous technological and social changes.
- be able to converse intelligently about major issues and problems associated with digital technology, including copyright, security, privacy, the digital divide, new economic models, and new forms of political participation.
- gain a hands-on familiarity with key new media platforms and technologies as both consumer and producer, including Twitter, YouTube, RSS, online role-playing, social bookmarking tools, and others.
- improve your ability to read and summarize scholarly and popular articles clearly and concisely.
- research, analyze, and evaluate an issue relevant to the themes and concerns discussed in class.

### Required Texts

Benkler, Yochai. *The Wealth of Networks* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). Available at the bookstore or for free (as in beer) online at [www.benkler.org](http://www.benkler.org).

## Assignments

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Late assignments will be penalized ½ grade per day (e.g. B+ to B).

Reading Summaries	10%	Paper (due Apr. 4)	20%
Homework	10%	Final Exam	20%
Second Life assignment	10%	Class Engagement	10%
Midterm Exam	20%		

## Policies and Expectations

Attendance: Your attendance and participation are integral to the success of the course as well as your own personal achievement. I will be taking attendance daily, and missing class or failing to participate constructively will definitely impact your class engagement grade. You are allowed **three absences** during the semester for sports, illness, or other reasons. On each of your fourth and fifth absences from class, your final grade will drop a half-letter grade (e.g. from B to B-). If you miss more than five classes for any reason other than verified medical or other personal emergency, you will receive an F for the course. You are responsible for all class content from days that you have missed.

Lateness: Be in your seat and ready to begin class at the scheduled start time. If you come in late (i.e. after I have shut the door and begun class), it will count as half an absence. Why am I such a tyrant about lateness? Because it distracts other students **and** me. When you interrupt class, you interfere with the learning environment of your peers in multiple ways, and that is simply unacceptable. If you are late, it is your responsibility to ensure, immediately after class, that I have changed the record to reflect that you were late rather than absent. If you fail to do so, the lateness will count as a full absence and protestations to the contrary will be summarily dismissed.

Engagement: The main responsibilities of creating a productive and enjoyable class rest with you, and that is why class contribution is weighted heavily in your final course grade (10%). Your active engagement affects not only what you get out of the course but also what your classmates get out of the course. Merely attending class and taking notes is not enough for your success in this class. While you can demonstrate class engagement in ways other than speaking in class (e.g. sending me your thoughts via email; coming to office hours to talk about course ideas, not just exam prep; forwarding relevant links of interest to me), engagement grades above a C will be reserved for students who regularly and productively participate in class discussions.

Preparation: Always bring that day's readings to class with you. The syllabus will always state clearly what you should read prior to each class, which assignments you should hand in, and what else you must do or bring for a given day. Late assignments will be penalized by a half-grade for each 24 hours of lateness (e.g. from B+ to B). If you know that you will have difficulty completing an assignment on time, let me know before the deadline and I will try to work with you if possible.

Written Work: All written work must be typed (double-spaced), spellchecked, and proofread. Failure to run your work through a spellchecker (one more time before printing is a good idea) will automatically result in a half-letter-grade deduction from your grade for that assignment. Multiple-page documents must be stapled—I will not accept unstapled work (please note that paper clips and dog-ears are *not* staples).

Grades: All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade. The calculation of your grade will be based on a 1,000-point scale, and the weight of each assignment is listed above. If you are concerned about your grade, come talk to me as early as possible.

In-Class Behavior: You may not eat in class (beverages are okay). You may not leave class except in actual emergency situations--no casual trips to the restroom or water fountain.

Email Policy: I will regularly use email to send out announcements, changes in the syllabus, reminders about tests or due dates, etc. It is your responsibility to check your email regularly to keep up-to-date with these announcements. Except in rare cases of personal or family emergency, I promise to answer all email from students within 24 hours (36 hours on weekends) and will hold you responsible for any announcements made via email within 24 hours of the announced change (36 hours on weekends). Please keep in mind that more involved questions should be asked in office hours, not over email.

Electronics: Ironically enough given the course material, I start from a position of hostility toward the use of new media technologies in the classroom. Ergo, you may not use computers in class without prior approval. Your cell phone or PDA must be turned off and put away during class. If you absolutely need to have your phone on during class for some reason, talk to me at the beginning of the semester or the particular class session and we'll work something out. If your phone rings during class, you will be subjected to a humiliating punishment of my own devious invention.

**NOTE:** TEXTING OR WEB-SURFING IN CLASS WILL RESULT IN AN **AUTOMATIC ZERO FOR CLASS ENGAGEMENT** FOR THE SEMESTER. THIS IS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR: **THERE IS NO WARNING AND THERE IS NO APPEAL:** IF I THINK YOU'VE DONE IT, YOU'VE DONE IT. SO DON'T EVEN *GIVE THE APPEARANCE* OF SNEAKING IN A TEXT, A QUICK PEEK AT FACEBOOK, ETC.

REPEAT OFFENSES WILL RESULT IN **AN ADDITIONAL 10% REDUCTION** OF YOUR COURSE GRADE PER OFFENSE.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO USE ELECTRONICS IN CLASS, DO SO KNOWING THAT YOU ARE STRONGLY RISKING YOUR GRADE--I AM **NOT** FOOLING AROUND. IT IS **YOUR ABSOLUTE RESPONSIBILITY TO AFFIRMATIVELY DEMONSTRATE ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION AT ALL TIMES.**

Okay, deep breath: why is this so crucial? Because, as with lateness, it distracts other students (and me, by the way). When you are not on task, you interfere with the learning environment of your peers in multiple ways, and that is simply unacceptable.

Accessibility and Special Accommodations: It is important that the course be accessible to all students. If you need any alternative accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order for you to be able to participate fully in the course, or if there are any external issues that may affect your work in this course, please contact me privately as soon as possible to discuss your specific needs. I rely on the Academic Support & Enrichment Center in 102 Doane to verify the need for reasonable accommodations based on documentation on file in that office.

Academic Honesty: You may not turn in substantially similar work to two classes without the express consent of *both* instructors. All sources in your written work must be properly cited; if you have any doubts about correct citation, contact the Writing Center or any of the many paper and online guides to academic citation. Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated, and students found to have committed plagiarism, **regardless of whether or not the plagiarism was committed intentionally and knowingly**, will face severe grade penalties and will also be reported to the university to face further academic discipline. You are encouraged to use the resources available in the library system and the Writing Center to guide your research. In addition, I call your attention to Denison's statement on academic integrity:

"Proposed and developed by Denison students, passed unanimously by DCGA and Denison's faculty, the Code of Academic Integrity requires that instructors notify the Associate Provost of cases of academic dishonesty, and it requires that cases be heard by the Academic Integrity Board. Further, the code makes students responsible for promoting a culture of integrity on campus and acting in instances in which integrity is violated.

"Academic honesty, the cornerstone of teaching and learning, lays the foundation for lifelong integrity. Academic dishonesty is intellectual theft. It includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for evaluation. This standard applies to all work ranging from daily homework assignments to major exams. Students must clearly cite any sources consulted—not only for quoted phrases but also for ideas and information that are not common knowledge. Neither ignorance nor carelessness is an acceptable defense in cases of plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to follow the appropriate format for citations. Students should ask their instructors for assistance in determining what sorts of materials and assistance are appropriate for assignments and for guidance in citing such materials clearly.

"For further information about the Code of Academic Integrity see <http://www.denison.edu/about/integrity.html>."

## **Reading Summaries**

For most class sessions, a group will be assigned to write summaries of the reading(s) for that day. These summaries should be emailed as a Word document attachment to [assignments@billkirkpatrick.net](mailto:assignments@billkirkpatrick.net) by **midnight the night before class** (5 points will be deducted from summaries submitted between midnight and class; summaries may not be handed in for credit after class). The guidelines for these are as follows:

- First, you should give a sentence or two stating **your understanding of the theme for the day**: why did I assign this (these) reading(s) to you? What ties all of the articles for that day together?
- Next, your summary should synopsize the reading for that day (if there are multiple readings, summarize the one that has an asterisk by it). This synopsis should clearly **state the thesis** of the reading: what, exactly, is the author arguing? It is important to give the author's largest claim(s) in your own words. Do not just parrot back the author's own language, nor simply make vague statements about the argument. Your synopsis should also clearly state **why the author's argument matters**: what's the "so what"?
- Finally, after synopsizing the article, you should give **an original thought** based on considering the readings: what new insight or understanding did the readings provide *you*? How have the readings changed your perspective on digital technology? How might you begin to apply them?
- Summaries must be **between 250-300 words total**, plus any bibliographic information. Summaries that fall outside of this range will be penalized 5 points.
- Your summary should be **well written**: grammatically correct, almost entirely typo-free, and stylistically polished. Summaries with substantial grammar and proofreading errors will receive a ✓- regardless of content.
- Summaries will be graded as ✓+, ✓, or ✓- and will cumulatively comprise 10% of your final grade. For the purposes of calculating your grade, you will receive 34 points for each ✓+, 27 points for each ✓, and 20 points for each ✓- (out of a total of 1000 points for the semester).

## **Homework**

Over the course of the semester, there will be 10 homework assignments of varying difficulty and effort; these will all be graded as ✓+, ✓, or ✓- and will cumulatively comprise 10% of your final grade. For the purposes of calculating your grade, you will receive 10 points for each ✓+, 7.5 points for each ✓, and 5 points for each ✓- (out of a total of 1000 points for the semester). The specific assignments with grading criteria will be detailed separately.

### Daily Schedule

Readings should be completed by that day's class, and you should come prepared to discuss them.  
Those that are not from Benkler will be linked on Blackboard (BB).

**Full citations for all articles will be available on Blackboard.**

*Every single thing on this syllabus is subject to change, so check your email or Blackboard for announcements and keep on your toes.*

### UNIT 1 – INTRODUCTION

Jan. 15	<b>A Time of Epochal Change</b>	
Jan. 17	<b>Theoretical Foundations I</b>	<u>Read:</u> Eisenstein, excerpt from <i>The Printing Press as an Agent of Change</i> <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 1)
Jan. 22	<b>Theoretical Foundations II</b>	<u>Read:</u> *Williams, "The Technology and the Society" Jay Rosen on his Twitter strategy <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 2) HW 1: Tweet with hashtag #Comm333
Jan. 24	<b>Theoretical Foundations III</b>	<u>Read:</u> Smith, "On the Division of Labour" *Benkler, Ch. 1 ("Introduction") <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 3)
Jan. 29	<b>Early Visions</b>	<u>Read:</u> Plant, "ada" *Bush, "As We May Think" <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 4) HW 2: New Media Interview

### UNIT 2 – KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY

Jan. 31	<b>New Modes of Stupidity?</b>	<u>Read:</u> Carr, "Is Google Making us Stupid?" Jackson, "Introduction," <i>Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming Dark Age</i> Bauerlein, "Introduction," <i>The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans ...</i>
Feb. 5	<b>New Modes of Knowledge?</b>	<u>Read:</u> Shirky, "Why Abundance is Good: A Reply to Nick Carr" Shirky, "It Takes a Village to Find a Phone" Chabris & Simons, "Digital Alarmists are Wrong" Metafilter thread, "Help Me Help My Friend in D.C." <u>Turn In:</u> Paper Topic
Feb. 7	<b>New Forms of Identity</b>	<u>Read:</u> Dibble, "A Rape in Cyberspace" *Bailey, "Virtual Skin" Boyd, "White Flight," pp. 31-37 <u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 1) HW 3: Wikipedia edit

### UNIT 3 – ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Feb. 12	<b>The Networked Economy</b>	<u>Read:</u> Benkler pp. 29-58 ("The Networked Information Economy" and "Some Basic Economics...") Anderson, "The Long Tail"
		<u>Turn In:</u> Second Life assignment
Feb. 14	<b>Intellectual Property I</b>	<u>Read:</u> Lessig, <i>Free Culture</i> (excerpt) *Levy, "The Patent Problem"
		<u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 2)
		<b>NOTE: Midterm exam handed out today</b>
Feb. 19	<b>Intellectual Property II</b>	<u>Read:</u> Patry, <i>Moral Panics and Copyright Wars</i> , pp. 61-78 Doctorow, "Creative Commons"
		*Johns, "Past, Present, Future" (excerpt) 498-518
		<u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 3)
Feb. 21	<b>Open Source Society</b>	<u>Read:</u> *Benkler, Ch. 3 ("Peer Production and Sharing") Lethem, "The Ecstasy of Influence"
		<u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 4)
Feb. 26	<b>NO CLASS TODAY: MIDTERM DUE IN MY BOX BY 5:00 P.M.</b>	
Feb. 28	<b>Changes in the Culture Industries</b>	<u>Read:</u> Doctorow, "Illegal Filesharing" Thompson, "Sex, Drugs And Updating Your Blog" Krukowski, "Making Cents" Wilson, "What Filesharing Studies Really Say"
		<u>Turn In:</u> HW 4: Apply a Creative Commons license to your work
Mar. 5	<b>The Ethics of Economic Transformations</b>	<u>Turn In:</u> HW 5: Letter to/from a rock star
Mar. 7	<b>NO CLASS</b>	

**SPRING BREAK, MAR. 11 - MAR. 15**

### UNIT 3 – SOCIAL AND ANTISOCIAL MEDIA

Mar. 19	<b>Social Media</b>	<u>Read:</u> *Turkle, "Alone Together" Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely" Tufekci, "Social Media's Small, Positive Role in Human Relationships"
		<u>Turn In:</u> Reading Summary (Group 1) HW 6: Social Media Journal
Mar. 21	<b>Social Media and Privacy</b>	<u>Read:</u> Boyd, "Making Sense of Privacy and Publicity" Nussbaum, "Say Everything" Thompson, "Brave New World of Digital Intimacy"

- Turn In: HW 7: Post an original video to YouTube
- Mar. 26    **Privacy and Security**    Read:    \*Zittrain, Ch. 9 ("Privacy")  
 Angwin, "The Web's New Gold Mine: Your Secrets"  
 Thompson, "How I Stole Someone's Identity"
- Turn In: Reading Summary (Group 2)
- Mar. 28    **Anonymous**    Read:    Anonymous, "5 Postulates: An Anonymous Manifesto"  
 Coleman, "Anonymous: From the Lulz to  
 Collective Action"

#### **UNIT 4 – POLITICS, SECURITY**

- Apr. 2    **NO CLASS TODAY: EXTRA OFFICE HOURS**
- Apr. 4    **NO CLASS TODAY: PAPERS DUE TO ASSIGNMENTS@BILLKIRKPATRICK.NET BY 5:00 P.M.**
- Apr. 9    **The Networked Public Sphere**    Read:    \*Benkler pp. 212-261 (excerpt from "Political Freedom Part 2")
- Turn In: Reading Summary (Group 3)
- Apr. 11    **Participatory Politics**    Read:    Andrejevic, "iPolitics"  
 Gladwell, "Small Change"  
 Jenkins/Driscoll, "Perhaps a Revolution is Not  
 What We Need"
- Turn In: HW 8: Post a comment to a political blog
- Apr. 16    **Security**    Read:    \*Zittrain, "Cybersecurity"  
 (EVALS TODAY)    Andrejevic, "iWar"  
 Pogue, "How Dangerous is the Internet for Children?"
- Turn In: Reading Summary (Group 4)
- Apr. 18    **Network Neutrality**    Read:    Wu, "Why You Should Care About Network Neutrality"
- Turn In: HW 9: Letter to your congressperson
- Apr. 23    **Whither Humanity?**    Read:    \*Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs"  
 Kurzweil, *The Singularity*, pp. 14-33
- Turn In: HW 10: Re-humanization Project
- NOTE:** Take-home final exam handed out
- Apr. 25    **NO CLASS TODAY: EXTRA OFFICE HOURS**

**TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE IN MY BOX NO LATER THAN MONDAY, MAY 2, AT 5:00 P.M.**